

# Students & Schools: Moving Forward

(December, 2025 Vol. 30 #3) – 39 Years & Counting

## Featured

**Preventing Student and Staff “Burnout:”  
Making More than a New Year’s Resolution**

### Also in this issue

>Quick links to online resources

>A Few Stories Excerpted from Various News Sources

>Comments and sharing from the field

**Preventing Student and Staff “Burnout:”  
Making More than a New Year’s Resolution**

One thing teachers and students often agree on: *Winter break can’t come soon enough!*

But once it’s over, a new year begins—and with it come renewed opportunities to improve well-being in schools.

For the New Year, be it resolved:

*We all will work to reduce stress and increase support at schools.*

To truly prevent burnout, staff and students must experience the school as a caring learning environments. That means fostering strong collegial and social support systems, and ensuring meaningful participation in decision-making.

While burnout is often viewed as a personal problem, wide-spread, long-term solutions require systemic changes that reculture schools in ways that enhance feelings of choice, connection, and competence—for staff and students alike.

## Four Key Elements of a Schoolwide Approach to Prevent Burnout

*Transform Working Conditions* – Open classroom doors for collaboration. Build teams of staff and students who support, nurture, and learn from each other every day.

*Induct, Support, and Nurture Newcomers* – Ensure new staff and students are inducted into the school culture in a welcoming and socially supportive way.

*Personalize Professional Development* – Shift inservice training toward personalized staff development—from day one through every subsequent capacity building effort.

*Restructure Governance for Shared Decision-Making* – Empower staff and students to participate meaningfully in shaping the school’s direction.

## About Reculturing Classrooms

Among the aims of classroom reculturing are changes that enhance student engagement, promote holistic development and assets, increase protective factors, and foster a climate of caring, guidance, and support. The foundation for such reculturing is differentiated instruction that (a) matches student motivation and capability and (b) provides special assistance to prevent and address problems as soon as they arise.

For Resources to Help Minimize Stress and Prevent Burnout, see the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on [\*Burnout\*](#).

Here are a few specific related Center documents"

>[\*Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout\*](#)

>[\*School Staff Burnout\*](#)

>[\*Teachers Can't Do it Alone!\*](#)

>[\*Addressing Student burnout\*](#)

>[\*Student Burnout\*](#)

### ***Building and Maintaining Classroom Community***

In the November issue of [\*Edutopia\*](#), a middle-school science teacher shares strategies to maintain engagement and connection as the school year progresses, including greeting students by name, using icebreakers, rotating random groups and encouraging passion projects. She emphasizes revisiting expectations and modeling respectful interactions to sustain a supportive, inclusive classroom culture focused on learning.

### **Call for Nominations:**

#### **National Award for Work on Transforming Student/Learning Supports**

The National Center for Mental Health in Schools & Student/Learning Supports is pleased to call for nominations for its award to a school making significant strides in rethinking and restructuring student/learning supports to better address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

#### **Award Details:**

- Recognition: National acknowledgment of your school's accomplishments
- Award Amount: \$1,000 to support your efforts to share your trailblazing efforts with others

**Nomination Deadline:** December 1, 2025

#### **How to Submit:**

We welcome both nominations and self-nominations. Please include a brief description of the work accomplished to date and send submissions to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

#### **More Information:**

Visit the Center's website for details about transforming student/learning supports into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>.

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School is where students will spend many of their waking hours, building routines and relationships with peers, educators, and administrators. Given the centrality of school settings in many students' lives, schools are an ideal location to support and promote children's mental and physical health... Schools are essential for ensuring all children can thrive academically, emotionally, and physically.

Jane M. Simoni  
National Institutes of Health

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### >Quick Links to Online Resources

- >>Influences on least restrictive environment and inclusion
- >>Thinking systematically: disrupting systems that maintain discipline inequities
- >>The Parent-School Relationship, Resilience and Parental Stress
- >>Bullying in Adolescence: Social Influence and Student Relationships
- >>School Boards: Navigating democracy in divided times
- >>Special education at a crossroads: What should the federal role be?
- >>Honoring Indigenous Families' Preferences & Contexts in Child Care & Early Education

### Here's what was discussed in the Community of Practice during November

>Are school policies working against student engagement at school?  
*Accounting for Motivational Differences*

>Strengthening school safety through prevention

>Can the season of giving and outreach start in the classroom?

>Do Public Schools Matter?

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>

### November Commentaries

>Comparing the Concepts of ACEs and Barriers to Learning and Teaching

>What's the difference between "School Mental Health"  
and "Mental Health in Schools"

>Major Reasons for Transforming K-12 Student/Learning Supports

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One of the most powerful things a teacher can do is help students develop empathy. It teaches them to understand one another, to accept differences, and to care. And that's what changes communities. – Jessica Bailey

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

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

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*Instead of chasing the next shiny object, we must focus on creating durable infrastructure that supports teaching, learning and equity in meaningful ways, and designing for scale without sacrificing local context.*

Julia Fallon  
Executive Director, State Educational Technology Directors Association

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**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](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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

**Students volunteering** – West Lauderdale students went to work in downtown Meridian (MS) to help others as part of a class assignment for their Smart Start dual credit class. The students volunteered at The Mississippi Children’s Museum-Meridian, the Jimmie Rodgers Museum and The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience, doing an assortment of chores including gardening, moving furniture, cleaning and more. The career coach at West Lauderdale High School, who organized the effort, said the volunteer hours help students develop their skills while also helping out.

**Students receive high school diplomas through L.A. Library program** – Los Angeles Public Library celebrated graduates of the library’s Career Online High School Degree program on Oct. 10 at the Central Library in Downtown Los Angeles. The program offers adults ages 19 and older an opportunity to earn a high school diploma. Los Angeles Public Library, which is the first public library in the nation to enable adults to earn an accredited high school diploma and career certificate online, has graduated more than 1,220 students.

**High school gears up for annual holiday fair** – The Belmont High School (NH) chapter of the Future Business Leaders of America will be holding its annual holiday fair at Belmont High School for the 18th season. The event is organized and run by the Future Business Leaders of America students and it allows them to have a hands-on approach to all segments of the event — from advertising and marketing to communication with vendors and community outreach. The Holiday Fair typically has around 80 to 90 vendors participate. BHS FBLA will also be assisting the Greater Lakes Regions Children’s Auction for donations to be auctioned off again this year at the Belknap Marketplace..

**Mobile Center Helps Mississippi Students With College and Career Planning Services** – The Get2College Mobile Center brings free college and career planning services directly to students and families across the state, with a particular focus on the Mississippi Delta. Students may schedule appointments with the mobile center when it is in their area and receive the assistance needed. The unit can be parked at church events, apartment complexes and football games. The unit has also been invited to Family Day by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

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*We know psychotherapy works—but why? We need to examine the efficacy and limitations of empirically supported treatments, as well as evidence that common factors—like therapeutic alliance, empathy, and client characteristics—may be more important.*

American Psychological Association notice of upcoming webinar

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## >Comments and sharing from the field

Response to **Comparing the Concepts of ACEs and Barriers to Learning and Teaching**

“You may remember me from your work with our district in the early 2000’s. Thank you again for your time with us. My understanding of mental health in school/district was perfunctory at best. Your broad concepts and specific targets were illuminating. I am reaching out today because the information in your email once again expanded my comprehension of what is happening with education on the national scene and how that translates to individual schools, teachers, and students. We have a new Superintendent. I believe he will be good for our district. We have had quite a ride in the past 2 decades. Thank you for organizing and sharing your knowledge and enlightening many new educators about this work. Given the current situation in our country, I decided to take the time to share my appreciate for all you do.

Response to ***Strengthening school safety through prevention***

“I can't thank you enough for the wonderful responses regarding school safety procedures and assessments! I so appreciate you putting my request out to professionals who are also dealing with these issues. Thanks to those who took the time to respond and to provide wonderful resources. I will get right on this!! I feel so fortunate to be connected with such a caring group of professionals.”

Response to ***Why Are So Few Educators Focused on Transforming Student Supports?***

“Good information. I hope more people find it and use it. Are you connected to the Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University? They have created an "educational opportunity" explorer, that has an interactive map of the USA, showing places where kids struggle more than in other places.

<https://edopportunity.org/opportunity/explorer/>

Have you used maps to show places where Transforming Student Supports are more needed than in other places? Or where schools are further advanced in integrating student learning supports with instruction? I share the Stanford map, and others in this concept map: <http://tinyurl.com/TMI-MappingData>

Response to ***The state of K-12 education in 2025-26: Challenges and Urgent Priorities***

“Thank you for sharing this 2 pager with me. I have been in K-12 education for over 37 years. I am interested in what solutions you have for fixing our broken K12 Public School system.”

**Center Response:** Thanks for your email and for raising such an important concern. You asked about solutions for fixing our broken K–12 public school system in the U.S. For us, the term solutions can feel overwhelming, given the complexity of the challenges. That said, we've spent many years developing ideas and frameworks aimed at fundamentally improving school improvement efforts. You can get a sense of our work from browsing ***Improving School Improvement***.

Here are a few key areas our Center has focused on:

- >*Expanding the Framework for School Improvement* – We advocate for moving from a two- to a three-component framework to better address the full range of factors influencing student success. See the introduction to the above reference.
- >*Transforming Student/Learning Supports* – We propose shifting from the current fragmented and marginalized approaches to a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports:  
<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2gk5c3nr>
- >*Developing Prototypes and Guides for Systemic Change* – Our work includes prototype designs for intervention and operational infrastructure changes to help schools transform supports using existing resources:  
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/agendapaper.pdf>
- >*Building on Existing Initiatives* – We encourage schools to enhance and integrate what's already in place, rather than starting from scratch:  
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/BuildMTSS.pdf>

> *Advancing Implementation and Improvement Science in Education* – We're also working on advancing efforts to implement improvements in education  
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/implscience.pdf>

We'd love to hear more about your interests and perspectives. Let's keep the conversation going.

### **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)

### **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](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)**