

31 years &  
counting



# Addressing Barriers to Learning

*New ways to think . . .*

*Better ways to link*



Vol. 22, #3

## Escaping Old Ideas to More Effectively Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching

*The real difficulty in changing the course of any enterprise  
lies not in developing new ideas but in escaping old ones.*

John Maynard Keynes

**P**ublic education is at a crossroads. Moving in new directions is imperative. One of the most pressing challenges for schools is to improve how schools address barriers to learning and teaching as part of their role in enhancing equity of opportunity. A positive future for public education depends on moving in new directions to accomplish this. Tweaking and tinkering old ideas is a recipe for disaster.

The imperative for moving school improvement policy and practice in new directions is highlighted by such long-standing problems as

- increasing equity of opportunity for every student to succeed, narrowing the achievement gap, and countering the school to prison pipeline
- reducing unnecessary referrals for special assistance and special education
- improving school climate and retaining good teachers
- reducing the number of low performing schools
- enhancing graduation rates and successful transitions to post-secondary opportunities.

Overcoming these problems requires making sustainable progress in

- improving supports for specific subgroups (e.g., English Learners, immigrant newcomers, lagging minorities, homeless students, students with disabilities)
- increasing the number of students who re-engage in classroom learning and doing so in ways that improve attendance, reduce disruptive behavior, and decrease suspensions and dropouts
- increasing family and community engagement with schools
- responding effectively when schools experience crises events and preventing crises whenever possible.

In some schools, continuous progress related to these concerns is being made. For many, however, sustainable progress remains elusive - and will continue to be so as long as the focus of school improvement policy and practice is primarily on improving instruction. Efforts to expand the use of instructional technology, develop new curriculum standards, make teachers more accountable, and improve teacher preparation and licensing all have merit; but they are insufficient for addressing the many everyday barriers to learning and teaching that interfere with effective student engagement in classroom instruction.

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### Also in this issue:

Fundamental Equity Concerns for Schools

>**Re-engaging Students in Classroom Instruction**

>**Making Motivation a Primary Focus**

>**The Challenge of Ensuring Equity of Opportunity**

Also a Center Resources Update

Policy makers and administrators know that good instruction delivered by highly qualified teachers cannot ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. Even the best teacher can't do the job alone. Teachers need student and learning supports in the classroom and schoolwide in order to personalize instruction and provide special assistance when students need such help. Unfortunately, school improvement plans continue to give short shrift to these critical matters.

We recognize, as did a Carnegie Task Force on Education, that school systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students. But as the task force stressed: when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge.

Now is the time to fundamentally transform how schools address factors that keep too many students from doing well at school. And while transformation is never easy, pioneering work across the country is showing the way. Trailblazers are redeploying existing funds allocated for addressing barriers to learning and weaving these together with the invaluable resources that can be garnered by collaboration with other agencies and with community stakeholders, family members, and students themselves.

**The first step in moving forward is to escape old ideas.**

**The second step is to incorporate a new vision in school improvement planning for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. Our analyses envision a plan that designs and develops a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student and learning supports.**

**The third step is to develop a strategic plan for systemic change, scale-up, and sustainability.**

This year we have prepared two new resources for moving these steps forward:

(1) A new (and free) book entitled:

>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide* (draft edition)  
Download from the Center's homepage at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

(2) Just published by Cognella:

>*Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System*

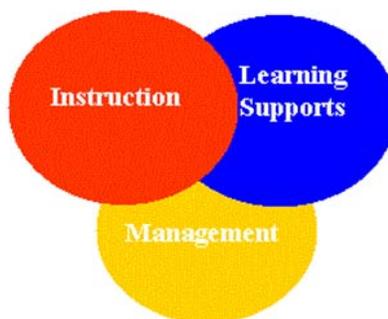
<https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student-and-learning-supports-9781516512782.html>

These resources can help make the rhetoric of the Every Student Succeeds Act a reality.

And our Center can help by providing free coaching and technical assistance. Feel free to contact at us at [adelman@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:adelman@psych.ucla.edu) or to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

### A Three Component Framework for to Enhance Equity in School Improvement Policy & Practice

Direct Facilitation  
of Learning  
and Development



Addressing Barriers to  
Learning & Teaching  
and Re-engaging  
Disconnected Students

Governing and  
Managing the  
Enterprise

## *a fundamental equity concern for schools*

### Re-engaging Students in Classroom Instruction

The degree of concern about student engagement varies depending on a school's population. Teaching goes well in schools where most students come each day ready and able to deal with what is being taught. In schools that are the greatest focus of public criticism, this certainly is not the case. The reality is that there are too many schools where teachers are confronted with groups of students who have become disengaged from classroom instruction.

Clearly, student disengagement *in classroom learning* is a major barrier to learning and teaching. For schools striving to enhance equity of opportunity this makes re-engaging students in classroom instruction a fundamental concern for school improvement.

#### Addressing Underlying Motivation for Disengagement and Misbehavior

*Students experiencing problems often develop negative attitudes about school and disconnect*

The essence of teaching is creating an environment that mobilizes the student and maintains that mobilization, while effectively facilitating learning. When a student disengages, re-engagement in learning depends on minimizing conditions that negatively affect motivation and maximizing conditions that have a positive motivational effect.

Consider students who spend most of the day trying to avoid all or part of instructional activity. A motivational interpretation of the avoidance behavior of many of these youngsters is that it reflects their perception that school is not a place where they experience feelings of competence, autonomy, and/or relatedness to significant others. Over time, these perceptions develop into strong motivational dispositions and related patterns of misbehavior.

Failure to attend to motivational concerns in a comprehensive, normative way results in approaching passive and often hostile students with practices that instigate and exacerbate problems.

#### Disengagement & Re-engagement

*For many schools, significant academic improvements will only occur when the large number of disengaged students are re-engaged in learning at school*

Students who manifest learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems often develop extremely negative attitudes about teachers and schooling. In such cases, they are not likely to be open to people and activities that look like "the same old thing." Major changes in approach are required if the youngster is even to perceive that something has changed in the situation.

Minimally, exceptional efforts must be made to have them

- (1) view the teacher and other interveners as supportive (rather than controlling and indifferent)
- (2) perceive content, outcomes, and activity options as personally valuable and obtainable.

Any effort to re-engage disengaged students must begin by addressing negative attitudes. School support staff and teachers must work together to reverse conditions that led to such attitudes.

Research on intrinsic motivation suggests that disconnection from classroom learning is associated with threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and/or relatedness to valued others. The threats may come from transactions with school staff, peers, instructional content and processes. Psychological disengagement can be expected to result in internalized behavior (e.g., boredom, emotional distress) and/or externalized behavior (misbehavior, dropping out).

Re-engaging disconnected students requires

- (a) overcoming negative attitudes toward school and learning,
- (b) enhancing motivational readiness for instruction,
- (c) maintaining intrinsic motivation throughout learning and problem solving,
- (d) nurturing continuing motivation so students engage in activities away from school that foster maintenance, generalization, and expansion of learning and problem solving.

*Need to meet students where they are in terms of both motivation and capability*

Key facets of the work encompass providing students with options and involving them in decision making. 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. Student participation in goal setting leads to more positive outcomes (e.g., higher commitment to a goal and increased performance).<sup>1</sup>

As with any barrier to learning and teaching, efforts to re-engage students are embedded in a student and learning support system that personalizes instruction and provides special assistance. Such a system is designed with prevention in mind, and when misbehavior does occur, a primary emphasis is on ameliorating underlying problems, re-engaging students in classroom instruction, and maintaining engagement.<sup>2</sup>

*Need to focus on maximizing feelings of competence, self-determination, and relationships with significant others and minimizing threats to such feelings*

All this requires a primary focus on matching a student's intrinsic motivation as well as capabilities. And the focus on intrinsic motivation calls for strategies that maximize feelings of competence, self-determination, and positive connection with significant others and that minimize threats to such feelings.

In this context, special attention is paid to a *student's perceptions* and reactions to the processes in use and the intended outcomes. With an emphasis on re-building relationships, first steps might include

- expanding the range of options for learning
- helping youngsters identify, decide on, and follow through on a range of relevant, valued, and socially appropriate alternatives
- providing a wider range of accommodations.

Given the above, highlighted on the next page is an example of four personalized intervention steps in working with *disengaged students*.

### Four Personalized Intervention Re-engagement Steps

- (1) *Clarify student perceptions of the problem.* 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.
- (2) *Reframe school learning.* In the case of those who have disengaged, major reframing in teaching approaches is required so that these students
  - a) view the teacher as supportive (rather than controlling and indifferent) and
  - b) 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.
- (3) *Renegotiate involvement in school learning.* New and mutual agreements must be developed over time through conferences with the student and including parents where appropriate. The intent 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. Students should be assisted in sampling new processes and content, options should include valued enrichment opportunities, and there must be provision for reevaluating and modifying decisions as perceptions shift.
- (4) *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, the above strategies must be pursued using processes and content that:

- 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 a welcoming, caring, safe, and just climate)
- Guide motivated practice (e.g., providing opportunities for meaningful applications)
- 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 self-directed learning or can arrange for additional support and direction)

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (2002). The paradox of achievement: The harder you push, the worse it gets. In J. Aronson (Ed.), *Improving academic achievement: Contributions of social psychology*. (Pp. 59-85). New York: Academic Press.

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

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. New York: Guilford.

<sup>2</sup> See Adelman, H.S. & Taylor, L. (2017). *Addressing barriers to learning: In the classroom and schoolwide*. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/barriersbook.pdf>

## a fundamental equity concern for schools

### Making Motivation a *Primary Concern* in Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

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

National Academy of Science's Research Council<sup>1</sup>

**E**veryone knows that student motivation is a critical facet of classroom life:

- Motivation is a prerequisite, and its absence may be a cause of learning and behavior problems
- Students may be motivated toward the idea of obtaining a learning *outcome* but may not be motivated to pursue traditional learning *processes*
- Students may be motivated to start to work on overcoming their learning and behavior problems but may not maintain their motivation
- Motivated learners can do more than others often anticipate.

Concern for engaging and re-engaging students in learning draws on what is known about human motivation. In addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems, motivational considerations begin with a focus on enhancing *readiness* to engage in classroom learning. Motivation also is a key ongoing *process* concern (e.g., maximizing engagement, minimizing factors that lead to disengagement). And when it comes to *outcomes*, enhancing *intrinsic* motivation for problem solving and positive development is critical.

Here, we highlight common practices that can work against engaging youngsters productively at school. Specifically, we focus on how schools too often (1) produce reactive misbehavior, (2) undermine intrinsic motivation, and (3) fail to enhance intrinsic motivation for learning and problem solving.

#### School Practices and Psychological Reactance

School practices that mainly address problem behaviors often focus heavily on controlling behavior and can produce psychological reactance. Psychological reactance is a motivational force that mobilizes behavior intended to protect or restore one's sense of freedom and personal control. For instance, when those in control say: *You can't do that ... you must do this ...*, the psychological reaction often is: *Oh, you think so!*

Brehm and Brehm postulated that when people feel a restriction on or threat to their freedom of choice they are motivated to react. They designated this as *psychological reactance*. Deci and Ryan stress that such psychological reactance can be expected to arise when individuals perceive threats to their self-determination.<sup>2</sup> Researchers have suggested that with prolonged denial of freedom, people's reactivity diminishes, and they become amotivated and usually feel helpless and ineffective.

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

At school, there are many practices that produce psychological reactance. Students are continuously confronted with demands, rules, and consequences. Clearly, schools must establish limits and enforce rules and play an ongoing role in socializing young people. At the same time, there is a potent motivational impact to all this that must be understood and addressed.

A particular irony is seen in how student misbehavior is handled. At one time, a heavy dose of punishment was the dominant approach. Currently, the emphasis is on positive practices designed to provide “behavior support” in and out-of-the-classroom. The move from punishment to positive approaches is a welcome one. What hasn’t changed, however, is that the strategies used to control misbehavior are more focused on social control than on engaging students in classroom learning and often produce psychological reactance and elicit further forms of undesirable behavior.

Dealing with misbehavior, of course, is essential. The challenge is how to do so in ways that productively engage students in classroom learning and sustain that engagement. All this argues for minimizing psychological reactance and resistance and rethinking social control practices.

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 extrinsic reinforcers for behavior modification, as well as direct skill instruction. Interventions are designed, for example, 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 and may even work against this goal.<sup>3</sup>

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



## Overreliance on Rewards

Grading, testing, and other performance evaluations play a prominent role in school programs and are a special concern in any discussion of using extrinsics to reinforce positive learning. For instance, 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.

*External reinforcement may indeed get a particular act going and may lead to its repetition, but it does not nourish, reliably, the long course of learning by which [one] slowly builds in [one's] own way a serviceable model of what the world is and what it can be.*

Jerome Bruner

Grades have a way of reshaping what students do with their learning opportunities. 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. 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!

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. And it is just one example of how systems that overemphasize extrinsics may have a serious negative impact on intrinsic motivation for learning.

### On Using Rewards to Control Behavior

As Deci has stressed: *Rewards are generally used to control behavior. Children are sometimes rewarded with candy when they do what adults expect of them. Workers are rewarded with pay for doing what their supervisors want. People are rewarded with social approval or positive feedback for fitting into their social reference group. In all these situations, the aim of the reward is to control the person's behavior -- to make [the person] continue to engage in acceptable behaviors. And rewards often do work quite effectively as controllers. Further, whether it works or not, each reward has a controlling aspect. Therefore, the first aspect to every reward (including feedback) is a controlling aspect. However, rewards also provide information to the person about his effectiveness in various situations. . . . When David did well at school, his mother told him she was proud of him, and when Amanda learned to ride a bike, she was given a brand new two-wheeler. David and Amanda knew from the praise and bicycle that they were competent and self-determining in relation to school and bicycling. The second aspect of every reward is the information it provides a person about his competence and self-determination.*

*When the controlling aspect of the reward is very salient, such as in the case of money or the avoidance of punishment, [a] change in perceived locus of causality . . . will occur. The person is 'controlled' by the reward and s/he perceives that the locus of causality is external.<sup>4</sup>*

## Failure to Enhance Intrinsic Motivation for Learning and Problem Solving

*Increasing intrinsic motivation involves affecting a student's thoughts, feelings, and decisions.*

*Teachers tell us that, while they are taught a bit about engaging students, neither their pre- nor in-service education focuses much on how to prevent students from disengaging and how to re-engage a student who has become disconnected.*

Psychological scholarship over the last sixty years has brought renewed attention to motivation as a central concept in understanding learning and attention problems. This work is just beginning to find its way into personnel preparation programs and schools. One line of work emphasizes the relationship of learning and behavior problems to deficiencies in intrinsic motivation and clarifies the importance of enhancing intrinsic motivation for learning and for personal and interpersonal problem solving.

Intrinsic motivation is a fundamental consideration in designing better ways to teach and provide effective student and learning supports. With respect to enhancing intrinsic motivation as an intervention concern, we emphasize maximizing *feelings* of self-determination, competence, and interpersonal relatedness and minimizing threats to such feelings.

Examples of practices for *maximizing intrinsic motivation* are:

- Personalized instruction (addressing motivation as a primary concern)
- Building relationships and planning instruction with an understanding of student perceptions and including a range of real life needs, as well as personal and cooperative experiences
- Providing real, valued, and attainable options and choices ensuring shared decision making
- Enhancing feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to valued others

Examples of *minimizing threats to intrinsic motivation* are:

- Ensuring a welcoming, caring, safe, and just environment
- Countering perceptions of social control and indifference
- Designing motivated applications as opposed to rote practice and deadening homework
- Ensuring extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities
- Providing regular feedback in ways that minimize use of evaluative processes that threaten feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to valued others

Understanding intrinsic motivation clarifies how essential it is to avoid processes that limit options and overrely on extrinsics in ways that make students feel controlled and coerced and that focus mainly on “remedying” problems. Such processes risk undermining intrinsic motivation and producing avoidance reactions in the classroom and to school. Practices for preventing disengagement, maintaining engagement, and re-engaging disconnected students (families, staff) require minimizing conditions that negatively affect intrinsic motivation and maximizing conditions that have a positive motivational effect.

Strong intrinsic motivation can be viewed as a fundamental *protective factor* and as a key to developing *resiliency*. Students who are intrinsically motivated to learn at school seek out opportunities and challenges and go beyond requirements. In doing so, they learn more and learn more deeply than do classmates who are extrinsically motivated. Facilitating the learning of such students is fairly straightforward and meshes well with school improvements that primarily emphasize enhancing instructional practices. The motivational focus is on maintaining and enhancing their motivation.

## Meaningful, Engaged Learning

*Engaged learners  
take responsibility for  
their learning*

In recent years, researchers have formed a strong consensus on the importance of engaged learning in schools and classrooms. This consensus, together with a recognition of the changing needs of the 21st century, has stimulated the development of specific indicators of engaged learning. Jones, Valdez, Nowakowski, and Rasmussen developed the indicators described below.<sup>5</sup>

*Vision of Engaged Learning.* Successful, engaged learners are responsible for their own learning. These students are self-regulated and able to define their own learning goals and evaluate their own achievement.

*Tasks for Engaged Learning.* In order to have engaged learning, tasks need to be challenging, authentic, and multidisciplinary. Such tasks are typically complex and involve sustained amounts of time. They are authentic in that they correspond to the tasks in the home and workplaces of today and tomorrow. Collaboration around authentic tasks often takes place with peers and mentors within school as well as with family members and others in the real world outside of school. These tasks often require integrated instruction that incorporates problem-based learning and curriculum by project.

*Assessment of Engaged Learning.* Assessment of engaged learning involves presenting students with an authentic task, project, or investigation, and then observing, interviewing, and examining their presentations and artifacts to assess what they actually know and can do.

*Instructional Models & Strategies for Engaged Learning.* The most powerful models of instruction are interactive.

*Learning Context of Engaged Learning.* For engaged learning to happen, the classroom must be conceived of as a knowledge-building learning community. Such communities not only develop shared understandings collaboratively but also create empathetic learning environments that value diversity and multiple perspectives.

*Grouping for Engaged Learning.* Collaborative work that is learning-centered often involves small groups or teams of two or more students within a classroom or across classroom boundaries.

*Teacher Roles for Engaged Learning.* The role of the teacher in the classroom has shifted from the primary role of information giver to that of facilitator, guide, and learner.

*Student Roles for Engaged Learning.* One important student role is that of explorer. Interaction with the physical world and with other people allows students to discover concepts and apply skills. Students are then encouraged to reflect upon their discoveries, which is essential for the student as a cognitive apprentice.

## Concluding Comments

Whatever the initial cause of a student's lack of success at school, 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 low motivation for learning and performing.<sup>6</sup>

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 and eventual dropout.

Most students enter 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.

Part of the problem is that most school staff have been taught to think primarily in terms of extrinsic motivation (i.e., reinforcement concepts) and have had little exposure to intrinsic motivation theory and its implications for school practices.

When intrinsic motivational considerations are not well-addressed, the likelihood is that outcomes will not generalize to other situations and will only last for a brief period of time. Engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning involves matching motivation and minimizing reactance. Matching motivation requires factoring in students' perceptions in determining the right mix of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. It also requires understanding the role played by expectations related to outcomes. Without a good match, social control strategies can temporarily suppress negative attitudes and behaviors, but re-engagement in classroom learning is not guaranteed.

All this has fundamental implications for enhancing equity of opportunity and improving the well-being of young people at school and beyond. Such rethinking involves moving away from approaches that dampen student engagement and elicit misbehavior; such rethinking involves developing new directions that incorporate intrinsic motivation as a primary readiness, process, and outcome concern.<sup>7</sup>

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine (2004). *Engaging schools: Fostering high school students' motivation to learn*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- <sup>2</sup> Brehm, J. W., & Brehm, S. S. (1981). *Psychological reactance: A theory of freedom and control*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. NY: Plenum.
- <sup>3</sup> National Research Council ... (see note 1)
- <sup>4</sup> Deci, E.L. (1975). *Intrinsic motivation*. NY: Plenum.
- <sup>5</sup> Jones, B. Valdez, G. Nowakowski, J. & Rasmussen C. (1994). *Designing Learning and Technology for Educational Reform*. Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.
- <sup>6</sup> While our focus here is on students, any discussion of motivation has applications to family members and school personnel. Think about the challenge of home involvement in schooling, and think about teacher burnout and dropout; think about systemic change.
- <sup>7</sup> See *Addressing barriers to learning: In the classroom and schoolwide*.  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/barriersbook.pdf>

## Additional Resources and References

*For both a theoretical foundation and applications, see:*

Burgoon, M., Alvaro, E., Grandpre, J., & Voloudakis, M. (2002). Revisiting the theory of psychological reactance: Communicating threats to attitudinal freedom. In J. P. Dillard & M. Pfau (Eds.), *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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Dweck, C.S. (2007). The Perils and Promises of Praise. *Educational Leadership*, 65, 34–39.

Silvia, P. J. (2005). Deflecting reactance: The role of similarity in increasing compliance and reducing resistance. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 27, 227-284.

*For popularized presentations, see:*

Deci, E.L., with Flaste, R. (1995). *Why we do what we do*. NY: Penguin Books.

Pink, D. (2009). *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. NY: Riverhead Books.

*From the Center at UCLA, see*

Adelman, H.S., & Taylor, L. (2017). *Addressing barriers to learning: In the classroom and schoolwide* – new book available at this time as a free resource -- download at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/barriersbook.pdf>

Adelman, H.S., & Taylor, L. (2017). *Transforming student and learning supports: Developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system*. From Cognella <https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student-and-learning-supports-9781516512782.html>

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

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



***I hear O.K.  
I'm having trouble listening!***

## The Challenge of Ensuring Equity of Opportunity

*Our system does not distribute opportunity equitably. Our leaders decry but tolerate disparities in student outcomes that are not only unfair, but socially and economically dangerous. Our nation's stated commitments to academic excellence are often eloquent but, without more, an insufficient response to challenges at home and globally.*

The Equity and Excellence Commission\*

Major disparities exist in the educational system. Some inequities stem from differences in resources available at schools. For example, a U.S. Department of Education study reported that 45 percent of high-poverty schools received less state and local funding than was typical for other schools in their district, and students in these schools are less likely to have access to strong teachers and challenging curricula. Other inequities arise from a variety of neighborhood, family, peer, and individual barriers that interfere with school learning and affect subgroups and individuals who continue to be underserved and discriminated against (e.g., those living in poverty, racial “minorities”, females, students with disabilities). The various inequities contribute to the widely reported disparities in schooling outcomes (e.g., underserved and discriminated against students are suspended, expelled, and drop out at higher rates, and attend and complete college at far lower rates than their peers).

As the Equity and Excellence Commission stressed:

Achieving excellence in American education depends on providing access to opportunity for all children, regardless of where they live or how much money their parents make. But, many of the problems our schools face begin elsewhere—in the home and family poverty, with inadequate health care, in dangerous communities and slum housing, in peer groups, in the larger culture.

Just as teachers can't (and shouldn't be expected to) address all these matter alone; neither can the public education system. What public education can and must do is (1) play a major role in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and (2) avoid being another barrier to equity of opportunity.

From the perspective of addressing barriers, equity of opportunity for succeeding at school and beyond requires

- (a) strengthening the focus on preventing problems and promoting whole child development,
- (b) personalizing instruction (including provision for necessary special assistance and accommodations and for learning compensatory strategies),
- (c) enhancing student motivation and coping abilities for overcoming barriers/problems,
- (d) ensuring access for all students to effective support systems with an emphasis on responding quickly when a problem arises.

***Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to enabling equity of opportunity and promoting whole child development.***

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

\**For Each and Every Child – A Strategy for Education Equity and Excellence* a report from the Equity and Excellence Commission (2013). The Commission is a federal advisory committee chartered by Congress. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/eec/equity-excellence-commission-report.pdf>  
Also, see *The Challenge of Addressing Equity of Opportunity for All Students: Broadening the Work of the Equity and Excellence Commission*. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/spring13.pdf>



## Center Resources Update

### Weekly Community of Practice Exchanges

Recent exchanges explored the following topics:

- >evaluating a school's focus on cultural competency
- >staffing patterns for student & learning supports
- >involving students and families in exploring options for summer learning
- >opportunities that open-up as attendance emerges as an expanded accountability indicator
- >supports for immigrant/refugee students
- >including student voices at school

Archived at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

### Monthly ENEWS editions (the Center's electronic newsletter)

**Contains:** Emerging Issues, News from Around the Country, News from our Center (including latest resources), News About Upcoming Webinars, Conferences, and Grants, Helpful Resources, Job Opportunities, Links to Online References and Resources from a Variety of Sources.

Archived at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/enews.htm>

### Previous issues of this quarterly e-journal

Some recent articles:

- >Revitalizing Local Control: Transforming Student Supports & Enhancing Equity of Opportunity
- >Every Student Succeeds Act: Planning is an Immediate Task, But . . . Addressing Barriers to Learning is the Pressing Imperative
- >Grit — Another Buzzword?
- >Student Motivation — a Fundamental Intervention Concern!
- >Personalization: Don't Let it Become Another Buzzword
- >Absenteeism: Beyond Reporting and Beyond Special Initiatives

Archived at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/news.htm>

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### Want resources? Need technical assistance? Coaching?

Use our website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

or contact us – E-mail: [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto: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](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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Are you ambivalent?

NO! ... yes?



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

Center Staff:

*Howard Adelman, Co-Director*

*Linda Taylor, Co-Director*

*Perry Nelson, Coordinator*

*. . . and a host of students*