



Continuing Education Units

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

UNIT I: Personalizing 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 the Units

Policy makers have embraced the concept of personalized learning. It is emphasized in the common core standards initiative, the proposed model core teaching standards, the administration's 2010 National Education Technology Plan, and the *Race to the Top* guidelines.

Unfortunately, personnel preparation for most school personnel has not included an in-depth focus on personalizing learning. Moreover, discussions of personalized learning often leave the impression that the process is mainly about incorporating technological innovations. For the most part, the discussions also fail to place personalized learning within the context of other conditions that must be improved in classrooms and school wide to address factors interfering with student learning and performance.

This set of continuing education units is 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 these ends:

Unit I provides some background, commonly used definitions, and guidance for personalizing learning.

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 I: Personalizing Learning

- A. Commonly Used Definitions & Distinctions**
- B. Expanding the Definition as a Basis for Guiding Practice**
- C. Personalizing Structure for Learning**
- D. Conferencing as a Key Strategy**
- E. Assessment to Plan; Feedback to Nurture**
- F. Moving a Classroom Toward Personalized Learning**

Brief Readings on Key Topics

- A – Turning Big Classes into Smaller Units
- B – Motivation: Time to Move Beyond Behavior Modification
- C – Volunteers as an Invaluable Resource
- D – Good Teaching: Improving Conditions for Learning in the Classroom
- E – About School and Classroom Climate

Overview Questions To Guide Learning

- (1) *What makes personalized instruction different from individualization?*
- (2) *What are key strategies associated with personalized teaching?*
- (3) *What are some key steps for transitioning toward personalizing learning?*

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 I: Personalizing Learning

We must take classroom learning beyond a one-size-fits-all mentality and bring it fully into the 21st century.

Arne Duncan (2012)

Personalized learning is not a pedagogic theory nor a coherent set of teaching approaches, but an idea that is struggling for an identity. ... Much of the impulse behind personalization of learning is laudable. This stance is in line with many promising new forms of assessment, differentiated learning and instruction, and redesigning high schools beyond age cohorts and class structures. More flexible approaches to education moving away from an industrial model are necessary, and finding ways to personalize learning will be important to adequately develop the skills and knowledge in society that will help the next generation creatively navigate an uncertain future.

Phil McRae (2010)

After years of being bandied about, the term *personalization* (of learning/instruction/education) is coming to the policy forefront in the U.S., the United Kingdom, Canada, and beyond. As the term increasingly appears in U.S. federal policy (e.g., the Race to the Top initiative), questions arise about how it relates to individualized and differentiated instruction and how to implement a personalized approach.

To help clarify these matters, the following continuing education unit provides some background, an expanded definition, and guidance for personalizing learning.

A. Commonly Used Definitions & Distinctions

For years, the term personalized instruction was not distinguished from individualized or differentiated instruction (Fullan, 2009). In recent years, distinctions have been made, and controversy has arisen around the concept. For example, Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley (2009) critique David Hargreaves's (2006) approach to personalization as being rooted in the business world's idea of *customization* and too often used as a means to manage and market learning. They state:

“With customized learning, students access existing and unchanged kinds of conventional learning through different means—on site or off site, online or offline, in school or out of school, quickly or slowly. . . . [However] the nature of learning is not transformed into something deeper, more challenging, and more connected to compelling issues in their world and their lives.”

These educators stress that schools in the 21st century must “embrace deeper virtues and values such as courage, compassion, service, sacrifice, long-term commitment and perseverance.” Thus, while “customized learning is pleasurable and instantly gratifying,” they

worry that it can become “just one more process of business-driven training delivered to satisfy individual consumer tastes and desires” and that overemphasizes the role of technology in the process of educating and socializing the young.

Despite the ongoing controversies, few argue against the goal of personalization which is to make schools function better in addressing the diverse needs and interests students bring to school each day. There is also agreement that new technologies can be helpful *to a degree* in accomplishing the goal. And, there is agreement that improved forms of formative assessments are an important element.

Some Views About Personalizing Learning

“The school learning process is an interaction of three elements: (a) student prior knowledge, style and engagement, (b) teacher competence, style, and commitment, and (c) the organization of the learning environment. *Personalization of instruction and learning is the effort on the part of a school to take into account individual student characteristics and needs, and flexible instructional practices, in organizing the learning environment.* Teachers committed to personalizing instruction help their students develop personal learning plans, assist in diagnosing their cognitive strengths and weaknesses and other style characteristics, help adapt the learning environment and instruction to learner needs and interests, and mentor authentic and reflective learning experiences for their students.”
Keefe and Jenkins (2000)

David Hargreaves (2006) prefers the term “personalizing” learning rather than “personalized” learning because it suggests that the concept refers to a process, not a product. The International Network for Educational Transformation (iNet) states: “Personalised learning is the challenge to meet more of the needs of more students more fully than has been achieved in the past ... It is concerned with a transformation of education and schooling that is fit for citizens in the 21st century” (iNet 2010a).

In the fall of 2010, personalizing learning was emphasized in introducing what is now called the *Next Generation Learning Challenges* initiative. The first wave of funding for this program came from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In November 2010, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation joined in. Given the source, questions were asked about whether the initiative is mainly about technology. Their answer is: “Technology is an important tool that has the potential to increase student achievement through more personalized models of teaching and learning that deepen learning and engagement and lower costs. We must use the power of technology to transform education, particularly for those who need it most. Next Generation Learning Challenges will harness this potential by identifying and expanding effective technology-enabled learning solutions to reach more students, with the goal of improving college readiness and completion. However, NGLC understands that technology itself is not the solution. We are committed to seeking innovative working models which harness active pedagogies and deliver results in deeper learning outcomes.” <http://nextgenlearning.org/the-grants/learn-more>

Policy makers increasingly are referring to *personalizing learning*

Personalized learning for diverse learners is one of the four key themes running through the Council for Chief State School Officer’s model core teaching standards (CCSSO, 2011). The document states:

“The explosion of learner diversity means teachers need knowledge and skills to customize learning for learners with a range of individual differences. These differences include students who have learning disabilities and students who perform above grade level and deserve opportunities to accelerate. Differences also include cultural and linguistic diversity and the specific needs of students for whom English is a new language. Teachers need to recognize that all learners bring to their learning varying experiences, abilities, talents, and prior learning, as well as language, culture, and family and community values that are assets that can be used to promote their learning. To do this effectively, teachers must have a deeper understanding of their own frames of reference (e.g., culture, gender, language, abilities, ways of knowing), the potential biases in these frames, and their impact on expectations for and relationships with learners and their families.

Finally, teachers need to provide multiple approaches to learning for each student. One aspect of the power of technology is that it has made learners both more independent and more collaborative. The core teaching standards assign learners a more active role in determining what they learn, how they learn it, and how they can demonstrate their learning. They also encourage learners to interact with peers to accomplish their learning goals. In these ways, the standards embody a vision of teaching that personalizes each learner’s experiences while ensuring that every learner achieves to high levels.”

Reflecting the CCSSO emphasis, the U.S. Department of Education is now incorporating personalized learning into its emphasis for policy and practice (e.g., in discussions of school applications of technology, in Race to the Top guidelines). As the feds increasingly use the term, professionals in the field have asked for its clarification.

In 2010, the department included the following definition in its national technology plan (Administration’s National Education Technology Plan, 2010):

“Personalization refers to instruction that is paced to learning needs, tailored to learning preferences, and

tailored to the specific interests of different learners. In an environment that is fully personalized, the learning objectives and content as well as the method and pace may all vary (so personalization encompasses differentiation and individualization).”

(<http://www.ed.gov/technology/netp-2010/learning-engage-and-empower>)

In 2010, 150 invited education leaders convened at the *SIIA-ASCD-CCSSO Symposium on [Re]Design for Personalized Learning* (<http://siiia.net/pli/presentations/PerLearnPaper.pdf>).

The Symposium confirmed the following assumptions:

- Today’s industrial-age, assembly-line educational model—based on fixed time, place, curriculum and pace—is insufficient in today’s society and knowledge-based economy. Our education system must be fundamentally re-engineered from a mass production, teaching model to a student-centered, customized learning model to address both the diversity of students’ backgrounds and needs as well as our higher expectations for all students.
- Educational equity is not simply about equal access and inputs, but ensuring that a student’s educational path, curriculum, instruction, and schedule be personalized to meet her unique needs, inside and outside of school. Educational equity meets each child where she is and helps her achieve her potential through a wide range of resources and strategies appropriate for her learning style, abilities, and interests, as well as social, emotional, and physical situation.
- Personalized learning requires not only a shift in the design of schooling, but also a leveraging of modern technologies. Personalization cannot take place at scale without technology. Personalized learning is enabled by smart e-learning systems, which help dynamically track and manage the learning needs of all students, and provide a platform to access myriad engaging learning content, resources and learning opportunities needed to meet each students needs everywhere at anytime, but which are not all available within the four walls of the traditional classroom.

On July 12, 2012, the department offered a summer webinar seminar on *Personalized Learning*. The seminar was described as providing “perspectives on the meaning, purpose, and future of personalized learning from Department of Education staff; teachers from Maryland and Virginia also shared how they use real-time data to individualize instruction and engage students with varied abilities.” (see archived webinar at <http://www.ed.gov/teaching/summerseminars>). In that seminar, the department defined personalized learning as encompassing individualized and differentiated instruction. They stressed the process involves a personal learning plan for (a) *adjusting the pace (individualized)*, (b) *adjusting the learning approach (differentiated)*, and (c) *leveraging student interests/experiences*.

They also emphasized that “Technology gives students opportunities for taking ownership of their learning. Personalized learning is paced to student needs, tailored

to learning preferences, and customized to the specific interests of different learners.” As examples, the seminar emphasized that the need for systems that adapt to learner needs, support differentiated learning, increase the frequency of formative assessments, provide learners choice about what and how they learn, customize instruction based on performance/preference, and approaches that turn learners into creators.

And related to all this is the increasing focus on a *Universal Design of Learning*. Calls for this approach emphasize ensuring that curriculum provides multiple means for engaging students (tapping into their interests and challenge them appropriately), as well as using multiple ways to represent information and knowledge (offering various modes for acquisition) and for expressing what they know (see <http://cast.org/udl/index.html>).

Innovative Learning Models and Personalized Pathways

From: *Next Generation Learning: The intelligent use of technology to develop innovative learning models and personalized educational pathways* issued by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation – <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/postsecondaryeducation/Documents/nextgenlearning.pdf>

“... increasing teacher effectiveness, empowering excellent teachers, and engaging and motivating students will require changes to the current system, as well as new thinking and innovation. ... we are focused on accelerating the development and adoption of breakthrough educational strategies that will enable every student to follow a more personalized pathway to college success.

In this paradigm of next-generation learning models, students and teachers -- both secondary and postsecondary – will have access to high-quality, relevant, and engaging content in a variety of forms. Class time and structure will be more flexible, to adapt to the learning needs of the students. Students will have access to multiple sources of instruction and use assessment and diagnostic tools to help direct the pace and format of their learning. Teachers will tailor their instruction and guidance to ensure progress and mastery for all students, with a focus on those who have historically been underserved.” Elements of this paradigm are discussed as (1) building blocks, (2) new learning models, and (3) enabling environments.

If you haven't done so, consider making entries into your *Learning Log*.

B. Expanding the Definition as a Basis for Guiding Practice

In the 1960s, our work at UCLA focused on a personalized approach to learning as fundamental to effective teaching and to preventing and correcting learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Since then, we have continued to develop and apply the approach (e.g., see Adelman, 1970-71, 1971; Adelman & Taylor, 1977, 1986, 1993, 1994, 2006; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2012; Feshbach & Adelman 1971; Povey & Fryer, 1972; Taylor & Adelman, 1999). This work presents the concept of personalized learning and teaching in broader terms than what has been discussed above.

First of all, based on a reciprocal determinist understanding of learning and behavior, we view personalized learning as nonlinear; that is, it is seen as an ongoing, dynamic, transactional, and spiraling process. Similarly, effective teaching is conceived as a dynamic, transactional, and spiraling process that strives to meet learners where they are. That is, the aim is create a good “match” or “fit” with the learner.

It is commonplace to see references to meeting learners where they are, analyses indicate the emphasis often is on *individualized* approaches that stress matching individual differences in *developmental capabilities*. In contrast, we define *personalization* as the process of accounting for individual differences in both capability and *motivation*.

Furthermore, from a psychological perspective, we stress that it is the student’s perception that determines whether the fit is good or bad. Given this, personalizing learning means ensuring learning opportunities are perceived by learners as good ways to reach their goals. Thus, a basic intervention concern is that of eliciting learners' perceptions of how well what is offered matches both their interests and abilities. This has fundamental implication for all efforts to assess students and manage behavior.

Based on our work over many years, we have formulated some basic underlying assumptions and major elements of a personalized approach that continue to guide our work. These are highlighted in Guides I-a and I-b. Following these guides is a brief discussion of matching development and motivation.

Personalization can be defined as the process of accounting for individual differences in both capability and *motivation*

Outlined in Guide I-a are underlying assumptions about personalized classrooms. Look them over and decide how they fit with what you believe.

What would you like to add?

Guide I-a

Underlying Assumptions of a Personalized Program

- Learning is a function of the ongoing transactions between the learner and the learning environment.
- Optimal learning is a function of an optimal match between the learner's accumulated capacities and attitudes and current state of being and the program's processes and context.
- Matching both learner motivation and capacities must be primary procedural objectives.
- The learner's perception is the critical criterion for evaluating whether a good match or fit exists between the learner and the learning environment.
- The wider the range of options that can be offered and the more the learner is made aware of the options and has a choice about which to pursue, the greater the likelihood that he or she will perceive the match as a good one.
- Besides improved learning, personalized programs enhance intrinsic valuing of learning and a sense of personal responsibility for learning. Furthermore, such programs increase acceptance and even appreciation of individual differences, as well as independent and cooperative functioning and problem solving.

Guide I-b

Major Elements of a Personalized Program

Major elements of personalized programs include:

- turning large classes into small units (many small group and individual learning opportunities – see Appended Brief Reading A)
- in-classroom collaboration and teaming
- regular use of informal and formal conferences for discussing options, making decisions, exploring learners' perceptions, and mutually evaluating progress
- a broad range of options from which learners can make choices with regard to types of learning content, processes, needed support and guidance, and desired outcomes
- active decision making by learners in making choices (with appropriate guidance and support) and in evaluating how well the chosen options match their motivation and capability
- establishment of program plans and mutual agreements about the ongoing relationships between the learners and the program personnel
- mutual evaluations of progress, problems, and learners' perceptions of the "match" in analyzing responses to all interventions
- reformulating plans and renegotiating agreements.

Matching Developmental Capabilities

Clearly, developmental differences must be accounted for. Variations in development are manifested as functional differences. Functional differences are accommodated through intervention strategies that match current capabilities in each area of development (i.e., cognitive, perceptual, motoric, language, social, emotional). This means accounting for areas in which development is lagging and those in which development meets or surpasses expectations.

One frequent problem in assessing developmental differences among students is that they are unmotivated to perform on demand. Thus, in schools, although discussion of specific areas of development is useful, an overall pattern of functioning usually is the focus of assessment for designing interventions to fit a given student.

The observed pattern reflects not only accumulated capacities but also *attitudes*. Differences are manifested not only in (1) rate – the pace of performance, but in (2) style – preferences with regard to ways of proceeding and modalities for learning, (3) amount – the quantity of produced outcomes, and (4) quality – care, mastery, and aesthetic features demonstrated in performance.

What Differences Affect Student Learning and Performance?

Rate, style, amount, and quality of performance on a given task and in a given situation not only reflect levels of competence but also are influenced by levels of motivation to perform. Therefore, when a student is relatively unmotivated to perform in any area of development, direct measures of these dimensions may be of little use in planning how best to fit a student's capabilities. This complicates direct assessment and argues for conducting strategies such as *authentic assessment* and *Response to Intervention* (Rti) under conditions when a student is highly motivated.

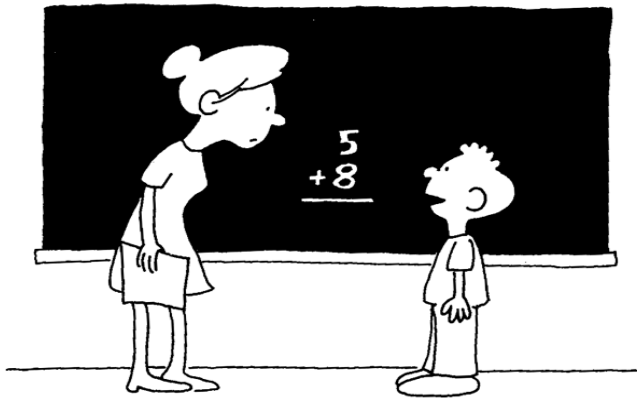
As you proceed through this Unit, how are your developmental capabilities and motivation affecting your learning?

Note your observations in your *Learning Log*

**We All Know
How Important
Motivation Is**

As essential as it is to attend to differences in capabilities, motivational differences often are the primary concern in personalizing learning. We all know students who have learned much more than we anticipated because they were highly motivated; and we certainly know students who learn and perform poorly when they are not invested in the work.

In attempting to meet students where there are, individualized instruction has focusing primarily on differences in students' developmental abilities. As widely practiced, individualization has overemphasized differences in observed abilities and underemphasized differences in motivation, especially *intrinsic* motivation.



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

**Personalization
means accounting for
both developmental
and motivational
differences**

Personalization requires knowing when, how, and what to teach and when and how to structure the situation so students can learn on their own. The process aim, of course, is student engagement, and engagement is about motivation. Thus, primary concerns in personalizing learning are to enhance (a) motivational readiness, (b) motivation related to learning processes, and (c) intrinsic motivation as an outcome. Also important is minimizing conditions that decrease engagement in learning (see appended brief Reading B).

Understanding intrinsic motivation clarifies how essential it is to avoid processes that limit options, make students feel controlled and coerced, and that focus mainly on skill building or “remedying” problems. Overreliance on extrinsic motivation risks undermining efforts to enhance intrinsic motivation and can produce avoidance reactions in the classroom and to school and,

thus, can reduce opportunities for positive learning and for development of positive attitudes. Over time, such practices result in too many students disengaging from classroom learning.

Clearly, the emphasis on motivation has fundamental intervention implications for personalizing learning. In particular, it calls for offering a broad range of content, outcomes, and procedural *options*, including a personalized structure to support and guide learning. With real options comes real opportunities for *involving learners in decision making*. The focus on motivation also stresses the importance of developing nonthreatening ways to provide *ongoing information about learning and performance*. And, of course, it calls for a significant focus on *enrichment* opportunities.

Caution: Don't Over-rely on Extrinsic

An understanding of intrinsic motivation underscores that 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. Understanding that an individual's perceptions can affect motivation has clarified some undesired effects of over-relying on extrinsics.

Because of the prominent role they play in school programs, grading, testing, and other performance evaluations are a special concern in any discussion of over-reliance 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. Certainly, many teachers use grades to try to control behavior – to reward those who do assignments well and to punish those who don't. Sometimes parents add to a student's perception of grades as extrinsic reinforcers by giving a reward for good report cards.

We all have our own horror stories about the negative impact of tests and grades on ourselves and others. In general, tests and grades have a way of reshaping the curriculum and what students do with their learning opportunities. As deadlines for assignments and tests get closer, interest in the topic gives way to interest in maximizing one's grade. Discussion of interesting issues and problems related to the area of study gives way to questions about how long a paper should be and what will be on the test. None of this is surprising given that poor grades can result in having to repeat a course or being denied certain immediate and long-range opportunities. It is simply a good illustration of how systems that overemphasize extrinsics may have a serious negative impact on intrinsic motivation for learning. The point is 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 promoting learning, managing classrooms, and addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

The aim of personalizing learning is to enhance stable, positive, intrinsic attitudes that mobilize ongoing pursuit of desired ends in the classroom, throughout the school, and away from school. Developing intrinsic attitudes is basic to increasing the type of motivated practice, for example reading for pleasure, that is essential for mastering and assimilating what has just been learned.

As for students who manifest learning and behavior problems, motivation is always a concern. And usually the emphasis 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, perseverance, selective attention, frustration tolerance, sustained attention and follow-through, and social awareness and skills. In all cases, the emphasis is on reducing or eliminating interfering behaviors, usually with the presumption that then the student will re-engage in learning. However, there is little evidence that these strategies enhance a student's motivation toward classroom learning and thus can be counterproductive in personalizing learning.

WHAT WORKS:

Reviews of the literature on human motivation suggest that providing students with valued options and involving them in decision making are key facets of addressing the problem of engagement in the classroom and at school.

For example, numerous studies have shown that opportunities to express preferences and make choices lead to greater motivation, academic gains, increases in productivity and on-task behavior, and decreases in aggressive behavior. Similarly, researchers report that student participation in goal setting leads to more positive outcomes (e.g., higher commitment to a goal and increased performance).

Practices for preventing disengagement and efforts to re-engage disconnected students (as well as families and staff) require minimizing conditions that negatively affect intrinsic motivation and maximizing those that enhance it. These matters are a focus in Unit II.

For Discussion:

HOW DOES THIS PLAY OUT IN CLASSROOMS YOU HAVE OBSERVED?
(Note your observations in your Learning Log.)

For a perspective on motivation that can expand your understanding of engagement, re-engagement, and intrinsic motivation in ways that go beyond the application of reinforcers, see appended Reading B and the list of resources at the end of this Unit.

C. Personalizing Structure for Learning

Classroom structure often is discussed as all or nothing – structured or unstructured (Lee & Anderson, 2013). The tendency also is to equate structure simply with limit setting and social control. Such practices tend to produce vicious cycles. The emphasis on control can have a negative impact on students’ motivation (e.g., producing psychological reactance), which makes it harder to teach and control them. As long as students do not value the classroom, the teacher, and the activities, poor learning and inappropriate behavior are likely outcomes. This increasingly can lead school staff to push, prod, and punish. Sometimes the phrase used is “they need clearer limits and consequences.” Such a cycle results in the whole enterprise of schooling taking on a negative tone for students and staff.

Obviously, it is not possible to personalize learning with youngsters who are out of control. Also obvious is the reality that use of external means to control behavior (e.g., isolating students in a “time out” situation, sending them for discipline) is incompatible with developing working relationships for personalizing learning. Using the term *structure* to describe extreme efforts to control behavior fails to recognize that the aim is to promote learning and performance, not just control behavior.

Good teaching involves a definition of structure that goes well beyond how much control a teacher has over students. Structure must be viewed as *the type of support, guidance, and direction provided the learner, and encompasses all efforts to clarify essential information – including communication of limits as necessary*. Structure can be *personalized* by varying it to match learners’ current motivation and capabilities with respect to specific tasks and circumstances.

Structure is not about control per se; it is about personalized support and guidance and caring

Personalized support and guidance in the classroom allow for active, caring interactions between students and their environment, and these interactions are meant to lead to a relatively stable, positive, ongoing working relationships. How positive the relationships are depends on how learners perceive the communications, support, guidance, direction, and limit setting. Negative perceptions can be expected to generate avoidance behavior and poor working relationships.

When a continuum of structure is made available and students are able to indicate their preferences, the total environment appears less confining. The main point of personalizing structure is to provide a high level of support and guidance for students when they need it and to avoid creating a classroom climate that is experienced by students as tight and controlling. Such an approach is a great aid in establishing the type of positive, caring working relationships necessary for personalizing learning and also provides a basis for turning big classes into smaller units.

Figuring out the best way to provide personalized structure is one of the most important problems a teacher faces in building working relationships with students. The problem is how to make the structure neither too controlling nor too permissive. Good schools do not want to create an authoritarian atmosphere, and no one working at a school wants to be pushed around. Most school staff find that a positive working relationship requires mutual respect; a warm working relationship requires mutual caring and understanding.

Simply reemphasizing limits (e.g., the rules) and enforcing them often is counterproductive. Misbehavior must be handled in ways that do not increase student disengagement with school learning.

Even better are strategies that enhance engagement by responding in a positive and matter-of-fact way. This involves responding with support, guidance, and direction that keeps a student focused on learning and interacting in ways that consistently convey a sense of appropriate and genuine warmth, interest, concern, and respect. The intent is to help students “know their own minds,” make their own decisions, and at the same time feel that others like and care about them. As discussed in Reading C, volunteers, aides, and student support staff can be used to positively engage disruptive students at the first sign of problems.

Competency-Based Learning and Personalized Learning

Transitioning away from seat time, in favor of a structure that creates flexibility, allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content, regardless of time, place, or pace of learning. Competency-based strategies provide flexibility in the way that credit can be earned or awarded, and provide students with personalized learning opportunities. These strategies include online and blended learning, dual enrollment and early college high schools, project-based and community-based learning, and credit recovery, among others. This type of learning leads to better student engagement because the content is relevant to each student and tailored to their unique needs. ...

By enabling students to master skills at their own pace, competency-based learning systems help to save both time and money. Depending on the strategy pursued, competency-based systems also create multiple pathways to graduation, make better use of technology, support new staffing patterns that utilize teacher skills and interests differently, take advantage of learning opportunities outside of school hours and walls, and help identify opportunities to target interventions to meet the specific learning needs of students. ...

U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/oii-news/competency-based-learning-or-personalized-learning>

Technology Can Help with Personalizing Learning

“Over the past 40 years, we have seen unprecedented advances in computing and communications that have led to powerful technology resources and tools for learning. Today, low-cost Internet access devices, easy-to-use digital authoring tools, and the Web facilitate access to information and multimedia learning content, communication, and collaboration. They also provide the ability to participate in online learning communities that cross disciplines, organizations, international boundaries, and cultures.”

Administration's National Education Technology Plan (2010)

“By itself, technology will not remake education. Meaningful change requires alterations in technology, organizational structure, instructional approach, and educational assessment. But if officials combine innovations in technology, organization, operations, and culture, they can overcome current barriers, produce better results, and reimagine the manner in which schools function.”

Darrell West (2011)

D. Conferencing as a Key Strategy

The ability to talk *with* rather than *at* a student is critical for personalizing learning. Talking *with* involves a true dialogue – which, of course, depends on each participant truly listening to and hearing the other. Personalized teaching is built on a base that appreciates what each student is thinking and feeling, and carrying on an ongoing dialogue with students offers the best opportunity to learn about such matters, and especially about what motivates a student to engage.

The mechanism for carrying on dialogues often is called a *conference*. However, the term does not convey the full sense of what is involved and, at times, is interpreted in ways contrary to the meaning used here. From a motivational perspective, conferences should be a time when the teacher or a team member and a student plan the next steps for learning and teaching and do so in a way that is mutually satisfying.

Conferences provide a time and context for

- exploring progress and problems
- clarifying and sampling options for next steps in personalizing learning, solving problems, and enrichment opportunities
- mutual planning and decision making
- modifying previous decisions whenever necessary.

The ability to talk with students is essential to personalizing learning

Conferences allow teacher to connect in personal ways and to convey a genuine warmth, interest, concern, and respect.

Conferences help students “know their own minds,” make their own decisions, and feel connected.

The importance of ensuring conferences as a two-way dialogue cannot be over-emphasized. They should be a time for both the student and teacher to say what they need, want, and are hoping for from each other. Conferences vary in length, depending first on how much time is available and second how much time is needed by a specific student.

The process is ongoing and not always done in a formal manner. Indeed, some of the best dialogues are spontaneous (e.g., occur when a teacher or team member takes time to sit down next to a student during class for an informal chat). Such impromptu conferences become feasible when the classroom is designed to maximize use of small group and independent learning activities and cooperative and peer supported learning. A few ideas and guidelines for conferencing are presented in Guide I-c.

Participating in conferences can enhance a student's feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness to the schools staff. Conferencing is pivotal in enhancing student engagement and re-engagement in learning. Through talking with a student, a teacher or team member can convey a sense of positive regard and gain a richer understanding of the status and bases for a student's current levels of motivation and capability. For example, dialogues yield information on motivational factors (e.g., student hopes, goals, desires, interests, attitudes, preferences, expectations, concerns) which should be considered in all planning. Dialogues also provide other information about who the student is as an individual (e.g., personal and family background and/or current life events that have relevance to current behavior and learning).

Properly conducted conferences convey positive regard, valuing of the student's perspective, and belief that the student should play a meaningful role in defining options and making decisions. Conferences also are one of the best contexts for providing feedback in a nurturing way and for conveying the staff's sincere desire to ensure equity of opportunity.

Students can keep *dialogue journals* as an aid for conferencing. Such a journal enables the student and teacher to carry on a daily conversation, writing each other in a direct and informal manner about matters of mutual concern relevant to personalizing learning. Journals can take many forms (e.g., a bound composition book, an ongoing email exchange). This mechanism facilitates communication, it provides motivated practice related to writing and reading. And, as with face-to-face conferences, it encourages self-evaluation and critical reflection.

**What else might facilitate regular conferencing to improve personalized learning?
(Note your observations in your Learning Log.)**

Guide I-c

Some Guidelines for Conferencing

Scheduling: Each day the teacher or another team member can plan to meet formally with about five individuals. The list for the day is generated as a combination of students who request a meeting and students with whom the staff asks to meet. Sometimes a decision may be made to hold a group conference when the focus is on matters that can benefit from a group discussion. Students are asked to sign-up for specific times and to take responsibility for preparing for and coming to the designated place for the conference.

Another variation, particularly for secondary level, uses a "conferencing teacher" for a group of students. Every teacher and student support staff member are assigned a set of students. They conference with these students every two weeks to review how their entire schedule is working out, review work samples (portfolios), and record progress.

Involving Parents. Periodically, staff-student conferences should involve parents or parent surrogates. Here, too, care must be taken to ensure true dialogues take place and that mutual sharing, planning, and decision making are intended. These conferences can take place at designated times and as needed. Because face-to face conferences are costly and difficult to arrange, phone and email exchanges need to become the rule rather than the exception. Although not always feasible, conferences with family members should include the student. Indeed, a good idea is that of student-led parent-staff conferences.

Some Process Guidelines

- Start out on a positive note: Ask about what the student currently likes at school and in the class and clarify areas of strength. (During first conferences, ask about outside interests, hobbies, areas of success.)
- In exploring current progress, be certain to ask the student about the reasons for their successes.
- In exploring current problems, be certain to ask the student about the reasons for the problems (including what aspects they don't like about school and the class). Clarify details about these matters (e.g. Are assignments seen as too hard? Is the student embarrassed because others will think s/he does not have the ability to do assignments? Are the assignments not seen as interesting? No support at home? Are there problems with peers or at home?)
- When necessary, use some of the time to analyze academic abilities and learning styles (e.g., listen to the student read aloud, review and discuss the work in a student's portfolio).
- Explore what the student thinks can be done to make things better (e.g., different assignments, extra support from a volunteer/peer, etc.).
- Arrive at some mutual agreements that the student values and expects to be able to do with a reasonable amount of effort.

E. Assessment to Plan; Feedback to Nurture

As many educators lament: "Most of the assessment done in schools today is after the fact and designed to indicate only whether students have learned." And those concerned with enhancing the use of technology as an adjunct for improving assessment in schools add: "We are not using the full flexibility and power of technology to design, develop, and validate new assessment materials and processes for both formative and summative uses" (Administration's National Education Technology Plan, 2010).

Assessment is used for a variety of purposes in schools. It is used to screen and identify those who need special assistance; it is used to help make decisions about a special placement for a student; it is used to evaluate programs and personnel. But, from a personalized learning and teaching perspective the main use is to help plan instruction and provide feedback in ways that enhance learning.

Planning for learning. From the perspective of personalizing learning, traditional student assessments inadequately address motivation and lead to faulty planning. To clarify the point, *individualization* typically focuses on daily performance with a view to planning to enhancing knowledge and skills and addressing developmental deficiencies. This overemphasis on developmental considerations tends to underemphasize motivational/attitudinal considerations, especially the enhancement of intrinsic motivation.

Given that those concerned with personalizing learning should assess both motivation and capabilities, increasing efforts have gone into exploring how to help them do so. One direction focuses on enhancing available tools, including greater use of technology. This includes observations, interviews, open discussion ("instructional conversations"), reflective journals, projects, demonstrations, collections of student work, and students' self evaluations. "Authentic" assessment has been proposed as a special approach to assessing complex performance. The process focuses on performance-based evaluation using such tools as essays, open-ended responses, responses to computer simulations, interview data, and analyses of student journals and work that is accumulated over time in a "portfolio." The information garnered from such assessments helps to design next steps related to both what and how to personalize learning opportunities.

Beyond tools is the matter of how assessment is pursued. In designing instruction, assessment must reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities. One of the best ways to think about pursuing such assessment is to view it as an *interactive* process. As captured by the notions of "dynamic" and "authentic" assessment, interactive assessment involves not only reviewing products, but clarifying,

The need it to find “new and better ways to assess what matters, doing assessment in the course of learning when there is still time to improve student performance, and involving multiple stakeholders in the process of designing, conducting, and using assessment”

Administration's National Education Technology Plan (2010)

through observation and discussion, learners’ responses to specific efforts to guide and support performance and learning. Such concepts and the traditional psychological testing idea of “testing the limits” are the genesis of recommendations for using *response to intervention* strategies.

Providing nurturing feedback. Personalizing learning calls for feedback on how well the outcomes match the student's intrinsic reasons for pursuing them. And, with a view to enhancing positive attitudes, feedback is conveyed in ways that nurture the student’s feelings about self, learning, school, and teachers. *Handled well, the information should contribute to students' feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness and should clarify directions for future progress.* Feedback that is inappropriately conveyed can be devastating.

Remember, when rewards and punishment are tied to feedback, they can greatly complicate the situation. In both cases, the impact can be negative (e.g., too great an emphasis on extrinsic rewards and punishment can be counterproductive to maintaining and enhancing intrinsic motivation).

A good context for providing feedback is a student conference – formal or informal. At such times, products and work samples can be analyzed; the appropriateness of current content, outcomes, processes, and structure can be reviewed; agreements and schedules can be evaluated and revised as necessary. Staff-student dialogues and group open-discussions often are the easiest and most direct way to find out learners' views of the match between themselves and the program.

Regardless of the format in which feedback is given, the point is to maintain student motivation and feelings of well-being while providing appropriate information to improve learning. For students who make many errors, this means providing support and guidance that anticipates and strives to prevent errors and also gives feedback selectively. In this last respect, the emphasis is on errors that must be reviewed because they are most relevant to personalizing the next learning opportunity. Others can be ignored until a later time. In all this, student self-monitoring, record keeping, and self-evaluation are especially helpful; close supervision and external rewards are used sparingly.

Many students are ready to self-evaluate (say what's working well for them and what isn't); others need to develop the ability to do so. When students are not motivated to appropriately self-evaluate and be self-directive, they need opportunities to find out how personally

valuable these "basic skills" can be. Sometimes all they need is to feel it's safe to say what's on their minds. If they already feel safe and just haven't acquired the skills, self-monitoring and regular record keeping provide a good way for learning such competence.

Many experts caution that among those not doing well in school, poor performance often is due to low motivation or high anxiety. In such cases, assessment findings are "contaminated." It is impossible to know whether failure to demonstrate an ability or skill represents a real deficiency in a particular area of development. Under such circumstances, it is easy to misprescribe what a student needs. It is, for example, not uncommon to assess a problem as due to skill deficiencies and design a program to teach "missing" skills – instead of helping overcome motivational problems interfering with performance.

What Policy Makers are Advocating to Improve Student Assessment

In Alabama, the state's education department is stressing a balanced system of assessment that includes:

(1) *Formative, Benchmark and/or Interim Assessment Repository w/ Resources – Grades 3-12*

A pool of aligned items to each standard at each grade level within each assessment content area will be available for teacher, school or system use for formative, benchmark and/or interim assessments to be used to inform instructional practice. Included will also be links to instructional resources aligned to the standards for use by teachers, schools or school systems.

(2) *Project-Based Assessments – Grades 6-12*

These assessments are designed to foster research inquiry skills, persistence, independence and intercommunications in ways that are not accomplished with more traditional summative and end-of-course assessments. Project-based assessments are scored based on templates or rubrics that produce rich, multileveled evaluations of student work.

(3) *Career Interest/Career Aptitude Assessments – Grades 6-12*

These assessments are designed to inform student, parent, teacher, counselor and principal decisions about appropriate coursework and co-curricular opportunities for students culminating in a comprehensive and annually updated four-year high school plan of study.

In its 2010 Race to the Top Assessment Competition, the U.S. Department of urged participants to take advantage of the capabilities of technology to provide students with realistic, complex performance tasks; provide immediate scoring and feedback; and incorporate accommodations that make the assessments usable by a diverse array of students.

F. Moving a Classroom Toward Personalized Learning

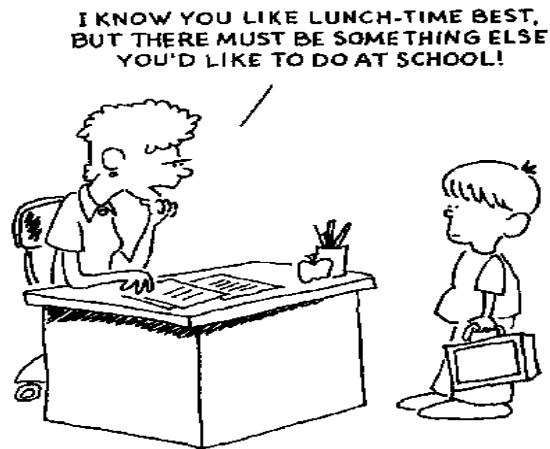
Student and learning support staff can be invaluable resources for personalizing learning in classrooms

So, what does it take to personalize a classroom?

First of all, the teacher must expect and value individual differences in student's motivation and development. The teacher must also offer options for learning and help students make decisions among the alternatives. The emphasis in such decision making must be on encouraging students to pursue what they perceive as a good match in terms of learning activities and structure. And as new information about what is and isn't a good match becomes available, there must be a willingness to revise decisions.

Given a teacher is motivated to personalize a classroom program, both the students and the teacher have to learn how to make it a reality. This usually involves moving toward personalization through a series of transition steps (see Guide I-c). In general, this means developing an appropriate variety of learning options to offer as a starting point, facilitating student understanding of what the new approach involves, and establishing procedures so that some students can work independently and in small cooperative learning groupings while the teacher pursues one-to-one and small-group interactions.

In reading the steps in Guide I-c, put a checkmark next to any you don't see as necessary and add any others you think would help.



Transition Steps Toward Personalizing Classrooms

I. Preparing the class

- A. Giving an enthusiastic explanation to the class of the why, what, when, and how of the intended changes (e.g., with the emphasis on the special personal opportunity of the new approach for them)
- B. Identifying available process and content options and increasing the variety to reflect the range of interests and capabilities present in the class
- C. Teaching students to be relatively self-sufficient at times and to ask others for help when necessary (e.g., a range of independent activities are introduced, including use of various technologies; students are shown how to use them, how to transition to other tasks on their own, and how to use peers, aides, and volunteers for support and direction when the teacher is working with others)
- D. Recruiting for collaboration (e.g., teaming with other teachers and student support staff, students, and volunteers) and developing strategies for them to provide support and guidance that may be needed by class members when the teacher is occupied with others
- E. Making trial runs to evaluate if students can function effectively while the teacher is occupied with others; continuing to develop student self-sufficiency and initiating trial runs until the class is at least minimally effective in this respect
- F. Giving demonstrations and providing opportunities for sampling learning options
- G. Using conferences to enhance understanding of each student's interests and strengths, introduce available options, discuss other options each would like to have available, and clarify the amount of structure the student views as needed; conferences should be oriented particularly to building a sense of valuing the opportunity to interact with the teacher in making program decisions
- H. Focusing over the first weeks particularly on developing additional learning options in keeping with students' specific requests

II. Additional conditions to facilitate conferences with students and small- groups and one-to-one facilitation of learning (incorporating technology as feasible)

- A. Establishing a quiet area where others will not interfere or be distracted
- B. Scheduling such sessions when other students are involved in independent activities or there is sufficient help available
- C. Establishing record keeping and information procedures for use by both student and teacher (e.g., objective checklists, records from last conference, products, work samples, tests materials, etc. – using technology to facilitate the process)

III. Ending the transition phase

- A. Establishing working agreements with each student about personalized learning plans (e.g., intended outcomes, procedures, and products, needed support and direction)
- B. Establishing procedures for regular conferences with students to improve, evolve, and expand the quality of the learning activities
- C. Establishing procedures for implementing special assistance if necessary (more on this in Unit II)

Concluding Comments

Personalizing learning is an ideal that is easier to achieve in some schools than in others. Even in the most favorable settings school staff find it a significant challenge. Regardless of curriculum content and standards, the process of personalizing learning starts with mobilizing the learner. Maintaining mobilized learning involves providing (a) multiple pathways, (b) learner decision making, and (c) ongoing information about learning and performance. As noted by the U.S. Department of Education: “To deeply engage their students, educators need to know about their students' goals and interests and have knowledge of learning resources and systems that can help students plan sets of learning experiences that are personally meaningful.” Moreover, it is essential to remember that “... teaching is fundamentally a social and emotional enterprise. The most effective educators connect to young people's developing social and emotional core ... by offering opportunities for creativity and self-expression.”

In planning and implementing personalized learning, technology can help. Again, as noted by the U.S. Department of Education: “Digital authoring tools for creating multimedia projects and online communities for sharing them with the world offer students outlets for social and emotion connections with educators, peers, communities, and the world at large. Educators can encourage students to do this within the context of learning activities, gaining further insights into what motivates and engages students....”

<http://www.ed.gov/technology/draft-netp-2010/connecting-students>

Clearly, there is a lot to learn about personalizing learning. At the same time, it is well to remember that personalization is just one facet of good teaching. As befits a society committed to equity, fairness, and social justice, good schools want to do their best for *all* students. For schools and teachers, equity, fairness, and justice starts with designing instruction in ways that account for a wide range of individual differences and circumstances. But, the work can't stop there if we are to assure all students an equal opportunity to succeed at school. Teachers and student support staff must be prepared to design classrooms and school wide approaches to accommodate and assist the range of learning, behavior, and emotional problems encountered in every school.

For more on improving conditions for learning in the classroom, see appended Reading D on *Good Teaching: Improving Conditions for Learning* and Reading E on *School & Classroom Climate*.

Then, go on to Unit II to learn about what else schools need to do to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students.



Unit I – Reflection & Stimulus for Discussion

Key Insights about: *Personalizing Learning*

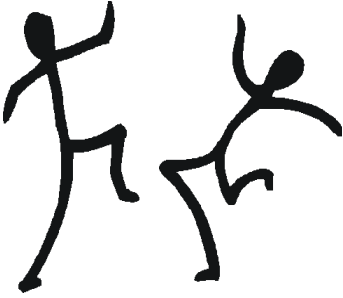
Based on what you learned so far:

Identify (and discuss) what is involved in personalizing learning. Be specific about the matter of engaging students and maintaining their engagement in learning in and out of the classroom.

- (1) Make a brief outline of what you see as the most important points.
- (2) Discuss them with your study group or other friends and colleagues.
- (3) After the discussion, decide how you might revise your outline.
- (4) Note key points in your *Learning Log*.

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.



Activity

Observe a group of students who are involved in the same classroom activity.

- (1) Identify one who appears highly engaged in learning and one who seems very bored.
- (2) After observing for a while, write down your views about why each of the students is responding so differently to the same activity.
- (3) Think about the bored student whom you observed (or another one you know) and make some notes about what's causing this.
- (4) Make some notes about what you think should be done,
- (5) Discuss your ideas with others.
- (5) Begin the group discussion with a brief exchange of what each participant thinks causes students not to be engaged in a classroom learning activity. Then discuss ideas for increasing the likelihood that such students will engage in such a learning opportunity.
- (6) Note key points in your *Learning Log*.

Brief Supplementary Readings

- A. Turning Big Classes into Smaller Units**
- B. Motivation: Time to Move
Beyond Behavior Modification**
- C. Volunteers as an Invaluable Resource**
- D. Good Teaching: Improving Conditions for
Learning in the Classroom**
- E. About School and Classroom Climate**

Brief Reading A – from the Center’s continuing education units entitled *RTI and Classroom & School wide Learning Supports*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/dbsimple2.asp?primary=2311&number=9897>

Turning Big Classes into Smaller Units

Just as it is evident that we need to turn schools with large enrollments into sets of small schools, we must do the same in the classroom everyday. As a report in 2000 from the American Youth Policy Forum states:

“The structure and organization of a High School of the Millennium is very different than that of the conventional high school. First and foremost, [the school] is designed to provide small, personalized, and caring learning communities for students The smaller groups allow a number of adults . . . to work together with the students . . . as a way to develop more meaningful relationships and as a way for the teachers to better understand the learning needs of each student.”

The Key is Grouping

Aside from times when a learning objective is best accomplished with the whole class, the general trend should be to create small classes out of the whole. This involves grouping students in various ways, as well as providing opportunities for individual activity. At a fundamental level, grouping is an essential strategy in turning classrooms with large enrollments into a set of simultaneously operating small classes.

Clearly, students should never be grouped in ways that harm them (e.g., putting them in low ability tracks, segregating those with problems). But grouping is essential for effective teaching. *Appropriate grouping* facilitates student engagement, learning, and performance. Besides enhancing academic learning, it can increase intrinsic motivation by promoting feelings of personal and interpersonal competence, self-determination, and positive connection with others. Moreover, it can foster autonomous learning skills, personal responsibility for learning, and healthy social-emotional attitudes and skills.

A well-designed classroom enables teachers to spend most of their time rotating among small self-monitored groups (e.g., two to six members) and individual learners. With team teaching and staff collaboration, such grouping can be done across classrooms.

Effective grouping is facilitated by ensuring teachers have adequate resources (including space, materials, and help). The key to effective grouping, however, is to take the time needed for youngsters to learn to work well with each other, with other resource personnel, and at times independently. Students are grouped and regrouped flexibly and regularly based on individual interests, needs, and for the benefits to be derived from diversity. Small learning groups are established for cooperative inquiry and learning, concept and skill development, problem solving, motivated practice, peer- and cross-age tutoring, and other forms of activity that can be facilitated by peers, aides, and/or volunteers. In a small group, students have more opportunities to participate. In heterogeneous, cooperative learning groups, each student has an interdependent role in pursuing a common learning goal and can contribute on a par with their capabilities.

Three types of groupings that are common are:

- *Needs-Based Grouping*: Short-term groupings are established for students with similar learning needs (e.g., to teach or reteach them particular skills and to do so in keeping with their current interests and capabilities).
- *Interest-Based Grouping*: Students who already are motivated to pursue an activity usually can be taught to work together well on active learning tasks.
- *Designed-Diversity Grouping*: For some objectives, it is desirable to combine sets of students who come from different backgrounds and have different abilities and interests (e.g., to discuss certain topics, foster certain social capabilities, engender mutual support for learning).

All three types provide opportunities to enhance interpersonal functioning and an understanding of working relationships and of factors effecting group functioning. And, in all forms of grouping, approaches such as cooperative learning and computer-assisted instruction are relevant.

Recognize and Accommodate Diversity

Every classroom is diverse to some degree. Diversity arises from many factors: gender, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, religion, capability, disability, interests, and so forth. In grouping students, it is important to draw on the strengths of diversity. For example, a multi-ethnic classroom enables teachers to group students across ethnic lines to bring different perspectives to the learning activity. This allows students not only to learn about other perspectives, it can enhance critical thinking and other higher order conceptual abilities. It also can foster the type of intergroup understanding and relationships essential to establishing a school climate of caring and mutual respect. And, of course, the entire curriculum and all instructional activities must incorporate an appreciation of diversity, and teachers must plan ways to appropriately accommodate individual and group differences.

Collaborative or Team Teaching

As Hargreaves (1994) notes:

“The way to relieve the uncertainty and open-endedness that characterizes classroom teaching is to create communities of colleagues who work collaboratively [in cultures of shared learning and positive risk-taking] to set their own professional limits and standards, while still remaining committed to continuous improvement. Such communities can also bring together the professional and personal lives of teachers in a way that supports growth and allows problems to be discussed without fear of disapproval or punishment.”

Obviously, it helps to have multiple collaborators in the classroom. An aide and/or volunteers, for example, can assist with establishing and maintaining well-functioning groups, as well as providing special support and guidance for designated individuals. As teachers increasingly open their doors to others, assistance can be solicited from paid tutors, resource and special education teachers, pupil services personnel, and an ever widening range of volunteers (e.g., tutors, peer buddies, parents, mentors, and any others who can bring special abilities into the classroom and offer additional options for learning). And, of course, team teaching offers a potent way to expand the range of options for personalizing

instruction. Not only can teaming benefit students, it can be a great boon to teachers. A good collaboration is one where colleagues mesh professionally and personally. It doesn't mean that there is agreement about everything, but there must be agreement about what constitutes good classroom practices.

Collaborations can take various forms. For example, teaming may take the form of:

- *Parallel Work* – team members combine their classes or other work and teach to their strengths. This may involve specific facets of the curriculum (e.g., one person covers math, another reading; they both cover different aspects of science) or different students (e.g., for specific activities, they divide the students and work with those to whom each relates to best or can support in the best way).
- *Complementary Work* – one team member takes the lead and another facilitates follow-up activity.
- *Special Assistance* – while one team member provides basic instruction, another focuses on those students who need special assistance.

Usually, the tendency is to think in terms of two or more teachers teaming to share the instructional load. We stress, however, the value of expanding the team to include support staff, aides, volunteers, and designated students to help in creating small groupings. Teachers and support staff can work together to recruit and train others to join in the collaborative effort. And, with access to the Internet and distance learning, the nature and scope of collaboration has the potential to expand in dramatic fashion.

A Note About Students as Collaborative Helpers

Besides the mutual benefits students get from cooperative learning groups and other informal ways they help each other, formal peer programs can be invaluable assets. Students can be taught to be peer tutors, cross-age tutors, group discussion leaders, role models, and mentors. Other useful roles include: peer buddies (to welcome, orient, and provide social support as a new student transitions into the class and school), peer conflict mediators, and much more. Student helpers benefit their peers, themselves, and the school staff, and enhance the school's efforts to create a caring climate and a sense of community.



Reflection & Stimulus for Discussion for Reading A

Key Insights about:

Turning Big Classes into Smaller Units

Based on what you learned so far:

Identify (and discuss) ways to group students for personalizing learning and how to collaborate with others to make this work.

- (1) Make a brief outline of what you see as the most important points.
- (2) Discuss them with your study group or other friends and colleagues.
- (3) After the discussion, decide how you might revise your outline.
- (4) Note key points in your *Learning Log*.

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.

Brief Reading B – from the Center’s continuing education units entitled *Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/enagei.pdf>

Motivation: Time to Move Beyond Behavior Modification

Maria doesn't want to work on improving her reading. Not only is her *motivational readiness* for learning in this area low, but she also has a fairly high level of *avoidance motivation* for reading. Most of the time during reading instruction she is disengaged and acting out.

In contrast, David is motivationally ready to improve reading skills, but he has very little motivation to do so in the ways his teacher proposes. He has high motivation for the *outcome* but low motivation for the *processes* prescribed for getting there.

Matt often is highly motivated to do whatever is prescribed to help him learn to read better, but his motivation starts to disappear after a few weeks of hard work. He has trouble maintaining a sufficient amount of ongoing or *continuing motivation*, and his attention and behavior wander.

Helena appeared motivated to learn and did learn many new vocabulary words and improved her reading comprehension on several occasions over the years she was in special school programs. Her motivation to read after school, however, has never increased. It was assumed that as her skills improved, her attitude toward reading would too. But it never has.

No one expected James to become a good reader because of low scores on tests related to phonics ability and reading comprehension. However, his teacher found some beginning level books on his favorite sport (baseball) and found that he really wanted to read them. He asked her and other students to help him with words and took the books home to read (where he also asked an older sister for some help). His skills started to improve rapidly and he was soon reading on a par with his peers.

What the preceding examples illustrate is that

- motivation is a learning prerequisite, and its absence may be a cause of learning and behavior problems, a factor maintaining such problems, or both
- individuals may be motivated toward the idea of obtaining a certain learning outcome but may not be motivated to pursue certain learning processes
- individuals may be motivated to start to work on overcoming their learning and behavior problems but may not maintain their motivation
- individuals may be motivated to learn basic skills but maintain negative attitudes about the area of functioning and thus never use the skills except when they must
- motivated learners can do more than others might expect.

Comparable motivational differences are found at every grade level and in every subject.

So, obviously, motivation is a fundamental consideration in engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning. But, much more is involved than effectively using rewards and consequences. A broader understanding of motivation clarifies how essential it is to build on and enhance intrinsic motivation and avoid processes that undermine it.

Appreciating Intrinsic Motivation

At the risk of over-simplifying things, the following discussion underscores a few facets of motivation theory that may not have been covered in pre-service personnel preparation.

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

E x V

Hint: the "x" is a multiplication sign.

If the E x V 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 this often means expectations of success or failure). “V” represents *valuing*, with valuing influenced by both what is valued intrinsically and extrinsically. 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.*

Two common reasons people give for not bothering to learn something are:

"It's not worth it"

"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 it is valued by the person and on the person's expectation that what is valued will be attained without too great a cost.

Engaging and re-engaging students depends on how the classroom and school address concerns about *valuing* and *expectations*. Schools and classrooms that offer a broad range of learning and enrichment opportunities (e.g., content, outcomes, procedural options) and involve students in decision making are best equipped to meet the challenge.

Note: While our focus here is on students, any discussion of motivation has applications to family members and school personnel. Think about the challenge of home involvement in schooling, and think about teacher burnout and dropout; think about systemic change.

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, 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. Such extrinsic reinforcers are easy to use and can immediately affect behavior. Therefore, they are widely used. 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.

What makes it worth pursuing?

It is important to remember that what makes extrinsics rewarding is that they are *experienced by the recipient* as a reward. What turns something extrinsic into a highly valued reward is that the recipient highly values it. 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*, for example, 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 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 challenges 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 is an internal push toward *self-determination*. People seem to value feeling and thinking that 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

Does the student perceive the outcome as attainable?

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 past experiences that influence our perceptions of how easy or hard it will be to obtain a desired outcome. Sometimes we know we can easily do something, but it may not be something we value pursuing. At other times, we may value something a great deal but not believe we can do it or can only obtain it by paying too great a personal price. Under such circumstances, we are likely to look for other valued activities and outcomes to pursue.

In general, then, what we value interacts with our expectations, and motivation is one product of this interaction.

About E x V

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.

In planning instruction and other interventions with students, consider:

$$\text{Expectancy} \times \text{Valuing} = \text{Motivation}$$
$$0 \quad \times \quad 1.0 \quad = \quad 0$$

High expectations paired with low valuing also yield low approach motivation.

In planning instruction and other interventions with students, consider:

$$\text{Expectancy} \times \text{Valuing} = \text{Motivation}$$
$$1.0 \quad \times \quad 0 \quad = \quad 0$$

Understanding Student Performance and Behavior

ACTIVITY

Think about your own behavior. How often is it affected by feelings that

"It's not worth it"

and/or

"I know I won't be able to do it."

Engagement and Matching Motivation

Engagement is associated with positive academic outcomes, including achievement and persistence in school; and it is higher in classrooms with supportive teachers and peers, challenging and authentic tasks, opportunities for choice, and sufficient structure.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004)

In the school research literature, engagement is defined in terms of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement (see Exhibit B-1). The same three categories apply to disengagement.

From a psychological perspective, disengagement from classroom learning is associated with threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and/or relatedness to valued others. The demands may be from school staff, peers, instructional content and processes. Psychological disengagement can be expected to result not only in learning problems but also in internalized behavior (e.g., boredom, emotional distress) and/or externalized behavior (misbehavior, dropping out).

In efforts to engage (and re-engage) youngsters, teachers, support staff, and parents often over-depend on reinforcement theory, despite the appreciation they have about the importance of intrinsic motivation. Indeed, what many of us have been taught about dealing with others runs counter to what we intuitively understand about human motivation in general and intrinsic motivation in particular.

It is evident that students who are intrinsically motivated to learn at school seek out opportunities and challenges and go beyond requirements. In doing so, they learn more and learn more deeply than do classmates who are extrinsically motivated. Facilitating the learning of such students is a fairly direct matter and fits well with broadband instructional practices. Such practices provide a reasonable match with the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement of these students and with their current levels of development.

Exhibit B-1

Defining, Recognizing Antecedents of, and Measuring Engagement

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) note that *engagement is defined* in three ways in the school research literature:

- ***Behavioral engagement*** draws on the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities and is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing dropping out.
- ***Emotional engagement*** encompasses positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school and is presumed to create ties to an institution and influences willingness to do the work.
- ***Cognitive engagement*** draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills.

Engagement is measured as follows:

- ***Behavioral Engagement:*** conduct, work involvement, participation, persistence (e.g., completing homework, complying with school rules, absent/tardy, off-task)
- ***Emotional Engagement:*** self-report related to feelings of frustration, boredom, interest, anger, satisfaction; student-teacher relations; work orientation
- ***Cognitive Engagement:*** investment in learning, flexible problems solving, independent work styles, coping with perceived failure, preference for challenge and independent mastery, commitment to understanding the work

Antecedents of engagement are grouped as:

- ***School level factors:*** voluntary choice, clear and consistent goals, small size, student participation in school policy and management, opportunities for staff and students to be involved in cooperative endeavors, and academic work that allows for the development of products
- ***Classroom Context:*** Teacher support, peers, classroom structure, autonomy support, task characteristics
- ***Individual Needs:*** Need for relatedness, need for autonomy, need for competence

In general, the goal in facilitating learning is to create an environment that engages the student and maintains and even enhances that engagement, while effectively facilitating learning. And, when a student disengages, re-engagement involves use of interventions that minimize conditions that negatively affect motivation and maximize conditions that have a positive motivational effect.

Teachers, parents, and support staff, of course, can't control all factors affecting motivation. For example, one has direct control over only relatively few facets of the physical and social environment. With concerns about engagement and re-engagement in mind, schools strive to create a good fit or "match" not only with the current *capabilities* of a given youngster, but with individual differences in *motivation*.

Matching individual differences in *motivation* means attending to matters such as:

- ***Motivation as a readiness concern.*** Motivation is a key antecedent condition in any learning situation. It is a prerequisite to student attention, involvement, and performance. If a learner does not have enough motivational readiness, strategies must be used 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.
- ***Motivation as a key ongoing process concern.*** Many learners are caught up in the novelty of a new subject, but after a few lessons, interest often wanes. Some students are 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. For example, some are motivated to start work on overcoming their problems but may not maintain that motivation. Strategies must be designed to elicit, enhance, and maintain motivation so that a youngster stays mobilized.
- ***Minimizing negative motivation and avoidance reactions as process and outcome concerns.*** Teachers and others at a school and at home 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.
- ***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, good behavior) increasingly is a positive intrinsic attitude that mobilizes learning and behaving outside the teaching situation and beyond the schoolhouse door. Achieving such an outcome involves use of strategies that do not over-rely on extrinsic rewards and that do enable youngsters 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*.

To enhance engagement and re-engage disconnected students, practices must increase positive and reduce negative feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies with respect to learning at school.

For learning and behavior problems, an additional concern is identifying and minimizing experiences that maintain or may increase avoidance motivation and psychological reactance.

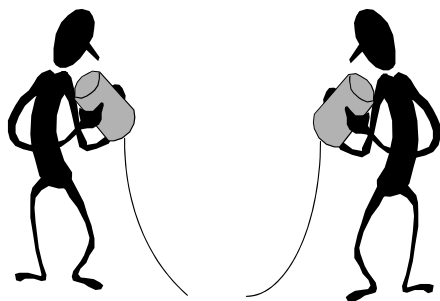
For more on practices that have positive motivational effects and that minimize conditions that increase avoidance and reactance and reduce intrinsic motivation, see the Center's continuing education units entitled: *Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families* – online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagei.pdf>

***I don't want to go to school.
It's too hard and the kids
don't like me.***

|

***That's too bad, but you have to go –
you're the Teacher!***

|



Intrinsic Motivation and the Classroom

Intrinsic motivation is a fundamental concern in every classroom. Understanding intrinsic motivation clarifies how essential it is to avoid processes that limit options, make students feel controlled and coerced, and that focus mainly on “remedying” problems. Overreliance on extrinsic motivation risks producing avoidance reactions in the classroom and to school and, thus, can reduce opportunities for positive learning and for development of positive attitudes. Over time, the result is that too many students disengage from classroom learning.

Practices for preventing disengagement and efforts to re-engage disconnected students (families, staff) require minimizing conditions that negatively affect intrinsic motivation and maximizing those that enhance it.

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

- feelings of self-determination
- feelings of competence and expectations of success
- feelings of interpersonal relatedness
- the range of interests and satisfactions related to learning.

Activities to correct deficiencies in intrinsic motivation are directed at improving awareness of personal motives and true capabilities, learning to set valued and appropriate goals, learning to value and to make appropriate and satisfying choices, and learning to value and accept responsibility for choice.

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. Without a good match, social control strategies can suppress negative attitudes and behaviors, but are unlikely to re-engage disconnected students in classroom learning.

Strong intrinsic motivation can be viewed as a fundamental *protective factor* and as a key to developing *resiliency*. Students who are intrinsically motivated to learn at school seek out opportunities and challenges and go beyond requirements. In doing so, they learn more and learn more deeply than do classmates who are extrinsically motivated. Facilitating the learning of such students is fairly straightforward and meshes well with school improvements that primarily emphasize enhancing instructional practices. The focus is on helping establish ways for students who already are motivationally ready and able to achieve and maintaining and enhancing their motivation. The process involves knowing when, how, and what to teach and also knowing when and how to structure the situation so students can learn on their own.

In contrast, students who manifest learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems usually are not motivationally ready and able to pursue nonpersonalized instructional practices. They often have extremely negative perceptions of teachers, programs, and school and generally are not open to people and activities that they perceive as "the same old thing." Any effort to re-engage disengaged students must begin by addressing negative perceptions. Teachers and school support staff must work together to reverse conditions that led to such perceptions. Minimally, exceptional efforts must be made to enhance such a student's perceptions that (1) the teacher and other interveners are supportive (rather than controlling and indifferent) and (2) content, outcomes, and activity options are personally valuable and obtainable.

Examples of practices for *maximizing intrinsic motivation* are:

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

Examples of *minimizing threats to intrinsic motivation* are:

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

Motivation and School Climate

The concept of *climate* plays a major role in shaping the quality of school life, teaching, learning, and support (see Reading E). School and classroom climate sometimes are referred to as the learning environment, as well as by terms such as atmosphere, ambience, ecology, and milieu.

**How many students does
it take to change a light bulb?**



**Only one, but the student
has to want to change the bulb!**



About Psychological Reactance and Re-engagement

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 (Deci & Flaste, 1995). 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 individual perceives 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 and how to re-engage a student who has become disconnected.

So: the irony is that overreliance on extrinsics to control behavior may exacerbate student problems. Motivational research suggests that when people perceive their freedom of choice is threatened, they have a psychological reaction that motivates them to restore their sense of freedom. (For instance, when those in control say: You can't do that ... you must do this ..., the covert and sometimes overt psychological reaction of students often is: *Oh, you think so!*) This line of research also suggests that with prolonged denial of freedom, people's reactivity diminishes, 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.



Reflection & Stimulus for Discussion for Reading B

Key Insights about:

Broadening Understanding of Motivation Move Beyond Behavior Modification

Based on what you learned so far:

*Discuss the importance of matching motivation
in personalizing learning.*

- (1) Make a brief outline of what you see as the most important points.
- (2) Discuss them with your study group or other friends and colleagues.
- (3) After the discussion, decide how you might revise your outline.
- (4) Note key points in your *Learning Log*.

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.

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



Brief Reading C

Volunteers as an Invaluable Resource*

Volunteers can be a multifaceted resource in a classroom and throughout a school. For this to be the case, however, the school staff must value volunteers and learn how to recruit, train, nurture, and use them effectively. When implemented properly, school volunteer programs can enable teachers to personalize instruction, free teachers and other school personnel to meet students' needs more effectively, broaden students' experiences, strengthen school-community understanding and relations, enhance home involvement, and enrich the lives of volunteers. In the classroom, volunteers can provide just the type of extra support needed to enable staff to conference and work with students who require special assistance.

Volunteers may help students on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. Group interactions are especially important in enhancing a student's cooperative interactions with peers. One-to-one work is often needed to develop a positive relationship with a particularly aggressive or withdrawn student, in re-engaging a student who has disengaged from classroom learning, and in fostering successful task completion with a student easily distracted by peers. Volunteers can help enhance a student's motivation and skills and, at the very least, can help counter negative effects that arise when a student has difficulty adjusting to school. Working under the direction of the teacher and student support staff, they can be especially helpful in establishing a supportive relationship with students who are having trouble adjusting to school (see Exhibit C-1).

Volunteers can be recruited from a variety of sources: parents and other family members; others in the community such as senior citizens and workers in local businesses; college students; and peers and older students at the school. There also are organized programs that can provide volunteers, such as local service clubs. And, increasingly, institutions of higher education are requiring students to participate in learning through service. Schools committed to enhancing home and community involvement in schooling can pursue volunteer programs as a productive element in their efforts to do so.

Few teachers have the time to recruit and train a cadre of volunteers. Teachers can work with student support staff and the school administration to set up a volunteer program for the school. Initially, a small group of volunteers can be recruited and taught how to implement and maintain the volunteer program (e.g., how to recruit a large pool of volunteers, help train them, nurture them, work with them to recruit replacements).

The cost of volunteer programs is relatively small compared to the impact they can have on school climate and the quality of life for students and school staff.

*For more on this topic, see our center's online clearinghouse Quick Find on *Volunteers in Schools* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/volunteers.html>

Exhibit C-1

The Many Roles for Volunteers in the Classroom and Throughout the School

I. Welcoming and Social Support

A. In the Front Office

1. Greeting and welcoming
2. Providing information to those who come to the front desk
3. Escorting guests, new students/families to destinations on the campus
4. Orienting newcomers

B. Staffing a Welcoming Club

1. Connecting newly arrived parents with peer buddies
2. Helping develop orientation and other information resources for newcomers
3. Helping establish newcomer support groups

II. Working with Designated Students in the Classroom

A. Helping to orient new students

B. Engaging disinterested, distracted, and distracting students

C. Providing personal guidance and support for specific students in class to help them stay focused and engaged

III. Providing Additional Opportunities and Support in Class and on the Campus

A. Recreation

B. Enrichment

C. Tutoring

D. Mentoring

IV. Helping Enhance Positive Climate Throughout the School – including assisting with "chores"

A. Assisting with Supervision in Class and Throughout the Campus

B. Contributing to Campus "Beautification"

C. Helping to Get Materials Ready



Reflection & Stimulus for Discussion for Reading C

Key Insights about:

Using Volunteers

Based on what you learned so far:

How could you use volunteers to help with personalizing learning?

- (1) Make a brief outline of what you see as the most important points.
- (2) Discuss them with your study group or other friends and colleagues.
- (3) After the discussion, decide how you might revise your outline.
- (4) Note key points in your *Learning Log*.

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.

Brief Reading D – from the Center’s CE units entitled *RTI and Classroom & School wide Learning Supports* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/dbsimple2.asp?primary=2311&number=9897>

Good Teaching: Improving Conditions for Learning in the Classroom

What goes on in the classroom is critical in ameliorating or exacerbating the learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems manifested by students. This reality, however, does not make addressing the problems the sole responsibility of teachers. And while response to intervention can play a strategic intervention role, implementing the approach also is not the sole responsibility of teachers; it requires a collective effort.

For response to intervention to become an effective facet in classrooms, teachers and student support personnel need to work together to transform classrooms. This involves:

- *inviting assistance into the classroom* to bring in more help (e.g., volunteers trained to work with students-in-need; resource teachers and student support staff to team up with the teacher in the classroom)
- ensuring what goes on in the classroom (and school wide) establishes and maintains *a stimulating, caring, and supportive climate*
- *redesigning classroom strategies* to enhance capability to prevent and handle problems and reduce the need for out of class referrals (e.g. personalizing instruction; expanding the range of curricular and instructional options and choices; systematic use of response to intervention and “pre-referral” interventions, and in class special assistance; turning big classes into smaller units; reducing over-reliance on social control)

Inviting Assistance into the Classroom

Collaboration and teaming are key facets of (1) addressing barriers to learning and teaching and (2) promoting engagement, learning, performance, and healthy development.

Teachers, especially new teachers, need as much in-classroom support and personalized on-the-job education as can be provided. All teachers need to learn more about how to enable learning among students, especially those with problems. All school staff need support from each other in enhancing outcomes for such students. Given their shared agenda, it seems evident that staff not only should work closely with each other, but also with parents, volunteers, professionals-in-training, and so forth (see Exhibit D-1).

Opening the classroom door allows for many forms of assistance, mentoring, partnership, and other collegial practices.

For example, student and learning support staff at a school should frequently work in classrooms as team members and not just offer teachers “consultation.” To do this effectively, some support staff will have to learn much more about classroom life and teaching. And, everyone who works in the classroom will need to move from an overemphasis on behavior modification to an understanding of the role of intrinsic motivation in engaging and re-engaging students in instruction.

Exhibit D-1

An Example of a Role that Others Can Play in the Classroom Related to Response to Intervention

Every teacher has had the experience of planning a wonderful lesson and having the class disrupted by one or two unengaged students (who often are more interested in interacting with a classmate than pursuing the lesson). The first tendency usually is to use some simple form of social control to stop the disruptive behavior (e.g., using proximity and/or a mild verbal intervention). Because so many students today are not easily intimidated, teachers often find such strategies don't work. So, the control efforts are escalated. The teacher reprimands, warns, and finally sends the student to "time-out" or to the front office for discipline. In the process, the other students start to titter about what is happening and learning is disrupted.

In contrast to this scenario, teachers can involve others (e.g., support staff, volunteers) to work with specific students in ways that help minimize disruptions, re-engage an errant student, and provide response to intervention data. For example, a volunteer can be trained to watch for and move quickly at the first indication that a student needs special guidance and support. The volunteer is taught to go and sit next to the student and quietly try to re-engage the youngster in the lesson. If this proves undoable, the volunteer takes the student to a quiet area in the classroom and initiates another type of activity or, if necessary and feasible, goes out for a brief walk. It is true that this means the student won't get the benefit of instruction during that period, but s/he wouldn't anyway and considerable data about the problem is provided.

None of this is a matter of rewarding student bad behavior. Rather, it is a strategy for avoiding the tragedy of disrupting the whole class while the teacher reprimands the culprit and in the process increases that student's negative attitudes toward teaching and school. This use of others allows teaching to continue, and as soon as time permits, it makes it possible for staff to explore with the student ways to make the classroom a mutually satisfying place to be. Moreover, by handling the matter in this way, the teacher is likely to find the student more receptive to discussing things than if the usual "logical consequences" have been administered (e.g., loss of privileges, sending the student to time-out or to the assistant principal).

Using this approach and not having to shift into a discipline mode has multiple benefits. For one, the teacher is able to carry out the day's lesson plan. For another, the other students do not have the experience of seeing the teacher having a control contest with a student. (Even if the teacher wins such contests, it may have a negative effect on how students perceive them; and if the teacher somehow "loses it," that definitely conveys a wrong message. Either outcome can be counterproductive with respect to a caring climate and a sense of community.) Finally, the teacher has not had a negative encounter with the targeted student. Such encounters build up negative attitudes on both sides which can be counterproductive with respect to future teaching, learning, and behavior. Because there has been no negative encounter, the teacher can reach out to the student after the lesson is over and start to think about how to use an aide or volunteers to work with the student to prevent future problems. (For more about volunteers, see Reading C.)

Promoting a Positive School and Classroom Climate

Stimulating, caring, and supportive classrooms promote academic achievement and social, and emotional learning

Opening the classroom door must be paired with interventions that ensure all who enter are welcomed and supported. The ideal is to have an environment where students and teachers feel positively stimulated, well-supported, and engaged in pursuing the learning objectives of the day. Student engagement is especially important in preventing problems. Thus, minimally, classroom practices must enhance motivation to learn and facilitate *active learning* and do so in ways that promote a climate and culture of mutual caring and respect (see Exhibit D-2 and Brief Reading E).

Simply stated, active learning is *learning by doing, listening, looking, and asking*; but it is not just being active that counts. It is the mobilization of the student to seek out and learn. Specific activities are designed to capitalize on student interests and curiosity, involve them in problem solving and guided inquiry, and elicit their thinking through reflective discussions and appropriate products. Moreover, the activities can be designed to do all this in ways that enhance engagement and intrinsic motivation by minimizing threats to and enhancing feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to others (see Brief Reading B).

There are many examples of ways to facilitate active learning at all grade levels. It can take the form of class discussions, problem-based and discovery learning, a project approach, involvement in “learning centers” at school, experiences outside the classroom, and independent learning in or out of school. Obviously, computers and the internet can be valuable tools in all this.

Stimulating, caring, and supportive classrooms do much more than motivate learning of subject matter and academic skills. They provide conditions for social and emotional learning. Students learn to cooperate, share responsibility, develop understanding and skills related to conflict resolution and mediation, and much more. For staff, such classrooms provide a context for collaborating with colleagues and with a variety of volunteers to ensure mutual support and counter staff burn out. The mental health implications of all this are clear.

(Note: Want references? See the resource list at the end of Unit I.)

Exhibit D-2

What's Involved in Promoting a Welcoming, Caring, and Hopeful Atmosphere in the Classroom and School wide

In a fundamental sense, a welcoming induction and ongoing support are critical elements both in creating a positive sense of community and in facilitating a student's (and staff) school adjustment and performance. As such, they are prime conditions for learning and thus to interpreting a student's response to any intervention at school.

School wide strategies for welcoming and supporting staff, students, and families at school *every day* are part of creating a mentally healthy school – one where staff, students, and families interact positively with each other and identify with the school and its goals. Analyses of practice and research suggest that a proactive approach to developing positive school and classroom climates requires careful attention to (1) enhancing the quality of life at school and especially in the classroom for students and staff, (2) pursuing a curriculum and enrichment opportunities that promote not only academic, but also social, and emotional learning, (3) fostering intrinsic motivation for learning and teaching, and (4) providing a comprehensive system of student and learning supports that enables teachers and other staff to be effective in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

Examples of the focus for practice advocated in the literature include

- ensuring safety and providing social support mechanisms for students and staff
- offering an array of options for pursuing goals along with meaningful participation by students and staff in decision making
- transforming the classroom infrastructure from a big classroom into a set of smaller units organized to maximize intrinsic motivation for learning and not based on ability or problem-oriented grouping
- providing instruction and responding to problems in a personalized way
- use of a variety of strategies for preventing and addressing problems as soon as they arise
- a healthy and attractive physical environment that is conducive to learning and teaching.

Redesigning Classroom Strategies

**Response to
intervention
is about
meeting
learners
where they
are now**

**Enhancing
motivation is a
fundamental
concern with
respect to
response to
intervention**

It is evident that how classrooms are arranged and how instruction is organized helps or hinders learning and teaching and affects behavior. In essence, an optimal design promotes personalized and holistic learning and minimizes learning, behavior, and emotional problems (discussed throughout Unit I). When a problem does arise, it is addressed immediately with response to intervention strategies (including a range of what in the past have been called “pre-referral” interventions as highlighted in Unit II).

The old adage: *Meet learners where they are* captures the commonsense view of good classroom practices and is the core principle for response to intervention strategies. Unfortunately, this adage often is interpreted only as a call for matching a student’s current *capabilities* (e.g., knowledge and skills).

The irony, of course, is that most school staff know that *motivational* factors (e.g., attitudes) play a key role in poor instructional outcomes. One of the most frequent laments about students is: “They could do it, if only they *wanted to!*”

We all also know that good abilities are more likely to emerge when students are motivated not only to pursue assignments, but also are interested in using what they learn. The point for emphasis is that response to intervention, as with all good intervention practices, requires ensuring a good match for *motivation* (especially *intrinsic* motivation), and this often involves overcoming *avoidance* motivation. (Students who don’t *want* to perform always will look as if they have significant skills deficits.)

Many instructional approaches are effective when a student is motivated to learn what is being taught. And, for students with learning, behavior, and emotional problems, motivation for classroom learning often is the primary concern. The seeds of significant problems are planted when instruction is not a good fit. Resultant learning problems generate an emotional overlay and usually behavior problems.

In learning to implement response to intervention, it is essential to learn how to *address motivation as a primary consideration* (see Brief Reading C). Instruction should be based on an appreciation of what is likely to affect a student's positive and negative motivation to learn. Among the fundamental intervention implications are ensuring that classrooms offer a broad range of content, outcome, and procedural *options*, including a personalized structure to facilitate learning. With real options comes real opportunities for *involving learners in decision making*. A motivational focus also stresses development of nonthreatening ways to provide information about learning and performance.

Keeping the Focus on Effectiveness

Based in part on school effectiveness research, there is growing consensus about what constitutes good schools and classrooms. Exhibits D-3 and D-4 offer syntheses that encapsulate prevailing thinking.

Notice the emphasis on the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, personalized processes and equity of opportunity, and ensuring a positive classroom and school wide climate.

Concluding Comments

Ultimately, given our society's commitment to equity, fairness, and justice, school improvement means doing the best at every school for *all* students. For school staff, equity, fairness, and justice start with designing instruction in ways that account for a wide range of individual differences and circumstances. But, the work can't stop there if all students are to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

Teachers and student support staff must work together to design all facets of classrooms and what goes on school wide with a view to accommodating and assisting all students and especially those who are not motivationally ready and able to profit from instructional improvements. Broadly conceived and implemented, response to intervention strategies can play a catalytic role in developing the type of school improvements that can ensure equity of opportunity.

Exhibit D-3

A Synthesis of Principles/Guidelines Underlying Good Schools and Teaching*

The following are widely advocated guidelines that provide a sense of the philosophy for school efforts to address barriers to development and learning and promote healthy development. This synthesis is organized around concerns for (1) stakeholders, (2) the teaching process, and (3) school and classroom climate.

- (1) With respect to *stakeholders*, good schools and good teaching
 - employ a critical mass of high quality leadership and line staff who believe in what they are doing, value the search for understanding, see errors as valuable sources of learning, and pursue continuing education and self-renewal,
 - involve all staff and a wide range of other competent, energetic, committed and responsible stakeholders in planning, implementation, evaluation, and ongoing renewal,
 - identify staff who are not performing well and provide personalized capacity building opportunities, support, or other corrective remedies.
 - (2) With respect to the *teaching process*, good schools and good teaching use the strengths and vital resources of all stakeholders to
 - ensure the same high quality for all students,
 - formulate and effectively communicate goals, standards, and quality indicators for cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development,
 - facilitate continuous cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development and learning using procedures that promote active learning in-and out-of-school,
 - ensure use of comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches (e.g., approaches that are extensive and intensive enough to ensure that students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school and develop in healthy ways),
 - (3) With respect to school and classroom *climate*, good schools and good teaching
 - make learning accessible to all students (including those at greatest risk and hardest-to-reach) through development of a full continuum of learning supports (i.e., an enabling component),
 - tailor processes so they are a good fit in terms of both motivation and capability and are no more intrusive and disruptive than is necessary for meeting needs and accounting for distinctive needs, resources, and other forms of diversity,
 - deal with students holistically and developmentally, as individuals and as part of a family, neighborhood, and community,
 - tailor appropriate measures for improving practices and for purposes of accountability.
- (3) With respect to school and classroom *climate*, good schools and good teaching
- delineate the rights and obligations of all stakeholders,
 - are guided by a commitment to social justice (equity) and to creating a sense of community,
 - ensure staff, students, family members, and all other stakeholders have the time, training, skills, and institutional and collegial support necessary to create an accepting and safe environment and build relationships of mutual trust, respect, equality, and appropriate risk-taking.
- And, in general, good schools and good teaching are experienced by all stakeholders as user friendly, flexibly implemented, and responsive.

*Synthesized from many sources including the vast research literature on good schools and good teaching; these sources overlap, but are not as restricted in their focus as the literature on effective schools and classrooms – see next Guide.

Exhibit D-4

A Synthesis of Characteristics of Effective Schools and Classrooms that Account for *All* Learners*

Effective Schools

- Commitment to shared vision of equality
 - >High expectations for student learning
 - >Emphasis on academic work that is meaningful to the student
- Daily implementation of effective processes
 - >Strong administrative leadership
 - >Alignment of resources to reach goals
 - >Professional development tied to goals
 - >Discipline and school order
 - >A sense of teamwork in the school
 - >Teacher participation in decision making
 - >Effective parental outreach and involvement
- Monitoring student progress through measured indicators of achievement
 - >Setting local standards
 - >Use of national standards
 - >Use of data for continuous improvement of school climate and curricula
- Optimizing school size through limited enrollment, creation of small schools within big schools (e.g., academies, magnet programs), and other ways of grouping students and staff
- Strong involvement with the community and with surrounding family of schools
 - >Students, families, and community are developed into a learning community
 - >Programs address transitions between grades, school, school-to-career, and higher education

*Synthesized from many sources including the vast research literature on effective schools and classrooms.

Effective Classrooms

- Positive classroom social climate that
 - >personalizes contacts and supports in ways that build trust over time and meets learners where they are
 - >offers accommodation so all students have an equal opportunity to learn
 - >adjusts class size and groupings to optimize learning
 - >engages students through dialogue and decision making and seizing “teachable moments”
 - >incorporates parents in multiple ways
 - >addresses social-emotional development
- Designing and implementing quality instructional experiences that
 - >involve students in decision making
 - >contextualize and make learning authentic, including use of real life situations and mentors
 - >are appropriately cognitively complex and challenging
 - >enhance language/literacy
 - >foster joint student products
 - >extend the time students engage in learning through designing motivated practice
 - >ensure students learn how to learn and are prepared for lifelong learning
 - >ensure use of prereferral intervention strategies
 - >use a mix of methods and advanced technology to enhance learning
- Instruction is modified to meet students’ needs based on ongoing assessments using
 - >measures of multiple dimensions of impact
 - >authentic assessment tools
 - >students' input based on their self-evaluations
- Teachers collaborate and are supported with
 - >personalized inservice, consultation, mentoring, grade level teaming
 - >special resources who are available to come into the classroom to ensure students with special needs are accommodated appropriately



Reflection & Stimulus for Discussion for Reading D

Key Insights about:

Improving Conditions for Learning in the Classroom

Based on what you learned so far:

Identify (and discuss) what principles and practices teachers should adopt to create a positive context for learning and to facilitate personalized learning.

- (1) Make a brief outline of what you see as the most important points.
- (2) Discuss them with your study group or other friends and colleagues.
- (3) After the discussion, decide how you might revise your outline.
- (4) Note key points in your *Learning Log*.

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.

Brief Reading E

About School and Classroom Climate

The concept of *climate* plays a major role in shaping the quality of school life, teaching, learning, and support (see Exhibit E-1). School and classroom climate sometimes are referred to as the learning environment, as well as by terms such as atmosphere, ambience, ecology, and milieu.

Over the long run, schools are likely to be more effective academically if they ensure a positive climate school wide and in classrooms. Research has indicated a range of strategies for enhancing a positive climate. All school stakeholders have a role to play in creating a safe, supportive, nurturing, and productive school and classroom climate. Of particular importance are efforts to promote social and emotional development and functioning and address barriers to learning and teaching to enable all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

Importance of Classroom Climate

Classroom climate is seen as a major determiner of classroom behavior and learning. Understanding the nature of classroom climate is a basic element in improving schools.

The concept of classroom climate implies the intent to establish and maintain a positive context that facilitates classroom learning, but in practice, classroom climates range from hostile or toxic to welcoming and supportive and can fluctuate daily and over the school year. Moreover, because the concept is a psychological construct, different observers may have different perceptions of the climate in a given classroom.

Analyses of research suggest significant relationships between classroom climate and matters such as student engagement, behavior, self-efficacy, achievement, and social and emotional development, principal leadership style, stages of educational reform, teacher burnout, and overall quality of school life. For example, studies report strong associations between achievement levels and classrooms that are perceived as having greater cohesion and goal-direction and less disorganization and conflict. Research also suggests that the impact of classroom climate may be greater on students from low-income homes and groups that often are discriminated against.

On a school level, organizational research suggests the profound role accountability pressures play. It seems likely that the increasing demands for higher achievement test scores and control of student behavior contribute to a classroom climate that is reactive, over-controlling, and over-reliant on external reinforcement to motivate positive functioning.

Exhibit E-1

School Climate

School and classroom *climate* are temporal, and somewhat fluid, perceived qualities of the immediate setting which *emerge* from the complex transaction of many factors (e.g., physical, material, organizational, operational, social, and personal variables). In turn, the climate reflects the influence of the underlying, institutionalized values and belief systems, norms, ideologies, rituals, and traditions that constitute the school *culture*. And, of course, the climate and culture at a school also are shaped by the surrounding political, social, cultural, and economic contexts (e.g., home, neighborhood, city, state, country).

Key concepts for understanding school and classroom climate are social system organization; social attitudes; staff and student morale; power, control, guidance, support, and evaluation structures; curricular and instructional practices; communicated expectations; efficacy; accountability demands; cohesion; competition; “fit” between learner and classroom; system maintenance, growth, and change; orderliness; and safety.

Because the concept is a psychological construct, climate in a given school and classroom can be perceived differently by observers. With this in mind, research has focused on the shared perceptions of those in the classroom, especially (1) *relationships* (e.g., the nature and intensity of personal relationships within the environment; the extent to which people are involved in the environment and support and help each other); (2) *personal development* (e.g., basic directions along which personal growth and self-enhancement tend to occur); and (3) *system maintenance and change* (e.g., the extent to which the environment is orderly, clear in expectations, maintains control, and is responsive to change).

The National School Climate Council (2007) recommends that school climate assessments focus on four dimensions: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the institutional environment – using surveys that encompass the perceptions of students, parents and guardians, and school personnel.*

*Note: The National School Climate Council (2007) offers the following definitions:

"School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of people's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures."

"A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Students, families and educators work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits and satisfaction from learning. Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment."

A Caring Context for Learning

From a psychological perspective, learning and teaching are experienced most positively when the learner cares about learning and the teacher cares about teaching. *Moreover, the whole process benefits greatly when all the participants care about each other.* Thus, good schools and good teachers work diligently to create an atmosphere that encourages mutual support, caring, and a sense of community. Such an atmosphere can play a key role in preventing learning, behavior, emotional, and health problems and promoting social and emotional learning and well-being.

Caring has moral, social, and personal facets. And when all facets of caring are present and balanced, they can nurture individuals and facilitate the process of learning. At the same time, caring in all its dimensions should be a major focus of what is taught and learned. This means a focus throughout on fostering positive social, emotional, and physical development.

Caring begins when students (and their families) first arrive at a school

Caring begins when students (and their families) first arrive at a school. Classrooms and schools can do their job better if students feel they are truly welcome and have a range of social supports. A key facet of welcoming encompasses effectively connecting new students with peers and adults who can provide social support and advocacy.

On an ongoing basis, caring and a positive classroom and school wide climate is best maintained through use of personalized instruction, regular student conferences, activity fostering social and emotional development, and opportunities for students to attain positive status. Efforts to create a caring classroom and school wide climate benefit from programs for cooperative learning, peer tutoring, mentoring, advocacy, peer counseling and mediation, human relations, and conflict resolution. Special attention is needed to promote practices that enhance motivation to learn and perform, while avoiding practices that decrease motivation and/or produce avoidance motivation and that focuses on mobilizing unmotivated students (and particularly those who have become actively disengaged from classroom instruction). Since a myriad of strategies can contribute to students (families, staff) feeling positively connected to the classroom and school, teachers need to work collaboratively with each other and with all other personnel at a school to address as many factors as feasible.

The Animal School (a parable)

Once upon a time, the animals decided that their lives and their society would be improved by setting up a school. The basics identified as necessary for survival in the animal world were swimming, running, climbing, jumping, and flying. Instructors were hired to teach these activities, and it was agreed that all the animals would take all the courses. This worked out well for the administrators, but it caused some problems for the students.

The squirrel, for example, was an A student in running, jumping, and climbing but had trouble in flying class, not because of an inability to fly, for she could sail from the top of one tree to another with ease, but because the flying curriculum called for taking off from the ground. The squirrel was drilled in ground-to-air take-offs until she was exhausted and developed charley horses from overexertion. This caused her to perform poorly in her other classes, and her grades dropped to D's.

The duck was outstanding in swimming class -- even better than the teacher. But she did so poorly in running that she was transferred to a remedial class. There she practiced running until her webbed feet were so badly damaged that she was only an average swimmer. But since average was acceptable, nobody saw this as a problem -- except the duck.

In contrast, the rabbit was excellent in running, but, being terrified of water, he was an extremely poor swimmer. Despite a lot of makeup work in swimming class, he never could stay afloat. He soon became frustrated and uncooperative and was eventually expelled because of behavior problems.

The eagle naturally enough was a brilliant student in flying class and even did well in running and jumping. He had to be severely disciplined in climbing class, however, because he insisted that his way of getting to the top of the tree was faster and easier.

It should be noted that the parents of the groundhog pulled him out of school because the administration would not add classes in digging and burrowing. The groundhogs, along with the gophers and badgers, got a prairie dog to start a private school. They all have become strong opponents of school taxes and proponents of voucher systems.

By graduation time, the student with the best grades in the animal school was a compulsive ostrich who could run superbly and also could swim, fly, and climb a little. She, of course, was made class valedictorian and received scholarship offers from all the best universities.

(George H. Reeves is credited with giving this parable to American educators.)



Reflection & Stimulus for Discussion for Reading E

Key Insights about:

School Climate

Our center at UCLA has emphasized that school climate is a perceived quality of the setting (e.g., see Adelman & Taylor, 2005). We suggest that it emerges in a somewhat *fluid* state from the complex transaction of many immediate environmental factors (e.g., physical, material, organizational, operational, and social variables). Both the climate of the classroom and the school reflect the influence of a school's culture, which is a *stable* quality emerging from underlying, institutionalized values and belief systems, norms, ideologies, rituals, and traditions. And, of course, classroom climate and culture both are shaped by the school's surrounding and embedded political, social, cultural, and economic contexts (e.g., home, neighborhood, city, state, country).

Based on what you learned so far:

Discuss how personalizing learning is related to school climate.

- (1) Make a brief outline of what you see as the most important points.
- (2) Discuss them with your study group or other friends and colleagues.
- (3) After the discussion, decide how you might revise your outline.
- (4) Note key points in your *Learning Log*.

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.

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OTHER RESOURCES

One easy way to access a wide range of resources for enhancing classroom and school wide interventions is to use our Center's Online Clearinghouse *Quick Finds*. See the Quick Find menu of topics at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm>

Also see the U.S. Department of Education's *What Works Clearinghouse* – see Topics at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/topics.aspx>

Below are a few additional references related to matters discussed in Unit I.

From the Center

>Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families: Four Units for Continuing Education

Unit I: Motivation: Time to Move Beyond Behavior Modification

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

Unit II: Strategic Approaches to Enhancing Student Engagement and Re-engagement

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

Unit III: Enhancing Family Engagement and Re-engagement

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

Unit IV: Embedding Engagement and Re-engagement into a Unified and Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports

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

>RTI and Classroom & School wide Learning: Supports: Four Units for Continuing Education

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/dbsimple2.asp?primary=2311&number=9897>

Unit I: Response to Intervention: Improving Conditions for Learning in the Classroom

Unit II: Implementing Response to Intervention Sequentially & Effectively

Unit III: Response to Intervention: Beyond Personalization

Unit IV: Pursuing Response to Intervention as One Strategy in a Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports

>Working with Disengaged Students (Practice Notes)

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

>Re-engaging Students in Learning (Quick Training Aid)

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

From the Literature:

>About Motivation for Learning & Encouraging Learning Autonomy

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>**School Climate**

School Climate Research Summary

http://nsc.csee.net/effective/school_climate_research_summary.pdf

National School Climate Standards

<http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/standards.php>

>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>

**I told her I lost my homework
because my computer crashed.
So she gave both me and my computer an F!**

