

Learning Supports: Enabling Learning in the Classroom

The focus here is on what teachers can do to better address students' learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems. The emphasis is on six fundamental steps for enabling learning in the classroom and schoolwide. These steps are intended to enhance student and learning supports by

- (1) rethinking assistance and support in the classroom
- (2) heightening the emphasis on positive classroom and schoolwide climate
- (3) emphasizing personalized intervention
- (4) ensuring a continuum of interventions and using a sequential approach in assessing responses to intervention
- (5) extending ways to accommodate differences and disabilities
- (6) expanding school improvement plans to include development of a comprehensive system of student and learning supports

Step 1: Rethinking Assistance and Support in the Classroom

Bringing others into the classroom is essential to effectively (1) address barriers to learning and teaching and (2) promote engagement, learning, performance, and healthy development.

Successful schools are collaborative enterprises. All stakeholders need each other's support to enhance desired outcomes, especially for students who are not doing well at school.

Teachers need as much in-classroom support as can be mobilized to enable student learning. This is not a matter of additional hiring but of rethinking ways to bring more hands into the classroom. Support can be mobilized not only by school staff teaming to work more closely with each other, but also by recruiting and directing parents, adult and student volunteers, professionals-in-training, and others to help in the classroom.

With respect to a school's student and learning support staff, a major need is to regularly bring such personnel into classrooms as team members rather than as "consultants." This means teaching some support staff much more about classroom life and learning.

Guide 1 offers one example of a role that others can play in the classroom to assist students who otherwise would disrupt the teacher and class.

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Guide 1

An Example of a Role that Others Can Play in the Classroom Related to Potentially Disruptive Students

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, efforts to control 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.

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 a 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 in which to learn. 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 other ways to use an aide or volunteers to work with the student to prevent future problems.

(Note: Appended to this document are relevant references and resources.)

Step 2: Heightening the Emphasis on Positive Classroom and Schoolwide Climate

Every teacher wants what goes on in the classroom (and schoolwide) to be stimulating, caring, and supportive.

The ideal is to have an environment where students and teachers feel positively 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. With these ends in mind, everyone who works in the classroom needs 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 (see Appendix).

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.

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.

Guide 2 highlights what’s involved in promoting a welcoming, caring, and hopeful atmosphere in the classroom and schoolwide.

Guide 2

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

1. ensuring safety and providing social support mechanisms for students and staff
2. offering an array of options for pursuing goals along with meaningful participation by students and staff in decision making
3. 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
4. providing instruction and responding to problems in a personalized way
5. using a variety of strategies for preventing and addressing problems as soon as they arise
6. creating a healthy and attractive physical environment that is conducive to learning and teaching.

Step 3: Emphasizing Personalized Intervention

Personalization goes beyond individualization.

Clearly, 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. 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 “prereferral” interventions).

The old adage: *Meet learners where they are!* captures the commonsense view of good classroom practices and is the core principle for good instruction. This sometimes is referred to as the concept of the “match” or the problem of “fit.”

Unfortunately, this core principle often is interpreted only as a call for *individualized* instruction which emphasizes *matching* a student’s current *capabilities* (e.g., knowledge and skills). The irony in this is reflected in the all too frequent teacher lament: “They could do it, if only they *wanted* to!”

Students who don’t *want* to are the bane of teachers and of efforts to assess a student’s responses to intervention (e.g., such students always appear to have more significant skills deficits than they actually have). For students with learning, behavior, and emotional problems, motivation for classroom learning often is the primary concern.

Most school staff are well aware that *motivational* factors (e.g., attitudes) play a fundamental role in determining instructional outcomes. A variety of instructional approaches are effective when a student is motivated to learn what is being taught. And 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.

Thus, in contrast to individualized instruction, we use the term *personalization* to designate matching individual differences in *both capability and motivation*.

And, from a psychological perspective, we stress that it is the student’s perception, not the teachers’, that determines whether the fit is good or bad.

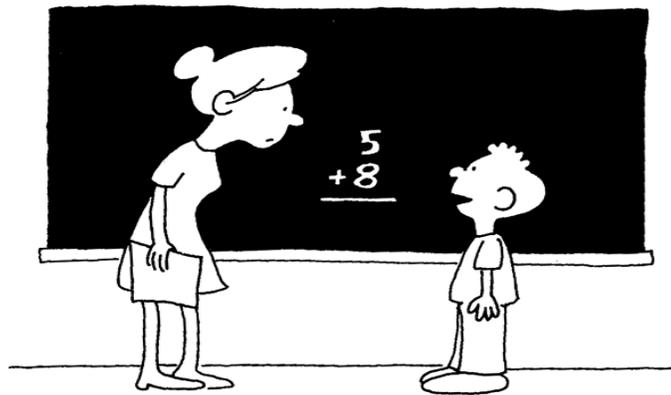
Good practice, then, includes ensuring a good *motivational match* (especially an *intrinsic* motivational match), and this often involves overcoming *avoidance* motivation. Schools strive to design instruction that fits, but the reality is that they can only approximate an optimal fit. They are likely to come closest by *personalizing* instruction and other interventions.

Personalized intervention planning recognizes that:

- Optimal performance and learning require motivational readiness
- Motivation represents both a process and an outcome concern
- School staff not only need to try to increase motivation – especially intrinsic motivation – but also to avoid practices that decrease it.

All this calls for ensuring that classrooms offer a broad range of content, outcome, and procedural *options*, including a personalized structure to facilitate learning. With real options, learners can be *involved in meaningful decision making*, and thus gain a greater sense of competence and self-determination and learn to be effective decision makers. Personalized practices also call for development of nonthreatening ways to provide information about learning and performance.

Personalized interventions can enhance stable, positive, intrinsic attitudes that mobilize ongoing pursuit of desired ends at 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 (again see the Appendix).



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

Because the *learner's perception* is a critical factor in defining whether the environment is a good fit, a basic concern is that of eliciting learners' perceptions of how well what is offered matches both their interests and abilities.

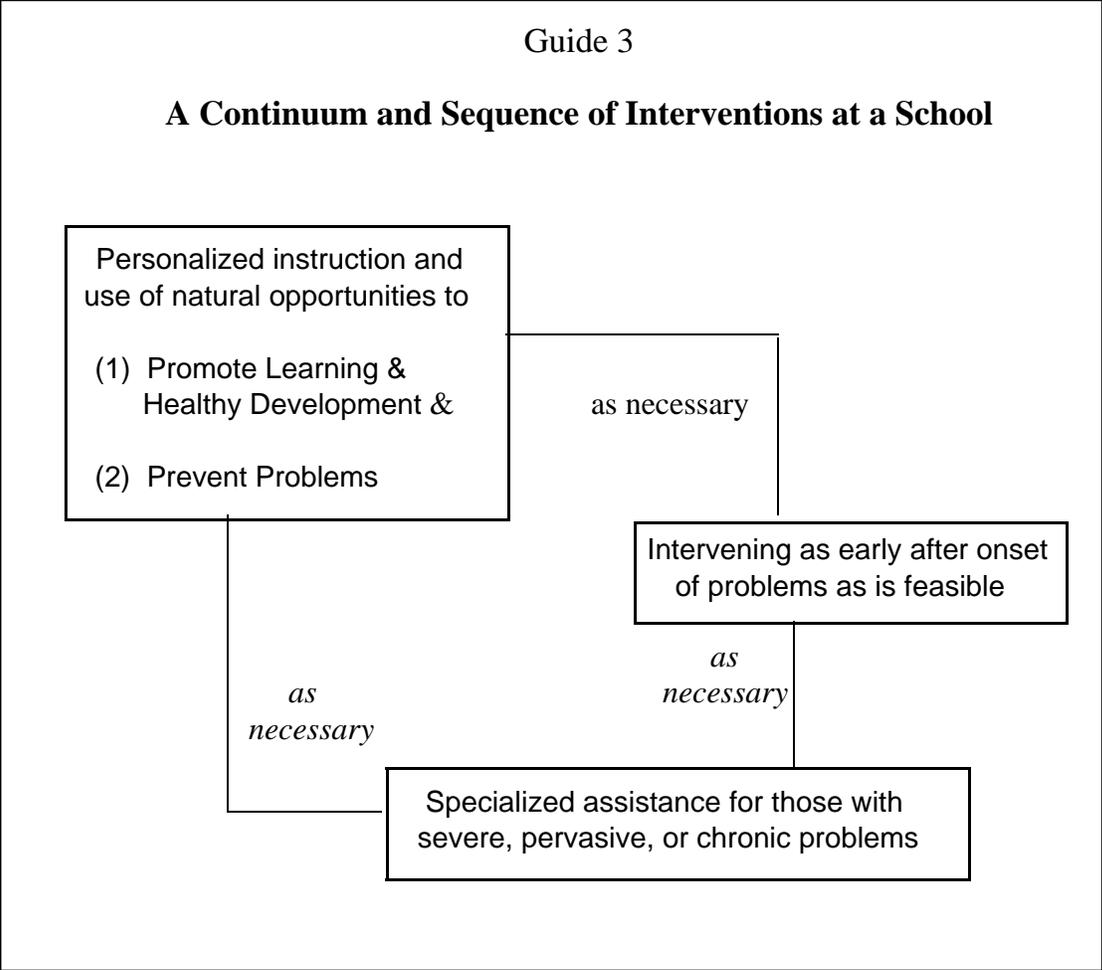
Properly designed and carried out, personalizing instruction can be sufficient in facilitating classroom learning for most students, and this reduces the need for specialized assistance.

Personalizing regular classroom programs also can improve the effectiveness of prevention, inclusion, and assessment of responses to intervention.

Step 4: Ensuring a Continuum of Interventions and Using a Sequential Approach in Assessing Responses to Intervention

Classroom redesign must enhance teacher capability to prevent and handle problems and reduce the need for out of class referrals.

A school that pursues equity of opportunity for all students strives to develop a full continuum of interventions and implements them sequentially and effectively. The continuum begins with promoting assets and preventing problems; then, as necessary, responds to problems as early as feasible after they appear and offers narrowly focused treatments and specialized help for severe/chronic problems (see Guide 3).



Guide 4 outlines a sequential framework to guide pursuing the most appropriate and least disruptive intervention needed for individuals with learning and behavior problems and for assessing responses to interventions (RTI).

Guide 4

Instruction Sequence and Levels

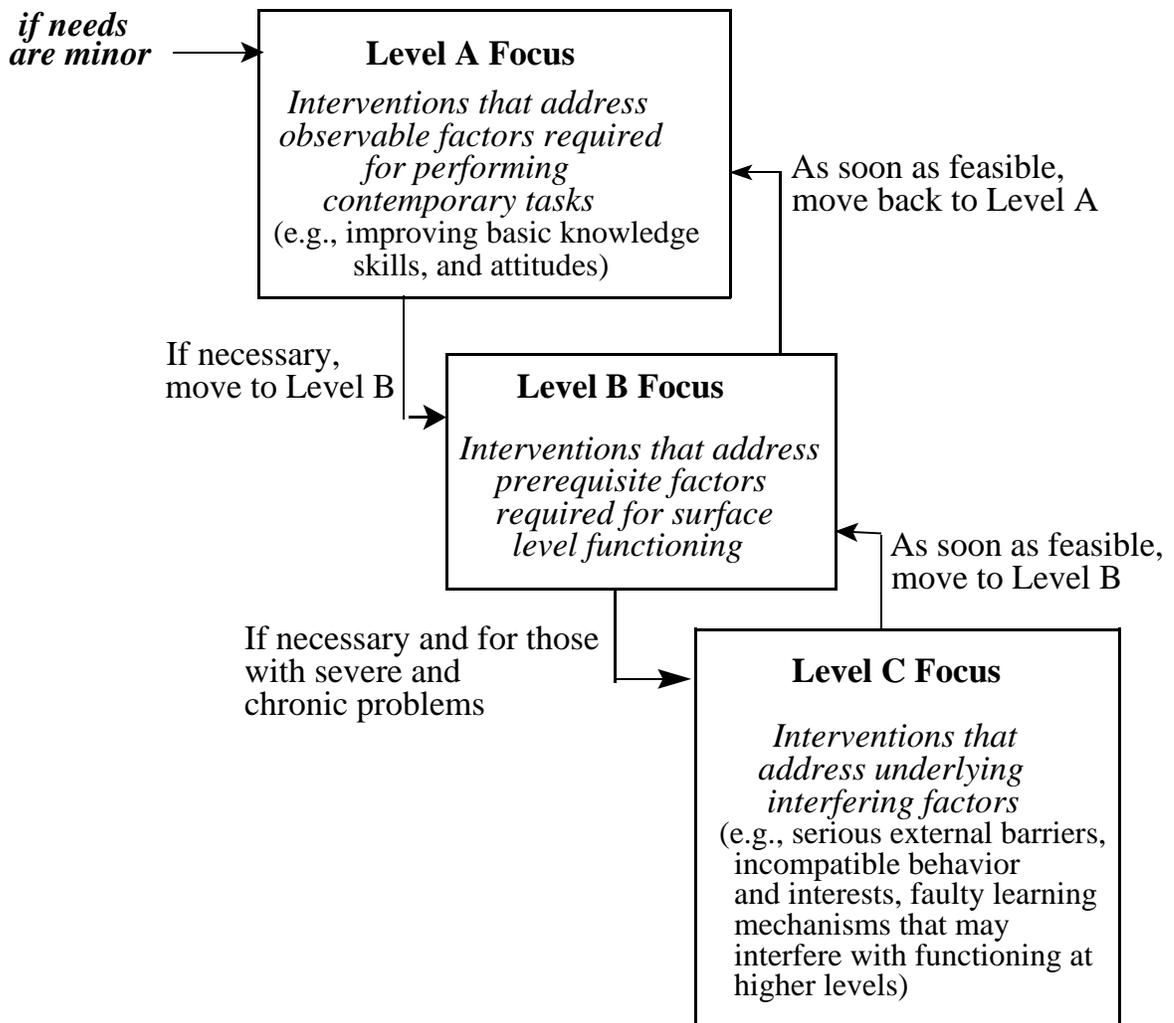
Step I. *Personalizing Instruction*

Add Step II as necessary

Step 2. *Special assistance**

- >for students who continue to have problems;
- >maintained only as long as needed

***Step II.** As necessary: *Best special practices* (special assistance, such as remediation, rehabilitation, treatment) are used differentially for minor and severe problems



With increasing numbers of students identified as troubled or in trouble, schools must design systems for intervening prior to referral for special education assessment. Otherwise, the system will grind to a halt. As illustrated in Guide 4, the first step is to personalize instruction. The intent is to be highly responsive to learner differences in both motivation and developed capabilities and, in the process, enhance a caring learning environment. With personalized instruction in place, the next step involves providing special assistance as needed. Note that this second step involves three levels of focus and is introduced only if learners continue to have problems. This sequence helps to minimize false positive diagnoses (e.g., of LD, ADHD) and identifies those who should be referred for special education assessment.

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To be a bit more specific:

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

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

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

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

Step II special assistance. Students for whom personalized instruction is found to be insufficient are provided supportive assistance. In keeping with the principle of using the least intervention necessary (e.g., doing what is needed in ways that are least intrusive, restrictive, disruptive), step 2 stresses use of different *levels* of special intervention.

Level A. Students with minor problems begin with special interventions that directly focuses on readily observable problems interfering with classroom learning and performance. The initial focus is on directly facilitating learning related to immediate tasks and interests and on expanding the range of interests. Practices involve (1) continued adaptation of methods to match and enhance levels of motivation and development and (2) reteaching specific skills and knowledge when students have difficulty.

Level B. Students who continue to have problems may also require a focus on necessary prerequisites (e.g., readiness attitudes, knowledge, and skills) they haven't acquired and need for functioning at the higher level. Again, procedures are adapted to improve the match, and reteaching is used when the learner has difficulty. If missing prerequisites are successfully developed, the focus returns to observable factors (Level A).

Level C. If Levels A and B interventions don't ameliorate the problem, the focus shifts to possible underlying factors. Students with severe and chronic problems require attention at all three levels. Only at this level is the emphasis on factors that may interfere with functioning (e.g., incompatible behaviors and interests, dysfunctional learning mechanisms). In pursuing underlying interfering factors (Level C), there is increased and intensified use of a wide range of instructional techniques. As soon as feasible, the focus shifts back to prerequisites (Level B) and then on to current tasks and interests (Level A). The special strategies are used whenever and as long as necessary.

While the framework looks linear, we all know that learning is an ongoing, dynamic, and transactional process.

The intent in proceeding in a sequential and hierarchical way is to use the simplest and most direct approaches first whenever problems appear minor. However, if available data indicate the presence of severe and pervasive problems, instruction for missing prerequisites (Level B) is begun immediately with a view to determining the need to address underlying interfering factors.

Notes:

(1) Any student who is not learning as well as *most* others in the classroom is a candidate for special assistance. Special assistance is an essential aspect of revamping classroom systems to address the needs of *all* learners. Using effective special assistance is fundamental to reducing misbehavior, suspensions, expulsions, grade retention, referrals to special education, and dropouts.

(2) As with personalization, special assistance must systematically and fully focus on motivation. This involves (a) assessing how motivated the student is for the assistance, (b) overcoming negative attitudes, (c) enhancing motivational readiness, (d) maintaining motivation throughout the learning process, and (e) nurturing intrinsic motivation for ongoing engagement. Attending to these matters is key to maximizing maintenance, generalization, and expansion of learning. Ignoring such matters means intervening with passive (and often hostile) learners. When motivation considerations are given short shrift, assessments and diagnoses are confounded, and intervention may just as readily exacerbate as correct students problems.

(3) Special assistance often is just an extension of general strategies (e.g., expanding options, reducing levels of abstraction, intensifying the way stimuli are presented and acted upon, increasing the amount and consistency of guidance and support); sometimes, however, major accommodations and more specialized interventions are needed (e.g., use of multisensory techniques). In either case, the process objectives are the same – to improve the match between the intervention and a learner's motivation and capabilities. To accomplish these objectives, all who are available to work with the youngster in the classroom (e.g., teachers, aides, volunteers, resource teachers, student support staff) must take the time to develop an understanding of students who are not learning well. This encompasses an appreciation of strengths as well as weaknesses (including missing prerequisites and interfering behaviors and attitudes, vulnerabilities, limitations, likes, dislikes).

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Step 5. Extending Ways to Accommodate Differences and Disabilities

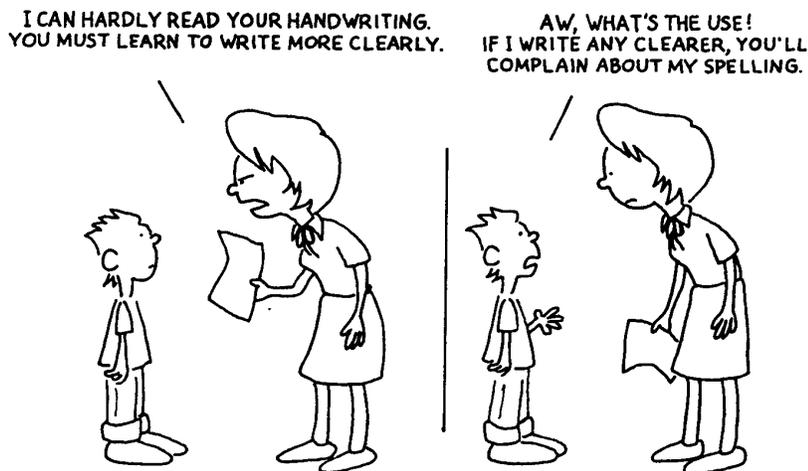
Accommodative strategies are intended to affect students' motivation by involving them in activities they value and believe are attainable with appropriate effort.

Part of enhancing conditions for learning is to accommodate a wider range of differences related to levels of motivation and current functioning. For example, environments can be changed to better account for youngsters who are very active and/or distractable.

Some behavioral expectations and standards initially must be relaxed for some students,. This usually involves widening limits for a time so that certain behaviors of a given student will not be designated as infringing the rules.

For students with low motivation or negative attitudes, the need is to identify a range of learning options they perceive as of considerable personal value and as attainable with an appropriate amount of effort.

Guide 5 offers a range of examples for accommodating differences and disabilities.



Guide 5

Accommodations

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Cont.)

Accommodations (Guide 5 cont.)

504 Accommodation Checklist

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

Physical Arrangement of Room

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

Lesson Presentation

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

Assignments/worksheets

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

- do not require lengthy outside reading assignments
- teacher monitor students self-paced assignments (daily, weekly, bi-weekly)
- arrangements for homework assignments to reach home with clear, concise directions
- recognize and give credit for student's oral participation in class

Test Taking

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

Organization

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

Behaviors

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

Step 6: Expanding School Improvement Plans to Include Development of a Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports

Instruction must be supported by a broad-range of student and learning supports focusing on factors interfering with good instruction and productive learning.

Clearly, a wide range of external and internal barriers to learning and teaching pose pervasive and entrenched challenges to educators across the country, particularly in chronically low performing schools. Failure to directly address such barriers ensures that (a) too many students will continue to struggle in school, and (b) teachers will continue to divert precious instructional time to dealing with behavior and other problems that can interfere with classroom engagement for all students.

The five steps outlined so far emphasize enhancing conditions for learning in the classroom. Such strategies are fundamental and essential, but the work can't stop there if all students are to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. Classroom improvements need to be part of a unified and comprehensive schoolwide system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

As illustrated in Guide 6, such a system is conceptualized as an enabling or learning supports component.

As indicated in Guide 6, an enabling component involves first addressing interfering factors and then (re)engaging students in classroom instruction. The reality is that interventions that do not stress engaging students fully in classroom learning generally are insufficient in sustaining, over time, student involvement, good behavior, and effective learning at school. Such a component is especially critical where large numbers of students are not doing well and at any school that is not yet paying adequate attention to equity and diversity concerns.

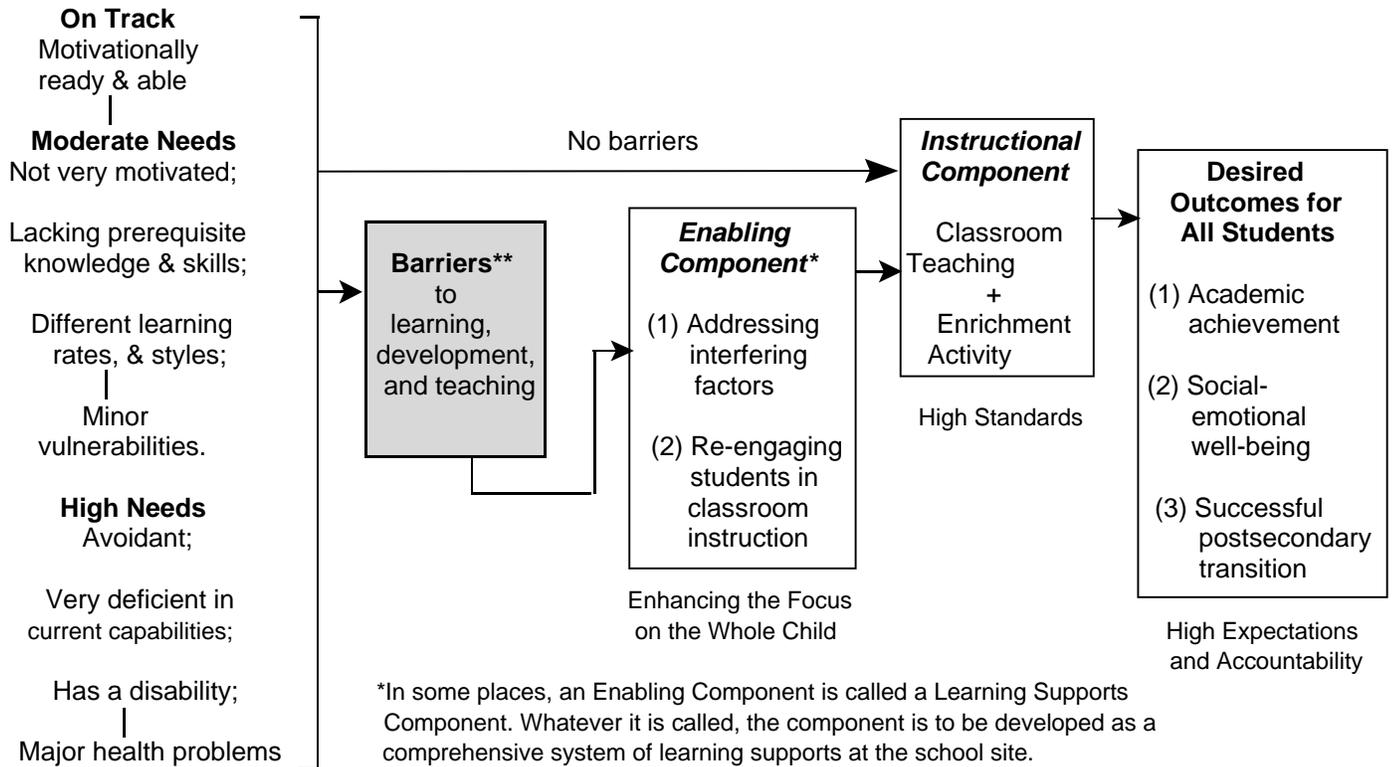
Work related to pioneering initiatives around the country is providing realistic and cost-effective guidance for fully integrating such a component into school improvement policy and practice. See *Where's it happening?* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/nind7.htm>

Guide 6

An Enabling or Learning Supports Component to Address Barriers and Re-engage Students in Classroom Instruction

Range of Learners

(based on their response to academic instruction at any given point in time)



**Examples of Risk-Producing Conditions that Can be Barriers to Learning

E n v i r o n m e n t a l C o n d i t i o n s			P e r s o n F a c t o r s
Neighborhood	Family	School and Peers	Individual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >extreme economic deprivation >community disorganization, including high levels of mobility & unemployment >violence, drugs, crime, etc. >minority and/or immigrant isolation >Lack of positive youth development opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >chronic poverty >domestic conflict/ disruptions/violence >parent/sibling substance abuse or mental illness >modeling problem behavior >abusive caretaking >inadequate provision for quality child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >poor quality school >negative encounters with teachers >negative encounters with peers &/or inappropriate peer models >many disengaged students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >medical problems >low birth weight/ neurodevelopmental delay >psychophysiological problems >difficult temperament & adjustment problems >inadequate nutrition and health care

Note: A reciprocal determinist view of behavior recognizes the interplay of environment and person variables with negative environmental conditions exacerbating person factors.

A comprehensive system of student and learning supports encompasses both a continuum of interventions and organized content. The prototype for organizing the content emphasizes six arenas encompassing interventions to:

- Enhance regular classroom strategies to enable learning (e.g., improving instruction for students who with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems and those have become disengaged from learning at school; includes a focus on prevention, early intervening, and use of strategies such as response to intervention)
- Support transitions (i.e., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions)
- Increase home & school connections & engagement
- Respond to, and where feasible, prevent crises
- Increase community involvement and support (outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers)
- Facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed.

As Guide 7 illustrated, the continuum and six content arenas can be formed into an intervention framework for a comprehensive system of learning supports.

The matrix provides a unifying framework for mapping what is in place and analyzing gaps. Such a framework can guide school improvement planning for developing a comprehensive system.

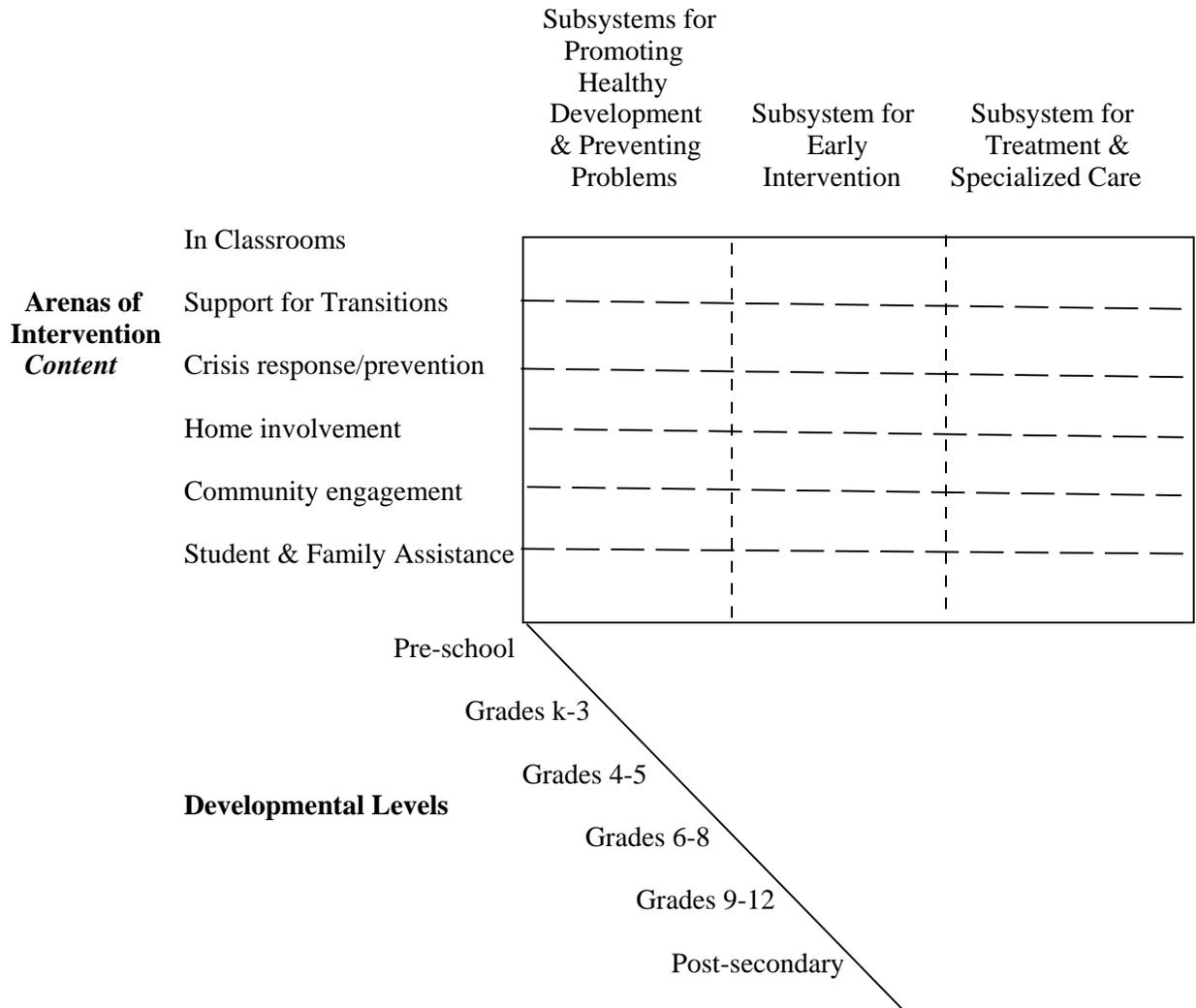
It is evident that teachers deserve to have their efforts enabled by a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports. For such a system emerge, however, teachers must mobilize all their colleagues to advocate for expanding school improvement plans to include such development as a priority.

As aids to this end, our Center has developed a range of resources (see for example *Establishing a comprehensive system of learning supports at a school: Seven steps for principals and their staff* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/7steps.pdf>)

Guide 7

**A Unifying Intervention Framework to Aid Schools, Families, and Neighborhoods
in Providing a Comprehensive and Cohesive System of Supports**

Integrated Intervention *Subsystems*



A Few References and Resource Aids

Adelman, H.S., & Taylor, L. (2006). *The implementation guide to student learning supports in the classroom and schoolwide: New directions for addressing barriers to learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Adelman, H.S., & Taylor, L. (2006). *The school leader's guide to student learning supports: New directions for addressing barriers to learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Center for Mental Health in School (2011). *Implementing response to intervention in context*. Los Angeles: Author at UCLA. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/implementingrti.pdf>

Center for Mental Health in School (2011). *Moving beyond the three tier intervention pyramid toward a comprehensive framework for student and learning supports*. Los Angeles: Author at UCLA. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefs/threetier.pdf>

Center for Mental Health in School (2011). *Where's it happening?* Los Angeles: Author at UCLA. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/nind7.htm>

Other Resources

One easy way to access a wide range of resources for enhancing classroom and schoolwide interventions is to use our Center's Online Clearinghouse *Quick Finds*. The menu of over 130 topics covers matters related to each of the steps highlighted in this set of practice notes; see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm>

For resources directly related to matters discussed in this set of Practice Notes, see:

>Center for Mental Health in School (2011). *RTI and classroom & schoolwide learning supports: A guide for teachers and learning supports staff*. Los Angeles: Author at UCLA. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtiguide.pdf>

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

To support efforts to guide expansion of school improvement planning to include development of a comprehensive system of student and learning supports, see:

>One Hour Introductory Webinar. *Strengthening school improvement: Developing a comprehensive system of learning supports to address barriers to learning and teaching*. Developed by our Center in collaboration with the American Association of School Administrators and Scholastic. – <https://scholastic.webex.com/scholastic/lsr.php?AT=pb&SP=TC&rID=48915112&rKey=09f14db0881f5159&act=pb>

>Examples of what others already are doing – *Where's it happening?* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/nind7.htm>

>Toolkit for *Rebuilding Student Supports into a Comprehensive System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

Appendix

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.

***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.

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*.

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; also see the reference list for key citations on motivation.)

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



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



Valuing and Expectations in the Classroom

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, it is probably because the main introduction to motivational thinking still tends to overemphasize reinforcement theory (which essentially stresses extrinsic motivation). Despite this, you probably intuitively understand the following points.

“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 and that intrinsic factors can be powerful motivators.

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

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.

$$(Expectancy \times Valuing = Motivation \quad 0 \times 1.0 = 0)$$

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.

$$(Expectancy \times Valuing = Motivation \quad 1.0 \times 0 = 0)$$

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.

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 individuals perceive threats to their self-determination. When this happens, they are motivated to react in ways that protect or restore their sense of personal control.

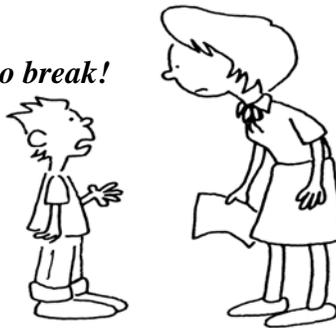
The argument sometimes is made that the reason students continue to misbehave and not do well at school is because the wrong socialization practices (e.g., punishment, illogical consequences) are

used or that good social control practices are implemented incorrectly. Thus, the ongoing emphasis is on convincing schools to (1) continue to minimize punishment and (2) do better in executing programs for social skills training, asset development, character education, and positive behavior support. The move from punishment to positive approaches is a welcome one. However, most of the new initiatives have not focused enough on a basic system failure that must be addressed if improved behavior is to be maintained. That is, strategies that focus on positive behavior have paid too little attention to helping teachers understand psychological reactance and the implications for engagement and disengagement related to classroom learning. Teachers tell us that they are taught a bit about engaging students, but neither pre- nor inservice focus much on how to prevent students from disengaging 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.

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



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For more about motivation, go to our Center's Online Clearinghouse *Quick Find* on the topic – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>