

Students & Schools: Moving Forward

(April, 2026 Vol. 30 #7) – 40 Years & Counting

Featured

Moving on to a New Grade/New School: Helping Students and Their Families Make Transition Plans

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Moving on to a New Grade/New School: Helping Students and Their Families Make Transition Plans

Supports for transitions constitute one of the six major domains in a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports. This domain addresses the daily and periodic transition events that regularly confront students – before school, breaks, lunch periods, after-school times, moving to a new grade or school, and the shift from school to career or higher education. Each transition can either exacerbate problems or serve as a natural opportunity to prevent difficulties, promote positive learning and attitudes, reduce alienation, and strengthen student–school relationships.

Our focus here is on assisting students and their families as they prepare for the move to a new teacher, grade level, or school setting.

Transition support involves both preparation and proactive follow up to ensure that the experience is a positive one. Effective interventions:

- provide closure related to what the student is leaving behind
- strengthen articulation and communication between the old and new settings
- welcome newcomers and ensure they receive the social support needed for positive adjustment
- assess transition success/problems
- implement timely corrective actions when problems arise

How Schools Can Help Students and Their Families Plan

Schools play a central role in ensuring that students and their families experience grade to grade and school to school transitions as smooth, predictable, and supportive processes. A well-designed transition plan not only reduces anxiety and confusion but also enhances students' readiness to learn in the new setting. The following Exhibit outlines ways schools can help families plan effectively.

Exhibit. **Helping Families Plan for Transition to a New Grade/School**

1. Provide Clear, Early, and Accessible Information

Families need reliable information well before the transition occurs. Schools can support them by:

- offering user-friendly guides that explain new expectations, schedules, school norms, and available supports
- hosting informational meetings – virtual or in person – to answer questions and reduce uncertainty
- ensuring materials are linguistically and culturally appropriate and available in multiple formats (print, digital, video)

2. Emphasize the Importance of Orientation Activities

Orientation requires more than a single event. Families should plan to

- visit the new school, meet the staff and new teachers, tour the campus, and learn routines
- learn how to support their child’s transition adjustment
- ask the school about a peer “buddy” to welcome and provide support for their child and themselves

3. Family Can Learn to Facilitate Communication Between Sending and Receiving Staff

If the family thinks it will be helpful, they can learn ways to facilitate information sharing between those who know the student and those who will be responsible next. This could include gathering and delivering

- relevant academic, behavioral, and support information
- information about how their child’s needs have been supported/accommodated

4. Support Students in Reflecting and Achieving Closure

Transitions are emotional events. Families can plan ways to contribute to efforts to

- give students opportunities to reflect on their growth and accomplishments
- celebrate the completion of the current grade or school
- encourage sharing and dealing with any worries or questions about the next step

5. Focus on Ensuring Relationship-Building Opportunities in the New Setting

Positive relationships are central to transition success. Families should plan to ask how the school

- ensures staff are welcoming, attentive, and proactive during the first weeks
- connects students with peers
- assigns a caring adult as a primary point of contact

6. Monitor Adjustment and Provide Follow-Up Supports

Transitions do not end on the first day of school. The family should plan to

- check in with the school regularly during the first months to ensure the transition is successful
- ask for timely interventions (academic, social-emotional, or logistical) when problems arise
- engage with the school in collaborative problem solving to address problems

7. Encourage Families to Plan for Continuing Engagement with the School

For more on this topic, see the Center’s Quick Find on

>[*Supports for Transitions /Grade Articulation/Welcoming, etc.*](#)

>[*Home Involvement in Schools*](#)

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Never look down on anybody, unless you are helping them up.

Jesse Jackson

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

- >How to Help Your Child Adjust to a New School
- >Helping Middle and High School Students with Transitions
- >Support Your Child's Transition from Elementary to Middle School
- >Transitions to Middle School: The New Normal
- >Dynamics that challenge the provision of integrated care for youth at-risk
- >Lessons From a Rural School's Path to Renewal
- >The Data We Can't Afford to Hide: The Need for More Transparency on Absenteeism
- >Initial Challenges Implementing the Full-Service Community Schools Approach and How FY 2023 Grantees Addressed Them

New From Center at UCLA

- >*Criteria and Rubric for a Best Practice Approach to Addressing Barriers to Learning & Teaching*
- >*California's Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI): What's it About?*
- >*The Wellness Coach Model for Enhancing Student Supports*
- >*Schools Banning Smartphones: Pros & Cons*
- >*Should schools be adopting universal mindfulness programs?*



(Image created by AI)

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Every student — no matter where they live, their background, or the color of their skin — deserves the resources and support they need to thrive. In communities nationwide, parents and educators work together to keep public schools safe and welcoming so students can be themselves while gaining the knowledge and life skills needed to reach their full potential.

Becky Pringle, NEA

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

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

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

- Are teens experiencing a “grind” culture and is it affecting their mental health?
- Improving Students’ Relationships with Teachers
- Reengaging Disconnected Students
- Improving student behavior: It’s about promoting pro-social development
- Natural Opportunities for Promoting Pro-Social Development at School
- Reduction in day-to-day victimization at schools
- Classroom based assistance for students experiencing stress
- Improving understanding of determinants of absenteeism
- Addressing Chronic Absenteeism
- Does a Multi-Tiered System of Supports limit teacher creativity?
- About School Improvement and Making Educational Practice “Scientific”
- Embedding Trauma-Informed Practices into a System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

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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Our choices as educators matter a great deal. A brief conversation, a well-designed lesson, or an extended project can stick with students for years. These experiences can spark an interest, open new pathways of exploration, and even set our students on new life trajectories. If cultivating curiosity is a worthwhile goal, we can't leave these experiences to chance. We must nurture learning environments that enable it and design and implement learning experiences that cultivate it.

“Purposeful moments and planned journeys spark student curiosity”

Herrmann, Zhang, & Daar

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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)

Gas cards, bikes, and money for parents considered in Detroit district's chronic absenteeism fight. More financial incentives, gas cards, and stronger early pick-up policies may be in the Detroit school district's future as part of ongoing efforts to improve attendance. With a new mayor who has promised to focus on city issues that affect youth and education, there could be momentum to address root causes of chronic absenteeism. Mayor Sheffield, has already begun conversations with the district around improving transportation. Those have included expanding city bus routes in areas where school-age kids have the highest rates of chronic absenteeism and hiring staff to make sure students feel safe riding the bus. This spring, the district will give some students at two high schools bicycles to get to school, They are already being used at Davis Aerospace Technical High School, where the chronic absenteeism rate dropped by more than 14 percentage points compared to the year before.

Cost savings cover, restore summer school programs. Bibb County School District (GA) leaders outlined an expanded slate of summer learning options and a budget amendment that uses state funds to support the effort. The district's summer camps, enrichment programs, learning initiatives and other activities will be funded through multiple sources, including the general fund budget, the poverty grant and the GEAR UP grant, among others. Push for Success Summer Academy is for K-3 students identified as needing extra support in literacy and math, based on benchmark data. Powering Excellence: The Final Push will help counselor-selected seniors recover missing credits and qualify for summer graduation.

These kids really care. Craig fund raiser supports local families battling cancer Janesville (WI) Craig High School students organized a “tailgate” fundraiser for families facing cancer. Craig Student Council members and the high school’s National Art Honor Society hosted the family-friendly event to raise money for Guarding Against Cancer. Local donors have also contributed... That students played a major role in planning and running the event reflects their strong desire to give back.

High school students fix up cars, then hand the keys to single mothers. At Louisa County High School in Mineral, Virginia, students enrolled in the school’s automotive technology program have been reviving timeworn vehicles and giving them to single mothers for free. They work on about five cars per year. The giveaway program is done in partnership with Giving Words, a local nonprofit that supports single mothers, mainly through car repairs and donations. They formed partnerships with local repair shops, as well as Louisa County High School and Charlottesville Area Technical Education Center. The cars are donated by individuals or automotive businesses.

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It takes a village to raise a child" is true. But it takes consistent, on-going outreach to bring people together to do the work and build the resources. Daniel Bassill

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>Comments and sharing from the field

Responses to ***The War in Iran: Update on Supporting Students*** (March 5, 2026)

1. “I would include international schools and DoDEA schools (e.g., Turkey and Bahrain).”
2. “Thank you for sharing this! This information is very useful, and I will share.”

Response to 2/26/26 email ***About the interagency agreement Relating to Family Engagement and School Support***

“I see the AI did not evaluate the benefits of Site Based Management. Until Carter education was a local endeavor and schools did quite well. As large as the country is, with the differing needs of the states one size fits all coming from DC doesn’t seem to work well. And I’m a retired educator; classroom teacher, SPED Director, & School Psychologist.”

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