



Continuing Education Units

Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families: Four Units for Continuing Education*

UNIT I: MOTIVATION: TIME TO MOVE BEYOND BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

(May, 2012)

***Unit I: Motivation: Time to Move Beyond Behavior Modification**

Access at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagei.pdf>

***Unit II: Strategic Approaches to Enhancing Student Engagement
and Re-engagement**

Access at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageii.pdf>

***Unit III: Enhancing Family Engagement and Re-engagement**

Access at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageiii.pdf>

***Unit IV: Embedding Engagement and Re-engagement into a Unified and
Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports**

Access at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageiv.pdf>

The Center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates
under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA,

Write: Center for Mental Health in Schools, Box 951563, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563
Phone: (310) 825-3634 email: smhp@ucla.edu website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

Permission to reproduce this document is granted.

Please cite source as the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA

Preface

Our Center is committed to enhancing continuing education in general and professional development in particular. At this time, we are primarily designing content and tools to aid districts and schools as they address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. We provide these resources at no cost through our website.*

Eventually, we will explore ways to provide continuing education credit. For now, our hope is that locals will be able to build the resources into their professional development and provide "credit" as appropriate.

We view all our efforts as works in progress and invite you to share your ideas about how to improve our existing resources and feel free to suggest additional resources you would like to see us develop.

*See our Center's resources and materials at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/materials/resources.htm>
Everything on the site is free for downloading.

Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families: Four Units of Continuing Education

Introduction to the Units

“Learning and succeeding in school requires active engagement. ... The core principles that underlie engagement are applicable to all schools—whether they are in urban, suburban, or rural communities. ... Engaging adolescents, including those who have become disengaged and alienated from school, is not an easy task. Academic motivation decreases steadily from the early grades of elementary school into high school. Furthermore, adolescents are too old and too independent to follow teachers’ demands out of obedience, and many are too young, inexperienced, or uninformed to fully appreciate the value of succeeding in school.”

National Academy of Science’s Research Council (2004)

We all know that students who are engaged do better than those who are not. And we know that some students seem unengaged and disconnected from learning in the classroom. It can be a struggle to maintain student engagement, and teachers and student support staff often feel at a loss when it comes to re-engaging students who have become disengaged.

Part of the problem is that most of pre- and inservice personnel preparation programs primarily teach engagement in *extrinsic* motivation terms (i.e., reinforcement concepts, behavior modification). This is unfortunate given that the key to addressing engagement and disengagement is an appreciation of *intrinsic* motivation.

Understanding intrinsic motivation clarifies how essential it is to avoid processes that limit options, make students feel controlled and coerced, and that focus mainly on “remedying” problems. Overreliance on extrinsic motivation risks undermining efforts to enhance intrinsic motivation and can produce avoidance reactions in the classroom and to school and, thus, can reduce opportunities for positive learning and for development of positive attitudes. Over time, such practices result in too many students disengaging from classroom learning.

Practices for preventing disengagement and efforts to re-engage disconnected students (as well as families and staff) require minimizing conditions that negatively affect intrinsic motivation and maximizing those that enhance it.

Easy to say, not so easy to do.

To underscore what is involved:

Unit I of this set of continuing education units provides an introduction to motivation that goes beyond the application of reinforcers. The emphasis is on expanding your understanding of engagement, re-engagement, and intrinsic motivation in the context of school improvement. Also highlighted are implications for school climate.

Unit II highlights strategic approaches to engaging and re-engaging students. Also covered are why it is important to avoid over-relying on extrinsic reinforcers and minimize practices that can produce reactance.

Unit III provides applications designed to engage and re-engage families. It focuses on differences among families and other primary care-takers with respect to differences in resources, motivation and needs, and barriers to involvement with the school.

Unit IV stresses that teachers can't and should not be expected to do it all alone. Rather, their work needs to be embedded into a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports and that system should be built with a view to engaging and re-engaging students, families, and all the professional who have a stake in improving schools.

As aids for personnel development, each unit begins with a set of questions that can be used to guide independent study and community of learners' discussions. A few topics are amplified with brief supplementary readings; others that can deepen learning and provide specific resource aids are referenced throughout and listed at the end of each unit. A description and examples of a set of self-study surveys also is appended.

Unit I: Motivation: Time to Move Beyond Behavior Modification

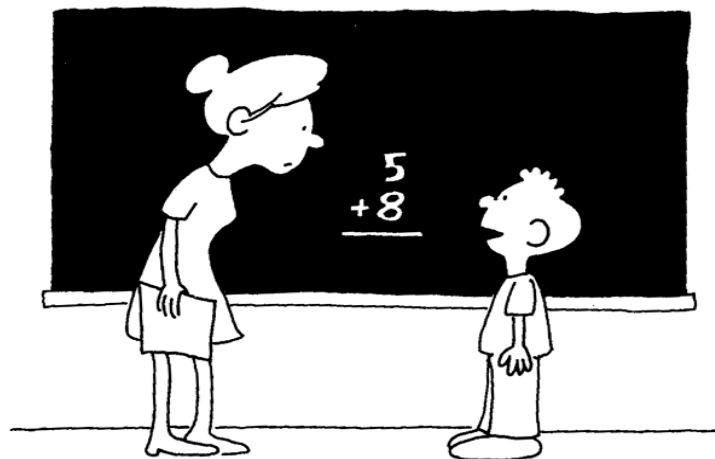
A. Appreciating Intrinsic Motivation

B. Engagement, Re-engagement, and Matching Motivation

C. Motivation and School Climate

Study and Discussion Questions

- (1) What is *intrinsic* motivation?
- (2) What are the implications of *intrinsic* motivation for enhancing engagement?
- (3) What leads some students to disconnect from classroom instruction?



GOSH, MRS. THOMPSON, I WAS READY TO
LEARN MATH YESTERDAY. TODAY I'M READY
TO LEARN TO READ.

Unit I. Motivation: Time to Move Beyond Behavior Modification

Maria doesn't want to work on improving her reading. Not only is her *motivational readiness* for learning in this area low, but she also has a fairly high level of *avoidance motivation* for reading. Most of the time during reading instruction she is disengaged and acting out.

In contrast, David is motivationally ready to improve reading skills, but he has very little motivation to do so in the ways his teacher proposes. He has high motivation for the *outcome* but low motivation for the *processes* prescribed for getting there.

Matt often is highly motivated to do whatever is prescribed to help him learn to read better, but his motivation starts to disappear after a few weeks of hard work. He has trouble maintaining a sufficient amount of ongoing or *continuing motivation*, and his attention and behavior wander.

Helena appeared motivated to learn and did learn many new vocabulary words and improved her reading comprehension on several occasions over the years she was in special school programs. Her motivation to read after school, however, has never increased. It was assumed that as her skills improved, her attitude toward reading would too. But it never has.

No one expected James to become a good reader because of low scores on tests related to phonics ability and reading comprehension in 2nd grade. However, his teacher found some beginning level books on his favorite sport (baseball) and found that he really wanted to read them. He asked her and other students to help him with words and took the books home to read (where he also asked an older sister for some help). His skills started to improve rapidly and he was soon reading on a par with his peers.

What the preceding examples illustrate is that

- motivation is a learning prerequisite, and its absence may be a cause of learning and behavior problems, a factor maintaining such problems, or both
- individuals may be motivated toward the idea of obtaining a certain learning outcome but may not be motivated to pursue certain learning processes
- individuals may be motivated to start to work on overcoming their learning and behavior problems but may not maintain their motivation
- individuals may be motivated to learn basic skills but maintain negative attitudes about the area of functioning and thus never use the skills except when they must
- motivated learners can do more than others might expect.

So, obviously, motivation is a fundamental consideration in engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning. But, much more is involved than effectively using rewards and consequences. A broader understanding of motivation clarifies how essential it is to build on and enhance intrinsic motivation and avoid processes that undermine it.

A. Appreciating Intrinsic Motivation

At the risk of over-simplifying things, the following discussion underscores a few facets of motivation theory that may not have been covered in pre-service personnel preparation.

Can you decipher this? (Don't go on until you've tried.)

E x V

Hint: the "x" is a multiplication sign.

If the **E x V** equation stumped you, don't be surprised. The main introduction to motivational thinking that many people have been given in the past involves some form of reinforcement theory (which essentially deals with extrinsic motivation). Thus, all this may be new to you, even though motivational theorists have been wrestling with it for a long time, and intuitively, you probably understand much of what they are talking about.

“E” represents an individual's *expectations* about outcome (in school this often means expectations of success or failure). “V” represents *valuing*, with valuing influenced by both what is valued intrinsically and extrinsically. Thus, in a general sense, motivation can be thought of in terms of expectancy times valuing. *Such theory recognizes that human beings are thinking and feeling organisms and that intrinsic factors can be powerful motivators. This understanding of human motivation has major implications for learning, teaching, parenting, and mental health interventions.*

Two common reasons people give for not bothering to learn something are:

"It's not worth it"

"I know I won't be able to do it."

In general, the amount of time and energy spent on an activity seems dependent on how much it is valued by the person and on the person's expectation that what is valued will be attained without too great a cost.

Engaging and re-engaging students depends on how the classroom and school address concerns about *valuing* and *expectations*. Schools and classrooms that offer a broad range of learning and enrichment opportunities (e.g., content, outcomes, procedural options) and involve students in decision making are best equipped to meet the challenge.

About Valuing

What makes it worth pursuing?

What makes something worth doing? Prizes? Money? Merit awards? Praise? Certainly! We all do a great many things, some of which we don't even like, because the activity leads to a desired reward. Similarly, we often do things to escape punishment or other negative consequences that we prefer to avoid.

Rewards and punishments may be material or social. For those with learning, behavior, and emotional problems, there is widespread use of such "incentives" (e.g., systematically giving points or tokens that can be exchanged for candy, prizes, praise, free time, or social interactions). Punishments have included loss of free time and other privileges, added work, fines, isolation, censure, and suspension. Grades have been used both as rewards and punishments. Because people will do things to obtain rewards or avoid punishment, rewards and punishment often are called *reinforcers*. Because they generally come from sources outside the person, they often are called *extrinsics*.

Extrinsic reinforcers are easy to use and can immediately affect behavior. Therefore, they are widely used. Unfortunately, the immediate effects are usually limited to very specific behaviors and often are short-term. Moreover, extensive use of extrinsics can have some undesired effects. And, sometimes the available extrinsics simply aren't powerful enough to get the desired results.

It is important to remember that what makes extrinsics rewarding is that they are *experienced by the recipient* as a reward. What turns something extrinsic into a highly valued reward is that the recipient highly values it. If someone doesn't like candy, there is not much point in offering it as a reward. Furthermore, because the use of extrinsics has limits, it's fortunate that people often do things even without apparent extrinsic reason. In fact, a lot of what people learn and spend time doing is done for intrinsic reasons. *Curiosity*, for example, seems to be an innate quality that leads us to seek stimulation, avoid boredom, and learn a great deal.

People also pursue some things because of an innate *striving for competence*. Most of us value feeling competent. We try to conquer some challenges, and if none are around, we usually seek one out. Of course, if challenges seem unconquerable or make us too uncomfortable (e.g., too anxious or exhausted), we try to put them aside and move on to something more promising.

Another important intrinsic motivator is an internal push toward *self-determination*. People seem to value feeling and thinking that they have some degree of choice and freedom in deciding what to do. And, human beings also seem intrinsically moved toward establishing and maintaining relationships. That is, we value the feeling of *interpersonal connection*.

About Expectations

Does the student perceive the outcome as attainable?

We may value something a great deal; but if we believe we can't do it or can't obtain it without paying too great a personal price, we are likely to look for other valued activities and outcomes to pursue. Expectations about these matters are influenced by past experiences that influence our perceptions of how easy or hard it will be to obtain a desired outcome. Sometimes we know we can easily do something, but it may not be something we value pursuing. At other times, we may value something a great deal but not believe we can do it or can only obtain it by paying too great a personal price. Under such circumstances, we are likely to look for other valued activities and outcomes to pursue.

Previously unsuccessful arenas usually are seen as unlikely paths to valued extrinsic rewards or intrinsic satisfactions. We may perceive past failure as the result of our lack of ability; or we may believe that more effort was required than we were willing to give. We may also feel that the help we needed to succeed was not available. If our perception is that very little has changed with regard to these factors, our expectation of succeeding now will be rather low.

In general, then, what we value interacts with our expectations, and motivation is one product of this interaction.

About E x V

Within some limits (which we need not discuss here), high expectations and high valuing produce high motivation, while low expectations (E) and high valuing (V) produce relatively weak motivation.

Youngsters may greatly value the idea of improving their reading. They usually are not happy with limited skills and know they would feel a lot better about if they could read. But, often they experience everything the teacher asks them to do is a waste of time. They have done it all before, and they *still* have a reading problem. Sometimes they will do the exercises, but just to earn points to go on a field trip and to avoid the consequences of not cooperating. Often, however, they try to get out of doing the work by distracting the teacher. After all, why should they do things they are certain won't help them read any better.

In planning instruction and other interventions with students, consider:

$$\text{Expectancy} \times \text{Valuing} = \text{Motivation}$$
$$0 \quad \times \quad 1.0 \quad = \quad 0$$

High expectations paired with low valuing also yield low approach motivation. Thus, the oft-cited remedial strategy of guaranteeing success by designing tasks to be very easy is not as simple a recipe as it sounds. Indeed, the approach is likely to fail if the outcome (e.g., improved reading, learning math fundamentals, applying social skills) is not valued or if the tasks are experienced as too boring or if doing them is seen as too embarrassing. In such cases, a strong negative value is attached to the activities, and this contributes to avoidance motivation.

In planning instruction and other interventions with students, consider:

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \textit{Expectancy} & \times & \textit{Valuing} & = & \textit{Motivation} \\ 1.0 & \times & 0 & = & 0 \end{array}$$

Understanding Student Performance and Behavior

ACTIVITY

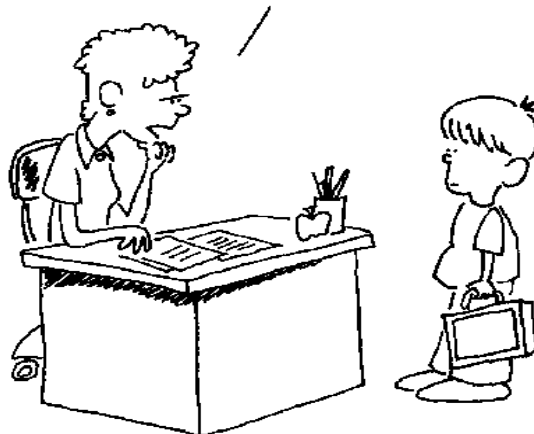
Think about your own behavior. How often is it affected by your feeling that

"It's not worth it"

and/or

"I know I won't be able to do it."

I KNOW YOU LIKE LUNCH-TIME BEST,
BUT THERE MUST BE SOMETHING ELSE
YOU'D LIKE TO DO AT SCHOOL!



B. Engagement, Re-engagement, and Matching Motivation

Engagement is associated with positive academic outcomes, including achievement and persistence in school; and it is higher in classrooms with supportive teachers and peers, challenging and authentic tasks, opportunities for choice, and sufficient structure.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004)

In the school research literature, engagement is defined in terms of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement (see Guide I-b). The same three categories apply to disengagement.

From a psychological perspective, disengagement from classroom learning is associated with threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and/or relatedness to valued others. The demands may be from school staff, peers, instructional content and processes. Psychological disengagement can be expected to result not only in learning problems but also in internalized behavior (e.g., boredom, emotional distress) and/or externalized behavior (misbehavior, dropping out).

In efforts to engage and re-engage youngsters, teachers, support staff, and parents often over-depend on reinforcement theory, despite the appreciation they have about the importance of intrinsic motivation. Indeed, what many of us have been taught about dealing with others runs counter to what we intuitively understand about human motivation in general and intrinsic motivation in particular.

It is evident that students who are intrinsically motivated to learn at school seek out opportunities and challenges and go beyond requirements. In doing so, they learn more and learn more deeply than do classmates who are extrinsically motivated. Facilitating the learning of such students is a fairly direct matter and fits well with broadband instructional practices. Such practices provide a reasonable match with the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement of these students and with their current levels of development.

In contrast, because students who manifest learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems often have developed extremely negative perceptions of teachers and programs, they are not likely to be open to people and activities that look like "the same old thing." Major changes in approach are required if the youngster is even to perceive that something has changed in the situation. Thus, efforts to re-engage disconnected students must begin by addressing negative perceptions of school, teachers, practices, peers, and the student him or her self. This means that school personnel (e.g., teachers, support staff) must work together and with primary home caretakers to reverse conditions that led to and may be maintaining such perceptions. Minimally, exceptional efforts must be made to have these students (1) view the teacher and other interveners as supportive (rather than controlling and indifferent) and (2) perceive content, outcomes, and activity options as personally valuable and obtainable.

Guide I-b

Defining, Recognizing Antecedents of, and Measuring Engagement

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) note that ***engagement is defined*** in three ways in the school research literature:

- ***Behavioral engagement*** draws on the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities and is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing dropping out.
- ***Emotional engagement*** encompasses positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school and is presumed to create ties to an institution and influences willingness to do the work.
- ***Cognitive engagement*** draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills.

Engagement is measured as follows:

- ***Behavioral Engagement:*** conduct, work involvement, participation, persistence (e.g., completing homework, complying with school rules, absent/tardy, off-task)
- ***Emotional Engagement:*** self-report related to feelings of frustration, boredom, interest, anger, satisfaction; student-teacher relations; work orientation
- ***Cognitive Engagement:*** investment in learning, flexible problems solving, independent work styles, coping with perceived failure, preference for challenge and independent mastery, commitment to understanding the work

Antecedents of engagement are grouped as:

- ***School level factors:*** voluntary choice, clear and consistent goals, small size, student participation in school policy and management, opportunities for staff and students to be involved in cooperative endeavors, and academic work that allows for the development of products
- ***Classroom Context:*** Teacher support, peers, classroom structure, autonomy support, task characteristics
- ***Individual Needs:*** Need for relatedness, need for autonomy, need for competence

In general, the goal in facilitating learning is to create an environment that engages the student and maintains and even enhances that engagement, while effectively facilitating learning. And, when a student disengages, re-engagement involves use of interventions that minimize conditions that negatively affect motivation and maximize conditions that have a positive motivational effect.

Teachers, parents, and support staff, of course, can't control all factors affecting motivation. For example, one has direct control over only relatively few facets of the physical and social environment. With concerns about engagement and re-engagement in mind, schools strive to create a good fit or “match” not only with the current *capabilities* of a given youngster, but with individual differences in *motivation*.

Matching individual differences in *motivation* means attending to matters such as:

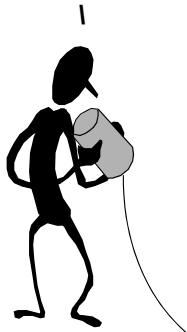
- ***Motivation as a readiness concern.*** Optimal performance and learning require motivational readiness. The absence of such readiness can cause and/or maintain problems. If a learner does not have enough motivational readiness, strategies must be implemented to develop it (including ways to reduce avoidance motivation). Readiness should not be viewed in the old sense of waiting until an individual is interested. Rather, it should be understood in the contemporary sense of establishing environments that are perceived by students as caring, supportive places and as offering stimulating activities that are valued and challenging, and doable.
- ***Motivation as a key ongoing process concern.*** Many learners are caught up in the novelty of a new subject, but after a few lessons, interest often wanes. Some student are motivated by the idea of obtaining a given outcome but may not be motivated to pursue certain processes and thus may not pay attention or may try to avoid them. For example, some are motivated to start work on overcoming their problems but may not maintain that motivation. Strategies must be designed to elicit, enhance, and maintain motivation so that a youngster stays mobilized.
- ***Minimizing negative motivation and avoidance reactions as process and outcome concerns.*** Teachers and others at a school and at home not only must try to increase motivation – especially intrinsic motivation – but also take care to avoid or at least minimize conditions that decrease motivation or produce negative motivation. For example, care must be taken not to over-rely on extrinsics to entice and reward because to do so may decrease intrinsic motivation. At times, school is seen as unchallenging, uninteresting, overdemanding, overwhelming, overcontrolling, nonsupportive, or even hostile. When this happens, a student may develop negative attitudes and avoidance related to a given situation, and over time, related to school and all it represents.
- ***Enhancing intrinsic motivation as a basic outcome concern.*** It is essential to enhance motivation as an outcome so the desire to pursue a given area (e.g., reading, good behavior) increasingly is a positive intrinsic attitude that mobilizes learning and behaving outside the teaching situation. Achieving such an outcome involves use of strategies that do not over-rely on extrinsic rewards and that do enable youngsters to play a meaningful role in making decisions related to valued options. In effect, enhancing intrinsic motivation is a fundamental *protective factor* and is the key to developing *resiliency*.

To enhance engagement and re-engage disconnected students, practices must increase positive and reduce negative feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies with respect to learning at school.

For learning and behavior problems, an additional concern is identifying and minimizing experiences that maintain or may increase avoidance motivation and psychological reactance.

Unit II highlights practices that have positive motivational effects and that minimize conditions that increase avoidance and reactance and reduce intrinsic motivation.

***I don't want to go to school.
It's too hard and the kids
don't like me.***



***That's too bad, but you have to go –
you're the Principal!***



C. Motivation and School Climate

The concept of *climate* plays a major role in shaping the quality of school life, teaching, learning, and support (see Guide I-c). School and classroom climate sometimes are referred to as the learning environment, as well as by terms such as atmosphere, ambience, ecology, and milieu.

Over the long run, schools are likely to be more effective academically if they ensure a positive climate schoolwide and in classrooms. Research has indicated a range of strategies for enhancing a positive climate. All school stakeholders have a role to play in creating a safe, supportive, nurturing, and productive school and classroom climate. Of particular importance are efforts to promote social and emotional development and functioning and address barriers to learning and teaching to enable all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

Importance of Classroom Climate

Classroom climate is seen as a major determiner of classroom behavior and learning. Understanding the nature of classroom climate is a basic element in improving schools.

The concept of classroom climate implies the intent to establish and maintain a positive context that facilitates classroom learning, but in practice, classroom climates range from hostile or toxic to welcoming and supportive and can fluctuate daily and over the school year. Moreover, because the concept is a psychological construct, different observers may have different perceptions of the climate in a given classroom.

Analyses of research suggest significant relationships between classroom climate and matters such as student engagement, behavior, self-efficacy, achievement, and social and emotional development, principal leadership style, stages of educational reform, teacher burnout, and overall quality of school life. For example, studies report strong associations between achievement levels and classrooms that are perceived as having greater cohesion and goal-direction and less disorganization and conflict. Research also suggests that the impact of classroom climate may be greater on students from low-income homes and groups that often are discriminated against.

On a school level, organizational research suggests the profound role accountability pressures play. It seems likely that the increasing demands for higher achievement test scores and control of student behavior contribute to a classroom climate that is reactive, over-controlling, and over-reliant on external reinforcement to motivate positive functioning.

Guide I-c

School Climate

School and classroom *climate* are temporal, and somewhat fluid, perceived qualities of the immediate setting which *emerge* from the complex transaction of many factors (e.g., physical, material, organizational, operational, social, and personal variables). In turn, the climate reflects the influence of the underlying, institutionalized values and belief systems, norms, ideologies, rituals, and traditions that constitute the school *culture*. And, of course, the climate and culture at a school also are shaped by the surrounding political, social, cultural, and economic contexts (e.g., home, neighborhood, city, state, country).

Key concepts for understanding school and classroom climate are social system organization; social attitudes; staff and student morale; power, control, guidance, support, and evaluation structures; curricular and instructional practices; communicated expectations; efficacy; accountability demands; cohesion; competition; “fit” between learner and classroom; system maintenance, growth, and change; orderliness; and safety.

Because the concept is a psychological construct, climate in a given school and classroom can be perceived differently by observers. With this in mind, research has focused on the shared perceptions of those in the classroom, especially (1) *relationships* (e.g., the nature and intensity of personal relationships within the environment; the extent to which people are involved in the environment and support and help each other); (2) *personal development* (e.g., basic directions along which personal growth and self-enhancement tend to occur); and (3) *system maintenance and change* (e.g., the extent to which the environment is orderly, clear in expectations, maintains control, and is responsive to change).

The National School Climate Council (2007) recommends that school climate assessments focus on four dimensions: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the institutional environment – using surveys that encompass the perceptions of students, parents and guardians, and school personnel.*

*Note: The National School Climate Council (2007) offers the following definitions:

"School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of people's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures."

"A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Students, families and educators work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits and satisfaction from learning. Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment."

A Caring Context for Learning

From a psychological perspective, learning and teaching are experienced most positively when the learner cares about learning and the teacher cares about teaching. *Moreover, the whole process benefits greatly when all the participants care about each other.* Thus, good schools and good teachers work diligently to create an atmosphere that encourages mutual support, caring, and a sense of community. Such an atmosphere can play a key role in preventing learning, behavior, emotional, and health problems and promoting social and emotional learning and well-being.

Caring has moral, social, and personal facets. And when all facets of caring are present and balanced, they can nurture individuals and facilitate the process of learning. At the same time, caring in all its dimensions should be a major focus of what is taught and learned. This means a focus throughout on fostering positive social, emotional, and physical development.

Caring begins when students (and their families) first arrive at a school

Caring begins when students (and their families) first arrive at a school. Classrooms and schools can do their job better if students feel they are truly welcome and have a range of social supports. A key facet of welcoming encompasses effectively connecting new students with peers and adults who can provide social support and advocacy.

On an ongoing basis, caring and a positive classroom and schoolwide climate is best maintained through use of personalized instruction, regular student conferences, activity fostering social and emotional development, and opportunities for students to attain positive status. Efforts to create a caring classroom and schoolwide climate benefit from programs for cooperative learning, peer tutoring, mentoring, advocacy, peer counseling and mediation, human relations, and conflict resolution. Special attention is needed to promote practices that enhance motivation to learn and perform, while avoiding practices that decrease motivation and/or produce avoidance motivation and that focuses on mobilizing unmotivated students (and particularly those who have become actively disengaged from classroom instruction). Since a myriad of strategies can contribute to students (families, staff) feeling positively connected to the classroom and school, teachers need to work collaboratively with each other and with all other personnel at a school to address as many factors as feasible.

The Animal School (a parable)

Once upon a time, the animals decided that their lives and their society would be improved by setting up a school. The basics identified as necessary for survival in the animal world were swimming, running, climbing, jumping, and flying. Instructors were hired to teach these activities, and it was agreed that all the animals would take all the courses. This worked out well for the administrators, but it caused some problems for the students.

The squirrel, for example, was an A student in running, jumping, and climbing but had trouble in flying class, not because of an inability to fly, for she could sail from the top of one tree to another with ease, but because the flying curriculum called for taking off from the ground. The squirrel was drilled in ground-to-air take-offs until she was exhausted and developed charley horses from overexertion. This caused her to perform poorly in her other classes, and her grades dropped to D's.

The duck was outstanding in swimming class -- even better than the teacher. But she did so poorly in running that she was transferred to a remedial class. There she practiced running until her webbed feet were so badly damaged that she was only an average swimmer. But since average was acceptable, nobody saw this as a problem -- except the duck.

In contrast, the rabbit was excellent in running, but, being terrified of water, he was an extremely poor swimmer. Despite a lot of makeup work in swimming class, he never could stay afloat. He soon became frustrated and uncooperative and was eventually expelled because of behavior problems.

The eagle naturally enough was a brilliant student in flying class and even did well in running and jumping. He had to be severely disciplined in climbing class, however, because he insisted that his way of getting to the top of the tree was faster and easier.

It should be noted that the parents of the groundhog pulled him out of school because the administration would not add classes in digging and burrowing. The groundhogs, along with the gophers and badgers, got a prairie dog to start a private school. They all have become strong opponents of school taxes and proponents of voucher systems.

By graduation time, the student with the best grades in the animal school was a compulsive ostrich who could run superbly and also could swim, fly, and climb a little. She, of course, was made class valedictorian and received scholarship offers from all the best universities.

(George H. Reeves is credited with giving this parable to American educators.)

Unit Concluding Comments

Getting students involved in their education programs is more than having them participate; it is connecting students with their education, enabling them to influence and affect the program and, indeed, enabling them to become enwrapped and engrossed in their educational experiences.

Wehmeyer & Sands (1998)

Most students enter kindergarten with a healthy curiosity and a desire to learn to read and write. By the end of 2nd grade, we start seeing the first referrals by classroom teachers because of learning and behavior problems. From that point on, increasing numbers of students become disengaged from classroom learning, and most of these manifest some form of behavioral and emotional problems.

In general, teaching involves being able to apply strategies focused on content to be taught and knowledge and skills to be acquired – with some degree of attention given to the process of engaging students. All this works fine in schools where most students come each day ready and able to deal with what the teacher is ready and able to teach. Indeed, teachers are fortunate when they have a classroom where the majority of students show up and are receptive to the planned lessons.

In schools that are the greatest focus of public criticism, this certainly is not the case. It is clear that teachers in such settings are confronted with an entirely different teaching situation. They encounter many students who not only frequently misbehave, but are not easily intimidated by “authority” figures. Efforts to do something about this state of affairs has escalated into an overemphasis on social control tactics. At the same time, little attention has been paid to the problem of re-engaging students who have become disengaged and often resistant to the prevailing teaching practices. This is seen in the fact that strategies for re-engaging students in *learning* rarely are a prominent part of pre or in-service preparation and seldom are the focus of interventions pursued by professionals whose role is to support teachers and students.

It doesn't have to be that way. The key is to move toward an greater appreciation that engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning involves practices that emphasize a good motivational fit. Matching motivation requires factoring in students' perceptions in determining the right mix of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. It also requires understanding the key role played by expectations related to outcome. And it requires a unified, comprehensive, schoolwide commitment to re-engaging students and families that have become disconnected from school.

We turn these matters in the following units.



Unit I – Reflection & Stimulus for Discussion

Key Insights about: *Engagement and Re-engagement of Students*

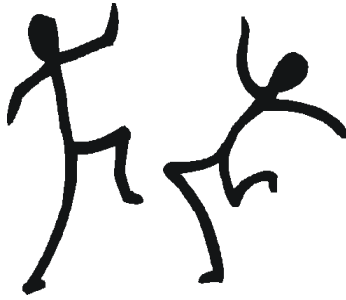
Based on what you learned so far:

*Identify (and discuss) what is involved in
engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning.*

- (1) Make a brief outline of what you see as the most important points.
- (2) Discuss them with your study group or other friends and colleagues.
- (3) After the discussion, decide how you might revise your outline.

If there is an opportunity for group discussion, you may find the following group process guidelines helpful:

- Start by identifying someone who will facilitate the group interchange
- Take a few minutes to make a few individual notes on a worksheet
- Be sure all major points are compiled for sharing with other groups.
- Ask someone else to watch the time so that the group doesn't bog down.



Activity

Observe a group of students who are involved in the same classroom activity.

- (1) Identify one who appears highly engaged in learning and one who seems very bored.
- (2) After observing for a while, write down your views about why each of the students is responding so differently to the same activity.
- (3) Think about the bored student whom you observed (or another one you know).
- (4) Make some notes about what you think should be done and then discuss your ideas with others.
- (5) Begin the group discussion with a brief exchange of what each participant thinks causes students not to be engaged in a classroom learning activity. Then discuss ideas for increasing the likelihood that such students will engage in such a learning opportunity.

**I told her the dog ate my homework.
So she gave my dog and F and sent
me to the doghouse!**



A Few References/ Resources

- Adelman, H.S., & Taylor, L. (2006). *The implementation guide to student learning supports in the classroom and schoolwide: New directions for addressing barriers to learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Brophy, J. (2004). *Motivating students to learn*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Center for Mental Health in Schools (2001). *Enhancing classroom approaches for addressing barriers to learning: Classroom Focused Enabling*. Los Angeles: Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/cfe.pdf>
- Center for Mental Health in Schools (2012). *RTI and classroom & schoolwide learning supports: Four units for continuing education*. Los Angeles: Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA.
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/dbsimple2.asp?primary=2311&number=9897>
- Cohen, J. & Geier, V. (2010). School climate research summary. *School Climate Brief, 1*. New York: National School Climate Center. www.schoolclimate.org/climate/research.php
- Deci, E.L. (1975). *Intrinsic motivation*. New York: Plenum.
- Deci, E.L. (2009). Large-scale school reform as viewed from the self-determination theory perspective. *Theory and Research in Education, 7*, 244-252.
- Deci, E.L., with Flaste, R. (1995). *Why we do what we do*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (2002). The paradox of achievement: The harder you push, the worse it gets. In J. Aronson (Ed.), *Improving academic achievement: Contributions of social psychology*. (Pp. 59-85). New York: Academic Press.
- Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Fredricks, J.A., Blumenfeld, P.C., & Paris, A.H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74*, 59-109.
- National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine (2004). *Engaging schools: Fostering high school students' motivation to learn*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- National School Climate Council (2007). *The school climate challenge: Narrowing the gap between school climate research and school climate policy, practice guidelines and teacher education policy*. www.schoolclimate.org/climate/policy.php/
- Pink, D. (2009). *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. NY: Riverhead Books.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2009). Promoting self-determined school engagement: Motivation, learning, and well-being. In K. R. Wentzel & A. Wigfield (Eds.), *Handbook on motivation at school* (pp. 171-196). New York: Routledge.

Stipek, D.J.(2001). *Motivation to learn: From theory to practice* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Wehrmeyer, M. L. & Sands, D. J. (1998). *Making it happen: Student involvement in education planning, decision making, and instruction*. Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.

Also see the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on *Engagement/Re-engagement*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>