



Continuing Education Units

RTI and Classroom & Schoolwide Learning Supports: Four Units for Continuing Education

UNIT I: RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION: IMPROVING CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

(April, 2012)

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

Access at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtii.pdf>

Unit II: Implementing Response to Intervention Sequentially & Effectively

Access at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtiii.pdf>

Unit III. Response to Intervention: Beyond Personalization

Access at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtiii.pdf>

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

Access at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtiiv.pdf>

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Introduction to the Units

Response to Intervention (RTI) initiatives wisely underscore the unacceptability of waiting for students to fail. However, as with so many other efforts intended to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school, this budding movement often is pursued as just another piecemeal effort. Fragmentary endeavors cannot address the complex realities confronting teachers and student support staff. Moreover, as formulated and practiced the approach often is too limited in how it frames what needs to go on to enable learning, engage students, and keep them engaged. In particular, it pays too little attention to the need to strengthen the classroom and schoolwide context in ways that enhance the effectiveness of the strategy.

Response to intervention must be built on a solid classroom and schoolwide foundation that incorporates a focus on promotion of healthy development, prevention, and responding as early after problem onset as is feasible. And it must be effectively connected to interventions designed to provide specialized student and family assistance for severe and chronic problems. In other words, RTI must be fully integrated into a systemic, unified, and comprehensive approach to school improvement.

The need for a comprehensive approach is particularly evident in schools where a significant proportion of students lack enthusiasm about attendance and about engaging in the day's lesson plans. The need is even more acute in schools where many students have become disengaged from classroom instruction, are behaving in disruptive ways, and are dropping out. To facilitate the success of such students at school, administrators, teachers, student support staff, and other key stakeholders must literally transform schools in ways that enable students to (1) get around interfering barriers and (2) (re)engage in classroom instruction. Properly designed, response to intervention strategies can help with all this, but it must be an integrated part of a well-designed and implemented school improvement plan.

With this in mind, the Center has developed four units for continuing education. Unit I places response to intervention in the context of a redesigned classroom. Unit II highlights response to intervention as a sequential and hierarchical approach for all students the foundation of which is personalization. Unit III focuses on early after onset interventions and specialized assistance. Unit IV emphasizes that the aim of enhancing equity of opportunity requires embedding classroom efforts within a comprehensive schoolwide system of student and learning supports for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

As aids for personnel development, each unit begins with a set of questions that can be used to guide independent study and community of learners' discussions. A few topics are amplified with brief supplementary readings; others that can deepen learning and provide specific resource aids are referenced throughout. A description and example of a set of self-study surveys also is appended.

About Ensuring Response to Intervention is Broad-Based and Preventative

According to the *National Center on Response to Intervention* “the purpose of RTI is to provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed in school, identify students with learning or behavioral problems, and ensure that they receive appropriate instruction and related supports” (<http://www.rti4success.org/>). They translate this into a definition that states

“response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities.”

They describe four essential components of response to intervention: (1) a school-wide, multi-level instructional and behavioral system for preventing school failure, (2) screening, (3) progress monitoring, and (4) data-based decision making for instruction, movement within the multi-level system, and disability identification (in accordance with state law). Their guidebook also states response to intervention is “a framework for providing comprehensive support to students and is not an instructional practice” and that “RTI is a prevention oriented approach to linking assessment and instruction that can inform educators’ decisions about how best to teach their students.”

While the RTI center states the strategy is meant to be broad-based and preventative, the approach described is too limited in how it frames what needs to go on in a classroom and schoolwide to enable learning, engage students, and keep them engaged.* Therefore, we have prepared the following continuing education units for teachers and learning supports staff. The units broaden perspectives of response to intervention, provide frameworks for contextualizing the work in classrooms and schoolwide, and generally enhance practices. And it places response to intervention in the context of a unified and comprehensive system for enabling all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school and beyond.

*There are other criticisms of RTI; relevant references covering these are included in the resource list at the end of Unit IV.

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

A. Inviting Assistance into the Classroom

B. Promoting a Positive School and Classroom Climate

C. Redesigning Classroom Strategies

D. Keeping the Focus on Effectiveness

Study and Discussion Questions

- (1) Why does effective response to intervention require additional hands in the classroom?
- (2) How does classroom (and schoolwide) climate relate to addressing a student's problems?
- (3) How do classroom strategies need to be redesigned to enhance teacher capability to prevent and handle problems and reduce the need for out of class referrals?

How was school today?



*Well, if it's true we learn from our mistakes,
I had a great day!*

Unit I: Response to Intervention: 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 schoolwide) 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 Guide I-a).

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.

Guide I-a

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 Brief Reading I-A.)

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 Guide I-b and Brief Reading I-B).

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 I-C).

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 IV.)

Guide I-b

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

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.

Schoolwide 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.

Also see Brief Reading I-B

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 in Unit II). 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 III).

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 Guide I-c and 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.

Guide I-c

Response to Intervention and Motivational Considerations

Response to intervention and all conditions for learning and must address motivational readiness and motivation as a fundamental process and outcome concern.

Response to intervention must be implemented in ways that increase, and avoid decreasing, intrinsic motivation

In transforming classrooms, the following points about motivation warrant particular attention:

- (1) *Optimal performance and learning require motivational readiness.* Motivation is a key antecedent condition in any learning situation. Readiness is understood in terms of offering stimulating and supportive environments where learning can be perceived as vivid, valued, and attainable. It is a prerequisite to student attention, involvement, and performance. Poor motivational readiness may be a cause of poor learning and a factor maintaining learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Thus, the need for strategies that can produce a high level of motivational readiness (and reduce avoidance motivation and reactance) so students are mobilized to participate.
- (2) *Motivation represents both a process and an outcome concern.* Individuals may value learning something, but may not be motivated to pursue the processes used. Many students are motivated to learn when they first encounter a topic but do not maintain that motivation. Processes must elicit, enhance, and maintain motivation so that students stay mobilized. Programs must be designed to maintain, enhance, and expand intrinsic motivation so that what is learned is not limited to immediate lessons and is applied in the world beyond the schoolhouse door.

Negative motivation and avoidance reactions and any conditions likely to generate them must be circumvented or at least minimized. Of particular concern are activities students perceive as unchallenging, uninteresting, overdemanding, or overwhelming. Most people react against structures that seriously limit their range of options or that are overcontrolling and coercive. Examples of conditions that can have a negative impact on a person's motivation are sparse resources, excessive rules, and a restrictive day-in, day-out emphasis on drill and remediation.

Students experiencing problems at school usually have extremely negative perceptions of and avoidance tendencies toward teachers and activities that look like "the same old thing." Major changes in approach must be made if such students are to change these perceptions. Ultimately, success may depend on the degree to which the students view the adults at school and in the classroom as supportive, rather than indifferent or controlling and the program as personally valuable and obtainable.

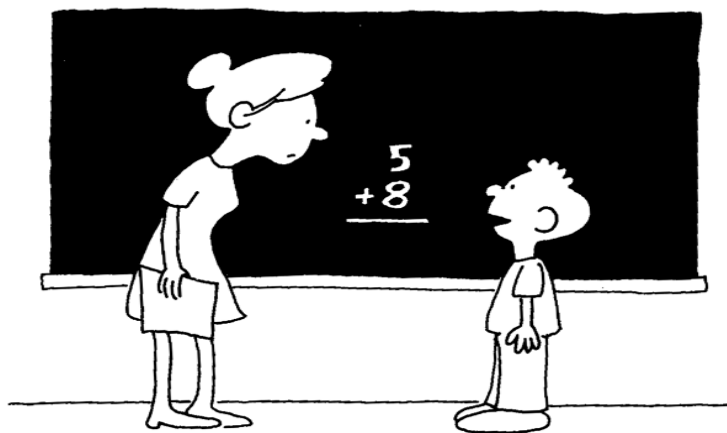
(cont.)

(3) *School staff not only need to try to increase motivation – especially intrinsic motivation – but also to avoid practices that decrease it.* Although students may learn a specific lesson at school (e.g., some basic skills), they may have little or no interest in using the new knowledge and skills outside of the classroom. Increasing such interest requires procedures that can reduce negative and increase positive feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies.

With behavior, learning, and emotional problems, it is especially important to identify and minimize experiences that maintain or may increase avoidance motivation. Of particular concern is the need to avoid overreliance on extrinsics to entice and reward since such strategies can decrease intrinsic motivation.

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

Also see Brief Reading I-C



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

Keeping the Focus on Effectiveness

Based in part on school effectiveness research, there is growing consensus about what constitutes good schools and classrooms. Guides I-d and I-e 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 schoolwide climate.

Unit 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 schoolwide 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.

Guide I-d

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.

Guide I-e

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



Unit I – Reflection & Stimulus for Discussion

Key Insights about: *Teaching in schools*

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 appropriate learning.

So now, what's your answer to the question:

What is Good Teaching?

- (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.

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 Supplementary Readings

I-A Volunteers as an Invaluable Resource

I-B About School and Classroom Climate

I-C Intrinsic Motivation and the Classroom

Brief Reading I-A

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.

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>

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

Brief Reading I-B

About School and Classroom Climate

The concept of *climate* plays a major role in shaping the quality of school life, teaching, learning, and support. School and classroom climate are temporal, and somewhat fluid, perceived qualities of the immediate setting which emerge from the complex transaction of many factors. 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).

School and classroom climate sometimes are referred to as the learning environment, as well as by terms such as atmosphere, ambience, ecology, and milieu. Depending on quality, the impact on students and staff can be beneficial for or a barrier to learning.

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. Moos (e.g., 1979) groups such concepts into three dimensions: (1) Relationship (i.e., 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 (i.e., basic directions along which personal growth and self-enhancement tend to occur); and (3) System maintenance and change (i.e., the extent to which the environment is orderly, clear in expectations, maintains control, and is responsive to change).

Research has indicated a range of strategies for enhancing a positive climate. All school staff have a significant role to play in ensuring that such strategies are well-implemented and maintained.

Our center at UCLA has emphasized that school climate is a perceived quality of the setting (Adelman & Taylor, 2005). 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).

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. Therefore, for purposes of his early research, Moos (1979) measured classroom environment in terms of the shared perceptions of those in the classroom. Prevailing approaches to measuring classroom climate use (1) teacher and student perceptions, (2) external observer's ratings and systematic coding, and/or (3) naturalistic inquiry, ethnography, case study, and interpretative assessment techniques (Fraser, 1998; Freiberg, 1999). Because the concept is a psychological construct, climate in a given school and classroom can be perceived differently by observers. With this in mind, Moos (1979) measured classroom environment in terms of the shared perceptions of those in the classroom. 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.*

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.

Given the correlational nature of classroom climate research, cause and effect interpretations remain speculative. The broader body of organizational research does indicate the profound role accountability pressures play in shaping organizational climate (Cohen, 2006; Cohen, et al., 2009, 2010; Mahoney & Hextall, 2000). Thus, 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.

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 socio-emotional and physical development.

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 schoolwide 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 schoolwide 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). Clearly, a myriad of strategies can contribute to students feeling positively connected to the classroom and school.

*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."

Resources

Increasing interest in enhancing school climate is reflected in the establishment of the National School Climate Center and the U.S. Department of Education's initiative for Safe and Supportive Schools. See

- the brief School Climate Research Summary posted on the National School Climate Center site –
http://nsc.csee.net/effective/school_climate_research_summary.pdf
- the National School Climate Standards –
<http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/standards.php>
- the U.S. Dept. of Education's Safe and Supportive Schools (S3) grant program which aims to provide the resources for systems to measure school climate and safety at the building level and to help intervene in those schools with the greatest needs –
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/safesupportiveschools/index.html>

For more resources, see our center's online clearinghouse Quick Find on *School Climate* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/environments.htm>

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Brief Reading I-C

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.

Appreciating Intrinsic Motivation

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 Improvement: Beyond Reinforcement Theory

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

About Valuing

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

Rewards and punishments may be material or social. For those with learning, behavior, and emotional problems, there is widespread use of such "incentives" (e.g., systematically giving points or tokens that can be exchanged for candy, prizes, praise, free time, or social

interactions). Punishments have included loss of free time and other privileges, added work, fines, isolation, censure, and suspension. Grades have been used both as rewards and punishments. Because people will do things to obtain rewards or avoid punishment, rewards and punishment often are called *reinforcers*. Because they generally come from sources outside the person, they often are called *extrinsics*.

Extrinsic reinforcers are easy to use and can immediately affect behavior. Therefore, they 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.

It is important to remember that what makes an extrinsic rewarding is that it is *experienced by the recipient* as a reward. What makes it a highly valued reward is that the recipient highly values it. If someone doesn't like candy, there is not much point in offering it as a reward. Furthermore, because the use of extrinsics has limits, it's fortunate that people often do things even without apparent extrinsic reason. In fact, a lot of what people learn and spend time doing is done for intrinsic reasons. *Curiosity*, 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*. (See the reference list for key citations on motivation.)

About Expectations

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

Previously unsuccessful arenas usually are seen as unlikely paths to valued extrinsic rewards or intrinsic satisfactions. We may perceive past failure as the result of our lack of ability; or we may believe that more effort was required than we were willing to give. We may also feel that the help we needed to succeed was not available. If our perception is that very little has changed with regard to these factors, our expectation of succeeding now will be rather low. *In general, then, what we value interacts with our expectations, and motivation is one product of this interaction.* (See next page).

A Bit of Theory

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. At the risk of over-simplifying things, the following discussion underscores a few facets of motivation theory.

E x V

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

Hint: the "x" is a multiplication sign.

In case the equation stumped you, don't be surprised. The main introduction to motivational thinking given most folks in the past involves some form of reinforcement theory (which essentially stresses 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.*

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.

Youngsters may greatly value the idea of improving their reading. They usually are not happy with limited skills and know they would feel a lot better about if they could read. But, often they experience everything the teacher asks them to do is a waste of time. They have done it all before, and they *still* have a reading problem. Sometimes they will do the exercises, but just to earn points to go on a field trip and to avoid the consequences of not cooperating. Often, however, they try to get out of doing the work by distracting the teacher. After all, why should they do things they are certain won't help them read any better.

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

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

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

Appropriate appreciation of all this is necessary in designing a match for optimal learning and performance.

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



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



Caution about Over-relying on Extrinsic

The discussion of valuing and expectations 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 overreliance on extrinsics as a way to reinforce positive learning. Although grades often are discussed as simply providing information about how well a student is doing, many, if not most, students perceive each grade as a reward or a punishment. 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 grades on ourselves and others. In general, grades have a way of reshaping what students do with their learning opportunities. In choosing what to study, students strongly consider what grades they are likely to receive. 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 example of how systems that overemphasize extrinsics may have a serious negative impact on intrinsic motivation for learning. *And if the impact of current practices is harmful to those who are able learners, imagine the impact on students with learning and behavior problems!*

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 addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

Many individuals with learning problems also are described as hyperactive, distractable, impulsive, behavior disordered, and so forth. Their behavior patterns are seen as interfering

with efforts to remedy their learning problems. Although motivation has always been a concern to those who work with learning and behavior problems, the emphasis in handling these interfering behaviors usually is on using extrinsics as part of efforts to directly control and/or in conjunction with direct skill instruction. For example, interventions are designed to improve impulse control, 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 (National Research Council, 2004).

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.

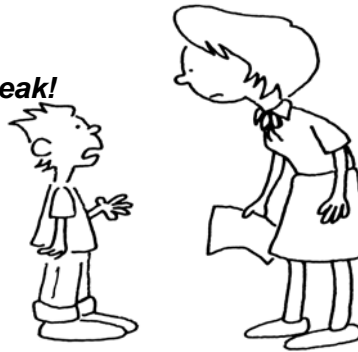
An often stated assumption is that stopping students' misbehavior makes them amenable to teaching and enhances classroom learning. In a few cases, this may be so. However, the assumption ignores all the work on understanding *psychological reactance* and the need for individuals to restore their sense 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 unmotivated 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.

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



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.