

Addressing Barriers to Learning

New ways to think . . .



Better ways to link

Volume 1, Number 4
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I suspect that many children would learn arithmetic, and learn it better, if it were illegal.

John Holt

Policies and Practices for Addressing Barriers to Student Learning: Current Status and New Directions

Over the summer and fall of 1996, our Center held a series of three regional meetings focused on the topic *Policies and Practices for Addressing Barriers to Student Learning: Current Status and New Directions*. The meetings brought together dedicated leaders from 25 states and the District of Columbia. They represented a mixture of national, state, and local agencies and organizations. Many others who could not attend expressed strong interest in providing feedback on the report and participating in follow-up efforts.

We have prepared a draft report highlighting the matters discussed, analysis and recommendations for next steps related to evolving a unifying policy framework for addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development. The draft is being circulated to elicit commentary which will be compiled in a companion document. To expand the range of feedback, we are reproducing the body of the draft report here (with a few revisions based on feedback we have already received.) We look forward to your reactions. After we have reviewed all the feedback and made appropriate revisions, we will circulate the final report.

Contents

- C *Center news*. See pages 3 and 4.
- C Some *lessons learned about New approaches to Teen Pregnancy Prevention* are offered on pp. 9-11.
- C Page 11 also highlights two major resources discussing prevention.
- C See page 12 for a discussion of *Dealing with Reactive Misbehavior*

We were on the high school field about an hour after school started. It was a sad sight. In a time span of about 15 minutes over 50 students furtively approached the fence, quickly scaled it, and disappeared into the neighborhood. Talk about barriers to learning! What can the school teach to a student who has fled? The irony is that after the school closes for the day many of the same students can be seen climbing back in to use the basketball courts.

Schools and communities cannot afford to ignore factors that interfere with student learning and performance.

Policy makers and practitioners have long understood that such factors must be addressed if students are to make satisfactory progress. This understanding is reflected in the array of activity aimed at preventing and correcting learning, behavior, emotional, and health problems. Some of the activity has helped. There is growing concern, however, among policy makers and many practitioners that current policies and practices are seriously flawed and grossly inadequate.

Reflecting this growing concern, leaders from state and local agencies and organizations gathered at regional meetings in the fall and summer of 1996 in Los Angeles, Albuquerque, and Portland, Maine to share their perspectives on

- C what's happening currently
- C what's getting in the way of necessary systemic changes
- C what might help quicken the pace of reform.

Participants were well-informed and in general agreement about these matters, and a strong consensus emerged from the three meetings. A sense of that consensus is reported here.

(continued on p.2)

***Existing policies and practices:
Are they fostering comprehensive, integrated approaches to
address barriers to learning and promote healthy development?***

***Policy emphasis on
collaboration
hopes to foster integrated
services and implicitly
hopes to create
comprehensive services***

What is the current policy approach to addressing barriers to learning? Participants indicated that the most prominent emphasis related to this matter is found in policies aimed at stimulating increased *collaboration* within schools, among schools, between schools and community agencies, and among agencies at local, state, and federal levels. Such initiatives mean to enhance cooperation and eventually increase *integrated use of resources*. The explicit hope is that cooperation and integration will lead to better use of limited resources; another implicit hope is that collaboration will lead to *comprehensive services*.

Other major trends designed to facilitate integrated use of resources are increased opportunity for *waivers* to mandated regulations and efforts to *decentralize* control and *restructure* organizations.

(The policy report contains exhibits of examples participants noted as potentially useful, albeit limited, current activity.)

Despite all the recent activity, participants concluded that:

No current policy establishes a framework for developing a comprehensive, integrated approach to address barriers to student learning and enhance healthy development.

***. . . but there is
no explicit policy
framework for a
comprehensive,
integrated
approach***

To underscore this point, it was stressed that in policy and practice

- C little attention is paid to restructuring the education support programs and services that schools own and operate
- C little attention is paid to doing more than co-locating a few community health and human services at select school sites
- C little attention is paid to weaving school owned resources and community owned resources together into a comprehensive, integrated approach to address barriers to learning and enhance healthy development.

Thus, in both policy and practice, it is evident that developing a comprehensive, integrated approach is a low priority.

There is bitter irony in all this. Without a comprehensive integrated approach for addressing barriers to learning, costly initiatives to improve education and to link health and social services to schools are unlikely to result in major increases in school achievement or major reductions in behavior problems.

(continued on p. 5)

Center News

We are moving into high gear. In addition to the recent policy report (see lead article), our Clearinghouse is generating Introductory Packets and Resource Aids, we've added ENEWS to our electronic networking, the web site and Consultation Cadre continue to blossom, and we are working with an increasing number of states and localities. A few resource updates follow to keep you informed.

Clearinghouse: More Resources for You

Four new Introductory Packets are available (and more are on the way). These highlight key topics related to (a) *specific psychosocial problems*, (b) *programs and processes*, and (c) *system concerns*. Each packet has an overview discussion, descriptions of model programs (where appropriate), references to publications, access information to other relevant centers, organizations, advocacy groups, and internet links, and a list of consultation cadre members ready to share expertise.

Added in the last few months are the following:

Violence Prevention and Safe Schools -- outlines selected violence prevention curricula and school programs and school-community partnerships for safe schools; emphasizes both policy and practice.

Financial Strategies to Aid in Addressing Barriers to Learning -- designed as an aid in identifying sources and understanding strategies related to financing reforms.

Confidentiality and Informed Consent -- contains an overview and discussion of these major topics as they relate to providing services and working collaboratively across agencies; includes sample consent forms and guidelines.

Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout -- includes brief discussions of what causes burnout and how to address the problem; highlights model programs and resource aids.

Other available packets include

- (1) *Teen Pregnancy Prevention and Support*
- (2) *Parent and Home Involvement in Schooling*
- (3) *Evaluation and Accountability*
- (4) *Collaborative Teams, Cross-Disciplinary Training, and Interprofessional Education*

Center Staff:

Howard Adelman, Co-director
Linda Taylor, Co-Director
Perry Nelson, Coordinator
Judy Onghai, Asst. Coordinator

Michael Allen, Associate

. . . and a host of graduate and undergraduate students

- (5) *Learning Problems and Learning Disabilities*
- (6) *Least Intervention Needed: Toward Appropriate Inclusion of Students with Special Needs*
- (7) *Dropout Prevention*. And in process is one on *Assessment to Address Barriers to Student Learning*.

To complement the material in the Introductory Packets, we are developing a series of Resource Aid packets. The first is a set of resources packaged under the title *Screening/Assessing Students: Indicators & Tools*.

Near completion is another set of aids for *Responding to Crises in Schools*.

Each Introductory Packet and Resource Aid Packet is available for a minimal fee (\$3.50) to cover the cost of copying, handling, and postage. Eventually, we plan on having some of this material and other Clearinghouse documents available, at no-cost, on-line for those with Internet access.

Beyond the materials we package, the Clearinghouse is growing with contributions from across the country. It contains resource material and program descriptions, reports, abstracts of articles, information on other centers, and so forth. As with all aspects of the Center, your contributions and feedback are crucial to the Clearinghouse's continuing development.

Please send us information and materials, ask for what you need, and send us your ideas and feedback.

Electronic Networking: Clicking into the Future

ENEWS is on line. If we have your email address, you've already received two editions of this new electronic news and forum bulletin board. The focus is on connecting those who share an interest in enhancing policies, programs, and practices related to addressing barriers to student learning and promoting mental health in schools. It is designed to augment the other ways our Center shares information and facilitates interchange and networking by sharing information and facilitating interchanges and networking. We'd especially like to develop a forum on major issues. Send us announcements, new items, general information, and commentary for posting.

You can add yourself to the ENEWS mailing list: send an email request to:

maiser@bulletin.psych.ucla.edu

leave the subject line blank, and in the body of the message type: **subscribe mentalhealth**

To contribute to ENEWS send us an email at:
smhp@ucla.edu

And please tell others about this.

(continued on p. 4)

If you are on the Internet, don't forget to check on the recent additions to our *web site*. It is updated every few weeks. You can also link to over 32 related sites from our web site. If you have favorite sites you think others would be interested in, let us know; and, of course, if you have any announcements or other material you want to contribute, send them to us.

Access our web site:

<http://www.lifesci.ucla.edu/psych/mh/>

Consultation Cadre:

How's it Working for You?

We are receiving some nice feedback about the cadre, but we need more details on how it's working. If you are a cadre member or have requested help from a cadre member, use the newsletter insert or any of our contact numbers to give us some feedback.

For those who don't know about the cadre, it is composed of professionals with relevant experience related to addressing barriers to student learning and mental health in schools who are willing to share their expertise without charging a fee. The cadre already has members indicating expertise related to major system concerns, a variety of program and processing issues, and almost every type of psychosocial problem. We compile and circulate the names of cadre members so that anyone in need can make a direct contact with professionals around the country. If you need some assistance or if you want to be listed as part of the cadre, let us know. (See the newsletter insert.)

So far, we have over 250 cadre members. The more the merrier and the better to cover all geographical and topical areas. Topics that need more coverage are

- C Issues related to working in rural, urban and suburban areas
- C Professional standards
- C School-based clinics
- C Disabilities
- C Gender and sexuality
- C Reaction to chronic illness
- C School adjustment

Geographically, we need more people in the Northwest.

Referrals to cadre members are provided as part of our daily technical assistance activity. Periodically, we feature individual members of the cadre on our

web site. Soon, the entire cadre list will be electronically accessible.

Regional Meetings

Are you Interested in Attending?

Following up on last summer's regional meetings, we are ready to help organize a steering committee and work groups at state and regional levels. An initial focus of the groups will be on developing an education and advocacy campaign that encourages policy makers to elevate priorities for addressing barriers to learning.

Many attendees at the summer meetings already expressed an interest in being on a steering committee. If you think you might want to be part of the proposed state/regional infrastructure, let us know. Phone, email, or write for more specific information. Current plans call for holding regional meetings next summer to facilitate development of steering and working groups. Let us know your ideas and interests related to this.

Also, let us know if there are other groups addressing these matters and how we can contact them.

We don't want to reinvent the wheel; we do want to connect and collaborate with as many others as we can.

FORUM -- What's on Your Mind?

Hal Lawson wants your help:.

"I am interested in recent research and writing on the ways in which complex partnerships involving families, schools, health and social service agencies, and other organizations are changing the roles and responsibilities of school principals and superintendents. I would appreciate receiving references and materials. Thanks!"

Email Hal at: Lawson_h@msmail.muohio.edu or by regular mail at Phillips Hall, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056

Our center gets frequent inquiries about how to show policy makers the savings that might accrue from prevention and early intervention programs. Besides the Perry Preschool Project, can anyone enlighten us with some references? Has anyone developed a computer model for generating projections?

Contact us at:

Email: smhp@ucla.edu

Phone: (310) 825-3634

FAX: (310) 206-8716

or use the enclosed flyer.

(continued from p. 2)

***Comprehensive approaches:
What's getting in the way?***

Why aren't efforts to address barriers to learning comprehensively a high priority for policy makers?

***Need to educate
the general public***

Participants made the following points:

There is no dedicated effort to generate the type of widespread *understanding* and *public support* needed to influence policy for a comprehensive, integrated approach to addressing barriers to learning.

Although most people don't think in terms of their role in *shaping policy* that affects youth, everyone has a voice at some level and often at various levels -- school site, community, board of education, city, county, state, federal.

Turf

In this context, significant efforts are yet to be made to ensure *a place at the table for all key stakeholder groups*. As such efforts are made, it is well to recognize that *turf battles* already play a major role in maintaining fragmentation, and thus, it is essential to deal with the likelihood that such battles will be exacerbated initially as more stakeholders are included.

***No unifying
concept***

With regard to needs and practices related to youngsters who are not doing well, there is *no unifying concept* around which to rally the public and to use as guide in formulating policy.

The norm is for advocates of specific problems to argue for a targeted group, thereby becoming part of a vast sea of advocates competing for the same dwindling resources. Similarly, advocates for different professional groups that offer "support services" are forced into competition with each other. As is widely acknowledged, approaching policy makers in such a piecemeal, competitive manner results in policies that fragment and limit the focus of efforts to address barriers to learning.

***Balancing
centralized and
decentralized
governance and
decision making***

Without a unifying concept around which competing forces can rally, it is unlikely that a comprehensive policy to address barriers to learning will be developed. (In this respect, the report highlights the concept of the Enabling Component for illustrative purposes.)

In terms of the role of government, a major factor getting in the way of developing a comprehensive integrated approach is the problem of appropriately *balancing centralized and decentralized governance* and decision making.

***Rule-driven
accountability***

Another major factor is overemphasis on *rule-driven accountability*.

***Inadequate
professional training
and certification***

With respect to vision, leadership, and rapidly changing capacity building needs, the *inadequacy of prevailing approaches to professional training and certification* continue as pervasive and fundamental problems.

(continued on p. 6)

Dearth of evidence on efficacy

There is a *dearth of evidence supporting the efficacy* of many programs and services. This is not simply a matter that programs lack promise or are poorly conceived. Some might be ineffective; however, (a) others lack resources for appropriate implementation, (b) outcome data often are not gathered because of lack of interest or resources, and (c) accountability mandates often are naive in demanding outcomes that are unrealistic given the stage of program development or the length of time a program has been in operation.

Failure to capitalize on existing opportunities

On the other side of the coin are *failures* of many agencies to *take advantage of shifts in policy* designed to enhance coordination and facilitate integrated approaches, such as waivers and Title XI of the Improving America's Schools Act.

(The policy report includes an exhibit of examples of policy related matters identified by participants as getting in the way of developing comprehensive integrated approaches.)

How can we move forward more quickly to develop a policy framework for a comprehensive, integrated approach?

Participants agreed that the most fundamental need is to *elevate the level of priority policy makers assign to addressing barriers to learning*.

Elevate level of policy priority

Consensus was that a major breakthrough in dealing with the many barriers confronting youth in this country is unlikely until policy makers treat the matter as a primary concern.

The need to do so is reflected in the failure of education restructuring and reform. Current public policy in this arena does not give the same level of priority to addressing barriers to student learning as it does to instructional and management reforms. This continues to be the case despite the fact that in many schools the test scores of over half the population are not indicating benefits from instructional reforms. One logical reason for this is that students cannot benefit from even the best curriculum and instruction as long as they are encountering major obstructions to effective learning and performance.

A central consideration in influencing policy priorities is mounting a *compelling campaign of education and advocacy*.

A campaign to educate and advocate -- organized around a unifying vision

Participants agreed there is considerable value in organizing such a campaign around a *unifying vision of a comprehensive, integrated approach for addressing barriers to learning and enhancing healthy development*.

This leads to considerations regarding next steps.

(continued on p. 7)

Next Steps

Developing Leadership & Infrastructure for the Campaign

Planning and implementing any campaign to affect public policy requires *development of leadership and infrastructure*. The regional meetings brought together stakeholders who could take a leadership role in evolving policy to address barriers to learning.

As a next step, our Center proposes to provide technical assistance for organizing an infrastructure consisting of a steering committee and work groups at local, state, regional, and national levels. These groups will focus on creating and implementing multifaceted and multiyear strategies to enhance widespread understanding and build constituencies to encourage policy makers to treat the matter of addressing barriers to learning as a primary concern.

Focus for the Campaign -- a unifying policy framework

In clarifying the need to elevate policy priority, the campaign will emphasize the need to develop *a unifying policy framework* for a comprehensive, integrated approach to address barriers to learning and promote healthy development.

Once the initial campaign is well underway, steering and work groups will have to pursue ongoing advocacy to ensure development of

- C policies and strategies for implementing *prototype demonstrations* that weave together school and community resources in ways that create a comprehensive, integrated approach
- C *formative* evaluations that lead to a *summative* focus on efficacy only after the prototype or any new site is functioning as planned

Advocacy for prototype demonstrations & appropriate evaluation

Ensuring wide-spread implementation (scale-up)

Finally, the steering and work groups will need to advocate for *scale-up* -- policies and strategies to ensure that comprehensive, integrated approaches are developed and maintained on a large-scale.

A few words about each of these matters will help further clarify their importance.

1. **A Unifying Policy Framework.** The campaign should call for a policy framework that places efforts to address barriers to learning in the context of current initiatives to restructure education and integrate community health and social services. Such a framework should be specific enough to guide and support efforts in schools and communities with respect to evolving a comprehensive, integrated component for addressing barriers to learning. It also should guide and support the process in ways that ensure this component is completely integrated with all other efforts to facilitate learning and development.

(continued on p. 8)

2. Prototypes. The policy framework should specify that demonstration prototypes are to weave school and community resources together to create a comprehensive integrated continuum of programs and services that can meet the needs of all children. Such prototypes are created as models for use in wide-spread diffusion strategies.
3. Evaluation. As a matter of sound public policy, accountability is essential. However, premature or naive accountability can wreak havoc with reform efforts. The policy framework should recognize that formative evaluation is the most logical form of accountability until a program is fully operational.
4. Scale-up. Wide-spread diffusion of comprehensive, integrated approaches is the goal. To this end, there is a need for policies and strategies that ensure sound diffusion models are developed and supported.

Technical Assistance

Our Center will provide a range of *technical assistance* such as (a) generating examples of the type of general policy statements that are needed, (b) developing strategic guidelines for how to encourage endorsement by policy makers, (c) helping to minimize the negative effects of competition among the many stakeholder groups concerned with specific facets of addressing barriers to learning, (d) sharing models for use in developing prototype demonstrations and for use in the diffusion process, and (e) aiding with evaluation planning.

(Examples of the types of models that may be of use are appended to the policy report. These include the concept of an enabling component, one school district's efforts to establish a comprehensive approach, and a draft of legislation that was proposed as a step in elevating a states' attention to the problem of addressing barriers to learning.)

Do You Know About . . . ?

The Institute of Medicine Report on Prevention of Mental Disorders

This comprehensive report (Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994) mandated by Congress recommends a stricter definition of the term prevention, summarizes programs, and specifies funding, personnel, and coordination priorities for building a national prevention research infrastructure. Five major disorders are used to illustrate possible approaches to prevention: conduct disorder, depressive disorders, alcohol abuse and dependence, schizophrenia, and Alzheimer's disease. Muñoz, Mrazek, and Haggerty summarize and comment on the report in the November 1996 issue of the *American Psychologist*.

P.J. Mrazek & R.J. Haggerty (1994). *Reducing risks of mental disorders: Frontiers for preventive intervention research*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force's *Guide to Clinical Preventive Services*

In this second edition of the guide, the preventive health panel advises *Talk More, Test Less* and when you do test, the procedure should be tailored to risk profiles and client preferences. In updating the guide, this initiative of the U.S. Public Health Service reviewed more than 6,000 studies of 200 different interventions for 70 diseases and conditions. The book is available at a cost of \$35 from the Government Printing Office (Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954).

Lessons Learned

New Approaches to Teen Pregnancy Prevention

A new report by *Adolescent Pregnancy Childwatch* in Santa Monica, California reframes ideas about teen pregnancy prevention and suggest strategies that work. For copies of the complete report, contact APCW, 1316 3rd Street Promenade, Suite B-5, Santa Monica, CA: 90401 (310)395-0098.

Reframing Our Thinking

This report offers three approaches to "challenge us to think about teen pregnancy in fresh ways." What follows are excerpts from the Executive Summary.

I. The Healthy Sexuality Approach: From Disease Prevention to Health Promotion

Our present approach focuses on teenagers' "activity" or "behavior"- what they "do" rather than on natural, evolving adolescent sexuality. Present strategies are based on fear, rather than understanding one's sexual development. . . .

We've been looking at the wrong thing. We've been using a medical model and looking at disease instead of health... What if we were to approach teen pregnancy by asking about what healthy adolescent sexuality looks like? (Trish Torruella, Senior Program Officer, Robin Hood Foundation)

. . . A positive, developmental approach . . . recognizes that . . . "society has a responsibility to help adolescents understand and accept their evolving sexuality and to help them make responsible sexual choices"

II. A Comprehensive Approach: From "Below the Waist" to the Whole Person

Researchers like Claire Brindis and Joy Dryfoos have been pointing out for some time the importance of a comprehensive approach One of the most effective examples of this approach is that pioneered by Michael Carrera . . . , which will have been successfully replicated in 16 sites in New York City and 23 locations outside the city by next year. . . .

Early on, Carrera understood that teen pregnancy is not simply a "genital problem" and not a "female sexuality problem". Rather, teen pregnancy is to a great extent a response to greater social and economic ills. Thus, he built his . . . program around the belief that "unintended

pregnancies among poor, urban teens can be more effectively curtailed if we reduce the impact of the institutional racism that is systemic in our society; if we provide quality education for everyone; and if we create more employment opportunities for young people and adults." . . . The comprehensive approach, as implemented by Carrera, includes the following eight components: 1) a family life and sexuality education program, 2) medical and health services, 3) mental health services, 4) self-esteem enhancement through the performing arts, 5) lifetime individual sports, 6) academic assessment and homework help, 7) a job club and career awareness program, and 8) a college admission program.

...the most powerful contraceptive is activated when a young person believes he or she is a valuable individual who can and should make plans for a bright future.. We must help (young people) locate and grasp a positive, hopeful outlook on their lives and their future. (Michael Carrera)

III. A Societal Approach: from Teen to Adult Sexuality and Community Responsibility

. . . we cannot separate adolescent sexuality from adult sexuality. Whether we are talking about the models of sexual behavior that children learn from their parents, the unconscious messages they receive from teachers and social workers or other professionals who work with young people, or the media images that surround them, it is clear that *adult* attitudes and values about sexuality affect them. . . .

It is no longer realistic to view the adolescent as responsible for the increase in single parent families. The data urge us to focus on the societal issues as they relate to unemployment and job opportunities, changing attitudes about gender roles, welfare reform policy, and the changing structure of the family.

Based on the above three approaches, the report presents a discussion of a comprehensive set of promising prevention strategies. These are summarized in the tables on the following pages.

(see pp. 10-11)

**Even if you're
on the right track,
you'll get run over
if you just sit there.**

Will Rogers

Prevention Strategies That Work

(From a 1996 report by Adolescent Pregnancy Childwatch)

1. Reduce Adult Discomfort with Their Own and Adolescent Sexuality

- Provide on-going training of trainers that increases knowledge, expands wisdom, and develops cultural understanding.
- Recognize that adolescent patterns of sexuality and birth rates mirror those of adults.
- Help parents become more comfortable with their own sexuality and better able to communicate with their children about difficult issues.
- Utilize a parent/school-linked approach to provide family life/sexuality education at the elementary level.
- Create a place for parent education and involvement in all school and community based sexuality curricula.
- Raise community awareness that research is clear that there is no correlation between sexuality education and increased rates of intercourse.
- Develop sexuality education and communication training for all adults who work with children and youth.

2. Develop a Family Approach to Teenage Pregnancy Prevention. Promote Healthy Sexuality

- Provide sexuality education at all levels, including sessions for parents, peer group activities and programs for young children.
- Offer prevention programs that are age-appropriate and include knowledge of contraception as well as abstinence, self-esteem, gender identity and roles, tools for setting and achieving goals, and hope for the future.
- Develop parenting/child development programs for new parents, including hospital and home visit programs.
- Recognize the association between child abuse/child sexual abuse and teen pregnancy and work to develop prevention and intervention programs.
- Re-frame teen pregnancy prevention as a female *and* male issue.
- Support policies and programs which enhance responsible fathering and male involvement.
- Improve strategies for linking community members with community resources and services.

3. Promote Caring, Consistent Adult Involvement for Every Child

- Parents must be educated about the importance of their consistent involvement in their children's lives.
- Encourage adults in the community to become mentors and make them aware of the importance of an adult in children's lives.
- Encourage inter-generational activities and involvement. Develop more creative ways for seniors to become involved with children and young adults.
- Provide extra-curricular activities at school and other community sites, involving adults from the community as volunteer coaches, counselors, and mentors.

4. Build Healthy Communities Through Sound Economic and Social Development

- Expand job creation, skill building, career options awareness.
- Utilize tax incentives and public/private partnerships to invest in human capital.
- Minimum wage or Earned Income Credit for all full time working which corresponds to a living wage.
- Dramatically expand accessible, affordable, flexible, quality child care. Put them in all high and middle schools for use by the whole community as child development training labs.
- Provide all children and young adults involvement with work-related skill building and exposure to employment opportunities.
- Make urban renewal and restoration of neighborhoods a priority. Families and children should be proud of where they live and feel safe. Schools should be clean and safe.

5. Promote Media Responsibility and Counteract Negative Media Images

- Encourage broadcast and print media to take responsibility for establishing ethical standards regarding both advertising and editorial portrayals of sexual images of boys and girls, women and men, and sexuality and violence.
- Make your concerns heard- respond to the media with letters to the editor, broadcasting company, television program or advertiser. Boycott advertisers who use sexually provocative ads and support those that use positive images.
- Create positive images in any media or editorial campaigns you do.
- Promote media literacy. Talk to children about the images they are seeing and hearing from the media.
- Create billboard project to lobby against negative, violent, gender division images.
- Provide training for advertising and entertainment industry about negative consequences of irresponsible and sexual images and messages.

6. Reaffirm the Importance of Values and the Involvement of Religious and Other Organizations

- “Walk the Walk” of valuing our children. Make children our first priority in terms of time, funding, creative programs.
- Moral relativism is not working for raising caring, responsible, inner-directed children. A need for renewed connection with a spiritual center is widely recognized.
- Mobilize religious congregations and members to make a recommitment to their own and other people’s children.
- Involve churches, temples and other faith organizations in planning activities and implementing parenting and teen pregnancy prevention programs.
- More frank and positive discussion regarding responsibilities as an individual and a member of society- incorporate character education programs like “Character Counts”.
- Encourage the development of an interfaith coalition around sexuality issues.

Ideas into Practice

Dealing with Reactive Misbehavior

David (aged 12) has an extensive history of having difficulty at school both in terms of learning and dealing with the rules. As a result, he tends to perceive school as a threatening place, and those at school tend to perceive him as a problem. Thus, when he comes to school, he feels vulnerable, fearful, and sometimes angry. He would like to avoid all teacher demands to perform. If he can't do so directly, he tries indirect ways, such as diverting the teacher to discuss other matters. When he can't manipulate the situation effectively, he acts-out -- arguing, inciting others, clowning around. By now, he has learned a rather large repertoire of behaviors to protect himself from what he perceives as threatening situations. And, of course, the more he displays such behavior, the more those around him treat him as uncontrollable and incorrigible.

Cognitive-affective motivational theory teaches that a youngster who perceives school staff and activities as threats to feeling self-determining, competent, and connected to others will react in protective ways (e.g., protesting, avoiding). Because others tend to see the reactions as misbehavior, they usually respond with threats and disciplinary measures. In turn, these often result in further negative reactions by the youngster. And on and on the cycle goes toward some tragic conclusion -- unless someone intervenes in ways that truly address the motivational underpinnings of the problem.

In working with teachers to address the motivational underpinnings for reactive misbehavior, the focus must

move beyond "time out" and other "logical consequences. Often what is needed is a major redesign of the youngster's program. This involves replacing activities that are generating feelings of incompetence, loss of control, and alienation from others. New alternatives for learning and performing involve matching a youngster's current needs and interests. Extra support and direction are required to assist progress. Consequences for inevitable lapses in behavior must be developed with the youngster so that s/he perceives them as reasonably fair, nondenigrating, and not a major threat to personal autonomy.

David's social studies teacher had become so desperate she was willing to try almost anything. It was agreed she would set aside time to help him identify one area he would personally value learning more about. It took some time, but he finally blurted out that he wanted to be a rock musician and would be interested in learning more about how people got into the field; he also wanted to improve his musical skills. A plan was devised. The teacher arranged for a volunteer to help him during composition time to write to his favorite musicians. For reading, he brought got rock magazines from the library and soon sought out biographies on several pop culture idols. A couple of students who played instruments were asked if they could help him with his musical skills after school. Things got better. The next step involved exploring ideas for a special project. The idea that appealed to him the most was to use the computer and CD roms to generate an audio-visual history of rock and roll. Another student loved the idea, and they were paired up to great effect. School got better; so did David.

(From H.S. Adelman & L. Taylor (1993). *Learning Problems and Learning Disabilities: Moving Forward*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.)

PLEASE FILL OUT THE INSERTED INFORMATION SHEET AND SEND IT TO US.

**School Mental Health Project/
Center for Mental Health in Schools
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ORGANIZATION
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