

Featured

- (1) Do mentors give students hope?**
- (2) How are the different causes of behavior problems at school understood?**
- (3) Rethinking how schools address student misbehavior & disengagement**

And, as always, you will find

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This community of practice *Practitioner* is designed for a screen bigger than an Iphone.

For discussion and interchange:

>Do mentors give students hope?

The need for additional resources is a constant concern with respect to promoting positive development and addressing barriers to learning and teaching (<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/fall99.pdf>). Mentors can make an important contribution to the well-being of students and schools.

As contrasted with tutors, mentors are older role models who can establish a one-to-one friendship between a student in hopes of “changing their lives for the better.” Studies suggest that when a mentor is able to develop a close relationship with a student, the student has better academic outcomes and relationship-only mentor programs have been found to produce as good academic outcomes as those with an academic focus.

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

>Mentoring

Here’s an excerpt from a recent article:

From: ***Understanding patterns of hope from informal mentoring***

“...Mentoring is associated with positive youth outcomes and functions as a safe, stable, nurturing relationship that can buffer against adversity and mental health challenges. Such relationships also promote hope, a key protective factor associated with reduced loneliness and enhanced wellbeing. Specifically, informal mentors have flexible, unstructured relationships that can help youth in different ways, depending on the circumstances of their relationship and mentees’ characteristics and preferences....

Mentors are nonparental adults who provide guidance, support, and encouragement to other, usually younger or less experienced, people. Mentors play an important role in youth development across childhood and adolescence, especially when youth lack other safe, stable, nurturing relationships...

Informal mentors are mentors that organically build the relationship with their mentee through pre-existing connections in the mentee’s community or social network, as opposed to program (or formal) mentors who are sponsored, matched, screened and trained by an organization. Teachers,

coaches, neighbors, youth group leaders, and extended family members commonly serve as informal mentors. ...

Overall, informal mentoring relationships have been associated with various positive outcomes, including increased academic performance, fewer behavioral problems and risky behaviors, improved social and emotional skills, increased psychological wellbeing, and improved physical health...

Mentors serve as unique agents for fostering hope, a process with motivational force that fosters resilience in the face of adversity and positive youth development. Hope theory suggests that youth primarily develop their capacity for hope through supportive relationships with adults. These adults model hope-oriented thinking and instill a sense of aspiration and encouragement in youth's lives. Hope is a goal-directed process that incorporates determination in line with individuals' goals (agency thinking) and planning ways to meet their goals (pathways thinking). Individuals who are more hopeful exhibit higher levels of emotional, psychological, academic, and social wellbeing (e.g., life satisfaction, self-worth, mental health, school engagement), whereas those who are less hopeful exhibit higher levels of emotional ill-being..."

For discussion and interchange:

>How are the different causes of behavior problems at school understood?

The essence of good classroom teaching is the ability to create an environment that first can mobilize the learners to pursue the curriculum and then can maintain that mobilization, while effectively facilitating learning. Behavior problems clearly get in the way of all this. Misbehavior disrupts. Because of this, discipline and classroom management are daily topics at every school and are controversial policy topics.

An AI summary notes:

School discipline is a hot-button policy issue, sparking debate between those advocating for stricter, traditional rules for order and safety (often citing rising misconduct) and those pushing for reform due to racial disparities, the "school-to-prison pipeline," and the negative impact of harsh punishments (like suspensions/expulsions) on minority students and students with disabilities. The controversy centers on balancing effective behavioral management with civil rights, with federal guidance shifting under different administrations, creating tension between ensuring school safety and promoting equity, with arguments over whether alternatives work or if strictness is necessary.

How these concerns are addressed is critical to the type of school and classroom climate that emerges and to student engagement and re-engagement in classroom learning. Critical aspects are how the different causes of misbehavior at school are understood and the need to ensure these differences are accounted for.

We find it useful for schools generally to adopt a developmentally-oriented, transactional lens for understanding the determinants of student behavior. Such a lens stresses that student problems can be grouped along a continuum. At one end are those for youngsters for whom internal factors are the primary determinants; at the other end are those for whom environmental factors are the primary determinants; and at each point along the continuum, there are those for whom some degree of transaction between internal and environmental factors determine the behavior. See Chapter 1 "Barriers to learning and teaching" in *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*.

Here's an excerpt from a recent article discussing the lenses used by teachers and administrators:

From: *Why Do Students Misbehave? An Exploration of Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of Elementary School Students' Problem Behavior*

“... When asked specifically about perceived causes of student misbehavior, school administrators more frequently attributed trauma or mental health issues as causes of misbehavior as compared to teachers, who attributed disruptive behavior more frequently to academic pressure, less free play, electronic devices, and parenting....

When considering the attributions educators made about students, it is important to further explore whether educators believe the reported causes of problem behavior can be remedied, as this mindset would likely have impact on the approach teachers take to managing student behavior, as opposed to viewing the cause as static or unable to be changed...

Research suggests that teachers with strong cognitive empathy view student behavior from a more positive lens and are more successful at managing problem behavior...

Teacher and administrator perceptions of effective behavior management approaches indicated disagreement across all three schools, supporting the original hypothesis. Specifically, administrators across all three schools most frequently discussed the use of school-level initiatives, specific interventions, and teachers' seeking administrative support outside of the classroom to manage student behavior. Teachers across all three schools most frequently discussed establishing and maintaining the classroom climate and expectations and using relationship-based approaches to manage student behavior. Therefore, there appears to be a gap in administrators' perceptions of school-wide implementation of programs and teachers' use of particular strategies rather than an entire program....

Given the wide array of behavior management approaches mentioned, as well as the emphasis on individualized approaches, it seems that teachers often seek to implement the approach that will most effectively meet student needs, which, as some teachers in this study described, can be a trial-and-error process. Therefore, the ways in which we equip teachers to manage behavior has significant implications; teachers require knowledge of and training in multiple effective practices, as well as support from administrators and staff to effectively implement these strategies, especially if teachers are picking and choosing strategies from their growing toolkit rather than fully committing to the newest initiative. ...

The results of the current study indicate that school-level initiatives and programs should pay greater attention to how teachers integrate (or adapt or even reject) program-specific approaches, whether new or old, with the beliefs and strategies they have developed over time.... Based on the results of this study, if teachers choose strategies from their toolkit to respond to and support student behavior, rather than opting for the use of an entire program or intervention, it may be useful to identify ways teachers can be supported when implementing the approaches they select. Rather than focusing on the fidelity of implementation of a program or intervention in its entirety, when rolling out an intervention with multiple steps or components, it would be beneficial to highlight the specific strategies that are integral for promoting positive student outcomes... This would allow teachers to integrate these strategies into their repertoire for managing student behavior if perceived as usable, without necessarily opting to implement an entire intervention approach...”

For more on understanding the causes of misbehavior, see the Center Quick Find on

[>Behavior Problems](#)

*The future is not a destination we're traveling toward—we create it together, every day, with every choice, every story of tomorrow we tell, every possibility we dream. **The Futures We Create***

For discussion and interchange:

>Rethinking How Schools Address Student Misbehavior & Disengagement

Discussion of student misbehavior must not be limited to discipline, behavior management, and student control. It is a whole school - whole child - whole family - whole community concern. Ultimately, it involves transforming the role schools play in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students.

The immediate need is for fundamental changes in the way student and learning supports are conceived and structured. This has been the focus of our Center at UCLA for some time. We have prepared many resources to clarify the need for change and provide prototypes for a transformed system of student and learning supports. We also have developed resources to guide those who are playing a role in making changes.

At this critical time when there is so much emphasis on supporting students and improving schools, we thought a brief guide would be especially useful to stakeholders ready to move forward. See ***Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions***.

This guide provides material for helping others understand the need for major changes, offers a blueprint for rethinking student and learning supports, and delineates first steps in making changes. And it offers direct links to online aids for more in-depth details.

Note: In keeping with efforts to facilitate social and emotional development, we also emphasize that addressing misbehavior at school is ***a natural opportunity for social-emotional learning***.

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

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

***An Agenda for Improving Student/Learning Supports:
A Month-by-Month Guide for Systemic Change with Existing Resources***

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)

*If you didn't make so many rules,
there wouldn't be so many
for me to break!*



>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

- >>[50 Years of IDEA: 4 Things to Know About the Landmark Special Education Law](#)
(note that the number of IDEA students has doubled)
- >>[A Longitudinal Study of Multidimensional Prosocial Behavior During Adolescence](#)
- >>[Implementation Science in School Mental Health](#)
- >>[An introduction to implementation evaluation of school-based interventions](#)
- >>[Framework for Implementing Improvement Science in a School District to Support Institutionalized Improvement](#)
- >>[Integrating Improvement and Implementation Sciences to Enhance Educational Outcomes](#)
- >>[“The Fear is Everywhere”: U.S. High School Principals Report Widespread Effects of Immigration Enforcement](#)

A Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's [Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts](#)
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

- 1/8 Understanding social anxiety
- 1/13 Positive classroom interactions
- 1/13 Artificial intelligence risks and benefits
- 1/14 School avoidance and mental health
- 1/15/26 From AI Risk to AI Readiness
- 1/15/26 Systemic advocacy in schools and districts to support student well-being
- 1/15/26 Elevating school staff talent and recruiting
- 1/15/25 Support for students experiencing homelessness
- 1/19 Building children's self-esteem
- 1/20 Building belonging in our schools
- 1/21/26 How schools are finding and keeping talent
- 1/22 Partner with families throughout the special education process.
- 2/10 Strengthening school community partnerships
- 2/10 Prevention core competencies
- 2/24 Whole school approach
- 3/3 Strong leaders make strong schools
- 3/24 Student voice and advocacy

[How Learning Happens](#) (Edutopia's series of videos explores guiding all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become engaged learners).

[Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth](#) (Webinar recording)

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! Contact: Ltaylor@ucla.edu

THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF THE PRACTITIONER*

***THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND
INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!***

**Send resources ideas, requests, comments,
and experiences for sharing
Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

*Who Are We? 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.