

30 years &
counting



Addressing Barriers to Learning

New ways to think . . .

Better ways to link



Vol. 21, # 3

Rethinking Education Initiatives: Lessons Learned and Moving Forward

After some unfortunate failures, foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Chan Zuckerberg Foundation are taking stock and rebooting their education initiatives. Here's some matters we think they should be thinking about.

First and foremost: No matter how appealing and well-intentioned an education initiative may be, the critical question is not: *Will it do some good?* – the big picture question is:

How much will it help improve conditions for learning?

And in this respect, *a fundamental concern involves what is and isn't being done about the many conditions interfering with students learning and teachers teaching the whole child effectively.*

Think About Lessons Learned by the Gates Foundation

Most schools are stretched thin by the many programs already underway. A common reaction of administrators is: *Enough - we can't take on another thing!* Nevertheless, when extramural funds are offered, budget-starved schools generally find special initiatives irresistible. This is especially so in districts that predominantly serve economically disadvantaged families. Unfortunately, the results often aren't beneficial and can be counterproductive to transforming public education.

A recent editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* underscores the matter. It highlights excerpts from a 2016 letter from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation about "lessons learned" from their efforts to improve schools

(<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-gates-education-20160601-snap-story.html>).

As the *Times* notes, the Gates Foundation has spent more than \$3 billion on education concerns since 1999. In doing so, the foundation has had "an unhealthy amount of power in the setting of education policy." Commenting on one example, the *Times* notes that "The foundation funded the creation of smaller schools, until its own study found that the size of the school didn't make much difference in student performance. When the foundation moved on, school districts were left with costlier-to-run small schools." The editorial quotes the foundation's CEO, Sue Desmond-Hellman as stating: "We're facing the fact that it is a real struggle to make systemwide change." ... "It is really tough to create more great public schools." ... "This has been a challenging lesson for us to absorb, but we take it to heart. The mission of improving education in America is both vast and complicated, and the Gates Foundation doesn't have all the answers."

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As the editorial observes, this is “a remarkable admission for a foundation that had often acted as though it did have all the answers. Today, the Gates Foundation is clearly rethinking its bust-the-walls-down strategy on education - as it should. And so should the politicians and policymakers, from the federal level to the local, who have given the educational wishes of Bill and Melinda Gates and other well-meaning philanthropists and foundations too much sway in recent years over how schools are run.”

So, as foundations with education initiatives move forward, it is critical to keep in mind that piecemeal policy advocacy for improving schools amounts to tinkering and works against fundamental system transformation.

Avoid the Downside

We all need to remember Seymour Sarason’s caution:

Good ideas and missionary zeal are sometimes enough to change the thinking of individuals; they are rarely, if ever, effective in changing complicated organizations ... with traditions, dynamics, and goals of their own.¹

As states and districts take a more proactive leadership role under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), advocates for specific concerns already are positioning themselves to elicit policy and financial support for special initiatives and programs. Education leaders can expect to see increased lobbying to address many special interests. The focus will be on all the old standard ideas and a few new ones (e.g., directly improving regular and special education instruction; closing the opportunity gap; enhancing safety; dealing with bullying; using restorative justice practices; facilitating prosocial education – social and emotional learning, moral and character education and development, civic responsibility and engagement; addressing substance abuse and mental health problems; working with the community to connect with community services and expand learning ecosystems; expanded uses of technology; broadening outcome accountability).

All, of course, are important school concerns. And dedicated advocates continue to offer compelling cases for pursuing each with discrete strategies they and their constituents favor.

When groups of advocates effectively lobby for a program or special initiative, the trend is for policy makers to respond in an ad hoc, piecemeal way. Few, if any, schools can afford to continue adding programs and initiatives in such a manner.

Schools also cannot continue to focus primarily *just* on improving instruction and management/governance. Such efforts are insufficient for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, increasing equity of opportunity, promoting whole child well-being, and generating a positive school climate. We see this in discussions about personalized instruction, especially those focusing on the use of technology. Personalization, indeed, is fundamental to improving student success in the classroom, but it involves much more than adding technology.² And while greater involvement of stakeholders in schools is essential, the latest moves to decentralize public education are unlikely to contribute significantly to improving classroom learning.³ So, as foundations pursue education initiatives and as states and districts move forward with ESSA, they should weigh the costs and benefits of every proposal in light of the need to transform schools in ways that effectively address barriers to learning and teaching and enhance equity of opportunity for many and not just a few students.

¹ Seymour Sarason (1971). *The Culture of School and the Problem of Change* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

² *Personalizing Learning and Addressing Barriers to Learning*. (2015). Center at UCLA.

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

³ See *ESSA, Equity of Opportunity, and Addressing Barriers to Learning* (2016). Center at UCLA.

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

Good intentions often have negative effects

As currently enacted, education policies are generating program after program and initiative upon initiative and producing fragmented approaches to whole school improvement and whole child well-being. Campaigns for new initiatives often reduce attention to other important concerns. Many special initiatives are keyed to relatively few students, and this is extremely problematic in districts that predominantly enroll economically disadvantaged families. Piecemeal policies and practices further fragment the already too scattered approaches intended to ameliorate problems, and given sparse resources, they engender “projectitis” and other problems (e.g., pilot demonstrations that have a short life; counterproductive competition for resources; cosmetic rather substantive changes; playing fast and loose with data). But worse yet, despite good intentions, the ad hoc and piecemeal approach to so many interrelated concerns works against pursuing the type of fundamental transformation of the educational system that is needed.⁴

Given all this, when asked to consider any discrete initiative/project for schools, it is essential that policy makers appreciate but not be swayed by good intentions. Good decisions require a cost-benefit analysis that clarifies how much the proposed efforts will improve schools for all students and for whole child well-being, as well as identifying unintentional consequences that may arise. And, proposals need to be viewed through the lens of an expanded school improvement framework.

Every major initiative, and especially the move to bring education planning back to states and districts, creates an opportunity and a challenge to end the tinkering. While it is important to see what guidelines and politics emerge related to foundation initiatives and ESSA, taking advantage of the new opportunities and meeting the challenge calls for states and districts to start planning new directions *now*.

Policy makers and state and local education leaders require help in moving away from all the tinkering as they plan ESSA implementation. So, funders such as foundations need to move quickly to help enhance understanding of a broad framework for school transformation and provide support for the complex system changes.

Lead the Way: End the Marginalization of Direct Efforts to Address Barriers to Learning & Teaching

Student and learning supports have long been marginalized in school improvement policy and practice. Widely circulated reports about improving schools continue to pay little or no attention to how such supports and the staff that provide them can be developed to more effectively address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students and families. The ongoing neglect contributes to these matters being given short shrift in school improvement planning and colludes with the ad hoc and piecemeal manner in which practices are implemented. The result is a pattern of fragmented and at times redundant programs and initiatives, and a counterproductive competition among student and learning support professionals, especially when funding is sparse (and when isn't it?).

And while the passage of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) offers opportunities, it also maintains the piecemeal approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging the disconnected. Transforming student and learning supports remains a missing concept. Continuing failure to directly address interfering factors, particularly in chronically low performing schools, 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 disrupt student engagement in classroom learning.

⁴ See *Impediments to enhancing availability of mental health services in schools: Fragmentation, overspecialization, counterproductive competition, and marginalization*. (2002). H.S. Adelman & L. Taylor. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/31%20impediments%20to%20enhancing%20availability%20of%20mental%20health%20in%20schools.pdf>

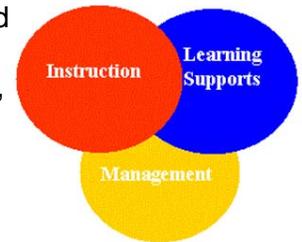
**Escaping the
2 component
framework for
school
improvement**

Our analyses indicate that the thinking of most education reformers and policy makers primarily is guided by a two component framework for school improvement. One component emphasizes improving and broadening instruction (e.g., improved curriculum standards, science-based instruction, use of technology, strengthening the focus on social-emotional learning, character development, and civic engagement). The other component focuses on bettering school management/governance (e.g., improving resource use, moving from centralized to decentralized governance, expanding stakeholder involvement in decision making).

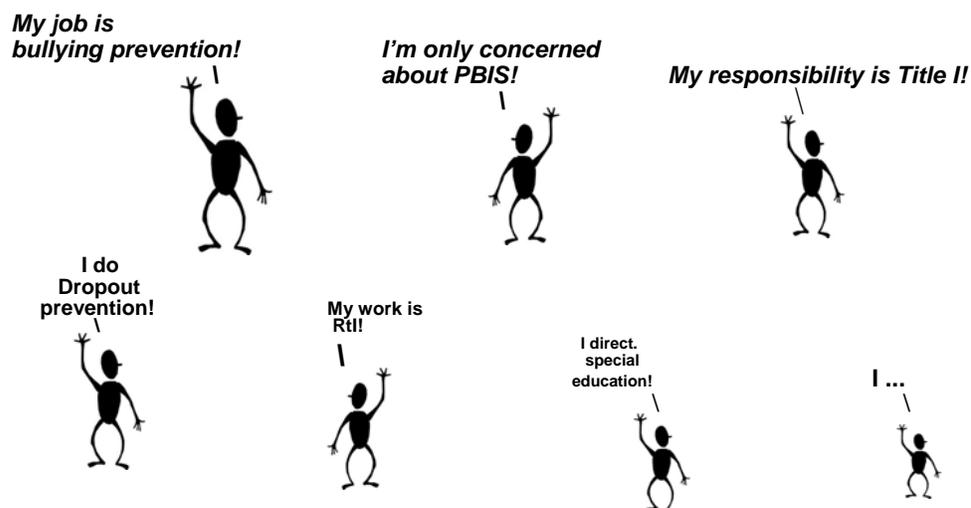
Some attention, of course, also is given to interventions for student and schooling problems. (Many schools refer to this facet as a multi-tiered system for student and learning supports. Some places designate it a learning supports component.) However, the reality is that reliance on the two-component framework has relegated student and learning supports to a low priority status in school improvement discussions.

The two component framework works fine for schools where few students encounter barriers to success. And, in general, some significant strides have been made with respect to both components. However, the framework is grossly insufficient for addressing the complex array of factors interfering with equity of opportunity for student success at schools, especially at schools enrolling large numbers from economically disadvantaged homes. Reformers need to escape the idea that the two component emphasis is sufficient to the challenge of addressing the many factors interfering with school improvement and student progress.

Given the number of schools and students in trouble, fundamental system transformation is essential.. Especially critical is expanding the policy framework for school improvement to add a third primary and essential component. This component is devoted to unifying and developing a comprehensive and equitable intervention system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. That is, in place of ad hoc and piecemeal policies and practices, this third component provides a foundation for transforming student and learning supports. The transformation involves first unifying and weaving together all school resources currently expended for student and learning supports. *And then*, the focus is on discriminatively braiding school and relevant community resources together to fill gaps. The intent over time is to replace the current laundry-list of fragmented practices by developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system that can serve all students.



The Current Situation – in many districts and schools



What Needs Attention in order to Transform Schools

As John Maynard Keynes stressed: *The real difficulty in changing the course of any enterprise lies not in developing new ideas but in escaping old ones.* That certainly is the case with respect to policy for improving schools.

Systemic change of this magnitude involves social, political, and cultural commitment to:

- (1) *Expanding the policy framework for school improvement.* As stressed above, it is time to move from a two- to a three-component framework so that all efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching are unified (e.g., as a Learning Support Component), with the third component prioritized and developed as primary and essential, and fully entwined with the Instructional and Management/governance Components.⁵
- (2) *Operationalizing the third component.* This requires reframing student and learning support interventions to create a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports in-classrooms and school-wide. A prototype intervention framework has been developed that encompasses
 - *a continuum of school-community interventions* consisting of subsystems for
 - >promoting effective schooling and whole child development
 - >preventing problems experienced by teachers and students
 - >addressing such problems as soon as feasible after they arise
 - >providing for students who have severe and chronic problems.

and

 - *a cohesively organized and delimited set of “content” arenas* for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students in the classroom and school-wide. These arenas encompass the range of concerns a school copes with each day.⁶
- (3) *Implementation.* This involves
 - *reworking the operational infrastructure* to ensure effective daily implementation and ongoing development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable systemic approach that enhances equity of opportunity;⁷
 - *enhancing mechanisms and strategic approaches for systemic change* in ways that ensure effective implementation, replication to scale, and sustainability;⁸
 - *developing standards and expanding the accountability framework* to account for the third component and to do so in ways that encompass both formative and summative evaluation.⁹

⁵ See Chapter 2 in *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* (2015). H.S. Adelman & L. Taylor. Los Angeles: Center for Mental Health in Schools.

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

⁶ A brief discussion of and examples related to each of the six content arenas is offered in Part II of *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* (2015). H.S. Adelman & L. Taylor. Los Angeles: Center for Mental Health in Schools. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf>

⁷ See *Key Leadership Infrastructure Mechanisms for Enhancing Student & Learning Supports* –

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/report/resource_oriented_teams.pdf

⁸ See *Bringing New Prototypes into Practice: Dissemination, Implementation, and Facilitating Transformation* –

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/implrep3.pdf>

⁹ See “Expanding the Accountability Framework for Schools” Appendix A in *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* (2015). H.S. Adelman & L. Taylor. Los Angeles: Center for Mental Health in Schools. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf>

For a prototype of standards and indicators for a learning supports component, see *Standards & Quality Indicators for an Enabling or Learning Supports Component* (2014). Los Angeles: Center for Mental Health in Schools.

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/qualityindicators.pdf> .

A Few Concluding Comments

As nicely elucidated by McDonnell & Weatherford (2016), successful transformation requires effective coping with the politics of enactment and implementation and building on lessons learned from previous and ongoing endeavors.* None of this is easy, but given the degree to which public education is under attack, all of it is essential.

Advocacy indicates what is wanted; *the politics of policy enactment* prioritizes what is to be implemented; *the politics of implementation* determines what actually is done in pursuing priorities. In education, major issues surround what advocates want and what is enacted and implemented. A constant concern is whether what schools are asked to do can *significantly* enhance equity of opportunity.

As leaders for fundamental school changes such as Warren Simmons have stressed, achieving equity of opportunity is not about specific programs and initiatives, it's about fundamental changes at social, political, and cultural levels. Given how many powerful economic and political forces are in pursuit of conflicting agenda for public schools, addressing these matters in policy and practice is an enormous challenge.

Of particular concern is how schools and communities focus on reducing factors that produce inequities. This includes the many barriers to learning and teaching that confront young people, families, and staff. Given sparse resources, if schools and communities do not work collaboratively and strategically to transform public education, we will continue the slide into a three-tiered set of K-12 institutions – one tier for the poor, one for the wealthy, and another for everyone else.

If you are interested in learning more about any of this, feel free to contact us; our emails are adelman@psych.ucla.edu or Ltaylor@ucla.edu .

*Lorraine M. McDonnell & Stephen Weatherford (2016). Recognizing the political in implementation research. *Educational Researcher*, 45, 233–242.
<http://edr.sagepub.com/content/45/4/233.full.pdf+html>

***Why does history
keep repeating itself?***

***Because we weren't
listening the first time!***



Note: The following article on diversity underscores the need for a broad, systemic approach to enhance equity of opportunity.

Understanding Diversity to Better Address Barriers to Learning

... it has been suggested that teachers unconsciously favor those students perceived to be most like themselves in race, class, and values; culturally relevant teaching means consciously working to develop commonalities with all the students.

Gloria Ladson-Billing

Part of this consciousness means that school staff must not favor students similar to themselves in making social contacts and enhancing learning and must not negatively hover over students who may differ from them, especially with respect to disciplinary measures.

Adapted from: Equity Initiatives Unit
Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland

Those who work in schools are a diverse group. So are the students and families who attend. Examples of diversity concerns identified in research include: age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, migration and refugee status and experiences, religion, spirituality, sexual orientation, disability, language, socioeconomic status, education, group identity, position in the social hierarchy, communication modality, level of acculturation/assimilation, developmental stages, stages of ethnic development, level of acculturation/assimilation, individual preferences, popular culture, family and lifestyle, workplace culture, and more.

Clearly, the topic of human diversity is complex and yet fundamental to any discussion of schooling. In particular, questions arise about such matters as how to establish a good match between instruction and learning, how much diversity should be a curricular focus, and how to balance teaching about commonalities and differences (and relatedly how much diversity should be promoted and celebrated). Discussions of diversity and cultural competence strive to provide a foundation for accounting for relevant differences.

At the core of all this are issues related to the society's interest in accommodating and promoting diversity. Biases, segregation, and disparities remain widespread. Thus, policy, politics, social philosophy, and practice converge in ways that make efforts to enhance equity of opportunity and social justice and celebrate diversity in classrooms controversial.

We have explored these matters in various resources that can be freely accessed on the Center's website (<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>). Our concern here is with providing additional information and resources, with special emphasis on enhancing understanding of the school's role in addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development.

Toward Better Understanding

All schools must consider significant individual and group differences. While many of the factors cited above have been and continue to be the focus of research, there is still a great deal to learn about differences and their impact.

With respect to learning and teaching, researchers have emphasized mismatches between teachers and students and among students from different backgrounds as causing problems (see Exhibit 1). Given the number of factors at play, it clearly is not feasible to prevent all mismatches. The aim of good classroom instruction is to facilitate students' learning of the designated curriculum by creating as good a match as is feasible. To meet this aim, schools must provide a range of interventions that (1) address barriers to learning and teaching and (2) engage students in the instructional process.

*The material in this article reflects work done by Katheryn Munguia as part of her involvement with the national Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA.

Exhibit 1

A Few Examples of How Researchers Discuss the Impact of Differences

Ed Fergus (2009) has summarized and expanded on the competing theories regarding the relative influence of social class background and racial-group membership on the school experiences, academic performance, behavior, and motivation of ethnic minority students. He states:

The general purpose of these competing theories has been to explain why ethnic minority students fail or succeed in schools. Many of these theories consider factors inside the school and the child's family, culture, racial/ethnic group affiliation, and responses to school. These theories are commonly situated into three categories of thought: cultural deprivation, cultural difference/discontinuity, and cultural ecology. Each theory juxtaposes dimensions of race as a significant variable, but each has omitted the meaning of race/ethnicity as internally and externally constructed, particularly among Latino groups.

Fergus' research emphasizes the need to study (1) how students define their own racial/ethnic identification and how they perceive others defining them; (2) how they discuss the opportunities available for the social group with which they identified and the social group with which they believe others have placed them; and (3) how the students' academic orientation (which reflects their educational and occupational aspirations, participation in co-curricular activities, and accommodation to schooling norms) relates to their experiences of racial and ethnic identification and their perceptions of opportunity.

Instructional mismatches have been found related to differences in

- *individualist and collectivist cultural backgrounds.* For example, Boykin, Albury, Tyler, Hurley, Bailey, & Miller (2005) found "African American students were significantly more accepting of communal and veristic high-achieving peers than European American students. European American students endorsed individualistic and competitive high achievers significantly more than African American students."
- *"rules" for communicating with adults.* For instance, researchers regularly stress that different cultures have different expectations about eye contact, physical touch, and gestures (Irvine & York, 1995). However, generalizations about such matters are tempered by level of acculturation, gender, age, position and status in society and groups, and individual preferences (Banks & Banks, 1995). Another generality suggested by research is that over 90 percent of a message may be communicated through facial expressions, voice tone, body posture and gestures and that when verbal and nonverbal messages don't match up, more attention is paid to the nonverbal message.
- *perceptions of self and others.* An example here is the work on independent view vs. interdependent views of self. Those with an independent self-view are seen as maintaining themselves as separate, self-contained individuals; those with an interdependent view are seen as adjusting themselves to fit in and maintain interdependence with others. With respect to thriving in a multicultural world, it has been suggested that interdependence is "a useful strategy for surviving when there are too few resources to go around" and that "college educated teachers and professors tend to use independent selves" while "students hailing from working-class background ... tend to use interdependent selves" (Markus & Conner, 2013). There is also a growing set of findings on stereotype threat; that is, the tendency for students to underperform because of increased anxiety resulting from concerns about confirming a stereotype associated with them (Aronson, 2004; Steele, 2010).

(cont.)

- *family income*. There are many ways that financial conditions result in an instructional mismatch. See, for example, research focusing on how financial concerns can capture attention and trigger cognitions that interfere with task concentration and decision making (Mani, Mullainathan, Shafir, & Zhao, 2013).
- *values*. Markus & Conner (2013) stress that, in contrast to higher status students, those with lower status tend to make decisions that are more ethical, negotiate more honestly, and compete more fairly in class and on the playground. Such students also seem to literally take insults to “heart” (e.g., a working class sample of students registered greater changes in blood pressure than did middle-class students).
- *teaching*. A variety of problems have been reported with respect to teacher gender, race, and cultural biases (Skelton, Francis, & Smulyan, 2006). For example, some female teachers produce an instructional mismatch for boys by designing instruction that emphasizes interdependence (Markus & Conner, 2013). Data also indicate that African American and Latino students have been disproportionately referred to the office and receive a harsher punishment compared to white students (Skiba et al., 2011). And teachers have been found to make negative attributions based on biases related to gender and some underrepresented minorities (e.g., perceiving the students as unmotivated, uncooperative, unintelligent). Gay (2000) summarizes her review of the teaching research by stating “Students of color, especially those who are poor and live in urban areas, get less total instructional attention; are called on less frequently; are encouraged to continue to develop intellectual thinking less often; are criticized more and praised less; receive fewer direct responses to their questions and comments; and are reprimanded more often and disciplined more severely. Frequently, the praise given is terse, ritualistic, procedural, and social rather than elaborate, substantive, and academic.”

In general, as applied to schools, the literature on enhancing school staff understanding of diversity focuses on learning about such matters as

- the multiple forms of human diversity (including within-group diversity) and how such factors affect student and school interveners’ attitudes, values, expectations, belief systems, world views, actions, and physical and mental health
- how diversity can negatively affect student-intervener contacts, relationships, and interactions (e.g., concerns about stereotypes, racism, sexism, gender bias, ethnocentrism, ageism, etc.; awareness of similarities and differences; power differentials that result in oppression, marginalization, victimization, blaming the victim)
- appreciating relevant strengths/assets; viewing psychosocial problems, disabilities, and school interventions in terms of reciprocal determinism and from the perspective of diverse groups
- prevalent biases in schools
- how diversity concerns can be accounted for appropriately in schools
- the role played by demographics and equity, cultural beliefs, religion, and ethnocentrism in public education and related political and societal considerations

Diversity and Personalized Instruction

From the perspective of establishing an effective instructional match, diversity is a major concern. The old adage: *Meet learners where they are* is meant to capture the commonsense view about establishing an effective instructional match that accounts for individual differences. 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 instructional outcomes.

We all know that good abilities are more likely to emerge when students are motivated. The point for emphasis is that good classroom practices involve matching *motivation* (especially *intrinsic* motivation), and this often involves overcoming *avoidance* motivation. (One of the most frequent laments about students is: "They could do it, if only they *wanted* to!")

Schools strive to design instruction that is a good fit for each student. However, the reality of individual differences and class size means that they can only *approximate* meeting students where they are.

For some time, efforts to improve instructional fit in classrooms have revolved around the concepts of individualized or personalized instruction. The two concepts overlap in their emphasis on 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*.

Moreover, personalization needs to be understood as a psychological construct. From a motivational perspective, 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 assessment concern in accounting for diversity and personalizing instruction is that of eliciting learners' perceptions of how well what is offered matches both their interests and abilities.

Diversity Requires a System of Student and Learning Supports

Of course, striving to personalize teaching and learning is essential but not sufficient. The greater the diversity in a classroom, the greater the likelihood that accommodations and special assistance in the form of student and learning supports will be needed in responding to learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Student and learning supports are designed to address factors that interfere with establishing an effective instructional match. Such supports are key to addressing barriers to learning and performing that are related to a student's background and/or current circumstances.

Every school has some student and learning supports. Given a highly diverse student body, a school must develop a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of such supports. This not only requires providing personalized instruction, accommodations, and special assistance in regular classrooms, it also requires supports that facilitate transitions, increase home and school connections, respond to and, where feasible, prevent school and personal crisis and traumatic events, increase community involvement, and facilitate student and family access to effective services and specialized assistance as needed (see Adelman & Taylor, 2015).

In an interview on PBS, Chris Emdin, a professor at Columbia University's Teachers College, criticizes the "white hero teacher" concept as archaic – an approach that sets up teachers to fail and that further marginalizes poor and minority children. In his 2016 book entitled *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood ... and the Rest of Y'all Too*, he draws parallels between current urban educational models and Native American schools of the past that measured success by how well students adapted to forced assimilation. His call is for an approach that prepares teachers to value the unique realities of minority children, incorporating their culture into classroom instruction. He stresses the stakes are too high to continue with the status quo.

A Note About Common Core State Standards and Diversity

Most states are adopting or adapting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). As they do so, two major concerns arise related to diversity. As we stress above, one concern is the need for personalization and learning supports to improve teaching and learning. The need for learning supports is underscored by the Council of the Great City Schools' report stressing the reality "that regardless of how effectively school district leaders develop and implement high-quality curricula aligned with the new standards, some students will need additional support and interventions to be successful" (Gamm, Elliott, Halbert, et al., 2012).

The second major concern is how to ensure that the curriculum content provides an appropriate balance in teaching about diversity and its implications for the society. Some critics have cautioned that "attending to the diversity of students' backgrounds is difficult when a 'common' set of 'core' standards neither recognizes nor reflects the multiple ways of being, knowing, and thinking that children bring to classrooms. In other words, by privileging one way of being literate and making sense of texts, the common core limits what counts for students who bring different ways of acting, interacting, and displaying what they know" (Compton-Lilly & Stewart, 2013).

Concluding Comments

As is the case for so many other countries, the United States continues to grow in diversity. Our history is one of both embracing diversity and fighting against it. Embracing diversity on school campuses requires creating and supporting values that encourage students and staff of all backgrounds to value each other, interact with mutual respect and support, and develop authentic relationships. This calls for transforming school policies and practices and doing away with any that work against equity of opportunity for all. Such changes constitute the hidden curriculum that can enhance social-emotional development and prepare students to live in an increasingly diverse world.

Major changes are underway throughout the world. These changes bring both challenges and opportunities. Schools have a fundamental role to play in meeting these challenges and teaching about the opportunities.

To meet the challenges, schools must provide instruction that fits the diverse knowledge, skills, and attitudes youngsters bring into the school setting. When there is a good match between what families and society expect and what schools do, concerns and conflict are minimized. The somewhat daunting task ahead is to make this the situation at all schools.

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Also see the Center Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on *Cultural Competence and related Issues*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/culturecomp.htm>





Center Update

Latest Center Resources

(For regular updates about new Center resources, go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> and click on *What's New.*)

New Information Resources

- > *A Student Initiated, Student Run, and Student Funded Center for Retaining Under-Represented Minority University Students* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/retent UCLA.pdf>
- > *Understanding Diversity to Better Address Barriers to Learning* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/diversity.pdf>
- > *Thinking Cautiously About Screening for Major Depressive Disorder in Adolescents: The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendations & Implications for Schools* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/depress.pdf>
- > *Gang Affiliation: Personal Academic and Mental Health Impact* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/gang.pdf>
- > *Teen Dating* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/dating2.pdf>

New Hot Topics

- <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/hottopic.htm>
- > *Don't grade schools on grit*
 - > *Resegregation?*

Examples of Recently Updated Resources

- > *School-based Client Consultation, Referral, and Management of Care* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/consultation/consultation2003.pdf>
- > *Volunteers to Help Teachers and School Address Barriers to Learning* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/volunteer/volunt.pdf>
- > *Protective Factors/resiliency* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sampler/resiliency/resiliency.pdf>
- > *Afterschool Programs and Addressing Barriers to Learning* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/afterschool/afterschool.pdf>
- > *Autism Spectrum Disorders and Schools* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/autism/autism.pdf>
- > *School Interventions to Prevent Youth Suicide* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sampler/suicide/suicide.pdf>
- > *Thinking about and Accessing Policy Related to Addressing Barriers to Learning* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sampler/sampler.pdf>
- > *Substance Abuse* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/substance/substance.pdf>

Want resources? Need technical assistance? Coaching?

Use our website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>
 or contact us – E-mail: Ltaylor@ucla.edu or Ph: (310) 825-3634
 Not receiving our monthly electronic newsletter (*ENEWS*)?
 Or our weekly *Community of Practice Interchange*?
 Send requests to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

***Be who you are and say what you feel,
 because those who mind don't matter
 and those who matter don't mind.***

~Dr. Seuss

The Center for Mental Health in Schools operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project in the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA.

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 . . . and a host of students