

Students & Schools: Moving Forward

(May, 2026 Vol. 30 #8) – *40 Years & Counting*

Featured

Planning for the End-of-the-School Year: A special focus on celebrations & safety

Also in this issue

>Quick links to online resources

>A Few Stories Excerpted from Various News Sources

>Comments and sharing from the field

Planning for the End-of-the-School Year: A special focus on celebrations & safety

The end of the school year is something we all look forward to – and for good reasons.

It's a time when school staff can prepare for a strong finish, ensure students are ready to transition successfully to the next year, and for everyone to reflect on what has been accomplished.

And it is a time for congratulations and celebrations.

For students and families, end of year celebrations are about recognizing effort and accomplishment. Displays of student work in classrooms and hallways – and end of year open houses – help students feel seen and proud while giving families a window into their child's learning.

For teachers, student support staff, and other school staff, this time offers space to reflect on shared experiences, strengthen relationships, highlight successes, and express appreciation for one another. Small gestures – like end of year gatherings with administrators – can go a long way in reinforcing a sense of belonging and collective purpose.

For district administrators and staff, visiting schools and classrooms to take part in end-of-year celebrations can provide another message of support to students, school staff, and families.

Together, end-of-the-year celebrations are moments to be cherished. Just as important, they provide another natural opportunity to promote social and emotional learning and enhance a healthy school climate – for example, by fostering reflection, gratitude, and appreciation of oneself and others.

About Making End-of-the-Year High School Student Celebrations Safe

Graduation ceremonies are often the high point of end-of-the-year celebrations. However, heightened excitement can also increase risks associated with events such as proms and post-prom parties. If a student-staff workgroup has not yet developed strategies to prevent problems, the end of the school year is an ideal time to do so. Here's what some recent graduates have shared:

- What my high school did was different from many others. Instead of renting an entertainment venue or hosting a large dance, our grad night was held on campus. It became one of my greatest memories – safe, positive, and incredibly fun in a setting we all knew and trusted.

- “In my own experience, I remember one of my teachers speaking in class about two weeks before prom and trying to give us some perspective on the event. She wanted us to have a good time, but also acknowledged the enormous stress that it caused for some people. My teacher encouraged us to view it as just another dance and to focus on graduating instead. I think teachers and/or counselors should engage students in conversations like these months before prom to temper the frenzy that can accompany the event and possibly prevent the unwise decisions students make at prom and post-prom parties.”

What is your class, school, or district planning for end-of-the-year celebrations? Send to: Ltaylor@ucla.edu

@#@##

The end of the school year is almost here...that means you can almost check another year off! ... I know the excitement is mixed with a little bit of sadness...saying goodbye is an emotional thing. There is so much to celebrate, hugs to be given and maybe even a tear or two to shed as we think back on the growth we have seen this year. Jessica Kubik

@##@#

>Quick Links to Online Resources

- >>Celebrating the end of the school year
- >>Celebrating everyone at the end of the school year
- >>The bittersweet end of another school year
- >>Programs and Practices That Influence School Connectedness for Secondary Students
- >>Adolescent Social Capital as a Source of Resilience against Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties in Times of Crisis
- >>K-12 Telehealth Provider Faces Uncertain Future as Funding Dries Up
- >>Cross-Organization Insights on Authentic Youth Engagement in Policy
- >>How Changes in Foster Youth Classification Status Relate to Student Absenteeism and Discipline
- >>Sixty Years of School Climate Research
- >>Examining youth mental health promotion at scale
- >>Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of the Effectiveness of Whole-school Interventions Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Risk Behaviours in Adolescence
- >>Effectiveness of school-based interventions to improve mental health and wellbeing of students: an umbrella review
- >>Improving school climate to improve child and adolescent mental health and reduce inequalities



"Listen, I hate report cards. You hate report cards. What're we doing here?!"

@#@#@##

I think of my role as relationship building, My daily interactions go beyond supervision. I greet students by name and build trust through consistency. This visibility has created a culture where students feel comfortable approaching me with concerns, knowing they'll be heard and respected.

Stanley "Ric" Calhoun, NEA Education Support Professional of the Year

@#@#@##

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

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

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

- Social media and the young: What should we do?
- Social Media as a Behavioral Activation Tool
- Students falling through the cracks: What's the data?
- It's that time of year when burnout is widely observed at schools
- Excerpt from: *Healthy Educators Need Healthy Schools*
- Repurposing closed schools to strengthen the school community
- More about mentoring: Is near-peer college/career advising a promising practice?
- About Social Anxiety, Social Participation and Identity Formation
- Addressing Social Anxiety, Social Participation, and Identity Formation

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>

@#@#@#

We must ensure that any use of AI in schools is guided by educators, protects students, and helps, not replaces, educators. Our students deserve more than algorithms. They deserve opportunity, connection, and committed educators in every classroom. Becky Pringle, NEA

@#@#@#

>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)

Bipartisan school-safety, student support bills into law. Gov. Abigail Spanberger signed a new batch of legislation centered on school safety, student well-being and expanded support systems in Virginia’s public schools, alongside measures addressing public health protections and food insecurity among children. The package of bills, all of which cleared the General Assembly with unanimous or bipartisan support during its 2026 session, reflects a broad push by lawmakers to strengthen emergency preparedness in schools, improve mental health resources, modernize student safety education and provide additional tools for educators working with at-risk youth.

Students Showcase Program in Which They Strive to Make their Middle School a Better Place. Middle school students explained how the Where Everybody Belongs (WEB) program functions at Saline Middle School during a student showcase at Tuesday's board of education meeting. WEB leaders introduce incoming sixth graders to the school and their classmates. WEB leaders are preparing for a fifth-grade transition exercise to show incoming students around the school and tell them what the middle school is all about.

Public Schools Elevate Student Voice to Drive Change. At a staff meeting at Columbia Heights Education Campus in Northwest D.C., students were present and at the center of the conversation. Scholars spoke candidly about their experiences with the school’s evolving model for clubs and internships — what was working, what could be improved and what they hoped would come next. The goal of the staff meeting was to identify implementation trends, including those raised by students, and improve structures for the following school year’s programming. Staff had set the ambitious target to engage 20% of their learners in traditional adult decision-making spaces. They exceeded that aim, with 30% of their scholars participating over the course of the school year.

Youth Environmental Action Summit. The fifth annual Upper Shore Youth Environmental Action Summit (MD) was a success, with 180 high school students attending. Students heard from environmental professionals, attended expert-led workshops and connected with peers involved in student environmental initiatives. Aside from the educational portion of the day, students also learned about volunteer, job, internship and scholarship opportunities.

@#@#@#

I hope that people who have general mental health needs and aren't able to get access to care shouldn't be shy about talking to AI about problems in their life. But I really hope that it isn't a substitute for real human professionals and real humans that are part of the social fabric of people's lives. Ryan McBain, RAND

@#@#@#

>Comments and sharing from the field

Response to: *California's Youth Behavioral Health Initiative: What's it About?*

I recently reviewed your recent email communication regarding the upcoming report on CA MTSS and the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI), and as the state project lead for CA MTSS, I wanted to reach out to offer support.... We strongly concur with your perspective that mental and behavioral health must be embedded within a unified, comprehensive system of student and learning supports. Integrating these efforts into a broader continuum that addresses engagement, barriers to learning, and overall student well-being is essential for meaningful and sustainable impact.... Thank you for highlighting this important work for the field.

Response to: *It's that time of year when burnout is widely observed at schools*

I just wanted to express once how much I admire and respect all that you have committed to achieving all of these years on behalf of young people and their families. You are remarkable and I am ever so grateful that you continue this incredible tradition of excellence in assuring that professionals receive the tools that they need to thrive.

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 140,000 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