



## Continuing Education Units

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

## UNIT II: STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO ENHANCING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND RE-ENGAGEMENT

(May, 2012)

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

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

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## 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

### Moving into Unit II

**C**learly, 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.

Unit I presented a perspective on motivation that goes beyond the application of reinforcers. It emphasized the importance of expanding your understanding of engagement, re-engagement, and intrinsic motivation in the context of school improvement. It also highlighted implications for school climate.

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.

This second unit 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 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 II: Strategic Approaches to Enhancing Student Engagement and Re-engagement**

- A. Engaging Students**
- B. Minimizing Disengagement and Facilitating Re-engagement**
- C. Caution: Don't Over-rely on Extrinsic . . .**
- D. . . . and Work to Minimize Psychological Reactance**

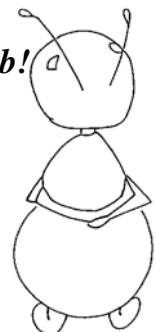
### ***Study and Discussion Questions***

- (1) In designing classroom instruction, what are the major considerations with respect to
  - (a) engaging students?
  - (b) minimizing disengagement and facilitating re-engagement?
- (2) What is the motivational downside of over-relying on extrinsic reinforcers?
- (3) What is psychological reactance and what are the motivational implications of this concept?

***How many students does it take to change a light bulb?***



***Only one, but the student has to want to change the bulb!***



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

*It is evident that how classrooms are arranged and how instruction is organized helps or hinders learning and teaching and affects behavior.*

In essence, an optimal design for teaching promotes personalized and holistic learning and minimizes learning, behavior, and emotional problems. And when a problem does arise, the design includes strategies for addressing it immediately (e.g., uses a broad range of practices in implementing a *response to intervention* approach).

These design concerns are central to efforts to improve schools in general and are reflected in specific proposals for improving how differences among learners are addressed. For example, the proposal for a *Universal Design of Learning* emphasizes ensuring that curriculum provides multiple means of (a) *engaging students* (tapping into their interests and challenge them appropriately), (b) *representing* information and knowledge (offering various modes for acquisition), and (c) *expressing what they know*. Our focus here is on thinking strategically about designing ways to maintain and enhance engagement and for re-engaging students who have disconnected from learning at school.

### A. Engaging Students

The old adage: *Meet learners where they are!* captures the commonsense view of good classroom practices. Unfortunately, this adage often is interpreted only as a call for matching a student's current *capabilities* (e.g., knowledge and skills).

The irony, of course, is that most school staff know that *motivational* factors (e.g., attitudes) play a key role in poor instructional outcomes. One of the most frequent laments about students is: "They could do it, if only they *wanted* to!" (Students who don't *want* to perform always will look as if they have significant skills deficits.)

We all also know that good abilities are more likely to emerge when students are motivated not only to pursue assignments, but also are interested in using what they learn. The point for emphasis is that all good intervention practices require ensuring a good match for *motivation* (especially *intrinsic* motivation). And, for students with learning, behavior, and emotional problems, a major design concern often is overcoming *avoidance* motivation and engaging them in classroom learning.

Many instructional approaches are effective when a student is engaged in learning. The seeds of significant problems are planted when students are not engaged.

As indicated in Unit I, it is essential to learn how to *address motivation as a primary consideration*. Instruction should be based on an appreciation of what is likely to affect a student's positive and negative intrinsic motivation to learn. Among the fundamental intervention implications are ensuring that classrooms offer a wide range of content, outcome, and procedural *options*, including a personalized structure to facilitate learning. With real options comes real opportunities for *involving learners in decision making*. A motivational focus also stresses development of nonthreatening ways to provide information about learning and performance.

## Personalizing to Facilitate Engaged Learning

*The desire to meet learners where they are sometimes is referred to as the concept of the “match” or the problem of “fit.” Schools strive to design instruction that fits, but the reality is that they can only approximate an optimal fit. A close approximation probably requires personalizing instruction and other interventions. And, it is essential to remember that it is the student’s perception that determines whether the fit is good or bad.*

For some time, efforts to improve instructional fit in the classroom have revolved around the concepts of individualized or personalized instruction. The two concepts overlap in emphasizing developmental differences. That is, most *individualized* approaches stress individual differences in developmental capability. *Personalization*, however, is defined as the process of accounting for individual differences in *both capability and motivation*.

Personalization needs to be understood as a psychological construct. Psychologically, the *learner’s perception* is a critical factor in defining whether the environment is a good fit. Given this, it is important to ensure learning opportunities are *perceived by learners* as good ways to reach their goals. Thus, a basic concern in pursuing *response to intervention* and any other assessment strategy is that of eliciting learners’ perceptions of how well what is offered matches both their interests and abilities.\*

### **ACTIVITY**

Outlined in Guide II-a on the next page are underlying assumptions of personalized classrooms. Look them over and decide how they fit with what you believe.

*What do you want to add?*

\*See the Center’s continuing education units on *Response to Intervention* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/dbsimple2.asp?primary=2311&number=9897>

## Guide II-a

### **Underlying Assumptions of a Personalized Program**

- Learning is a function of the ongoing transactions between the learner and the learning environment.
- Optimal learning is a function of an optimal match between the learner's accumulated capacities and attitudes and current state of being and the program's processes and context.
- Matching both learner motivation and capacities must be primary procedural objectives.
- The learner's perception is the critical criterion for evaluating whether a good match or fit exists between the learner and the learning environment.
- The wider the range of options that can be offered and the more the learner is made aware of the options and has a choice about which to pursue, the greater the likelihood that he or she will perceive the match as a good one.
- Besides improved learning, personalized programs enhance intrinsic valuing of learning and a sense of personal responsibility for learning. Furthermore, such programs increase acceptance and even appreciation of individual differences, as well as independent and cooperative functioning and problem solving.

Education is not the filling of a pail,  
but the lighting of a fire.

William Butler Yeats

## Personalize First; Add Special Assistance as Necessary

The first step in engaging students is to be highly responsive to learner differences in both motivation and development and, in the process, enhance a caring learning environment. Properly designed and carried out, personalizing instruction can be sufficient in facilitating classroom learning for most students, and this reduces the need for specialized assistance.

Personalizing regular classroom programs also can improve the effectiveness of prevention and other interventions designed to reduce unnecessary referrals. Personalization represents a regular classroom application of the principle of using the least intervention necessary to be effective (which encompasses the concept of "least restrictive environment").

With personalized instruction in place, the next step involves providing special assistance to those learners who continue to have problems.

To be a bit more specific:

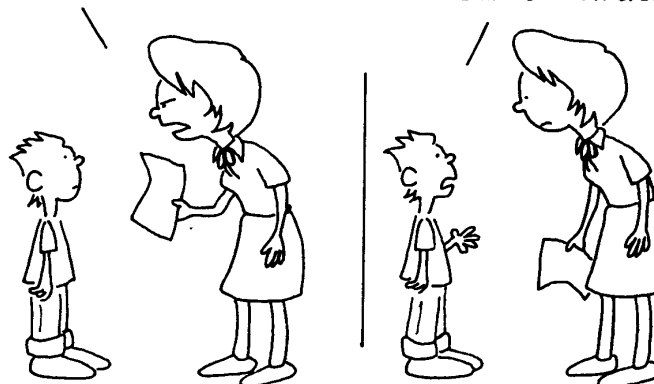
*Step 1 personalizing instruction.* The intent is to ensure a student *perceives* instructional processes, content, and outcomes as a good match with his or her interests and capabilities.

- A first emphasis is on *motivation*. Practices focus on (re)engaging the student in classroom instruction, with special attention paid to increasing intrinsic motivation and minimizing psychological reactance.
- Matching *developmental capabilities* is a parallel concern in Step 1. Practices focus on accounting for current knowledge and skills.

Guide II-b highlights some major elements of a personalized program. A discussion of procedural objectives of a personalized classroom and the importance of providing personalized structure for learning are presented in the *Brief Reading* appended to this unit. Also appended is a self-study survey related to classroom-based learning supports.

I CAN HARDLY READ YOUR HANDWRITING.  
YOU MUST LEARN TO WRITE MORE CLEARLY.

AW, WHAT'S THE USE!  
IF I WRITE ANY CLEARER, YOU'LL  
COMPLAIN ABOUT MY SPELLING.





## Guide II-b

### Major Elements of a Personalized Program

Major elements of personalized programs include:

- turning large classes into small units (many small group and individual learning opportunities)
- in-classroom collaboration and teaming
- regular use of informal and formal conferences for discussing options, making decisions, exploring learners' perceptions, and mutually evaluating progress
- a broad range of options from which learners can make choices with regard to types of learning content, processes, needed support and guidance, and desired outcomes
- active decision making by learners in making choices (with appropriate guidance and support) and in evaluating how well the chosen options match their motivation and capability
- establishment of program plans and mutual agreements about the ongoing relationships between the learners and the program personnel
- mutual evaluations of progress, problems, and learners' perceptions of the "match" in analyzing responses to all interventions
- reformulating plans and renegotiating agreements.

Note, again, that the impact at any time depends on the student's perception of how well an intervention fits his or her needs.

Based on a student's responses during Step 1, it is determined if *special assistance* (step 2) also is needed.

*Step 2 special assistance.* Students for whom personalized instruction is found to be insufficient are provided supportive assistance. In keeping with the principle of using the least intervention needed (e.g., doing what is needed in ways that are least intrusive, restrictive, disruptive), step 2 stresses use of different *levels* of special intervention. With respect to sequence, students with minor problems begin with special intervention that directly focuses on readily observable problems interfering with classroom learning and performance (Level A). Students who continue to have problems may also require a focus on necessary prerequisites (e.g., readiness attitudes, knowledge, and skills) they haven't acquired (Level B). If Levels A and B interventions don't ameliorate the problem, the focus shifts to possible underlying factors. Students with severe and chronic problems require attention at all three levels.

This sequence broadens the typical *Response to Intervention* approach, helps minimize false positive diagnoses (e.g., LD, ADHD), and identifies those who should be referred for special education assessment.

***WHAT WORKS:***

Reviews of the literature on human motivation suggest that providing students with valued options and involving them in decision making are key facets of addressing the problem of engagement in the classroom and at school.

For example, numerous studies have shown that opportunities to express preferences and make choices lead to greater motivation, academic gains, increases in productivity and on-task behavior, and decreases in aggressive behavior. Similarly, researchers report that student participation in goal setting leads to more positive outcomes (e.g., higher commitment to a goal and increased performance).

***For Discussion:***

***HOW DOES THIS PLAY OUT IN CLASSROOMS YOU OBSERVE?***

## **B. Minimizing Disengagement and Facilitating Re-engagement**

Student disengagement in schooling is a fundamental barrier to well-being. Thus, maintaining engagement and re-engaging students who disconnect from classroom learning must be a fundamental focus for all teachers and support staff.

As stressed, the logical first step before providing special assistance on a person-by-person basis is to personalize instruction and enhance enrichment opportunities. By improving the fit between what goes on in the classroom and individual differences in motivation and capability, most students should be mobilized to try harder.

A few students, however, may need something more (especially those experiencing interfering factors, including specific vulnerabilities or a major disability). Whatever the initial cause of someone's learning and behavior problems, the longer the individual has lived with such problems, the more likely he or she will have negative feelings and thoughts about instruction, teachers, and schools. The feelings may include anxiety, fear, frustration, and anger. The thoughts may include strong expectations of failure and vulnerability and low valuing of many learning opportunities. Such thoughts and feelings can result in avoidance motivation or, less obvious, low motivation for learning and performing in many areas of schooling.

When it becomes evident that more is needed, well-designed and implemented special assistance strategies are essential to minimize disengagement and facilitate re-engagement. Special assistance is an essential aspect of revamping classroom systems to address the needs of *all* learners and may be provided in or out of the classroom. Any student who is not learning as well as *most* others is a candidate for special assistance. Using effective special assistance is fundamental to enhancing learning and reducing misbehavior, grade retention, referrals to special education, and dropouts.

Special assistance often is just an extension of general strategies; sometimes, however, more specialized interventions are needed. In either case, the process objectives are the same – to improve the match between the intervention and a learner's motivation and capabilities. In doing so, the emphasis is on ensuring assistance is provided early after onset and that learning options are expanded, accommodations are broadened, and extra support and guidance are provided. Ignoring such matters means intervening with passive (and often hostile) learners. Moreover, assessments and diagnoses are confounded, and intervention may just as readily exacerbate as correct students problems.

**You aren't paying attention to me.  
Are you having trouble hearing?**



## Expanding Learning Options and Broadening Accommodations

All who are available to work with the youngster in the classroom (e.g., teachers, aides, volunteers, resource teachers, student support staff) must take the time to develop an understanding of students who are not learning well. This encompasses an appreciation of strengths as well as weaknesses (including missing prerequisites and interfering behaviors and attitudes, limitations, likes, dislikes).

Part of the information comes from analyses of responses to intervention. However, for such information to be valid, extensive efforts must be made to ensure students are mobilized and interventions are appropriately designed to account for developmental differences and vulnerabilities. Accomplishing all this requires access to, control over, and willingness to use a wide range of *options* and *accommodations*.

offer variety to mesh with student interests

The best classroom designs offer variety to mesh with student interests. A great deal of variety seems necessary to engage some students – especially those with low motivation for or negative attitudes about school. For such individuals, few currently available options may be appealing. How much greater the range of options must be depends primarily on the strength of their avoidance tendencies. Determining what will engage them is a major teaching challenge and an immediate focus for special interventions.

accommodate a wider range of behavior

Besides adding options, there is a need to accommodate a wider range of individual differences. For example, environments are changed to better account for very active and/or distractable students. Accommodations may include reducing levels of abstraction, intensifying the way stimuli are presented and acted upon, and increasing the amount and consistency of guidance and support. For some students, some behavioral expectations and standards initially must be relaxed. This usually involves widening limits for a time so that certain behaviors of a given student will not be designated as infringing the rules.

*Accommodative strategies are intended to affect students' motivation by involving them in activities they value and using processes they believe make outcomes attainable with appropriate effort.*

Remember that, in general, the initial focus in working with a student with low motivation or negative attitudes is on ensuring interventions are perceived by the student as a good fit for learning at school. This requires dialoguing with them and facilitating their efforts to

- identify a range of learning options they perceive as of considerable personal value and as attainable with an appropriate amount of effort (including, as necessary, alternatives to established curriculum content and processes)
- make personal and active decisions.

## Guide II-c

### **Accommodations**

*If students seem easily distracted, the following might be used:*

- identify any specific environmental factors that distract students and make appropriate environmental changes
- have students work with a group that is highly task-focused
- let students work in a study carrel or in a space that is “private” and uncluttered
- designate a volunteer to help whenever students becomes distracted and/or start to misbehave, and if necessary, to help them make transitions
- allow for frequent "breaks"
- interact with students in ways that will minimize confusion and distractions (e.g., keep conversations relatively short; talk quietly and slowly; use concrete terms; express warmth and nurturance)

*If students need more support and guidance, the following might be used:*

- develop and provide sets of specific prompts, multisensory cues, steps, etc. using oral, written, and perhaps pictorial and color-coded guides as organizational aids related to specific learning activities, materials, and daily schedules
- ensure someone checks with students frequently throughout an activity to provide additional support and guidance in concrete ways (e.g., model, demonstrate, coach)
- support student efforts related to self-monitoring and self-evaluation and provide nurturing feedback keyed to student progress and next steps

*If students have difficulty finishing tasks as scheduled, try the following:*

- modify the length and time demands of assignments and tests
- modify the nature of the process and products (e.g., allow use of technological tools and allow for oral, audio-visual, arts and crafts, graphic, and computer generated products)

## 504 Accommodation Checklist

Various organizations concerned with special populations circulate lists of 504 accommodations. The following is one that was downloaded from website of a group concerned with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (see <http://www.come-over.to/FAS/IDEA504.htm>).

### Physical Arrangement of Room

- seating student near the teacher
- seating student near a positive role model
- standing near student when giving directions/presenting lessons
- avoiding distracting stimuli (air conditioner, high traffic area)
- increasing distance between desks

### Lesson Presentation

- pairing students to check work
- writing key points on the board
- providing peer tutoring
- providing visual aids, large print, films
- providing peer notetaker
- making sure directions are understood
- including a variety of activities during each lesson
- repeating directions to student after they are given to the class: then have him/her repeat and explain directions to teacher
- providing written outline
- allowing student to tape record lessons
- having child review key points orally
- teaching through multi-sensory modes, visual, auditory, kinesthetics, olfactory
- using computer-assisted instruction
- accompany oral directions with written directions for child to refer to blackboard or paper
- provide model to help students, post the model, refer to it often
- provide cross age peer tutoring
- to assist the student in finding the main idea underlying, highlighting, cue cards, etc.
- breaking longer presentations into shorter segments

### Assignments/worksheets

- giving extra time to complete tasks
- simplifying complex directions
- handing worksheets out one at a time
- reducing the reading level of the assignments
- requiring fewer correct responses to achieve grade (quality vs. quantity)
- allowing student to tape record assignments/homework
- providing a structured routine in written form
- providing study skills training/learning strategies
- giving frequent short quizzes and avoiding long tests
- shortening assignments; breaking work into smaller segments
- allowing typewritten or computer printed assignments prepared by the student or dictated by the student and recorded by someone else if needed.
- using self-monitoring devices
- reducing homework assignments
- not grading handwriting
- student not be allowed to use cursive or manuscript writing

- reversals and transpositions of letters and numbers should not be marked wrong, reversals or transpositions should be pointed out for corrections
- do not require lengthy outside reading assignments
- teacher monitor students self-paced assignments (daily, weekly, bi-weekly)
- arrangements for homework assignments to reach home with clear, concise directions
- recognize and give credit for student's oral participation in class

### Test Taking

- allowing open book exams
- giving exam orally
- giving take home tests
- using more objective items (fewer essay responses)
- allowing student to give test answers on tape recorder
- giving frequent short quizzes, not long exams
- allowing extra time for exam
- reading test item to student
- avoid placing student under pressure of time or competition

### Organization

- providing peer assistance with organizational skills
- assigning volunteer homework buddy
- allowing student to have an extra set of books at home
- sending daily/weekly progress reports home
- developing a reward system for in-schoolwork and homework completion
- providing student with a homework assignment notebook

### Behaviors

- use of timers to facilitate task completion
- structure transitional and unstructured times (recess, hallways, lunchroom, locker room, library, assembly, field trips, etc.)
- praising specific behaviors
- using self-monitoring strategies
- giving extra privileges and rewards
- keeping classroom rules simple and clear
- making "prudent use" of negative consequences
- allowing for short breaks between assignments
- cueing student to stay on task (nonverbal signal)
- marking student's correct answers, not his mistakes
- implementing a classroom behavior management system
- allowing student time out of seat to run errands, etc.
- ignoring inappropriate behaviors not drastically outside classroom limits
- allowing legitimate movement
- contracting with the student
- increasing the immediacy of rewards
- implementing time-out procedures

## Respond as Early After Onset as is Feasible

Don't wait  
for failure

For many years, the impetus for identifying problems was so that referrals could be made for special assistance. This led to increasing numbers of referrals, many of which led to assessment for special education.

As it became evident that too many students were being inappropriately diagnosed, efforts were made to ensure that appropriate accommodations and “pre-referral” interventions were used to resolve the problems within the regular classroom. Then, in the last reauthorization of the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), concern for reducing referrals and improving intervention effectiveness was codified in terms of “Response to Intervention” and a commitment to “Early Intervening.” Embedded in these strategies is a commitment to expand the range of accommodations for student differences and disabilities. When implemented within a comprehensive framework for student and learning supports (discussed in Unit IV), these strategies have the potential to enable teachers and other concerned parties to respond early after the onset of problems.

Effective early after onset interventions can improve the learning opportunities of many students and reduce the number who disengage, as well as reducing the number who are *inappropriately* diagnosed with learning disabilities and behavioral disorders, thereby minimizing identification of students who don't need expensive special education.

*Guide II-d outlines a set of problem solving steps and tasks designed to guide early after onset planning and “pre-referral intervening.” It is important to emphasize that the point is to implement specific and well-monitored plans for “identified” students and is not to be used as a delaying tactic related to getting students the interventions they need.*

### **Activity**

Discuss what strategies are commonly used to respond as soon as feasible after a problem appears.

**What else needs to be added?**

## Guide II-d

### **Problem Solving Steps and Tasks Designed to Guide Early after Onset Planning and “Pre-referral Intervening”**

School violence, poor academic performance, misbehavior in class -- with increasing numbers of students identified as troubled or in trouble, schools must design systems for intervening prior to referral for special assistance. Otherwise, the system will grind to a halt. What has been called a *pre-referral intervention* process delineates steps and strategies to guide teachers in identifying the sources of learning and behavior problems (student, teacher, curriculum, environment, etc.) and how to resolve them within the regular classroom.

The following is one example of such a process:

**(1) Formulate an initial description of the problem.**

**(2) Get the youngster's view of what's wrong and, as feasible, explore the problem with the family.**

As every teacher knows, the causes of learning, behavior, and emotional problems are hard to analyze. What looks like a learning disability or an attentional problem may be emotionally-based. Misbehavior often arises in reaction to learning difficulties. What appears as a school problem may be the result of problems at home. The following are some things to consider in seeking more information about what may be causing a youngster's problem.

- (a) Through enhanced personal contacts, build a positive working relationship with the youngster and family.
- (b) Focus first on assets (e.g. positive attributes, outside interests, hobbies, what the youngster likes at school and in class).
- (c) Ask about what the youngster doesn't like at school.
- (d) Explore the reasons for “dislikes” (e.g., Are assignments seen as too hard? as uninteresting? Is the youngster embarrassed because others will think s/he does not have the ability to do assignments? Is the youngster picked on? rejected? alienated?)
- (e) Explore other possible causal factors.
- (f) Explore what the youngster and those in the home think can be done to make things better (including extra support from a volunteer, a peer, friend, etc.).
- (g) Discuss some new things the youngster and those in the home would be *willing* to try to make the situation better.



**(3) Try new strategies in the classroom** -- based on the best information about what is causing the problem.

***Some Things to Try***

- Make changes to (a) improve the match between a youngster's program and his/her interests and capabilities and (b) try to find ways for her/him to have a special, positive status in class, at the school, and in the community. (This helps counter a negative image students may have created among peers and negative feelings about themselves which, in turn, helps work against students' tendencies to pursue negative behaviors.) Talk and work with other staff in developing ideas along these lines.
- Add resources for extra support (aide, volunteers, peer tutors/coaches, mentors) not only to help support student efforts to learn and perform, but to enhance students' social support networks. Create time to interact and relate with the youngster as an individual.
- Discuss with the youngster (and those in the home) why the problems are occurring.
- Specifically focus on exploring matters with the youngster that will suggest ways to enhance positive motivation.
- Change aspects of the program (e.g., materials, environment) to provide a better match with his/her interests and skills.
- Provide enrichment options (in and out of class).
- Use resources such as volunteers, aides, and peers to enhance the youngster's social support network.
- Specifically focus on exploring ways those in the home can enhance their problem-solving efforts.
- If necessary include other staff (e.g., counselor, principal) in a special discussion with the youngster exploring reasons for the problem and ways to enhance positive involvement at school and in class.

**(4) If the new strategies don't work, talk to others** at school to learn about approaches they find helpful (e.g., reach out for support/mentoring/coaching, participate with others in clusters and teams, observe how others teach in ways that effectively address differences in motivation and capability, request additional staff development on working with such youngsters).

**(5) If necessary, use the school's referral processes** to ask for additional support services.

**(6) Work with referral resources to coordinate your efforts with theirs** for classroom success.

Only after all this is done and has not worked is it time to ask for additional support services. As such services are added, of course they must be coordinated with what is going on in the classroom, school-wide, and at home.

## Strategies for Re-engaging Disconnected Students

A greater proportion of individuals with avoidance or low motivation for learning at school are found among those with learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems. For these individuals, few currently available options may be appealing. How much greater the range of options needs to be depends primarily on how strong avoidance tendencies are. In general, however, the initial strategies for working with such students involve

- further expansion of the range of options for learning (if necessary, this includes avoiding established curriculum content and processes)
- mainly emphasizing areas in which the student has made personal and active decisions
- accommodating a wider range of behavior than usually is tolerated and for a greater period of time

In all instances where a student becomes disengaged from classroom instruction, an intensive and highly personalized set of interventions are required. Here are four strategies to try:

apply  
intensive  
and highly  
personalized  
interventions

- (a) *Clarify student perceptions of the problem.* It is desirable to create a situation where it is feasible to talk openly with students about why they have become disengaged. This provides an invaluable basis for formulating a personalized plan to alter their negative perceptions and to prevent others from developing such perceptions.
- (b) *Reframe school learning.* Major reframing in teaching approaches is called for so that these students 1) view the teacher as supportive (rather than controlling and indifferent) and 2) perceive content, outcomes, and activity options as personally valuable and obtainable. It is important, for example, to eliminate threatening evaluative measures; reframe content and processes to clarify purpose in terms of real life needs and experiences and underscore how it all builds on previous learning; and clarify why the procedures are expected to be effective especially those designed to help correct specific problems.
- (c) *Renegotiate involvement in school learning.* Develop new and mutual agreements through conferences with the student and including parents where appropriate. The intent over time is to affect perceptions of choice, value, and probable outcome. The focus throughout is on clarifying awareness of valued options, enhancing expectations of positive outcomes, and engaging the student in meaningful, ongoing decision making. Assist

students in sampling new processes and content; include options that embrace a range of valued enrichment opportunities; and provide for reevaluating and modifying decisions as perceptions shift.

(d) *Reestablish and maintain an appropriate working relationship.* This requires the type of ongoing interactions that create a sense of trust, open communication, and provide personalized support and direction. To maintain re-engagement and prevent disengagement, pursue the above strategies using processes and content that:

*minimize conditions that negatively affect intrinsic motivation; maximize conditions that enhance positive motivation*

- Minimize threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to others
- Maximize such feelings (included here is an emphasis on a school taking steps to enhance public perception that it is a welcoming, caring, safe, and just institution)
- Guide motivated practice (e.g., providing opportunities for meaningful applications and clarifying ways to organize practice)
- Provide continuous information on learning and performance in ways that highlight accomplishments
- Provide opportunities for continued application and generalization (e.g., ways in which students can pursue additional, self-directed learning or can arrange for additional support and direction)

Remember: Before some students will decide to participate in a proactive way, they have to perceive the learning environment as positively different – and quite a bit so – from the one in which they had so much trouble. In specific cases, this may mean *temporarily* putting aside established options and standards and focusing on the most fundamental choice: *Do they want to participate or not?*

Obviously, it is no easy task to decrease well-assimilated negative attitudes and behaviors. And, the task is likely to become even harder in the context of high stakes testing policies (no matter how well-intentioned). It also seems obvious that, *for many schools, enhanced achievement test scores will only be feasible when the large number of disengaged students are re-engaged in learning at school.*

How do you like school?



### **C. Caution: Don't Over-rely on Extrinsic . . .**

The discussion of valuing and expectations underscores that motivation is not something that can be determined solely by forces outside the individual. Others can plan activities and outcomes to influence motivation and learning; however, how the activities and outcomes are experienced determines whether they are pursued (or avoided) with a little or a lot of effort and ability. Understanding that an individual's perceptions can affect motivation has clarified some undesired effects of over-relying on extrinsics.

Because of the prominent role they play in school programs, grading, testing, and other performance evaluations are a special concern in any discussion of overreliance on extrinsics as a way to reinforce positive learning. Although grades often are discussed as simply providing information about how well a student is doing, many, if not most, students perceive each grade as a reward or a punishment. Certainly, many teachers use grades to try to control behavior – to reward those who do assignments well and to punish those who don't. Sometimes parents add to a student's perception of grades as extrinsic reinforcers by giving a reward for good report cards.

We all have our own horror stories about the negative impact of grades on ourselves and others. In general, grades have a way of reshaping what students do with their learning opportunities. In choosing what to study, students strongly consider what grades they are likely to receive. As deadlines for assignments and tests get closer, interest in the topic gives way to interest in maximizing one's grade. Discussion of interesting issues and problems related to the area of study gives way to questions about how long a paper should be and what will be on the test. None of this is surprising given that poor grades can result in having to repeat a course or being denied certain immediate and long-range opportunities. It is simply a good example of how systems that overemphasize extrinsics may have a serious negative impact on intrinsic motivation for learning. *And if the impact of current practices is harmful to those who are able learners, imagine the impact on students with learning and behavior problems!*

The point is that extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic reasons for doing things. Although this is not always the case and may not always be a bad thing, it is an important consideration in deciding to rely on extrinsic reinforcers in addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

Many individuals with learning problems also are described as hyperactive, distractable, impulsive, behavior disordered, and so forth. Their behavior patterns are seen as interfering with efforts to remedy their learning problems. Although motivation has always been a concern to those who work with learning and behavior problems, the emphasis in handling these interfering behaviors usually is on using extrinsics as part of efforts to directly control and/or in conjunction with direct skill instruction. For example, interventions are designed to improve impulse control, perseverance, selective attention, frustration tolerance, sustained attention and follow-through, and social awareness and skills. In all cases, the emphasis is on reducing or eliminating interfering behaviors, usually with the presumption that then the student will re-engage in learning. However, there is little evidence that these strategies enhance a student's motivation toward classroom learning.

## Is It Worth It?\*

In a small town, there were a few youngsters who were labeled as handicapped. Over the years, a local bully had taken it upon himself to persecute them. In one recent incident, he sent a gang of young ragamuffins to harass one of his classmates who had just been diagnosed as having learning disabilities. He told the youngsters that the boy was retarded, and they could have some fun calling him a "retard."

Day after day in the schoolyard the gang sought the boy out. "Retard! Retard!" they hooted at him.

The situation became serious. The boy took the matter so much to heart that he began to brood and spent sleepless nights over it. Finally, out of desperation, he told his teacher about the problem, and together they evolved a plan.

The following day, when the little ones came to jeer at him, he confronted them saying,

"From today on I'll give any of you who calls me a 'retard' a quarter."

Then he put his hand in his pocket and, indeed, gave each boy a quarter.

Well, delighted with their booty, the youngsters, of course, sought him out the following day and began to shrill, "Retard! Retard!"

The boy looked at them -- smiling. He put his hand in his pocket and gave each of them a dime, saying, "A quarter is too much -- I can only afford a dime today."

Well, the boys went away satisfied because, after all, a dime was money too.

However, when they came the next day to hoot, he gave them only a penny each.

"Why do we get only a penny today?" they yelled.

"That's all I can afford."

"But two days ago you gave us a quarter, and yesterday we got a dime. It's not fair!"

"Take it or leave it. That's all you're going to get."

"Do you think we're going to call you a 'retard' for one lousy penny?"

"So don't."

And they didn't.

\*Adapted from a fable presented by Ausubel, 1948

## D. . . . and Work to Minimize Psychological Reactance

When students are not engaged in the lessons at hand, it is commonplace to find them pursuing courses of action teachers find troublesome. The greatest concern usually arises when a student's behavior is disruptive. Schools react to such behavior with an array of *social control* strategies. At one time, a heavy dose of punishment was the dominant approach. Currently, the emphasis is on more positive practices designed to provide "behavior support" in and out-of-the-classroom.

An often stated assumption is that stopping students' misbehavior makes them amenable to teaching and enhances classroom learning. In a few cases, this may be so. However, the assumption ignores all the work on understanding *psychological reactance* and the need for individuals to restore their sense of self-determination. Moreover, it belies two painful realities: the number of students who continue to manifest poor academic achievement and the staggering dropout rate in too many schools.

*Psychological reactance is a motivational force that seems to arise when an individual perceives threats to their self-determination. When this happens, they are motivated to react in ways that protect or restore their sense of personal control.*

The argument sometimes is made that the reason students continue to misbehave and not do well at school is because the wrong socialization practices (e.g., punishment, illogical consequences) are used or that good social control practices are implemented incorrectly. Thus, the ongoing emphasis is on convincing schools to (1) continue to minimize punishment and (2) do better in executing programs for social skills training, asset development, character education, and positive behavior support.

*The move from punishment to positive approaches is a welcome one.*

However, most of the new initiatives have not focused enough on a basic system failure that must be addressed if improved behavior is to be maintained. That is, strategies that focus on positive behavior have paid too little attention to helping teachers understand psychological reactance and the implications for engagement and disengagement related to classroom learning. Teachers tell us that they are taught a bit about engaging students, but neither pre- nor inservice focus much on how to prevent students from disengaging, how to work against producing reactive behavior, and how to re-engage a student who has become disconnected.

*"I suspect that many children would learn arithmetic, and learn it better, if it were illegal." – John Holt*

**So:** the irony is that overreliance on extrinsics to control behavior may exacerbate student problems.

Students who perceive their freedom of choice is threatened are motivated to restore their sense of self-determination.

The tendency when those in control say: *You can't do that ... you must do this ...*, the covert and sometimes overt psychological reaction of students (and most of us) often is: **Oh, you think so!**

However, research also cautions that with prolonged experiences of control over their self-determination, people's reactivity diminishes and they become amotivated and usually feel helpless and ineffective.

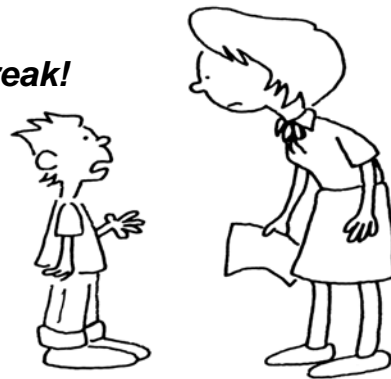
All this argues for

- 1) minimizing student disengagement and maximizing re-engagement by moving school culture toward a greater focus on intrinsic motivation and
- 2) minimizing psychological reactance and resistance and enhancing perceptions that lead to re-engagement in learning at school by rethinking social control practices.

In general, fostering student perceptions of real choice (e.g., being in control of one's destiny, being self-determining) can help counter perceptions of coercion and control. Shifting such perceptions can reduce reactance and enhance engagement in classroom learning.

*(For more on all this, see the references in Unit I and at the end of this unit.)*

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



## Unit Concluding Comments

Low motivation leads to half-hearted effort. Avoidance motivation leads to avoidance behaviors. Individuals with avoidance and low motivation often are attracted to socially disapproved activity. Poor effort, avoidance behavior, and active pursuit of disapproved behavior on the part of students are sure-fire recipes for failure.

Official dropout figures don't tell the tale. The reality seen in most high schools in poor cities and rural areas is that only about half those who were enrolled in Grade 9 are still around to graduate from Grade 12. Most of these students entered kindergarten with a healthy curiosity and a desire to learn to read and write. By the end of Grade 2, 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. It is not surprising, then, that many are heartened to see the shift from punishment to positive behavior support in addressing unwanted behavior. However, as long as factors that lead to disengagement are left unaffected, we risk perpetuating the phenomenon that William Ryan identified as blaming the victim.

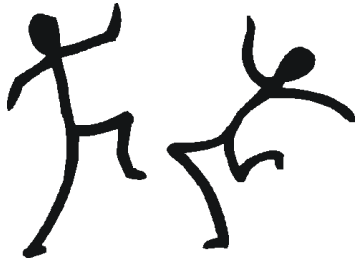
It remains tempting to focus directly on reinforcement theory to mobilize students and deal with misbehavior. It also is tempting to think that the solution is to tell students that they must shape up *or else!* For every student who "shapes up," ten others may be pushed out of school through a progression of low grades, poor test scores, suspensions, opportunity transfers, and expulsions.

The strategies outlined in this unit address the core difficulties of mobilizing students and re-engaging those who have become actively disengaged from classroom instruction. The unit also stresses ways to clarify whether more intensive and specialized assistance are required. Also stressed is that, unless a student is mobilized, efforts to determine whether s/he has a true disability or disorder, such as LD or ADHD, are undermined.

From an intervention perspective, key matters in engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning are to match motivation and minimize reactance. 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. Without a good match, social control strategies can temporarily suppress negative attitudes and behaviors, but re-engagement in classroom learning is unlikely. Unfortunately, without maintaining engagement and facilitating re-engagement in classroom learning, there will be no substantial and lasting gains in achievement test scores, unwanted behavior is very likely to reappear, and many will continue to be left behind.



Of course, mobilizing students and re-engaging those who have become actively disengaged is not the sole responsibility of teachers. A wide range of external and internal barriers to learning and teaching pose pervasive and entrenched challenges to educators across the country, particularly in chronically low performing schools. Failure to directly address such barriers ensures that (a) too many children and youth will continue to struggle in school, and (b) teachers will continue to divert precious instructional time to dealing with behavior and other problems that can interfere with classroom engagement for all students. Thus, schools expect families to play a role; we address this in Unit III. In addition, there is a schoolwide context for all this. We address this in Unit IV.



## Unit II – Reflection & Stimulus for Discussion

Key Insights about: *Strategies for Student Engagement and Re-engagement*

Based on what you learned so far:

*Identify (and discuss) major strategies for engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning.*

As an aid, see the self-study survey appended to this unit. It highlights a range of classroom-based efforts intended to enhance learning and performance.

- (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 classroom.

- (1) What strategies are used to engage students?
- (2) What strategies are used to maintain/enhance student engagement over time?
- (3) What strategies are used to re-engage students who seem unconnected to classroom instruction.
- (4) Does the classroom process seem to over-rely on extrinsics at the cost of promoting intrinsic motivation?
- (5) What steps are taken to minimize psychological reactance?

Why students misbehave – insight from a note intercepted by a teacher:

*Hey Jim, get kicked out of sixth period and join me in the assistant principal's waiting room.*

## A Few References/Resources

In addition to the references in Unit I, see:

Center for Mental Health in Schools, Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on *Motivation*.  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>

We mention *Universal Design for Learning*. For information on this, see CAST Website,  
<http://cast.org/udl/index.html>

### Other Resources

One easy way to access a wide range of resources for enhancing classroom and schoolwide interventions is to use our Center's Online Clearinghouse *Quick Finds*. See the Quick Find menu of topics at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm>

Another Center resources is the *Practitioner and Professional Development: Virtual Toolbox for Mental Health in Schools* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/toolbox.htm>

Also see the U.S. Department of Education's *What Works Clearinghouse* – see Topics at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/topics.aspx>

*Below are a few additional references related to matters discussed in the three units.*

#### >Encouraging Learning Autonomy

*Learner-centered teaching: Five key changes to practice.*  
M. Weimer. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

*Learner Autonomy : A Guide to Developing Learner Responsibility.*  
A. Scharle, A. Szabo, & P. Ur (Eds). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

*The parallel curriculum: A design to develop high potential and challenge high-ability learners.*  
C.A. Tomlinson, S/N/ Kaplan, J.S. Renzulli, et al. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. 2002.

*Cooperative and Collaborative Learning.*  
Concept to Classroom Series.  
<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/coopcollab/index.html>

*The educator's guide to emotional intelligence and academic achievement: Social-emotional learning in the classroom.*  
M. Elias & H. Arnold. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. 2006.

*What every teacher should know about media and technology.*  
D.W. Tileston. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2004.

*Center for Children and Technology.* <http://cct.edc.org/>

## >Appreciating Diversity

*An introduction to multicultural education.* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) J.A. Banks. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2007.

*Teaching English language learners K-12: A quick-start guide for the new teacher.*  
J. Jesness. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2004.

*English Language Learners in Your Classroom: Strategies That Work* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)  
E. Kottler, J.A. Kottler, & C.P. Street. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2007.

*All Children Read: Teaching for Literacy in Today's Diverse Classrooms* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.).  
CA. Temple, D. Ogle, A. Crawford, & P. Freppon. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2010.

*Best teaching practices for reaching all learners: What award-winning classroom teachers do.*  
R. Stone. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2004.

*Technology for the diverse learner: A guide to classroom practice.*  
M. Bray, A. Brown, & T.D. Green. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2004.

## >Addressing Problems

*Teaching students with learning problems.*(8th ed.)  
C.D. Mercer, A.R. Mercer, & P.C. Pullen. NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010.

*Learning disabilities: The interaction of learner, task, and setting,* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)  
C.R. Smith. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2003.

*Inclusion strategies that work! Research-based methods for the classroom.* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)  
T.J. Karten, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2010.

*Rethinking classroom management: Strategies for prevention, intervention, and problem solving.*  
P.S. Belvel & M.M. Jordan. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2003.

*Relationship-driven classroom management: Strategies that promote student motivation.*  
J.M. Vitto. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2003.

*Emotional and behavioral problem: A handbook for understanding and handling students.*  
P. Zionts, L. Zionts, & R.L. Simpson. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2002.

*Motivation to learn: From theory to practice* (4th ed.)  
D.J. Stipek. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2001.

*What every teacher should know about student motivation.*  
D.W. Tileston. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2004.

*A guide to co-teaching: Practical tips for facilitating student learning.* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)  
R.A. Villa, J.S. Thousand, & A.I. Nevin. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2008.

*Best practices in school psychology - V.*  
A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.), Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychologists, 2008.

*Teach them all to read. Catching kids before they fall through the cracks* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)  
E.K. McEwan-Adkins (Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2009.

*Reading for academic success: Powerful strategies for struggling, average, & advanced readers, grade 7-12.* Strong, R.W., Perini, M.J., Silver, H.F., Tuculescu, G.M. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2002.

*Engaging adolescents in reading.*  
J.T. Guthrie (Ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2007.

*Unpacking mathematical practice.*  
Megan Franke <http://www.cfkeep.org/html/stitch.php?s=11093407507142>

*Thinking mathematically.* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)  
R. Blitzler. NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2010.

*Teaching mathematics to middle school students with learning difficulties.*  
M. Montague & A.K. Jitendra. New York: Guilford (2006).

*Math Smart!: Over 220 Ready-to-Use Activities to Motivate & Challenge Students Grades 6-12.*  
J.A. Muschla & G.R. Muschla. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

*Inquiry-based learning using everyday objects: Hands-on instructional strategies that promote active learning in Grades 3-8.*  
A.E. Alvarado & P.R. Herr. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2003.

*Tips for the science teacher: Research-based strategies to help students learn.*  
H.J. Hartman, N.A. Glasgow. Thousand Oaks : Corwin Press, Inc., 2002.

*Teaching science for conceptual learning and understanding – 10 science teaching tips for elementary school.* D. Wetzel.  
<http://david-r-wetzel.suite101.com/10-science-teaching-tips-for-elementary-school-a65420>

*Problem-based learning in middle and high school classrooms: A teacher's guide to implementation.* A. Lambros. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2004.

*Problem-based learning in K-8 classrooms: A teacher's guide to implementation.*  
A. Lambros. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2002.

## >Assessment

*Assessment strategies for self-directed learning.*  
A.L. Costa & B. Kallick. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2004.

*Dynamic assessment and its implications for RTI models.*  
R.K. Wagner & D.L. Compton. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 311-12, 2011  
Online at: <http://ldx.sagepub.com/content/44/4/311.full.pdf+html>

*Assessing students in groups: Promoting group responsibility and individual accountability.*  
D.W. Johnson & R.T. Johnson, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2004.

## ***Brief Reading for Unit II***

### **Some Additional Design Considerations**

The nature and scope of a classroom design is influenced by one's procedural objectives, level of intervention focus for special assistance, and view of appropriate structure for student learning and behavior. These matters are discussed here from the perspective of personalized and special assistance interventions.

### **Procedural Objectives**

We all know that learning is nonlinear; it is an ongoing, dynamic, and transactional process. With this in mind, it helps to have a set of procedural objectives to guide implementation of personalized *instruction*.

A primary procedural objective is to establish and maintain an appropriate *working* relationship with students. This is done by creating a sense of trust and caring, open communication, and providing support and guidance as needed. A basic aspect is clarifying the purpose of learning activities and processes (especially those designed to help correct specific problems) and why processes will be effective.

Examples of other procedural objectives are to

- (a) clarify the nature and purpose of evaluative processes and apply them in ways that deemphasize feelings of failure (e.g., explaining to students the value of feedback about learning and performance; providing feedback in ways that minimize any negative impact)
- (b) guide and support motivated practice (e.g., by suggesting and providing opportunities for meaningful applications and clarifying ways to organize practice);
- (c) provide opportunities for continued application and generalization (e.g., so learners can pursue additional, self-directed learning in the area or can arrange for additional support and direction).

Classroom teaching, of course, requires focusing on more than one procedure at a time. In general, procedures and content are tightly interwoven means to an end. And, with advanced technology, many new means are available for blending content and process into personalized activities.

### **Levels of Focus**

When special assistance is indicated, the teacher may focus on any of the three levels outlined previously. However, as indicated, the sequence and level differ depending on whether students have minor and occasional problems or have severe and pervasive problems.

Practices at each level:

For learners with minor or occasional problems, the initial focus is on directly facilitating learning related to immediate tasks and interests and on expanding the range of interests. Practices involve (1) continued adaptation of methods to match and enhance levels of motivation and development and (2) reteaching specific skills and knowledge when students have difficulty.

*If* problems continue, the focus shifts to assessment and development of missing prerequisites (Level B) needed for functioning at the higher level. Again, procedures are adapted to improve the match, and reteaching is used when the learner has difficulty. If missing prerequisites are successfully developed, the focus returns to observable factors (Level A).

*The intent in proceeding in this sequential and hierarchical way is to use the simplest and most direct approaches first whenever problems appear minor. However, if available data indicate the presence of severe and pervasive motivation or developmental problems, instruction for missing prerequisites (Level B) is begun immediately.*

If help in learning missing prerequisites (Level B) is not effective, the focus shifts to underlying interfering factors (Level C). Only at this level is the emphasis on factors that may interfere with functioning (e.g., incompatible behaviors and interests, dysfunctional learning mechanisms).

In pursuing underlying interfering factors (Level C), there is increased and intensified use of a wide range of instructional techniques. As soon as feasible, the focus shifts back to prerequisites (Level B) and then on to current tasks and interests (Level A). The special strategies are used whenever and as long as necessary.

*(Note: Some references related to providing special assistance in the classroom are included in the resource list at the end of Unit IV.)*

## **Providing Personalized Structure for Learning and Behaving**

Classroom structure often is discussed as all or nothing – structured or unstructured. The tendency also is to equate structure simply with limit setting and social control. Such practices tend to produce vicious cycles. The emphasis on control can have a negative impact on students' motivation (e.g., producing psychological reactance), which makes it harder to teach and control them. As long as students do not value the classroom, the teacher, and the activities, poor learning and inappropriate behavior are likely outcomes. This increasingly can lead school staff to push, prod, and punish. Such a cycle results in the whole enterprise of schooling taking on a negative tone for students and staff.

The view of structure as social control is particularly prevalent in responding to student misbehavior. In such cases, it is common for observers to say that youngsters need “more structure.” Sometimes the phrase used is “clearer limits and consequences,” but the idea is the same. Youngsters are seen as “out of control,” and the solution is seen as applying more external controls.



Obviously, it is not possible to facilitate the learning of youngsters who are out of control. Also obvious is the reality that some procedures used to control behavior interfere with efforts to facilitate learning. A teacher cannot teach youngsters sent out of the classroom or suspended from school. And students may be less receptive to the teacher upon returning to class.

In general, efforts to use external means to control behavior (e.g., isolating students in a “time out” situation, sending them for discipline) are incompatible with developing working relationships. Using the term *structure* to describe extreme efforts to control behavior fails to recognize that the objective is to facilitate learning and performance, not just control behavior.

Good teaching involves a definition of structure that goes well beyond how much control a teacher has over students. Structure must be viewed as *the type of support, guidance, and direction provided the learner, and encompasses all efforts to clarify essential information – including communication of limits as necessary*. Structure can be *personalized* by varying it to match learners’ current motivation and capabilities with respect to specific tasks and circumstances.

Good support and guidance in the classroom allow for active interactions between students and their environment, and these interactions are meant to lead to a relatively stable, positive, ongoing working relationships. How positive relationships are depends on how learners perceive the communications, support, guidance, direction, and limit setting. Negative perceptions can be expected to generate avoidance behavior and poor working relationships.

When a continuum of structure is made available and students are able to indicate their preferences, the total environment appears less confining. The main point of personalizing structure is to provide a high level of support and guidance for students when they need it and to avoid creating a classroom climate that is experienced by students as tight and controlling. Such an approach is a great aid in establishing the type of positive working relationships necessary for effective teaching and use of RTI strategies and also provides a basis for turning big classes into smaller units.

Figuring out the best way to provide personalized structure is one of the most important problems a teacher faces in building working relationships with students. The problem is how to make the structure neither too controlling nor too permissive. Good schools do not want to create an authoritarian atmosphere, and no one working at a school wants to be pushed around. Most school staff find that a positive working relationship requires mutual respect; a warm working relationship requires mutual caring and understanding.

It is clear that when students misbehave, staff must respond immediately – but the emphasis needs to be on enhancing personalized structure rather than simply on punishment. Yes, students will go beyond allowable limits and must experience some logical and reasonable consequences. At the same time, simply reemphasizing limits (e.g., the rules) and enforcing them often is counterproductive. Misbehavior must be handled in ways that do not increase student disengagement with school learning.

## **Beyond Punishment and Social Control**

Misbehavior disrupts. In some forms, such as bullying and intimidating others, it is hurtful. And, observing such behavior may disinhibit others.

When a student misbehaves, a natural reaction is to want that youngster to experience and other students to see the consequences of misbehaving. One hope is that public awareness of consequences will deter subsequent problems. As a result, a considerable amount of time at schools is devoted to discipline; a common concern for teachers is "classroom management." In their efforts to deal with deviant and devious behavior and to create safe environments, unfortunately schools increasingly over-rely on negative consequences control techniques. Such practices model behavior that can foster rather than counter development of negative values and often produces other forms of undesired behavior. Moreover, the tactics often make schools look and feel more like prisons than community treasures.

To move schools beyond over-reliance on punishment and control strategies, there is ongoing advocacy for social skills training, positive behavior support, and new agendas for emotional "intelligence" training, asset development, and character education. Relatedly, there are calls for greater home involvement, with emphasis on enhanced parent responsibility for their children's behavior and learning.

More comprehensively, some reformers want to transform schools in ways that create an atmosphere of "caring," "cooperative learning," and a "sense of community." Such advocates usually argue for schools that are holistically-oriented and family-centered. They want curricula to enhance values and character, including responsibility (social and moral), integrity, self-regulation (self-discipline), and a work ethic and also want schools to foster self-esteem, diverse talents, and emotional well-being. These trends are important. When paired with a contemporary understanding of human motivation, they recognize that the major intent in dealing with behavior problems at school must be the engagement and re-engagement of students in classroom learning

## **Using Self-Study Surveys as an Aid**

- 1. About the Center's Surveys**
- 2. One Example: *Classroom-based Approaches to Enable and Re-engage Students in Classroom Learning***

## 1. About the Center's Self-Study Surveys

### *Surveying and Planning to Enhance Efforts to Address Barriers to Learning at a School Site*

The Center has developed a set of self-study surveys to aid school staff as they try to map and analyze their current programs, services, and systems with a view to developing a comprehensive, multifaceted approach to addressing barriers to learning.

In addition to an overview Survey of Learning Supports System Status, there are self-study surveys to help think about ways to address barriers to student learning by enhancing

- Classroom-based Approaches to Enable and Re-engage Students in Classroom Learning
- Crisis Assistance and Prevention
- Support for Transitions
- Home Involvement in Schooling
- Community Outreach for Involvement and Support
- Student and Family Assistance Programs and Services
- School-Community Collaboration

The entire set are online at:

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Surveys/Set1.pdf>

*About the Self-Study Process to Enhance  
the Component for Addressing Barriers to Student Learning*

This type of self-study is best done by teams.

However, it is *NOT* about having another meeting and/or getting through a task!

It is about moving on to better outcomes for students through

- working together to understand what is and what might be
- clarifying gaps, priorities, and next steps

Done right it can

- counter fragmentation and redundancy
- mobilize support and direction
- enhance linkages with other resources
- facilitate effective systemic change
- integrate all facets of systemic change and counter marginalization of the component to address barriers to student learning

A group of school staff (teachers, support staff, administrators) could use the items to discuss how the school currently addresses any or all of the areas of the component to address barriers (the enabling component). Members of a team initially might work separately in responding to survey items, but the real payoff comes from group discussions.

The items on a survey help to clarify

- what is currently being done and whether it is being done well and
- what else is desired.

This provides a basis for a discussion that

- analyzes whether certain activities should no longer be pursued (because they are not effective or not as high a priority as some others that are needed).
- decides about what resources can be redeployed to enhance current efforts that need embellishment
- identifies gaps with respect to important areas of need.
- establishes priorities, strategies, and timelines for filling gaps.

The discussion and subsequent analyses also provide a form of quality review.

## 2. One Example of a Self-study Survey

### *Classroom-based Approaches to Enable and Re-engage Students in Classroom Learning*

This arena provides a fundamental example not only of how learning supports overlap regular instructional efforts, but how they add value to prevailing efforts to improve instruction. Classroom-based efforts to enable learning can (a) prevent problems, (b) facilitate intervening as soon as problems are noted, (c) enhance intrinsic motivation for learning, and (d) re-engage students who have become disengaged from classroom learning. This is accomplished by increasing teachers' effectiveness so they can account for a wider range of individual differences, foster a caring context for learning, and prevent and handle a wider range of problems when they arise. Effectiveness is enhanced through personalized staff development and opening the classroom door to others who can help. One objective is to provide teachers with the knowledge and skills to develop a classroom infrastructure that transforms a big class into a set of smaller ones. Such a focus is essential for increasing the effectiveness of regular classroom instruction, supporting inclusionary policies, and reducing the need for specialized services.

Work in this arena requires programmatic approaches and systems designed to personalize professional development of teachers and support staff, develop the capabilities of paraeducators and other paid assistants and volunteers, provide temporary out of class assistance for students, and enhance resources. For example: personalized help is provided to increase a teacher's array of strategies for accommodating, as well as teaching students to compensate for, differences, vulnerabilities, and disabilities. Teachers learn to use paid assistants, peer tutors, and volunteers in targeted ways to enhance social and academic support.

As appropriate, support *in the classroom* also is provided by resource and itinerant teachers and counselors. This involves restructuring and redesigning the roles, functions, and staff development of resource and itinerant teachers, counselors, and other pupil service personnel so they are able to work closely with teachers and students in the classroom and on regular activities.

***Classroom-based Approaches ...***

Indicate all items that apply.

Yes	Yes but more of this is needed	No	If no, is this something you want?
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**I. Opening the Classroom Door**

A. Are others invited into the classroom to assist in enhancing classroom approaches?

1. aides (e.g., paraeducators; other paid assistants)?
2. older students?
3. other students in the class?
4. volunteers?
5. parents?
6. resource teacher?
7. specialists?
8. other? (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

___	___	___	___
___	___	___	___
___	___	___	___
___	___	___	___
___	___	___	___
___	___	___	___
___	___	___	___
___	___	___	___

B. Are there programs to train aides, volunteers, and other "assistants" who come into the classrooms to work with students who need help?

___	___	___	___
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**II. Redesigning Classroom Approaches to Enhance Teacher Capability to Prevent and Handle Problems and Reduce Need for out of Class Referrals**

A. Is instruction personalized (i.e., designed to match each student's motivation and capabilities)?

___	___	___	___
-----	-----	-----	-----

B. When needed, is in-classroom special assistance provided?

___	___	___	___
-----	-----	-----	-----

C. Are there small group and independent learning options?

___	___	___	___
-----	-----	-----	-----

D. Are behavior problems handled in ways designed to minimize a negative impact on student attitudes toward classroom learning?

___	___	___	___
-----	-----	-----	-----

E. Is there a range of curricular and instructional options and choices?

___	___	___	___
-----	-----	-----	-----

F. Are prereferral interventions used?

___	___	___	___
-----	-----	-----	-----

G. Are materials and activities upgraded to

1. ensure there are enough basic supplies in the classroom?
2. increase the range of high-motivation activities (keyed to the interests of students in need of special attention)?
3. include advanced technology?
4. other? (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

___	___	___	___
___	___	___	___
___	___	___	___
___	___	___	___

H. Are regular efforts to foster social and emotional development supplemented?

___	___	___	___
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**Classroom-based Approaches (cont.)**

	Yes	Yes but more of this is needed	No	If no, is this something you want?
I. Which of the following can teachers request as special interventions?				
1. Family problem solving conferences?	—	—	—	—
2. Exchange of students to improve student-teacher match and for a fresh start?	—	—	—	—
3. Referral for specific services?	—	—	—	—
4. Other (specify) _____	—	—	—	—
J. What programs are there for temporary out-of-class help?				
1. a family center providing student & family assistance?	—	—	—	—
2. designated problem remediation specialists?	—	—	—	—
3. a "time out" situation?	—	—	—	—
4. Other? (specify) _____	—	—	—	—
K. What is done to assist a teacher who has difficulty with limited English speaking students?				
1. Is the student reassigned?	—	—	—	—
2. Does the teacher receive professional development related to working with limited English speaking students?	—	—	—	—
3. Does a bilingual coordinator offer consultation?	—	—	—	—
4. Is a bilingual aide assigned to the class?	—	—	—	—
5. Are volunteers brought in to help (e.g., parents, peers)?	—	—	—	—
6. Other? (specify) _____	—	—	—	—
<b>III. Enhancing and Personalizing Professional Development</b>				
A. Are teachers clustered for support and staff development?	—	—	—	—
B. Are demonstrations provided?	—	—	—	—
C. Are workshops and readings offered regularly?	—	—	—	—
D. Is consultation available from persons with special expertise such as				
1. learning supports staff (e.g., psychologist, counselor, social worker, nurse)?	—	—	—	—
2. resource specialists and/or special education teachers?	—	—	—	—
3. members of special committees?	—	—	—	—
4. bilingual and/or other coordinators?	—	—	—	—
5. other? (specify) _____	—	—	—	—
E. Is there a formal mentoring program?	—	—	—	—
F. Is team teaching or co-teaching used as an opportunity for teachers to learn on the job?	—	—	—	—
G. Is the school creating a learning community?	—	—	—	—
H. Is there staff social support?	—	—	—	—



***Classroom-based Approaches (cont.)***

	Yes	Yes but more of this is needed	No	If no, is this something you want?
I. Is there formal conflict mediation/resolution for staff?	___	___	___	___
J. Is there a focus on learning how to integrate intrinsic motivation into teaching and classroom management?	___	___	___	___
K. Is there assistance in learning to use advanced technology?	___	___	___	___
L. Other (specify) _____	___	___	___	___

**IV. Curricular Enrichment and Adjunct Programs**

A. What types of technology are available to the classroom?				
1. Are there computers in the classroom?	___	___	___	___
2. Is there a computer lab?	___	___	___	___
3. Is computer assisted instruction offered?	___	___	___	___
4. Are there computer literacy programs?	___	___	___	___
5. Are computer programs used to address ESL needs?	___	___	___	___
6. Does the classroom have video recording capability?	___	___	___	___
7. Is instructional TV used in the classroom?	___	___	___	___
8. Is there a multimedia lab?	___	___	___	___
9. Other? (specify) _____	___	___	___	___
B. What curricular enrichment and adjunct programs do teachers use?				
1. Are library activities used regularly?	___	___	___	___
2. Is music/art used regularly?	___	___	___	___
3. Is health education a regular part of the curriculum?	___	___	___	___
4. Are student performances regular events?	___	___	___	___
5. Are there several field trips a year?	___	___	___	___
6. Are there student council and other leaders opportunities?	___	___	___	___
7. Are there school environment projects such as				
a. mural painting?	___	___	___	___
b. horticulture/gardening?	___	___	___	___
c. school clean-up and beautification?	___	___	___	___
d. other? (specify) _____	___	___	___	___
8. Are there special school-wide events such as				
a. sports	___	___	___	___
b. clubs and similar organized activities?	___	___	___	___
c. publication of a student newspaper?	___	___	___	___
d. sales events?	___	___	___	___
e. poster contests?	___	___	___	___
f. essay contests?	___	___	___	___
g. a book fair?	___	___	___	___
h. pep rallies/contests?	___	___	___	___
i. attendance competitions?	___	___	___	___
j. attendance awards/assemblies?	___	___	___	___
k. other? (specify) _____	___	___	___	___
9. Are guest contributors used (e.g., outside speakers/performers)?	___	___	___	___
10. Other (specify) _____	___	___	___	___

**Classroom-based Approaches (cont.)**

<b>V. Classroom and School-wide Approaches Used to Create and Maintain a Caring and Supportive Climate</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes but more of this is needed</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>If no, is this something you want?</b>
<b>A. Are there school-wide approaches for</b>				
1. creating and maintaining a caring and supportive climate?	—	—	—	—
2. supporting high standards for positive behavior?	—	—	—	—
3. Other (specify) _____	—	—	—	—
<b>B. Are there classroom approaches for</b>				
1. creating and maintaining a caring and supportive climate?	—	—	—	—
2. supporting high standards for positive behavior?	—	—	—	—
3. Other (specify) _____	—	—	—	—
<b>VI. Capacity Building for Classroom-based Approaches</b>				
<b>A. Are there programs to enhance broad stakeholder involvement in classroom-based approaches?</b>				
—	—	—	—	—
<b>B. Programs used to meet the educational needs of personnel related to classroom-based approaches –</b>				
1. Is there ongoing training for learning supports staff with respect to classroom-based approaches?	—	—	—	—
2. Is there ongoing training for others involved in providing classroom-based approaches (e.g., teachers, peer buddies, office staff, administrators)?	—	—	—	—
3. Other (specify) _____	—	—	—	—
<b>C. Which of the following topics are covered in educating stakeholders?</b>				
1. How others can work effectively in the classroom?	—	—	—	—
2. Re-engaging students who have disengaged from classroom learning	—	—	—	—
3. Personalizing instruction	—	—	—	—
4. Addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems	—	—	—	—
5. Enriching options and facilitating student and family involvement in decision making	—	—	—	—

D. Indicate below other things you want the school to do to assist a teacher's efforts to address barriers to students' learning.

Indicate below any other ways used at the school to assist a teacher's efforts to address barriers to students' learning.

Other matters relevant to Classroom-based approaches are found in the surveys on

>Support for Transitions >Home Involvement in Schooling >Community Involvement & Support