

# Addressing Barriers

*New ways to think . . .*

*Better ways to link*

# to Learning

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

## Re-engaging Students in Learning at School

*Student disengagement in schooling is a fundamental barrier to well-being. Thus, re-engaging students in classroom learning must be a fundamental focus for all who are concerned about learning, behavior, and emotional problems.*

**A** cornerstone of mental health in schools and other enterprises for addressing barriers to learning must incorporate strategies for *re-engaging* and then maintaining the engagement of students in classroom learning. This means that all of us must appreciate and do something about helping teachers address these matters. It is absolutely essential to do so if the phrase “leave no child behind” is to have real meaning.

An unfortunate reality is that strategies for ensuring no child is left behind differ in different schools. Take *teaching* for example. In general, teaching involves being able to apply strategies focused on content to be taught and knowledge and skills to be acquired – with some degree of attention given to the process of engaging students. This works fine in schools where most students come each day ready and able to deal with what the teacher is ready and able to teach.

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Indeed, teachers are blessed when they have a classroom where the majority of students show up and are receptive to the planned lessons.

In schools that are the greatest focus of public criticism, this certainly is not the case. What most of us realize, at least at some level, is that teachers in such settings are confronted with an entirely different teaching situation. Among the various supports they absolutely must have are ways to re-engage students who have become disengaged and often resistant to broad-band teaching approaches. To the dismay of most teachers, however, approaches for re-engaging students in *learning* rarely are a prominent part of pre or in-service preparation and seldom are the focus of strategies pursued by professionals whose role is to support teachers and students.

### What is Happening in Schools Currently?

It is commonplace to find that, when a student is not engaged in the lessons at hand, the youngster may engage in activity that disrupts. Teachers and other staff try to cope. The emphasis is on classroom management. At one time, a heavy dose of punishment was the dominant approach. Currently, the stress is on more positive practices designed to provide “behavior support” (including a variety of out-of-the-classroom interventions). For the most part, however, the strategies are applied as a form of *social control* aimed directly at stopping disruptive behavior. An often stated assumption is that stopping the behavior will make the student amenable to teaching. In a few cases, this may be so. However, the assumption ignores all the work that has led to understanding *psychological reactance*. Moreover, it belies the reality that so many students continue to do poorly in terms of academic achievement and the fact that dropout rates continue to be staggering.

The argument sometimes is made that the above problems simply reflect the failure of the system to do a good job in implementing social control and other socialization practices. But, probably the more basic system failure is how little attention is directed at

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helping teachers engage and maintain the engagement of students in learning. And, when they encounter a student who has disengaged and is misbehaving, the need shouldn't be first and foremost on social control but on strategies that have the greatest likelihood of re-engaging the student in classroom learning.

### **It's About Motivation – Especially Intrinsic Motivation**

Engaging and re-engaging students in learning, of course, is the facet of teaching that draws on what is known about human motivation. What is widely taught as good strategies for dealing with student misbehavior seldom reflects what most of us intuitively understand about human motivation. In particular, intuitive understanding of the importance of intrinsic motivation gives way to over-dependence on reinforcement theory.

Let's review some basics. Learning is a result of the transactions between learner and environment. The essence of teaching is creating an environment that first can mobilize the learner to pursue the curriculum and then can maintain that mobilization, while effectively facilitating learning. And, when a student disengages, re-engagement in learning depends on use of interventions that reduce factors that interfere with and enhance those that increase interest and/or capability.

Of course, no teacher, parent, or counselor can control all the key motivational factors. Indeed, as interveners, we can actually affect only a relatively small segment of the physical environment and social context in which learning occurs. In doing so, we try to maximize the likelihood that opportunities to learn are a good fit with the current capabilities of a given student. And, we should also place the same emphasis on matching individual differences in motivation. This means, for example, attending to:

**C Motivation as a readiness concern.** Optimal performance and learning require motivational readiness. The absence of such readiness can cause and/or maintain problems. If a student does not have enough motivational readiness, strategies must be implemented to develop it (including ways to reduce avoidance motivation). Readiness should not be viewed in the old sense of waiting until an individual is interested. Rather, it should be understood in the contemporary sense of establishing environments that are perceived by students as caring, supportive places and as offering stimulating activities that are valued and challenging, and doable.

### **C Motivation as a key ongoing process concern.**

Many students are caught up in novelty when a subject is new, but after a few lessons, interest often wanes. Students may be motivated by the idea of obtaining a given outcome but may not be motivated to pursue certain processes and thus may not pay attention or may try to avoid them. Students may be motivated to start to work on overcoming their problems but may not maintain their motivation. Strategies must be designed to elicit, enhance, and maintain motivation so that a student stays mobilized.

**C Minimizing negative motivation and avoidance reactions as process and outcome concerns.** Teachers and others at a school not only must try to increase motivation – especially intrinsic motivation – but also take care to avoid or at least minimize conditions that decrease motivation or produce negative motivation. For example, care must be taken not to over-rely on extrinsics to entice and reward because to do so may decrease intrinsic motivation. At times, school is seen as unchallenging, uninteresting, overdemanding, overwhelming, overcontrolling, nonsupportive, or even hostile. When this happens, a student may develop negative attitudes and avoidance related to a given situation (and over time) related to school and all it represents.

**C Enhancing intrinsic motivation as a basic outcome concern.** It is essential to enhance motivation as an outcome so the desire to pursue a given area (e.g., reading) increasingly is a positive intrinsic attitude that mobilizes learning outside the teaching situation. Achieving such an outcome involves use of strategies that do not overrely on extrinsic rewards and that do enable students to play a meaningful role in making decisions related to valued options. In effect, enhancing intrinsic motivation is a fundamental *protective factor* and is the key to developing *resiliency*.

*Increasing intrinsic motivation involves affecting a student's thoughts, feelings, and decisions. In general, the intent is to use procedures that can potentially reduce negative and increase positive feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies with respect to learning. For learning and behavior problems, this means especially identifying and minimizing experiences that maintain or may increase avoidance motivation. This especially means avoiding processes that make students feel controlled and coerced, that limit the range of options with regard to materials, and that limit the focus to a day-in, day-out emphasis on problems to be remedied. Such processes are likely to produce avoidance reactions and thus reduce opportunities for positive learning and for development of positive attitudes.*

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## Center News



Now Online!!

### **Guidebook: MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS**

The Center has again updated and for the first time put on the internet this introductory guide which focuses on where the MH facets of school-based health centers (SBHCs) fit into the work of schools.

- C Module I addresses problems related to sparse center resources (e.g., limited finances) and how to maximize resource use and impact
- C Module II focuses on matters related to working with students (consent, confidentiality, problem identification, prereferral interventions, screening/assessment, referral, counseling, prevention/mental health education, responding to crises, management of care)
- C Module III explores quality improvement, evaluating outcomes, and getting credit for all you do

Each module is organized into a set of units with many resource aids (sample forms and special exhibits, questionnaires, interviews, screening indicators) for use as part of the day-by-day SBHC operational focus on mental health and psychosocial concerns.

DOWNLOAD - entire guidebook (1.4M; 504pp) or in sections – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> (or order a hardcopy for \$30.00)

### **Weekly Listserv for School MH Practitioners and the Center's Consultation Cadre**

Want to exchange info on MH practices in school and also network with colleagues across the country?

If you aren't already part of the practitioners' listserv, contact the Center to sign up. (See Center contact info on next page.)

### **Screening/Assessing Students: Indicators & Tools**

This resource packet has been updated. Besides delineating indicators and specific tools, it addresses the debate about screening and provides guidelines to minimize misidentification. Download at no cost from the Center website or order a hard copy.

## **NEW ONLINE TRAINING RESOURCES**

The Center is pleased to announce a new initiative to enhance inservice efforts at schools related to mental health and psychosocial concerns. We are developing and putting online two major forms of assistance:

**C QUICK TRAINING AIDS** – Each of these offers a brief set of resources to guide an inservice staff development session. (They also are a form of quick self-tutorial.) The format for each includes (a) key talking points for a short training session, (b) a brief overview of the topic, (c) fact sheets, (d) tools, and (e) a sampling of other related info and resources.

The first four are now online (and available in hard copy). They are:

- > *Bullying Prevention*
- > *School-Based Crisis Intervention*
- > *Suicide Prevention*
- > *Violence Prevention*

**C TRAINING TUTORIALS** – These are designed as self-directed opportunities for more in-depth learning. They can be used as self-tutorials or a guide for training others. Each includes (a) initial resources to “preheat” the process, (b) three focused reading/activity sessions, and (c) follow-up for ongoing learning.

Seven are now online (and in hard copy).

- > *Classroom Changes to Enhance and Reengage Students in Learning*
- > *Community Outreach: School-Community Resources to Address Barriers to Learning*
- > *Creating the Infrastructure for an Enabling (Learning Support) Component to Address Barriers to Learning*
- > *Crisis Assistance and Prevention: Reducing Barriers to Learning*
- > *Home Involvement in Schooling*
- > *Student and Family Assistance Programs & Services to Address Barriers to Learning*
- > *Support for Transitions to Address Barriers to Learning*

We invite you to look at all these new resources (<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>) and provide feedback for improving them; also, propose topics you would like us to develop into Quick Training Aids. (In compiling resource material, the Center tries to identify those that represent “best practice” standards. If you know of better material, please let us know so that we can make improvements.)

You may also want to check to see if you can use any of these for continuing education credit.

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## Want resources? Need technical assistance?

Contact us at:

E-mail: [smhp@ucla.edu](mailto:smhp@ucla.edu) Ph: (310) 825-3634

Write: Center for Mental Health in Schools  
Department of Psychology, UCLA  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

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

If you're not receiving our monthly electronic newsletter (ENEWS), send an E-mail request to:

[listserv@listserv.ucla.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.ucla.edu)

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

**FOR THOSE WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS, ALL RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE BY CONTACTING THE CENTER.**

Also, if you want to submit comments and info for us to circulate, use the insert form in this newsletter or contact us directly by mail, phone, E-mail, or the Net Exchange on our website.

## DO YOU KNOW ABOUT?

### School Support Staff Restructuring

Colleagues have been pointing out significant changes taking place in how schools are using support staff. For example, one district superintendent is proposing the following reorganization at a large high school:

"We currently have 8 academic counselors, 1 transition counselor, 2 college advisors, and 1 dean of students. While these positions have served the school over the last 30 or so years, they are not optimizing the level of service for our current student body...I propose we redesign the 'former' counselor type position in a way that provides 12 Student Service Coordinators. These administrative positions will serve a number of functions which will dramatically increase direct service to students and families. The total modest increase in staffing allotment will actually result in a reduced student/coordinator case load to approximately 275 per coordinator. This is a dramatic improvement over the current structure. These coordinators would also serve as direct family/school support personnel."

It's important that we all start attending to and discussing the various changes taking place and what they mean for the long-term. Are you experiencing any similar

reorganizations of support positions in your district? What do you think about this reorganization? Strengths? Advantages? Challenges?

### IDEA Reauthorization

President Bush's commission is in the process of formulating recommendations to reform the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) when it is reauthorized next year. In an article in the L.A. Times (12/26/01), Chester Finn, Jr. and Andrew Rotherham lay out their view of the issues and the "reforms" they advocate. These include "streamlining" special education categories, stressing the prevention of reading problems, screening for early identification, ending "double standards" for student discipline, eliminating "red tape" for charter schools, and more.

Now is the time to generate discussion and appropriate input. What are your views? Post them directly on our website's NET EXCHANGE page for others to read and respond. Go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> Or you can send your response by email to: [smhp@ucla.edu](mailto:smhp@ucla.edu)

### Special Institute on Developing School-Based Responses to Crisis/Trauma/Disaster

Our sister center, the *Center for School Mental Health Assistance (CSMHA)*, will hold a one-day institute designed as an intensive training and forum for discussion to address the full continuum of crisis/trauma/disaster response. This special institute will be on September 18 as part of CSMHA's National Conference on *Advancing School Based Mental Health Programs* which will take place on September 19-21 in Philadelphia. For further information, contact CSMHA at 888/706-0980, email [csmha@psych.umaryland.edu](mailto:csmha@psych.umaryland.edu), or visit the website at <http://csmha.umaryland.edu>

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You know you are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when you are in contact with folks all over the world via the Internet, but you haven't spoken to your next door neighbor in years.

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***If we replace anonymity with community, sorting with support, and bureaucracy with autonomy, we can create systems of schools that truly help all students achieve.***

Tom Vander Ark

Center Staff:

*Howard Adelman, Co-Director  
Linda Taylor, Co-Director  
Perry Nelson, Coordinator  
... and a host of graduate  
and undergraduate students*

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## Two Key Components of Motivation: Valuing and Expectations

*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

Two common reasons people give for not bothering to learn something are "It's not worth it" and "I know I won't be able to do it." In general, the amount of time and energy spent on an activity seems dependent on how much the activity is valued by the person and on the person's expectation that what is valued will be attained without too much cost.

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

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

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

It is important to remember that what makes some extrinsic factor rewarding is the fact that it is experienced by the recipient as a reward. What makes it a highly valued reward is that the recipient highly values it. If someone doesn't like candy, there is not much point in offering it as a reward. Furthermore, because the use of extrinsics has limits, it's fortunate that people often do things even without apparent extrinsic

reason. In fact, a lot of what people learn and spend time doing is done for intrinsic reasons. *Curiosity* is a good example. Curiosity seems to be an innate quality that leads us to seek stimulation, avoid boredom, and learn a great deal.

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

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

**About Expectations.** We may value something a great deal; but if we believe we can't do it or can't obtain it without paying too great a personal price, we are likely to look for other valued activities and outcomes to pursue. Expectations about these matters are influenced by previous experiences.

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

*In general, then, what we value interacts with our expectations, and motivation is one product of this interaction (see next page).*

There are many intervention implications for all staff to derive from understanding intrinsic motivation. For example, mobilizing and maintaining student motivation depends on how a classroom program addresses concerns about valuing and expectations. Schools and classrooms that offer a broad range of opportunities (e.g., content, outcomes, procedural options) and involve students in decision making are best equipped to meet the challenge.

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*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*

Margaret Mead

### A Bit of Theory

Motivation theory has many facets. At the risk of over simplifying things, the following discussion is designed to make a few big points.

E x V

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

Hint: the "x" is a multiplication sign.

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

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

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

David greatly values the idea of improving his reading. He is unhappy with his limited skills and knows he would feel a lot better about himself if he could read. But, as far as he is concerned, everything his reading teacher asks him to do is a waste of time. He's done it all before, and he *still* has a reading problem. Sometimes he will do the exercises, but just to earn points to go on a field trip and to avoid the consequences of not cooperating. Often, however, he tries to get out of doing his work by distracting the teacher. After all, why should he do things he is certain won't help him read any better.

*(Expectancy x Valuing = Motivation 0 x 1.0 = 0)*

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

*(Expectancy x Valuing = Motivation 1.0 x 0 = 0)*

*Motivation is not something that can be determined solely by forces outside the individual. Others can plan activities and outcomes to influence motivation and learning; however, how the activities and outcomes are experienced determines whether they are pursued (or avoided) with a little or a lot of effort and ability. Appropriate appreciation of this fact is necessary in designing a match for optimal learning and performance.*

## Overreliance on Extrinsic: A Bad Match

A growing appreciation of the importance of a student's perceptions has led researchers to important findings about some undesired effects resulting from overreliance on extrinsics. Would offering you a reward for reading this material make you more highly motivated? Maybe. But a reward might also reduce your motivation for pursuing the topic in the future. Why might this happen? You might perceive the proposed reward as an effort to control your behavior. Or you may see it as an indication that the activity needs to be rewarded to make you want to do it. Such perceptions may start you thinking and feeling differently about what you have been doing. For example, you may start to resent the effort to control or bribe you. Or you may begin to think there must be something wrong with the activity if someone has to offer a reward for doing it. Also, later you may come to feel that the topic is not worth pursuing any longer because no reward is being offered.

Any of these thoughts and feelings may cause you to shift the intrinsic value you originally placed on learning about the topic. The point is that extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic reasons for doing things. Although this may not always be a bad thing, it is an important consideration in deciding to rely on extrinsic reinforcers.

Because of the prominent role they play in school programs, grading, testing, and other performance evaluations are a special concern in any discussion of the overreliance on extrinsics as a way to reinforce positive learning. Although grades often are discussed as simply providing information about how well a student is doing, many, if not most, students perceive each grade as a reward or a punishment.

The point for emphasis here is that engaging and re-engaging students in learning involves matching motivation. Matching motivation requires an appreciation of the importance of a student's perceptions in determining the right mix of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. It also requires understanding the key role played by expectations related to outcome.

## Re-Engagement in School Learning

For motivated students, facilitating learning is a fairly straightforward matter and fits well with school improvements that primarily emphasize enhancing instructional practices. The focus is on helping establish ways for students who are motivationally ready and able to achieve and, in the process, maintain and hopefully enhance their motivation. The process involves knowing when, how, and what to teach and also knowing when and how to structure the situation so they can learn on their own. However, students who manifest learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems often have developed extremely

### Rewards -- To Control or Inform?

As Ed Deci has cogently 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 him 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.

negative perceptions of teachers, programs, and school in general. Any effort to re-engage these students must begin by recognizing such perceptions. That is, the first step in addressing the problem is for the school leadership to acknowledge its nature and scope. Then, school support staff and teachers must work together to pursue a major initiative focused on re-engaging those who have become disengaged and reversing conditions that led to the problem.

Given appropriate commitment in policy and practice, there are four general strategies we recommend for all working with disengaged students (e.g., teachers, support staff, administrators):

***Clarifying student perceptions of the problem*** – Talk openly with students about why they have become disengaged so that steps can be planned for how to alter the negative perceptions of disengaged students and prevent others from developing such perceptions.

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**Reframing school learning** – In the case of those who have become disengaged, it is unlikely that they will be open to schooling that looks like "the same old thing." Major changes in approach are required if they are even to perceive that anything has changed. Minimally, exceptional efforts must be made to have 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 procedures can be effective – especially those designed to help correct specific problems.

**Renegotiating involvement in school learning** – New and mutual agreements must be developed and evolved over time through conferences with the student and where appropriate including parents. 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. For the process to be most effective, 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. In all this, it is essential to remember that effective decision making is a basic skill (as fundamental as the three Rs). Thus, if a student does not do well initially, this is not a reason to move away from student involvement in decision making. Rather, it is an assessment of a need and a reason to use the process not only for motivational purposes but also to improve this basic skill.

**Reestablishing and maintaining an appropriate working relationship** (e.g., through creating a sense of trust, open communication, providing support and direction as needed).

In applying the above strategies, maintaining re-engagement and preventing disengagement requires a continuous focus on:

- C ensuring that the processes and content minimize threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to valued others, maximize such feelings, and highlight accomplishments (included here is an emphasis on a school enhancing public perception that it is a welcoming, caring, safe, and just institution)
- C guiding motivated practice (e.g., providing opportunities for meaningful applications and clarifying ways to organize practice)
- C providing continuous information on learning and performance

- C providing opportunities for continued application and generalization (e.g., ways in which students can pursue additional, self-directed learning or can arrange for additional support and direction)

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

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### Key Challenges for Support Staff, Teachers, & Administrators

- C Minimize student disengagement and maximize re-engagement by moving school culture toward a greater focus on intrinsic motivation
  - C Minimize psychological reactance and enhance perceptions that lead to re-engagement in learning at school by rethinking social control practices
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### Resource and Training Aids

The Center has developed a set of continuing education modules and an accompanying set of readings and tools entitled: *Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom-Focused Enabling*. Facets of these modules are incorporated into a Training Tutorial entitled: *Classroom Changes to Enhance & Re-engage Students in Learning* and a forthcoming Quick Training Aid on re-engaging students. These are downloadable at no cost from the website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> or ordered as hard copy. Also, you will find many resources relevant to this topic on the website's QuickFind search. And, you can access other related resources through the Center's "Gateway to a World of Resources."

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## Lessons Learned



### Crisis Debriefing

Scott Poland wants to share some lessons learned about crisis debriefing in schools. (Poland is Dir. of Psychological Services for Cypress-Fairbanks Indep. School District in Houston, past president of the National Association of School Psychologists, and a past chair and current member of the National Emergency Assistance Team). We are pleased to pass his thoughts on to you. Of course, we realize that the nature and form of crisis debriefing remains controversial. Thus, we also are interested in airing different views about debriefing practices.

Scott Poland has been assisting in crisis aftermath across the country. He states: "School administrators sometimes underestimate the emotional impact of the tragedy and the need for faculty and students to have the opportunity to process the tragedy. Higher rates of PTSD in particular have been found with exposure to violence versus national disasters (Brock, Sandoval, & Lewis, 2001). School support personnel such as school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses are aware of the need for processing sessions but are sometimes uncertain how to proceed."

Given time constraints and the need to focus on groups of high school students and adults, Poland stresses the importance of encouraging participants to relate:

- (1) where they were when they first became aware of the tragedy and specifically what they recall related to their initial sensory perceptions (what they saw, heard, tasted, touched, smelled)
- (2) their thoughts or reactions since the tragedy
- (3) their biggest concern or worry about the immediate future
- (4) what would help them feel safer right now
- (5) what has helped them cope in the past in dealing with difficult life events and what they can do to help themselves cope now.

Procedurally, each of these matters is dealt with in sequence around the group. A summary is made by the leader after each topic "with emphasis being placed on the commonality of what everyone has experienced and that no one is alone." Poland recommends focusing on the school faculty first if possible so they can better assist students. Recognizing the limitations of such a session, he stresses that an invitation should be extended to those needing additional assistance and that a handout be available with information about coping (and with information about referral resources).

For more information, Poland indicates you can contact him at 713/460-7835 or PolandNASP@aol.com

He also recommends contacting the National Organization for Victim Assistance about its NOVA model (800/TRY-NOVA).

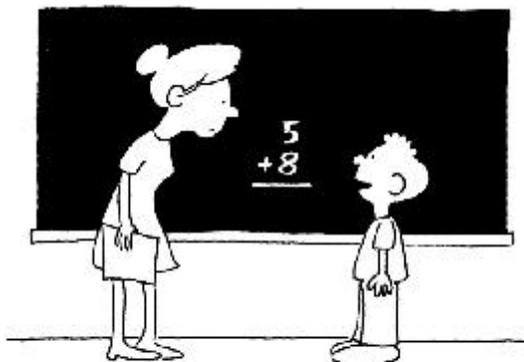
Cited reference is: S. Brock, J. Sandoval, & S. Lewis (2001). *Preparing for crisis in the schools*. New York: Wiley & Sons.

### Principles for School-Based Services

Gary Melton, Director of the *Institute on Family & Neighborhood Life* at Clemson University wants to share the following principles composed by the Leadership Team for Ecologically Oriented Service in the Anderson School District 5.

1. Services should take place in natural settings whenever possible and should adapt to, and take advantage of, those settings. (Stated differently, school-based services should also be school-oriented.)
2. Services should promote generalization and long-term maintenance of behavior change.
3. Services should emphasize the positive and should build on systemic resources.
4. Services should focus in part on creation of systems to support positive family-school relationships.
5. Services should reflect a long-term developmental view, consistent with the 13 or 14 years of school involvement that most children and their families have.
6. Service definitions, record-keeping rules, and other administrative procedures should flow logically from service principles.
7. Providers should have a commitment to evidence-based practice.

The document outlining these seven principles also provides the rationale and major implications for each. For convenient access, we have placed the full document on our website. Go to the Quick Find search, scroll down to the topic School-linked Services, and click. Also, see the Policy Leadership Cadre's *Mental Health in Schools: Guidelines, Models, Resources & Policy Considerations*.



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

## Ideas into Practice



As described on p. 3, we are developing Quick Training Aids. See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>  
The following is from the one entitled: *School Based Crisis Intervention* and exemplifies the type of “tools” we are including in these resources.

### A Crisis Screening Interview

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Note identified problem:

Is the student seeking help? Yes No

If not, what were the circumstances that brought the student to the interview?

-----

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: M F Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Current class \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_ Primary Language \_\_\_\_\_

*We are concerned about how things are going for you. Our talk today will help us to discuss what's going O.K. and what's not going so well. If you want me to keep what we talk about secret, I will do so – except for those things that I need to discuss with others in order to help you. In answering, please provide as much detail as you can. At times, I will ask you to tell me a bit more about your thoughts and feelings.*

1. Where were you when the event occurred? (Directly at the site? nearby? out of the area?)
2. What did you see or hear about what happened?
3. How are you feeling now?
4. How well do you know those who were involved?
5. Has anything like this happened to you or any of your family before?
6. How do you think this will affect you in the days to come? (How will your life be different now?)
7. How do you think this will affect your family in the days to come?
8. What bothers you the most about what happened?
9. Do you think anyone could have done something to prevent it? Yes No Who?
10. Thinking back on what happened, (not at all) (a little) (more than a little) (very much)
 

how angry do you feel about it?	1	2	3	4
how sad do you feel about it?	1	2	3	4
how guilty do you feel about it?	1	2	3	4
how scared do you feel?	1	2	3	4
11. What changes have there been in your life or routine because of what happened?
12. What new problems have you experienced since the event?
13. What is your most pressing problem currently?
14. Do you think someone should be punished for what happened? Yes No Who?
15. Is this a matter of getting even or seeking revenge? Yes No  
Who should do the punishing?
16. What other information do you want regarding what happened?
17. Do you think it would help you to talk to someone about how you feel about what happened?  
Yes No Who? How soon?  
Is this something we should talk about now? Yes No What is it?
18. What do you usually do when you need help with a personal problem?
19. Which friends and who at home can you talk to about this?
20. What are you going to do when you leave school today?  
If you are uncertain, let's talk about what you should do?



## WHAT IS A RESOURCE COORDINATING TEAM?

Every school that wants to improve its systems for providing student support needs a mechanism that focuses specifically on improving resource use and enhancement. A *Resource Coordinating Team* is a vital form of such a mechanism.

Most schools have teams that focus on individual student/family problems (e.g., a student support team, an IEP team). These teams focus on such functions as referral, triage, and care monitoring or management. In contrast to this case-by-case focus, a school's *Resource Coordinating Team* can take responsibility for enhancing use of all resources available to the school for addressing barriers to student learning and promoting healthy development. This includes analyzing how existing resources are deployed and clarifying how they can be used to build a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach. It also integrally involves the community with a view to integrating human and financial resources from public and private sectors to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

### What are its functions?

A Resource Coordinating Team performs essential functions related to the implementation and ongoing development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach for addressing barriers to student learning and promoting healthy development.

Examples of key functions are:

- , Mapping resources at school and in the community
- , Analyzing resources
- , Identifying the most pressing program development needs at the school
- , Coordinating and integrating school resources & connecting with community resources
- , Establishing priorities for strengthening programs and developing new ones
- , Planning and facilitating ways to strengthen and develop new programs and systems
- , Recommending how resources should be deployed and redeployed
- , Developing strategies for enhancing resources
- , "Social marketing"

Related to the concept of an Enabling (Learning Support) Component, these functions are pursued within frameworks that outline six curriculum content areas and

the comprehensive continuum of interventions needed to develop a comprehensive, multifaceted approach to student support that is integrated fully into the fabric of the school.

### Who's on a Resource Coordinating Team?

A Resource Coordinating Team might begin with only two people. Where feasible, it should expand into an inclusive group of informed stakeholders who are able and willing. This would include the following:

- C Principal or assistant principal
- C School Psychologist
- C Counselor
- C School Nurse
- C School Social Worker
- C Behavioral Specialist
- C Special education teacher
- C Representatives of community agencies involved regularly with the school
- C Student representation (when appropriate and feasible)
- C Others who have a particular interest and ability to help with the functions

It is important to integrate the RCT with the infrastructure mechanisms at the school focused on instruction and management/governance. For example, the school administrator on the team must represent the team at administrative meetings; there also should be a representative at governance meetings; and another should represent the team at a Resource Coordinating *Council* formed for the feeder pattern of schools.

### References:

- Adelman, H.S. (1993). School-linked mental health interventions: Toward mechanisms for service coordination and integration. *Journal of Community Psychology, 21*, 309-319.
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- Rosenblum, L., DiCecco, M.B., Taylor, L., & Adelman, H.S. (1995). Upgrading school support programs through collaboration: Resource Coordinating Teams. *Social Work in Education, 17*, 117-124.

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The center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563 Phone: (310) 825-3634.

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Excerpts from: *High-Stakes Testing for Dentists??  
What Dentists and Teachers Have in Common*

by John S. Taylor, Superintendent of Schools,  
Lancaster County School District, South Carolina

My dentist is great! He sends me reminders so I don't forget checkups. He uses the latest techniques based on research. He never hurts me, and I've got all my teeth, so when I ran into him the other day, I was eager to see if he'd heard about the new state program. I knew he'd think it was great. "Did you hear about the new state program to measure the effectiveness of dentists with their young patients?" I said. "No," he said. He didn't seem too thrilled. "How will they do that?"

"It's quite simple," I said. "They will just count the number of cavities each patient has at age 10, 14, & 18 and average that to determine a dentist's rating. Dentists will be rated as Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average, and Unsatisfactory. That way parents will know which are the best dentists. It will also encourage the less effective dentists to get better," I said. "Poor dentists who don't improve could lose their licenses to practice ...."

"That's terrible" he said.

"What? That's not a good attitude," I said. "Don't you think we should try to improve children's dental health..?"

"Sure I do," he said, "but that's not a fair way to determine who is practicing good dentistry."

"Why not?" I said. "It makes perfect sense to me."

"Well, it's so obvious," he said. "Don't you see that dentists don't all work with the same clientele; so much depends on things we can't control? "For example," he said, "I work in a rural area with a high percentage of patients from deprived homes, while some of my

colleagues work in upper-middle-class neighborhoods. Many of the parents I work with don't bring their children to see me until there is some kind of problem and I don't get to do much preventative work. "Also," he said, "many of the parents I serve let their kids eat way too much candy from a young age, unlike more educated parents who understand the relationship between sugar and decay. "To top it all off," he added, "so many of my clients have well water which is untreated and has no fluoride in it. Do you have any idea how much difference early use of fluoride can make?"

"It sounds like you're making excuses," I said.

"I am not!" he said. "My best patients are as good as anyone's, my work is as good as anyone's, but my average cavity count is going to be higher than a lot of other dentists because I chose to work where I am needed most."

... "In a system like this, I will end up being rated average, below average or worse. "My more educated patients who see these ratings may believe this so-called rating actually is a measure of my ability and proficiency as a dentist. They may leave me, and I'll be left with only the neediest patients. And my cavity average score will get even worse. "On top of that, how will I attract good dental hygienists and other excellent dentists to my practice if it is labeled below average?" . . .

"There you go again," I said. "You aren't acting professionally at all."

"You don't get it," he said. "Doing this would be like grading schools and teachers on an average score on a test of children's progress without regard to influences outside the school, the home, the community served, and stuff like that. Why would they do something so unfair to dentists? No one would ever think of doing that to schools." . . . "I'm going to write my representatives and senator. I'll use the school analogy, surely they'll see my point." . . .

Use the enclosed response form to ask for what you need and to give us feedback.  
And, please send us information, ideas, and materials for the Clearinghouse.

**School Mental Health Project/  
Center for Mental Health in Schools  
Department of Psychology, UCLA  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563**

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## Response Form (Newsletter, Winter, 2002)

UCLA

- (1) **Want a free copy of one of our new Quick Training Aids or Training Tutorials?**  
(see description on page 3 of the Newsletter; access at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>)

Because these training materials represent a major new initiative, we are seeking any and all feedback for improving these first attempts. (In compiling resource material, the Center tries to identify those that represent "best practice" standards. If you know of better material, please let us know about them as well as providing other suggestions so that we can make improvements.) You can use this form to provide feedback if it is not extensive. (Please indicate resources names.) To show our appreciation for your taking time to provide feedback, we will be pleased to send you a hard copy of one of these new aids; just indicate the name of the one you want.

- (2) If you have any resource requests, list them below.

- (3) As always, we welcome your feedback on any facets of the Center's operations.

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Agency \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Thanks for completing this form.** Return it by FAX to (310) 206-8716 *or* in a separate envelope.

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