Continuing Education Units

Personalizing Learning and Addressing Barriers to Learning: Two Continuing Education Units *

UNIT II: More is Needed to Address Barriers to Learning

(July, 2012)

*Unit I: **Personalizing Learning**

Access at: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/personalizeI.pdf

*Unit II: **More is Needed to Address Barriers to Learning**

Access at: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/persII.pdf

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Preface

Our Center is committed to enhancing continuing education in general and professional development in particular. At this time, we are primarily designing content and tools to aid districts and schools as they move to personalize learning, address barriers to learning and teaching, and re-engage disconnected students. We provide these resources at no cost through our website.*

Eventually, we will explore ways to provide continuing education credit. For now, our hope is that locals will be able to build the resources into their professional development and provide "credit" as appropriate.

We view all our efforts as works in progress and invite you to share your ideas about how to improve our existing resources and feel free to suggest additional resources you would like to see us develop.

*See our Center's resources and materials at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/materials/resources.htm
Everything on the site is free for downloading.

Personalizing Learning and Addressing Barriers to Learning

Introduction to Unit II

As discussed in Unit I, policy makers have embraced the concept of personalized learning, but personnel preparation for most school personnel has not included an in-depth focus on this matter. Moreover, discussions of personalized learning often leave the impression that the process is mainly about incorporating technological innovations. To address these matters, Unit I provides some background, commonly used definitions, and guidance for personalizing learning.

Unfortunately, for the most part, discussions of personalized learning also fail to place the practices within the context of other conditions that must be improved in classrooms and schoolwide to address factors interfering with student learning and performance.

Both units are designed to help schools move forward in personalizing learning as an approach that reflects the reality that learning is a nonlinear, dynamic, transactional, and spiraling process, and so is teaching. Personalization strives to meet learners where they are – both in terms of current capabilities and motivation. And while personalized learning provides a sound approach to teaching, classrooms also need to offer special assistance whenever students need something more and schools need to develop a unified and comprehensive system to address common barriers to teaching and learning and to re-engage disconnected students. To address these matters, Unit II highlights barriers to learning and teaching and classroom and school-wide strategies that build on personalization to address such barriers and re-engage disconnected students.

As aids for personnel development, each unit begins with a set of overview questions to guide independent study and community of learners' discussions. Additional questions for reflection and discussion and specific activities are included throughout. A few topics are amplified with brief readings; other resources that can deepen learning and provide specific aids are referenced throughout and listed at the end of each unit. A description and examples of a set of self-study surveys also is appended to Unit II.

We invite you to contact us about any questions or concerns that arise as you pursue these Units. Email: Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Unit II: More is Needed to Address Barriers to Learning

A. Barriers to Learning and Teaching

B. A Sequential and Hierarchical Classroom-Based Approach

C. Minimizing Disengagement and Facilitating Re-engagement

D. Minimize Psychological Reactance

E. Addressing Barriers to Learning: A Schoolwide System of Learning Supports

About Self-Study Surveys & One Example

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

Overview Questions To Guide Learning

(1) What is special assistance and when is it needed??

(2) Why should personalized instruction remain in place after it becomes necessary to implement specialized assistance?

(3) What is a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports?

To promote active learning, we recommend keeping a *Learning Log* to note key insights, ideas, practices, observations, and general reflections and changes you want to see incorporated into classrooms and schoolwide.

Unit II. More is Needed to Address Barriers to Learning

As stressed in Unit I, the intent of personalizing instruction is to be highly responsive to learner differences in both motivation and development and, in the process, enhance a caring learning environment. Some students, however, require something more. This is most obvious for students with certain disabilities.

Clear recognition of this group is found in the common cores state standards initiative which includes an "application to students with disabilities." As McNulty and Gloeckler (2011) state: "Language in the Common Core State Standards outlines the areas that must be available to students receiving special education services in order for them to demonstrate their conceptual and procedural knowledge and skills in English language arts (including reading, writing, listening, and speaking) as well as in mathematics." Areas emphasized are (1) supports and related services to meet unique needs of students with disabilities and "enable their access to the general education curriculum" (e.g., instructional strategies based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning, accommodations, assistive technology devices and services), (2) an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to facilitate attainment of grade-level academic standards, and (3) qualified personnel "to deliver high-quality, evidence-based, individualized instruction and support services."

Because of IDEA, applications to students with disabilities are mandated. But what about the many others who, at some time or another, bring problems with them that affect their learning and perhaps interfere with the teacher's efforts to teach? In some geographic areas, many youngsters bring a wide range of problems stemming from restricted opportunities associated with poverty and low income, difficult and diverse family circumstances, high rates of mobility, lack of English language skills, violent neighborhoods, problems related to substance abuse, inadequate health care, and lack of enrichment opportunities. Such problems are exacerbated as youngsters internalize the frustrations of confronting barriers and the debilitating effects of performing poorly at school. In some locales, the reality often is that over 50% of students are not succeeding. And, in most schools in these locales, teachers are ill-prepared and poorly supported to address the problems in a potent manner.

A. Barriers to Learning and Teaching

To be clear about the phrase *barriers to learning and teaching*: While there are many schools where the majority of students are doing just fine, in any school there are youngsters who are failing; and in too many schools, particularly those serving lower income families, large numbers of students are doing poorly. Much of what is addressed by the state standards movement is relevant to correcting the problem. What's missing, however, is critical, and improving the standards requires a full appreciation of barriers to learning and teaching (see Guide II-a). Teachers who do not understand the implications of such risk-producing conditions are unlikely to design an effective program for a significant number of students.

Guide II-a. **Examples of Risk-Producing Conditions that Can be Barriers to Learning**

Environmental Conditions*			**Person Factors***
Neighborhood	***Family***	***School and Peers***	***Individual***
>extreme economic deprivation	>chronic poverty	>poor quality school	>medical problems
>community disorganization, including high levels of mobility	>conflict/disruptions/violence	>negative encounters with teachers	>low birth weight/ neurodevelopmental delay
>violence, drugs, etc.	>substance abuse	>negative encounters with peers &/or inappropriate peer models	>psychophysiological problems
>minority and/or immigrant status	>models problem behavior		>difficult temperament & adjustment problems
	>abusive caretaking		>inadequate nutrition
	>inadequate provision for quality child care		

*A reciprocal determinist view of behavior recognizes the interplay of environment and person variables.

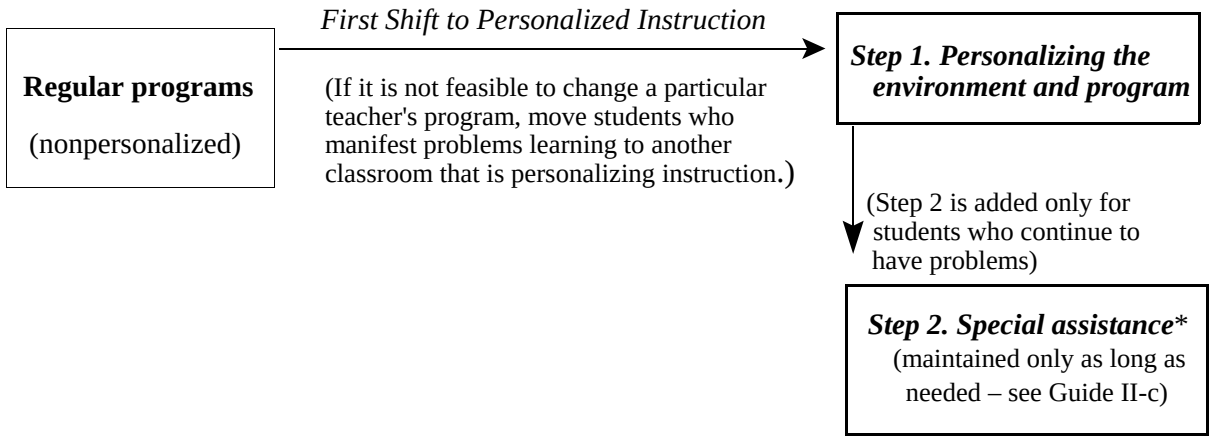
B. A Sequential and Hierarchical Classroom-Based Approach

When students require more than personalized instruction, it is essential to address the problem immediately. That is, with personalized instruction in place, the next step involves providing special assistance as needed.

We illustrate this in Guide II-b. Note that this second step is introduced only if learners continue to have problems. As outlined in Guide II-c, step 2 involves three levels of focus.

Guide II-b

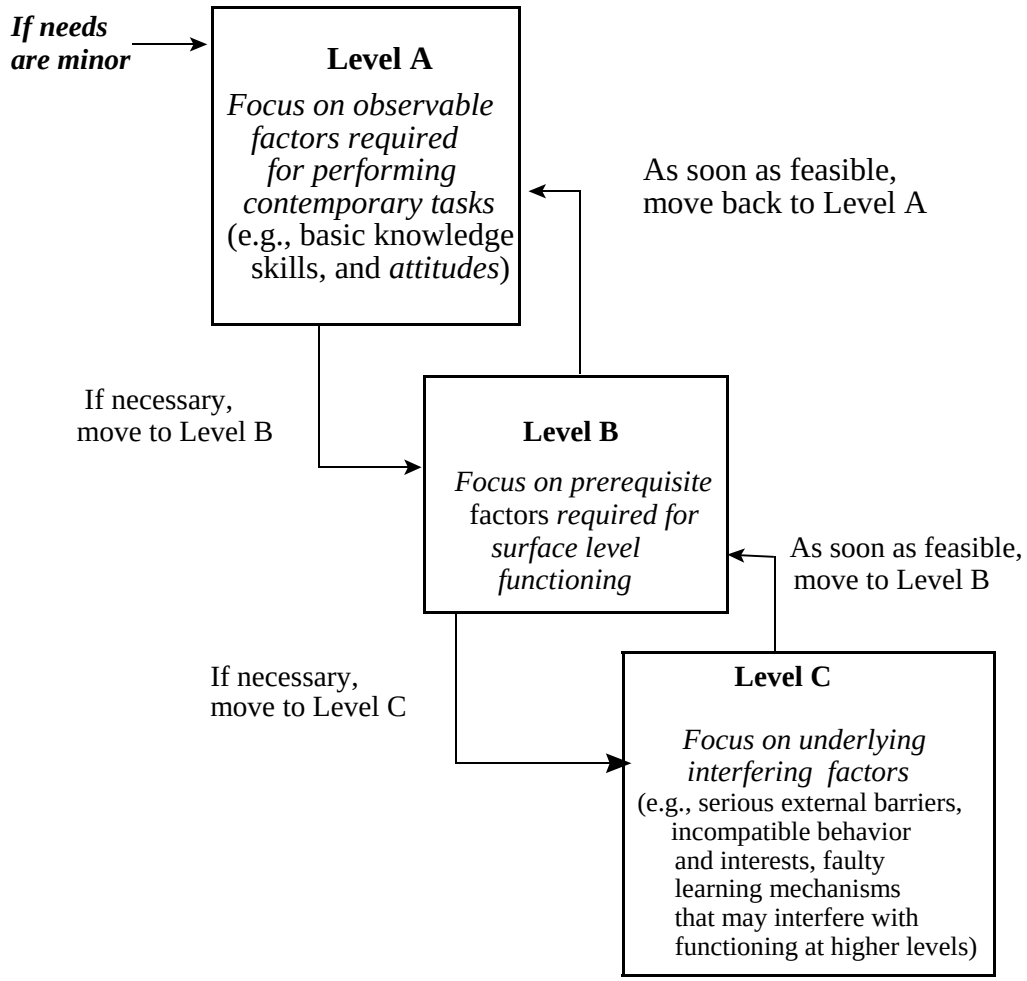
Sequential and Hierarchical Classroom Approach to Address Engagement Problems and Identify the Level of Special Assistance Needed by a Student



Guide II-c

***Step 2: Special Assistance Sequence and Hierarchy**

Step 2 is introduced as necessary using best practices for special assistance (remediation, rehabilitation, treatment). These are applied differentially for minor and severe problems.



To be a bit more specific:

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

A first emphasis is on *motivation*. Practices focus on (re)engaging the student in classroom instruction, with special attention paid to increasing intrinsic motivation and minimizing psychological reactance.

Matching *developmental capabilities* is a parallel concern in Step 1. Practices focus on accounting for current knowledge and skills.

Then, based on a student's responses to personalized instruction, it is determined if *special assistance* (step 2) also is needed..

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

This sequence helps to minimize false positive diagnoses (e.g., LD, ADHD) and identifies those who should be referred for special education assessment.

As stressed in Unit I, remember that the impact at any time depends on the student's perception of how well an intervention fits his or her needs.

Currently, *Response to Intervention* (Rti) is the prominently advocated strategy for addressing problems as soon as they arise. To better understand what is involved in making Rti effective, see the Center's continuing education units on *Response to Intervention* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/dbsimple2.asp?primary=2311&number=9897

Assessment to Address Interfering Factors

As part of the ways they regularly assess students' interests and needs, teachers need to know how to analyze authentic responses made to instruction and other interventions. Their analyses must consider (a) motivational as well as developmental considerations related to content, processes, and immediate outcomes and (b) whether assessing and addressing the problem requires a deeper look. For instance, they need to be able to determine whether the problem stems from the student not having acquired readiness skills and/or because of "critical student dispositions" that have produced avoidance motivation to curricula content and instructional processes. And, when problems persist, they must consider what other external and internal factors may be interfering with learning and whether accommodations are necessary. All this is consistent with a sequential intervention approach that first *personalizes* instruction and then assesses learning and behavior problems using a hierarchical set of interventions (see Guides II-b & c).

To do all this effectively, teachers usually need assistance. Indeed, in many instances, identifying and addressing barriers and needs and re-engaging disconnected students can only be appropriately accomplished through collaborative processes. Thus, the standards need to specifically reflect collaboration for assessment (e.g., with students themselves, family members, learning and student support staff). And because strategies such as "Response to Intervention" (Rti) begin in the classroom, standards for assessment should involve an emphasis both on what should happen prior to referral for specialized assistance and what should be done during the referral process if referral proves necessary.

C. Minimizing Disengagement and Facilitating Re-engagement

A common lament among teacher's in schools where many students have not been doing well is that they need to learn a lot more about how to re-engage students who have disconnected from learning at school.

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

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

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

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

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

learners. Moreover, assessments and diagnoses are confounded, and intervention may just as readily exacerbate as correct students problems.

Expanding Learning Options and Broadening Accommodations

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

Offer variety to mesh with student interests ... accommodate a wider range of behavior

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

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

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

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

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

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

Guide II-d

Accommodations

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

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

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

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

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

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

(cont.)

Accommodations (Guide II-d cont.)

504 Accommodation Checklist

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

Physical Arrangement of Room

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

Lesson Presentation

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

Assignments/worksheets

- giving extra time to complete tasks
- simplifying complex directions
- handing worksheets out one at a time
- reducing the reading level of the assignments
- requiring fewer correct responses to achieve grade (quality vs. quantity)
- allowing student to tape record assignments/homework
- providing a structured routine in written form
- providing study skills training/learning strategies
- giving frequent short quizzes and avoiding long tests
- shortening assignments; breaking work into smaller segments
- allowing typewritten or computer printed assignments prepared by the student or dictated by the student and recorded by someone else if needed.
- using self-monitoring devices
- reducing homework assignments
- not grading handwriting
- student not be allowed to use cursive or manuscript writing
- reversals and transpositions of letters and numbers should not be marked wrong, reversals or transpositions should be pointed out for corrections
- do not require lengthy outside reading assignments
- teacher monitor students self-paced assignments (daily, weekly, bi-weekly)
- arrangements for homework assignments to reach home with clear, concise directions
- recognize and give credit for student's oral participation in class

Test Taking

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

Organization

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

Behaviors

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

Respond as Early After Onset as is Feasible

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

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

Don't wait for failure

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

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

Activity

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

What else needs to be added?

Note key points in your Learning Log.

Problem Solving Steps and Tasks Designed to Guide Early after Onset Planning and "Pre-referral Intervening"

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

The following is one example of such a process:

(1) Formulate an initial description of the problem.

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

(a) Through enhanced personal contacts, build a positive working relationship with the youngster and family.

(b) Focus first on assets (e.g. positive attributes, outside interests, hobbies, what the youngster likes at school and in class).

(c) Ask about what the youngster doesn't like at school.

(d) Explore the reasons for "dislikes" (e.g., Are assignments seen as too hard? as uninteresting? Is the youngster embarrassed because others will think s/he does not have the ability to do assignments? Is the youngster picked on? rejected? alienated?)

(e) Explore other possible causal factors.

(f) Explore what the youngster and those in the home think can be done to make things better (including extra support from a volunteer, a peer, friend, etc.).

(g) Discuss some new things the youngster and those in the home would be *willing* to try to make the situation better.

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

Some Things to Try

- Make changes to (a) improve the match between a youngster's program and his/her interests and capabilities and (b) try to find ways for her/him to have a special, positive status in class, at the school, and in the community. (This helps counter a negative image students may have created among peers and negative feelings about themselves which, in turn, helps work against students' tendencies to pursue negative behaviors.) Talk and work with other staff in developing ideas along these lines. (cont.)

Guide II-e (cont.)

- Add resources for extra support (aide, volunteers, peer tutors/coaches, mentors) not only to help support student efforts to learn and perform, but to enhance students' social support networks. Create time to interact and relate with the youngster as an individual.
- Discuss with the youngster (and those in the home) why the problems are occurring.
- Specifically focus on exploring matters with the youngster that will suggest ways to enhance positive motivation.
- Change aspects of the program (e.g.,materials, environment) to provide a better match with his/her interests and skills.
- Provide enrichment options (in and out of class).
- Use resources such as volunteers, aides, and peers to enhance the youngster's social support network.
- Specifically focus on exploring ways those in the home can enhance their problem-solving efforts.
- If necessary include other staff (e.g., counselor, principal) in a special discussion with the youngster exploring reasons for the problem and ways to enhance positive involvement at school and in class.

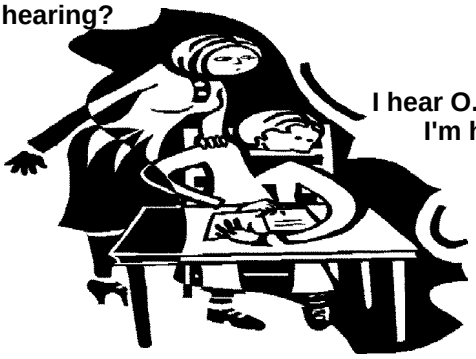
(4) If the new strategies don't work, *talk to others* at school to learn about approaches they find helpful (e.g., reach out for support/mentoring/coaching, participate with others in clusters and teams, observe how others teach in ways that effectively address differences in motivation and capability,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

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

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

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

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



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

Strategies for Re-engaging Disconnected Students

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

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

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

apply intensive and highly personalized interventions

(a) *Clarify student perceptions of the problem*. It is desirable to create a situation where it is feasible to talk openly with students about why they have become disengaged. This provides an invaluable basis for formulating a personalized plan to alter their negative perceptions and to prevent others from developing such perceptions.

(b) *Reframe school learning.* Major reframing in teaching approaches is called for so that these students 1) view the teacher as supportive (rather than controlling and indifferent) and 2) perceive content, outcomes, and activity options as personally valuable and obtainable. It is important, for example, to eliminate threatening evaluative measures; reframe content and processes to clarify purpose in terms of real life needs and experiences and underscore how it all builds on previous learning; and clarify why the procedures are expected to be effective especially those designed to help correct specific problems.

(c) *Renegotiate involvement in school learning.* Develop new and mutual agreements through conferences with the student and including parents where appropriate. The intent over time is to affect perceptions of choice, value, and probable outcome. The focus throughout is on clarifying awareness of valued options, enhancing expectations of positive outcomes, and engaging the student in meaningful, ongoing decision making. Assist

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

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

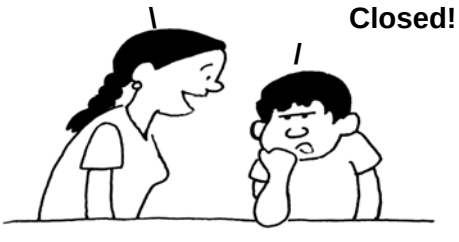
- Minimize threats to feelings of competence, self-determination,
- and relatedness to others
- Maximize such feelings (included here is an emphasis on a school taking steps to enhance public perception that it is a welcoming, caring, safe, and just institution)
- Guide motivated practice (e.g., providing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

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

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

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

How do you like school?



As stressed in Unit I, Don't Over-rely on Extrinsics

Many individuals with learning problems also are described as hyperactive, distractable, impulsive, behavior disordered, and so forth. Their behavior patterns are seen as interfering with efforts to remedy their learning problems. Although motivation has always been a concern to those who work with learning and behavior problems, the emphasis in handling these interfering behaviors usually is on using extrinsics as part of efforts to directly control and/or in conjunction with direct skill instruction. For example, interventions are designed to improve impulse control, perseverence, 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. The point made in Unit I was that extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic reasons for doing things. Although this is not always the case and may not always be a bad thing, it is an important consideration in deciding to rely on extrinsic reinforcers in addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

D. Minimize Psychological Reactance

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

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

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

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

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

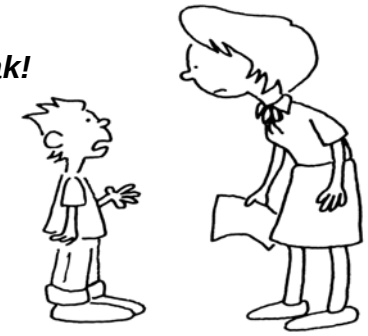
However, most of the new initiatives have not focused enough on a basic system failure that must be addressed if improved behavior is to be maintained. That is, strategies that focus on positive behavior have paid too little attention to helping teachers understand psychological reactance and the implications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

Activity

Discuss how to reduce psychological reactance.

Note key points in your Learning Log.

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



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

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

The tendency when those in control say:

You can't do that ... you must do this ...,

the covert and sometimes overt psychological reaction of students (and most of us) often is:

Oh, you think so!

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

All this argues for

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

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

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

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

E. Addressing Barriers to Learning: A Schoolwide System of Learning Supports

To date, almost all school improvement efforts have been dominated by a two component model. One component emphasizes instruction, the other management/governance. As we have documented in our previous policy analysis reports (e.g., Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2010b), research has clarified the need for a third component to directly and comprehensively focus on (a) addressing barriers to learning and teaching and (b) re-engaging students who have become disconnected from classroom instruction.

Analyzing the *common core state standards* and the *model core teaching standards* from the perspective of the third component underscores the ongoing problem of marginalized attention to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. This problem runs throughout the state standards movement.

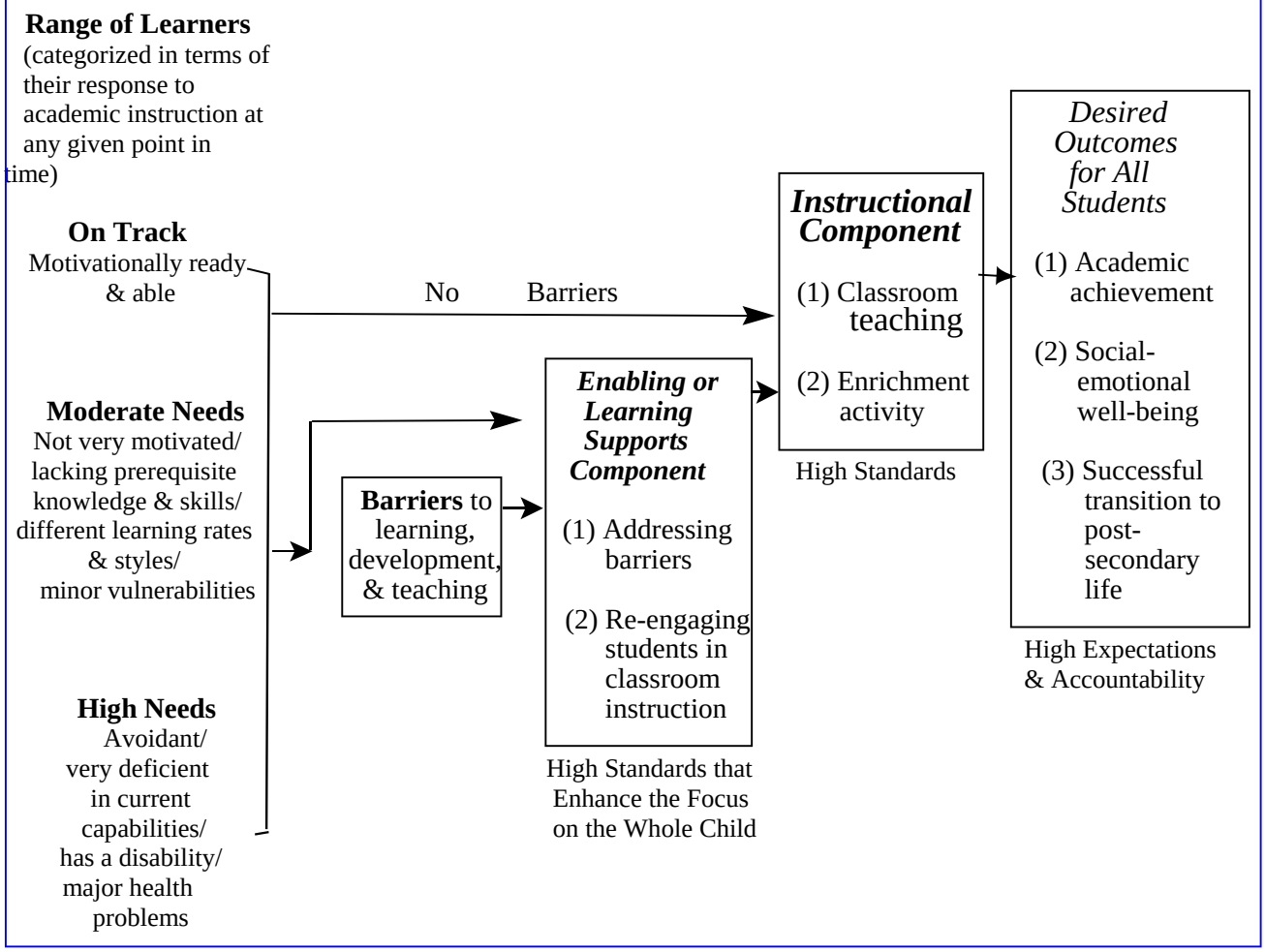
Guide II-f graphically portrays the reality that many students encounter barriers preventing them from benefitting from good instruction. For all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school, every teacher must play a significant role in the classroom and schoolwide with respect to helping students around those barriers and then re-engaging them in classroom instruction (Adelman & Taylor, 2006, 2008; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008, 2010a,b, 2012; Chu, 2010).

As indicated in Guide II-f, pioneering efforts have designated the third component as an enabling or learning supports component (Adelman & Taylor, 2006; EDC evaluation of Gainesville Public Schools , 2012; Iowa Department of Education, 2004; Louisiana Department of Education, 2010). The concept of an enabling or learning supports component has fundamental implications in expanding understanding of the teacher's role and functions in transforming schools.

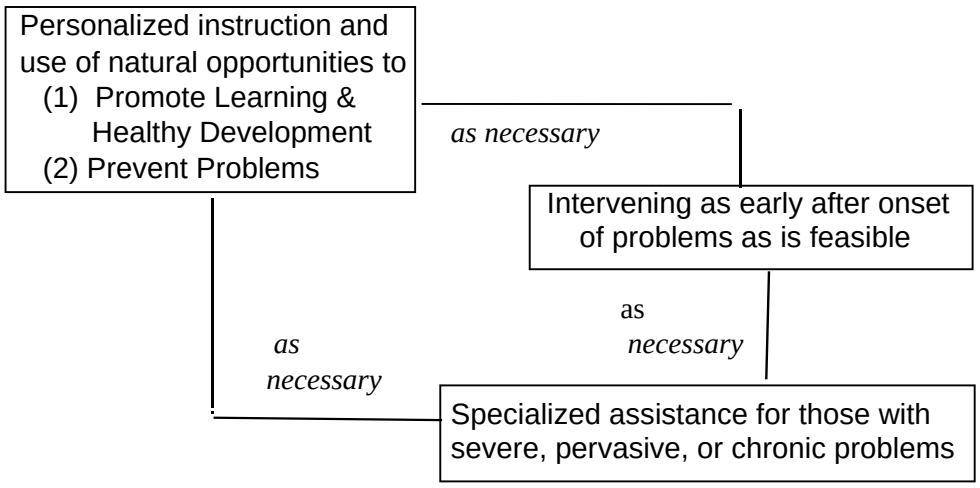
Guide II-g illustrates that operationalizing the component involves developing a full continuum of integrated *systems* for intervention designed to:

(a) promote healthy development and prevent problems,
(b) respond as early after problem onset as is feasible, and
(c) provide for those whose serious, pervasive, and chronic problems require more intensive assistance and accommodation.

Guide II-f. **An Enabling or Learning Supports Component to Address Barriers and Re-engage Students in Classroom Instruction***



Guide II-g. **A Full Continuum and Sequence of Interventions at a School**



Content of a Learning Supports Component

Operationalizing the component also involves rethinking the many fragmented programs and services designed as student and learning supports. Just as efforts to *enhance* instruction emphasize well designed curriculum content, a delineated and integrated content focus is essential for *enabling* learning by addressing external and internal factors that interfere with students engaging effectively with instruction.

For example, at schools, the content focus for addressing a full range of interfering factors can be coalesced into the following six classroom and school-wide arenas.

(1) *enhancing regular classroom strategies to enable learning* (e.g., personalized instruction for students who have become disengaged from learning at school and accommodations and specialized assistance in the classroom for those with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems)

(2) *supporting transitions* (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other daily and periodic transitions)

(3) *increasing home and school connections* (e.g., with all student caretakers)

(4) *responding to and where feasible, preventing crises* (e.g., minimizing impact of crises, eliminating violence and harassment, ensuring safety)

(5) *increasing community involvement and support* (e.g., outreaching to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers for a variety of roles and functions and integration of resources)

(6) *facilitating student and family access to effective special assistance and services as needed (e.g.,* in the classroom, referral out for school, district, or community assistance)

From the perspective of the above concepts and frameworks, significant deficiencies in the core state standards movement become evident. In particular, this perspective raises the questions:

How do the standards emphasize the teacher's role and functions in addressing barriers and re-engaging students?

How do the standards emphasize the role and functions of student and learning support staff in addressing barriers and re-engaging students?

Technology Can Aide in Addressing Barriers to Learning

"A complex set of personal and academic factors underlie students' decision to leave school or to disengage from learning, and no one strategy will prevent every separation from the education system....

Many students report that dropping out of school is a gradual process of disengagement that can be reversed with more relevant learning experiences and social and emotional interactions at school.... Technology-based programs and resources, including online learning, tutoring and mentoring, and social networks and participatory communities within and across educational institutions, can provide both. They also can give students guidance and information about their own learning progress and opportunities for the future. Specifically, students need to know what is expected of them as they move from middle school to high school and from high school to postsecondary education. Other practices supported with technology also can help address the problem.

First, there is the issue of identifying students' difficulties early and providing extra support where needed. Support should start as early as possible, before children enter school, and should become intensified for those students who need it as they move through school. From the point of high school entry, every student could have a learning dashboard indicating whether or not his or her course enrollments and performance are on track for high school graduation and qualification for college entry. Such a system could make 'smart' suggestions about options for fulfilling requirements, including the possibility of earning credits for courses taken during the summer, in alternative programs, at community colleges, or online.

When prevention fails and students quit attending school for a period of time, we must have multiple options for reconnecting them with the education system. Such students often become discouraged about their prospects for being able to earn the credits needed for graduation or have an aversion to returning to a school where they will be in classes with younger students rather than their original cohort. ...

Increasingly, secondary students are taking courses online to earn credit for courses they initially failed or missed because they were not attending school. Such courses can be taken under any number of arrangements -independently in the evening, during summer sessions, in a night school, or during the school day with a member of the teaching staff, who provides encouragement and support as the student works with the online material."

Administration's National Education Technology Plan (2010)

Unit II – Reflection & Stimulus for Discussion

Key Insights about: *Establishing a School-wide* Enabling *or Learning Supports Component*

Based on what you learned so far:

Identify (and discuss) what is meant by an enabling component and outline the major arenas the component encompasses.

If there is an opportunity for group discussion, you may find the following group process guidelines helpful:

- Start by identifying someone who will facilitate the group interchange
- Take a few minutes to make a few individual notes on a worksheet
- Be sure all major points are compiled for sharing with other groups.
- Ask someone else to watch the time so that the group doesn't bog down.
- Note key points in your *Learning Log*.

Unit II – Activity

- Using large sheets of paper, draw the matrix illustrated below (adapted from Guide 14) and "map" the existing programs and services at your school.
- Note which cells in the matrix are "impoverished."
- What are your conclusions about the school's approach to enabling learning by providing comprehensive learning supports?

Integrated Intervention *Subsystems*

Arenas of Intervention *Content*	Subsystems for Promoting Healthy Development & Preventing Problems	Subsystem for Early Intervention	Subsystem for Treatment & Specialized Care
In Classrooms			
Support for Transitions			
Crisis response/prevention			
Home involvement			
Community engagement			
Student & Family Assistance			

About Self-Study Surveys

1. **About the Center's Surveys**

2. **One Example: *Classroom-based Approaches to Enable and Re-engage Students in Classroom Learning***

1. About Self-Study Surveys

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

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

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

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

The entire set are online at:
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Surveys/Set1.pdf

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

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

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

It is about moving on to better outcomes for students through

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

Done right it can

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

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

The items on a survey help to clarify

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

This provides a basis for a discussion that

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

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

2. One Example of a Self-study Survey

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

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

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

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

Classroom-based Approaches ...

Indicate all items that apply.

	Yes	Yes but more of this is needed	No	If no, is this something you want?
I. Opening the Classroom Door				
A. Are others invited into the classroom to assist in enhancing classroom approaches?				
1. aides (e.g., paraeducators; other paid assistants)?	____	____	____	____
2. older students?	____	____	____	____
3. other students in the class?	____	____	____	____
4. volunteers?	____	____	____	____
5. parents?	____	____	____	____
6. resource teacher?	____	____	____	____
7. specialists?	____	____	____	____
8. other? (specify)_____	____	____	____	____
B. Are there programs to train aides, volunteers, and other "assistants" who come into the classrooms to work with students who need help?	____	____	____	____
II. Redesigning Classroom Approaches to Enhance Teacher Capability to Prevent and Handle Problems and Reduce Need for out of Class Referrals				
A. Is instruction personalized (i.e., designed to match each student's motivation and capabilities)?	____	____	____	____
B. When needed, is in-classroom special assistance provided?	____	____	____	____
C. Are there small group and independent learning options?	____	____	____	____
D. Are behavior problems handled in ways designed to minimize a negative impact on student attitudes toward classroom learning?	____	____	____	____
E. Is there a range of curricular and instructional options and choices?	____	____	____	____
F. Are prereferral interventions used?	____	____	____	____
G. Are materials and activities upgraded to				
1.ensure there are enough basic supplies in the classroom?	____	____	____	____
2. increase the range of high-motivation activities (keyed to the interests of students in need of special attention)?	____	____	____	____
3. include advanced technology?	____	____	____	____
4. other? (specify) _____	____	____	____	____
H. Are regular efforts to foster social and emotional development supplemented?				

Classroom-based Approaches (cont.)

	Yes	Yes but more of this is needed	No	If no, is this something you want?
I. Which of the following can teachers request as special interventions?				
1. Family problem solving conferences?	____	____	____	____
2. Exchange of students to improve student-teacher match and for a fresh start?	____	____	____	____
3. Referral for specific services?	____	____	____	____
4. Other (specify) _____	____	____	____	____
J. What programs are there for temporary out-of-class help?				
1. a family center providing student & family assistance?	____	____	____	____
2. designated problem remediation specialists?	____	____	____	____
3. a "time out" situation?	____	____	____	____
4. Other? (specify) _____	____	____	____	____
K. What is done to assist a teacher who has difficulty with limited English speaking students?				
1. Is the student reassigned?	____	____	____	____
2. Does the teacher receive professional development related to working with limited English speaking students?	____	____	____	____
3. Does a bilingual coordinator offer consultation?	____	____	____	____
4. Is a bilingual aide assigned to the class?	____	____	____	____
5. Are volunteers brought in to help (e.g., parents, peers)?	____	____	____	____
6. Other? (specify) _____	____	____	____	____

III. Enhancing and Personalizing Professional Development

A. Are teachers clustered for support and staff development?	____	____	____	____
B. Are demonstrations provided?	____	____	____	____
C. Are workshops and readings offered regularly?	____	____	____	____
D. Is consultation available from persons with special expertise such as				
1. learning supports staff (e.g., psychologist, counselor, social worker, nurse)?	____	____	____	____
2. resource specialists and/or special education teachers?	____	____	____	____
3. members of special committees?	____	____	____	____
4. bilingual and/or other coordinators?	____	____	____	____
5. other? (specify) _____	____	____	____	____
E. Is there a formal mentoring program?	____	____	____	____
F. Is team teaching or co-teaching used as an opportunity for teachers to learn on the job?	____	____	____	____
G. Is the school creating a learning community?	____	____	____	____
H. Is there staff social support?	____	____	____	____

Classroom-based Approaches (cont.)

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

IV. Curricular Enrichment and Adjunct Programs

A. What types of technology are available to the classroom?

1. Are there computers in the classroom?	____	____	____	____
2. Is there a computer lab?	____	____	____	____
3. Is computer assisted instruction offered?	____	____	____	____
4. Are there computer literacy programs?	____	____	____	____
5. Are computer programs used to address ESL needs?	____	____	____	____
6. Does the classroom have video recording capability?	____	____	____	____
7. Is instructional TV used in the classroom?	____	____	____	____
8. Is there a multimedia lab?	____	____	____	____
9. Other? (specify)_____	____	____	____	____

B What curricular enrichment and adjunct programs do teachers use?

1. Are library activities used regularly?	____	____	____	____
2. Is music/art used regularly?	____	____	____	____
3. Is health education a regular part of the curriculum?	____	____	____	____
4. Are student performances regular events?	____	____	____	____
5. Are there several field trips a year?	____	____	____	____
6. Are there student council and other leaders opportunities?	____	____	____	____
7. Are there school environment projects such as				
a. mural painting?	____	____	____	____
b. horticulture/gardening?	____	____	____	____
c. school clean-up and beautification?	____	____	____	____
d. other? (specify)_____	____	____	____	____
8. Are there special school-wide events such as				
a. sports	____	____	____	____
b. clubs and similar organized activities?	____	____	____	____
c. publication of a student newspaper?	____	____	____	____
d. sales events?	____	____	____	____
e. poster contests?	____	____	____	____
f. essay contests?	____	____	____	____
g. a book fair?	____	____	____	____
h. pep rallies/contests?	____	____	____	____
i. attendance competitions?	____	____	____	____
j. attendance awards/assemblies?	____	____	____	____
k. other? (specify) _____	____	____	____	____
9. Are guest contributors used (e.g., outside speakers/performers)?	____	____	____	____
10. Other (specify)?_____	____	____	____	____

Classroom-based Approaches (cont.)

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

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

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

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

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>**QUICK FINDS:** Also see the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds for more on all the topics covered. Go to http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm

>Toolkit for New Directions for Student and Learning Supports

See the toolkit for Rebuilding Student Supports into a Comprehensive System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm