

(7/16/25) **This continuing education resource is from the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

Featured

(1) *Cuts in Medicaid for Schools Call for Rethinking Student Supports*

(2) *Collaboration in the classroom for student/learning supports*

And, as always, you will find

(3) *Links to a few other resources relevant to continuing education*

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

For discussion and interchange

>*Cuts in Medicaid for Schools Call for Rethinking Student Supports*

Request from a colleague:

"I support our School Social Work Team in our district. One of the major issues we are facing, like many school systems in the country, is how to support our students and families who may lose health insurance and other benefits due to Medicaid cuts. Our school system utilizes outside vendors/ community mental health agencies (many of whom rely on Medicaid reimbursement) to provide mental health services to our students. We have a small number of school system employed social workers who are able to provide mental health support to any student regardless of insurance, but due to funding we are severely understaffed (20 school system employed social workers for appx. 58,000 students) and rely heavily on our community vendors. Without Medicaid funding, many of our students will not be able to access school-based mental health services. Is there any guidance that you or the Student Supports group can provide on how school systems can address this as we prepare for the upcoming school year?"

Center Comments:

Clearly, the challenges ahead are increasing at an exponential rate, and some *fundamental* changes must be made at school and district levels. Recent policy shifts have only intensified long-standing issues – such as chronic budget shortfalls, difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, infrastructure failures, and the loss of students to private schools. Related to all this, we hear daily from school administrators and staff about the increasing proportion of students manifesting learning, behavior, and emotional problems. And the field has long recognized that prevailing approaches to student/learning supports can't address the nature and scope of need, especially at schools in many urban settings and poor rural communities. A systemic transformation of student/learning supports is urgently needed.

See the following Exhibit for a brief roadmap highlighting how we see schools moving forward to transform the way they use student/learning supports in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reducing the opportunity and achievement gaps

Moving Forward

First:

Adopt a Comprehensive Policy Framework*

Ensure that addressing barriers to learning and teaching is recognized as a core component of school improvement.

Then:

Map Existing Resources*

Identify and document all school, district, and community resources currently used to address student and learning needs.

Rework Operational Infrastructure*

Establish leadership structures that can unify, develop, and implement a comprehensive and equitable system of student/learning supports.

Strengthen School-Community Collaboration*

Reach out to weave together school and community resources that share an agenda for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students.

***Resources to Support These Steps**

For details and aids in pursuing the above steps, see

- > *[Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions](#)*
- > *[Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Starting the Process](#)*

Comments from the Field:

We asked a colleague what their response would be to this request; here is what they shared:

“ The prospects for saving services are diminishing. The deep cuts in the federal budget will hurt many students and families, and it will be a painful time for school districts trying to help those students and families. School systems across the country are grappling with how to sustain mental health supports in the face of potential Medicaid cuts and coverage losses, especially when so much of the infrastructure relies on community mental health providers and Medicaid reimbursement.

Here are some guidance strategies and potential next steps that I'm sharing with school districts with the understanding that schools may need to ask community volunteers to do some of the outreach due to school district staffing limitations. Some school districts are planning to hire retired teachers, social workers, and others to work part-time to do some of the following.

- > Partner with your local Department of Social Services and Medicaid offices to receive alerts or data (if permissible) on families who may be at risk of losing coverage.
- > Conduct targeted outreach through schools to help families re-enroll or troubleshoot eligibility issues during redetermination processes.
- > Use family engagement staff or liaisons to support communication, particularly in underserved communities or where language access may be a barrier.
- > Advocate for local or state funding streams to temporarily or partially cover uninsured students' access to care.

- >Consider piloting school-employed clinicians, such as licensed social workers or mental health specialists, who can serve students regardless of insurance status. While this is constrained by staffing and funding, even incremental expansion may help serve the most vulnerable.
 - >Leverage telehealth partnerships that offer sliding-scale or pro bono options for uninsured students (so of these providers have better and unique access to Medicaid and insurance companies).
 - >Look deeper into Title I, II, and IV funding to see how it can support training and wellness programs for students and staff.
 - >IDEA funds can be used when mental health impacts learning, especially for students with IEPs or 504 plans (for now IDEA funding is not being significantly cut).
 - >Consider coordinating with your McKinney-Vento liaison and any homeless/foster youth programs, who often have alternate pathways to secure benefits or access care.
 - >Convene a Medicaid & School Mental Health Task Force
 - >Bring together district leaders, legal and finance teams, local providers, and health department representatives to plan for various funding scenarios and develop contingency strategies. This group could explore options such as contract revisions with providers, shared care models, and blended/braided funding approaches (e.g., combining local funds with philanthropy or county mental health funds). It will benefit the providers to be part of this discussion.
 - >Stay connected with your state department of education and Medicaid agency to track eligibility policies, waivers, or funding mechanisms that may mitigate disruptions (Don't wait for information to be sent by the Federal or state DOE – reach out to them.)
 - >Join with organizations like the School-Based Health Alliance, National Center for School Mental Health, or Children's Defense Fund that are working at the national level to protect Medicaid access and support for school-based providers. Also, reach out to your community organization that have the same concerns. Collaboration is more important than ever. Competing for funding must be replaced with shared funding.
- Create a clear, accessible FAQ or one-pager for families explaining what may change, who to contact for help, who they can contact to express their concerns, and how to stay insured.
- Work with your communications office to preempt misinformation and empower school social workers and counselors with talking points.
- Combining early outreach, creative and possible shared funding, and cross-agency collaboration may preserve access for as many students as possible—and build long-term resilience into the local mental health system. The reality is that states and local governments can no longer depend on the unsettled federal landscape.”

Center Comments:

We recognize that those concerned mainly with maintaining as many student *services* as feasible will continue to focus on strategies like those outlined by our colleague. However, in many school districts, the number and complexity of barriers to learning are so extensive that relying primarily on direct services – such as one-on-one or small group interventions and wraparound supports – is insufficient.

Ultimately, it is important to understand that *services* are only one facet of a *unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports*. The fundamental challenge ahead is to transform student/learning supports into such a system and to ensure it is fully integrated into school improvement policy and practice.

Transformation means a shift in thinking – beyond services and special initiatives. While adopting a continuum of interventions (such as MTSS) is a necessary step, it is not enough. A truly effective system must also define and integrate the domains of support within that continuum. See: *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*.

Finally, we stress that it is feasible to *start* the transformation with whatever resources are

currently available. The core and heart of available resources are those student and learning support staff at district and school levels that are still on the staff. It is time to revise the roles and functions of such personnel so that they can pursue the steps highlighted in the above Exhibit. (For a perspective on how job descriptions might be reworked to support transforming student/learning supports, see Part III of *New Roles and Functions for Student/Learning Support Staff*.)

For discussion and interchange

>Collaboration in the classroom for student/learning supports

One of the six domains of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports in our prototype is *In-classroom Supports*. It involves embedding student and learning supports into regular classroom strategies to enable learning and teaching (e.g., teachers working collaboratively with each other and with student support staff to ensure instruction is personalized with an emphasis on enhancing intrinsic motivation and social-emotional development for all students, especially those experiencing mild to moderate learning and behavior problems; reengaging those who have become disengaged from instruction; providing learning accommodations and supports as necessary; using response to intervention in applying special assistance; addressing external barriers with a focus on prevention and early intervention. (See *Classroom-based Learning Supports*.)

For the necessary collaboration, it is essential to “open the classroom door” to opportunities for teachers to work with and learn from other teachers and student support staff. It enables mentors to model and guide change (e.g., demonstrate and discuss new approaches, guide initial practice and eventual implementation, and follow-up to improve and refine). (See *Opening the Classroom Door*.)

One arrangement is for schools to use specialist personnel (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, special education resource teachers) to mentor and demonstrate rather than pursuing traditional consultant roles. That is, instead of telling teachers what they might do to address student learning, behavior, and emotional problems, specialists could be trained to go into classrooms to work with model in implementing new practices to engage and reengage students in learning. Opening the classroom door also allows for the addition of a variety of forms of assistance and useful partnerships.

For more on collaboration, see the following online clearinghouse Quick Find:

>[Collaboration](#)

Can you define collaboration for me?



Sure! Collaboration is an unnatural act among nonconsenting adults.

From: *Collaboration in Special Education: A Commentary on Where We Are and Where We Need to Go*

“...If one looks across the professional literature, collaboration is clearly important to the efficient and effective delivery of special education services, multi-tiered systems of support, the working conditions that affect teacher retention and attrition, and the high leverage practices for identified for all teachers.

Given that collaboration is identified as essential to practice and success, it must be valued through preparation and induction with the expectation that education professionals are competent collaborators when given the space and resources to be effective. Educator competencies should include specific, observable skills for a wide range of interactions, and education professionals should be held accountable for using those skills when they are collaborating with families, colleagues, administrators, students, community agency personnel, or others....

Learning about collaboration in preparation and identifying those skills as competencies in standards would allow the opportunity to work across disciplines, helping each group to better understand the expertise and knowledge of others and providing the opportunity for clearly defining roles and responsibilities. Too often, educators, related service providers, and administrators enter the profession without a clear understanding of others’ expertise. In our experience, school personnel report it is easy to understand that the math or science teacher has an expertise in those content areas; however, few truly understand the depth of knowledge or expertise of a special educator, occupational therapist, school psychologist, or counselor. In effective collaborations, everyone brings strengths, and discovering those strengths is critically important....

It is critical that researchers, teacher educators, education professionals, related service providers, administrators, and professional organizations collaborate to:

- >Develop a consistent, coherent language of collaboration and its key constructs that might lead to measures that could be used across studies. Conduct research that builds conceptual models and informs practice.
- >Identify collaborative skills as part of the professional competencies and standards in all preprofessional preparation programs. Hold programs accountable for teaching and measuring these skills for accreditation purposes.
- >Teach, practice, and provide feedback on the use of collaborative skills such as active listening, conflict resolution, and shared decision-making in preparation and in practice. Expect proficiency in these skills and make it part of the evaluation process.

A collective effort to address these three areas would have a significant positive impact on the efficacy of collaborative endeavors in schools. In turn, outcomes for students with disabilities would improve, and the next special issue would celebrate the great progress made.”

In your locale: *How are the above topics being pursued?*
Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

- >>Understanding the relationship between teacher collaboration and instructional clarity
- >>The importance of community in public school success
- >>Supporting Transition Resilience Among Newcomer Groups
- >>Stand-alone and Brief Positive Psychology Interventions for Potential Use in Educational Settings
- >>Self-regulated learning and students with disabilities

Note: To provide ready access to resources related to transforming student/learning supports, we've created direct links on our *homepage* for key stakeholder groups – including school boards, superintendents, principals, support staff, teachers, community collaborative stakeholders, families, and students.

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>

- 7/16 Leveraging CDC's Mental Health Action Guide
- 7/17 Advocacy, ethics, and sustainability in prevention
- 7/23 Investing in young people
- 7/24 Problematic Media Use: Screening and Intervention
- 7/29 Promoting healthy communities
- 7/29 Adolescent substance abuse prevention
- 7/30 Conflict management and problem solving
- 8/5 Harnessing the power of anxiety
- 8/6 Student Connectedness Fosters Attendance and Engagement
- 8/7 Supporting multilingual student success
- 8/20 Mental health and special education
- 8/20 Understanding anxiety
- 8/20 Classroom participation and engagement
- 8/21 Making the case for prevention
- 8/25 Understanding anxiety in children and youth
- 9/18 The power of emotion regulation to drive k12 wellbeing
- 9/24 Family Engagement is the Foundation for Attendance and Learning

How Learning Happens (Edutopia's videos exploring how educators can guide all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become productive and 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 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! Contact: ltaylor@ucla.edu

The work of the **National Initiative for Transforming Student/Learning Supports** emphasizes that:

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

Our research indicates that transforming student/learning supports involves

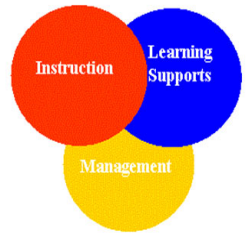
>moving school improvement policy from a 2 to a 3 component framework

and

>unifying and developing student/learning supports into a comprehensive and equitable intervention system

See:

>***Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions***



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

For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

We post a broad range of issues and responses to the Net Exchange on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm>.