Good teachers want to do their best for *all* students. This, of course, reflects our society's commitment to equity, fairness, and justice. But, if this commitment is to be meaningful, it cannot be approached simplistically. (It was said of the legendary coach Vince Lomardi that he was always fair because he treated all his players the same -- like dogs!) For schools and teachers to be equitable, fair, and just involves designing instruction in ways that accounts for a wide range of individual differences and circumstances.

Good teachers are always learners. They are keenly interested in what others have found works well. This leads most teachers to be rather eclectic in their daily practice.

Because there is so much to learn about effectively teaching students who manifest learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems, eclecticism can be a healthy alternative to fads, fancies, and dogmaticism. But care must be taken to avoid naive forms of eclecticism. Naive eclecticism is the tendency to grab hold of almost every new idea one learns about. (If it looks appealing, it is adopted – regardless of whether it is valid or consistent with other practices the teacher is using.)

No one should use a casual and undiscriminating approach to teaching. And, no one should think there is a “magic bullet” that will solve the many dilemmas a teacher encounters every day.

The way to avoid naive eclecticism is to build one’s approach to teaching on a coherent set of

- underlying concepts
- a set of practice guidelines that reflect these concepts
- best practices that are consistent with the guidelines.

These considerations guide the following discussion which focuses on “classroom-focused enabling” as a critical aspect of efforts to assure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.
In many schools, when students are not doing well, the trend is to refer them directly for assessment in hopes of referral for special help – perhaps even assignment to special education. In some schools and classrooms, the number of referrals is dramatic. Where special teams exist to review students for whom teachers request help, the list grows as the year proceeds. The longer the list, the longer the lag time for review – often to the point that, by the end of the school year, the team has reviewed just a small percentage of those referred. And, no matter how many are reviewed, there are always more referrals than can be served.

One solution might be to convince policy makers to fund more remediation and related services at schools. However, even if the policy climate favored more special programs, such interventions alone are not a comprehensive approach for addressing barriers to learning. More services to treat problems certainly are needed. But so are prevention and early-after-onset programs that can reduce the number of students teachers send to review teams.

No one is certain of the exact number of students who require assistance in dealing with factors that interfere with classroom learning. There is consensus, however, that significant barriers are encountered by many, especially those from poor families. Because of societal inequities, teachers in large urban and poor rural schools usually tell us that over 50% of their students are manifesting learning, behavior, and emotional problems. In public schools serving more affluent families, the proportion of students experiencing such problems is smaller, but it is a rare school that does not have more problems than it can handle effectively. (Findings from the National Assessment of Education Progress indicate that 40 percent of nine-year-olds in the U.S. are reported as scoring poorly.)

As discussed in Module I, schools committed to the success of all children must be redesigned to enable learning by addressing barriers to learning. A key element of an enabling component involves building the capacity of classrooms to enhance instructional effectiveness. We call this classroom-focused enabling. A key facet of classroom-focused enabling is personalized instruction that accounts for motivational and developmental differences.
Based on our analyses of the "best practice" literature, we have designed this module to address the following topics, which are key to preventing problems and maximizing learning in the classroom:

Unit A: What is Good Teaching?
1) Principles, Guidelines, and Characteristics of Good Schools and Good Teaching
2) Underlying Assumptions and Major Program Elements of a Personalized Program
3) A Collaborative and Caring Classroom: Opening the Classroom Door
   a) Opening the Door to Enhance Teacher Learning
   b) Opening the Door to Assistance and Partnerships
   c) Creating a Caring Context for Learning
A Few Related References

Unit B: Engaging Students (and their Families) in Learning: Real and Valued Options and Decision Making
1) About Motivation
   a) Motivation and Learning
   b) Two Key Components of Motivation: Valuing and Expectations
   c) Overreliance on Extrinsic Rewards: A Bad Match
2) Options
3) Learner Decision Making
4) Research on Preferences, Choice, Control, and Student Engagement
A Few Related References

Unit C: General Strategies for Facilitating Motivated Performance and Practice
1) Creating a Stimulating and Manageable Learning Environment
   a) Designing the Classroom for Active Learning
   b) Grouping Students and Turning Big Classes into Smaller Units
2) Providing Personalized Structure for Learning
3) Instructional Techniques
   a) Using Techniques to Enhance Motivation
   b) Using Techniques to Support and Guide Performance and Learning
4) Turning Homework into Motivated Practice
5) Assessing Student Learning to Plan Instruction and Providing Nurturing Feedback
   a) Planning Instruction
   b) Providing Nurturing Feedback
6) Conferencing as a Key Process
7) Volunteers as an Invaluable Resource
A Few Related References

(cont.)
Unit D: Special Classroom Assistance to Engage, Guide, and Support Those Students Who Need More

1) Levels of Special Assistance
2) Level A – Special Assistance in the Classroom to Engage and Accommodate Students in Age Appropriate Life Tasks
   a) Adding Learning Options and Individual Accommodations
   b) About Addressing Behavior Problems
3) Level B – Special Assistance in the Classroom to Develop Prerequisites
4) Level C – Special Assistance in the Classroom to Address Factors Interfering with Learning
   a) Classroom Instruction at Level C
   b) A Note About Inclusion
5) Sequencing Special Assistance
6) Referral When Necessary
A Few Related References

Unit E: Capitalizing on Technology

1) Technology in the Classroom – A Big Picture Overview
2) Applications and Benefits of Technology in the Classroom
   a) Uses and Benefits
   d) Caveats and Cautions
3) Supporting Special Assistance
4) Access to and By the Home
5) Some Websites for Classroom Resources and a Few References on Using Technology
Unit A

Objectives

The intent in this Unit is to help you learn more about:

(1) *principles, guidelines, and characteristics of good schools and good teaching* (After going over the material, be sure you can identify at least three principles or characteristics of good teaching.)

(2) *underlying assumptions and major program elements of a personalized program* (After going over the material, be sure you can identify three program elements.)

(3) *what is involved in "opening up the classroom door"* (After going over the material, be sure you can discuss two basic features involved in creating a collaborative and caring classroom).

*Kids need us most, when they’re at their worst.*
Unit A: What is Good Teaching?

We believe the strength in education resides in the intelligent use of the powerful variety of approaches – matching them to different goals and adapting them to the student's styles and characteristics. Competence in teaching stems from the capacity to reach out to different children and to create a rich and multidimensional environment for them. Curriculum planners need to design learning centers and curricula that offer children a variety of educational alternatives. The existing models of teaching are one basis for the repertoire of alternative approaches that teachers, curriculum makers, and designers of materials can use to help diverse learners reach a variety of goals. We believe the world of education should be a pluralistic one – that children and adults alike should have a "cafeteria of alternatives" to stimulate their growth and nurture both their unique potential and their capacity to make common cause in the rejuvenation of our troubled society.

Bruce Joyce & Marsha Weil
Most public school curriculum guides and manuals reflect efforts to prepare youngsters to cope with what may be called developmental or life tasks. Reading, math, biology, chemistry, social studies, history, government, physical education, sex education – all are seen as preparing an individual to take an appropriate role in society as a worker, citizen, community member, and parent.

Most teachers, however, also want to foster individual well-being, talents, and personal integrity.

Thus, good teaching is not simply a matter of conveying content and mastering instructional techniques. Underlying any discussion of What is good teaching? is a rationale regarding what constitutes the right balance between societal and individual interests.

The rationale we have adopted here is that good teaching in the context of society’s institutions for educating the young requires adoption of a coherent approach to accomplishing society’s intentions in ways that promote the well-being of youngsters. On top of this, good teaching requires the ability to execute such a balancing act while achieving explicit outcomes related to both societal and individual goals.

Because of the importance of the rationale adopted by teachers, we begin this module with a quick summary of principles, guidelines, and characteristics that have been synthesized over the years. They warrant more discussion, but we must leave that to you.

The main focus in this module is on processes for effective instruction and creating a caring environment – which are essential facets of good teaching. From this perspective, we can begin with the old adage:

*Good teaching meets learners where they are.*

In practice, this adage usually is interpreted as a call for matching a student’s current capabilities (e.g., knowledge and skills). However, matching motivation also is essential. Such a motivational emphasis encompasses concerns about intrinsic motivation and overcoming avoidance motivation.
It is clear that the emphasis on matching capabilities is the prevalent orientation in the literature on teaching. Motivational considerations often are given short shrift. The irony, of course, is that most teachers recognize that motivational factors often play a key role in accounting for poor instructional outcomes. One of the most common laments among teachers is: “They could do it, if only they wanted to!” Teachers also know that good abilities are more likely to emerge when students are motivated not only to pursue class assignments, but also are interested in using what they learn in other contexts.

Our intent here is to outline an orientation to teaching that (a) stresses the necessity of matching both motivation and capabilities and (b) practices that encompass both regular instruction and specialized assistance (see the Figure below). The ideas presented in this module reflect both an appreciation that learning and teaching are dynamic and nonlinear processes and that some learners experience problems that require use of something more than the best personalized instruction offers. The discussion also reflects an appreciation for the importance of a caring context.

Finally, it is recognized that teaching and enabling learning are not the teacher's responsibility alone. Good teaching requires collaboration among teachers and other staff at the school and is fostered or hindered by what takes place outside the school. These are matters covered in Modules I and III.

**Building Assets & Addressing Barriers to Learning and Development**

- **Promoting Learning & Healthy Development**
  
  - as necessary

- **Prevention of Problems**
  
  - as necessary

- **Intervening as early after onset of problems as is feasible**
  
  - as necessary

- **Specialized assistance for those with severe, pervasive, or chronic problems**
1) Principles, Guidelines, and Characteristics of Good Schools and Good Teaching

Over many years of study, consensus is emerging about what constitutes effective schools and effective classrooms. On the following pages are a series of syntheses that encapsulate some of the best thinking about these matters. These probably will seem rather general and maybe a bit abstract and overwhelming on first reading. Take some time to reflect on them – perhaps a few at a time. Such reflection is an essential part of thinking out your philosophy about what schools should be about and your understanding of what good teaching is.

Obviously, some ideas require school-wide and even community-wide action; these represent objectives you will want to work with other stakeholders to achieve over time. We discuss your role related to such systemic changes in Module III. Other ideas represent classroom practices that you will learn more about in this module and, hopefully, through other inservice efforts at your school and on-the-job.

Stop, think, discuss

After reading and thinking a bit about the principles, guidelines, and characteristics on the following pages: If you haven’t done so, you will find it helpful to form a study group to discuss the various points and their implications for daily practice.

(1) Find a good time and place for the group to meet.

(2) Clearly, you won’t have time to discuss many of the items in detail, so:
   a. begin the discussion with a brief exchange of what each member thinks are the most important guidelines and characteristics
   b. discuss items anyone thinks should be deleted and/or added
   c. choose a few items that the group wants to talk about in detail and spend about 10 minutes discussing each
Exhibit

Principles/Guidelines Underlying Good Instructional Practice

The following are widely advocated guidelines that provide a sense of the philosophy guiding efforts to address barriers to development and learning and promote healthy development.

Good instructional practice

- facilitates continuous cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development,
- is comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated (e.g., extensive and intensive enough to ensure that students have the opportunity to develop fully),
- makes learning accessible to all students (including those at greatest risk and hardest-to-reach),
- ensures the same high quality for all,
- is user friendly, flexibly implemented, and responsive,
- is guided by a commitment to social justice (equity) and to creating a sense of community,
- uses the strengths and vital resources of all stakeholders to facilitate student learning and development,
- deals with students holistically and developmentally, as an individual and as part of a family, neighborhood, and community,
- is planned, implemented, evaluated, and evolved by highly competent, energetic, committed and responsible stakeholders,
- is tailored to fit distinctive needs and resources and to account for diversity,
- is tailored to use interventions that are no more intrusive than is necessary in meeting needs (e.g., the least restrictive environment),
- is staffed by stakeholders who have the time, training, skills and institutional and collegial support necessary to create an accepting environment and build relationships of mutual trust, respect, and equality,
- is staffed by stakeholders who believe in what they are doing,
- is staffed by stakeholders who pursue continuing education and self-renewal.
### Exhibit

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Schools</th>
<th>Effective Classrooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *Commitment to shared vision of equality*  
> High expectations for student learning  
> Emphasis on academic work that is meaningful to the student | *Positive classroom social climate that*  
> Personalizes contacts and supports  
> 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  
> Incorporates parents in multiple ways  
> Addresses social-emotional development |
| *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 | *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  
| *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 | *Instruction is modified to meet students’ needs based on ongoing assessments using*  
> Measures of multiple dimensions of impact  
> 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 |
| *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 | |

2) Underlying Assumptions and Major Program Elements of a Personalized Program

**Underlying Assumptions.** In Module I, we outlined the following basic assumptions that we see as underlying personalized programs.

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

**Program elements.** As we delineate throughout this Module, the major elements of personalized programs include:

- regular use of informal and formal conferences for discussing options, making decisions, exploring learner perceptions, and mutually evaluating progress
- a broad range of options from which the learner can make choices with regard to learning content, activities, and desired outcomes
- a broad range of options from which the learner can make choices with regard to facilitation (support, guidance) of decision making and learning
- active decision making by the learner in making choices and in evaluating how well the chosen options match his or her current levels of motivation and capability
- establishment of program plans and mutual agreements about the ongoing relationships between the learner and the program personnel
- regular reevaluations of decisions, reformulation of plans, and renegotiation of agreements based on mutual evaluations of progress, problems, and current learner perceptions of the "match"
3) A Collaborative and Caring Classroom: Opening the Classroom Door

*In some schools, it seems that teachers and students enter their classrooms ready to do battle. And at the end of the class, whoever is able to walk out “alive” is the winner.*

This, of course, is a gross exaggeration. . . . . Isn’t it?

For a long time, teachers have gone into their classrooms and figuratively and often literally have shut their doors behind them. As a result, for better and worse, they have been on their own. On the positive side, the closed door limits outside meddling and inappropriate monitoring. The downside is that, in too many instances, teachers are deprived of opportunities to learn from colleagues and too often the isolation from others leads to feelings of alienation and “burn out.” Moreover, students are cut off from a variety of resources and experiences that appear essential to ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to learn.

Because the negatives outweigh the potential gains, there are increasing calls for “opening the classroom door” to enhance collegial collaboration, consultation, mentoring, and greater involvement of expert assistance, volunteers, family members, and the community-at-large. Such fundamental changes in the culture of schools and classrooms are seen as routes to enhancing a caring climate, a sense of community, and teaching effectiveness. These changes are especially important for preventing commonplace learning, behavior, and emotional problems and for responding early-after-onset when a problem does arise.

Some of these matters were discussed briefly in Module I. The exhibit on the next page and the discussion on the pages following it offer some additional details to consider.
Exhibit

What's involved in working together?

Collaboration and collegiality

As Hargreaves and others have noted, these concepts are fundamental to improving morale and work satisfaction and to the whole enterprise of transforming schools to meet the needs of individuals and society. Collaborative cultures foster collaborative working relationships which are spontaneous, voluntary, development-oriented, pervasive across time and space, and unpredictable. When collegiality is mandated, it often produces what has been called contrived collegiality which tends to breed inflexibility and inefficiency. Contrived collegiality is administratively regulated, compulsory, implementation-oriented, fixed in time and space, and predictable.

Teacher collaboration and teaming

Increasingly it is becoming evident that teachers need to work closely with other teachers and school personnel as well as with parents, professionals-in-training, volunteers, and so forth. Collaboration and teaming are key facets of addressing barriers to learning. They allow teachers to broaden the resources and strategies available in and out of the classroom to enhance learning and performance.

Welcoming for new staff and ongoing social support for all staff

Just as with students and their families, there is a need for those working together at a school to feel they are truly welcome and have a range of social supports. Thus, a major focus for stakeholder development activity is establishment of a program that welcomes and connects new staff with others with whom they will be working and does so in ways that effectively incorporates them into the community.

Barriers to working together

Problems related to working relationships are a given. To minimize such problems, it is important for participants to understand barriers to working relationships and for sites to establish effective problem solving mechanisms to eliminate or at least minimize such barriers.

Rescue dynamics

A special problem that arises in caring communities are rescue dynamics. Such dynamics arise when caring and helping go astray, when those helping become frustrated and angry because those being helped don't respond in desired ways or seem not to be trying. It is important to minimize such dynamics by establishing procedures that build on motivational readiness and personalized interventions.
a) Opening the Door to Enhance Teacher Learning

*New teachers need as much on-the-job training as can be provided.*

*All teachers need to learn more about classroom-focused enabling.*

In opening the classroom door to enhance teacher learning, the crux of the matter is to ensure that effective mentoring and collegial practices are used. Learning effectively from colleagues is not just a talking game. It involves opportunities for mentors and colleagues to model and guide change (e.g., demonstrate and discuss new approaches, guide initial practice and eventual implementation, and follow-up to improve and refine). Preferably, the modeling would take place in a teacher’s own classroom. However, if the school can arrange it, the process also can be carried out in colleagues’ classrooms. Also, videotapes of good practices in colleagues classrooms can be used in a variety of ways to enrich collegial sharing.

One type of arrangement that can facilitate shared learning is team teaching with a mentor or a colleague. (Team teaching is covered in Unit C.)

Another arrangement is for the school to use its specialist personnel (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, special education resource teachers) in providing mentoring and demonstrations rather than as “consultants.” That is, rather than telling teachers what they might do to address student learning, behavior, and emotional problems, specialists should be trained to go into classrooms to model and then guide teachers as they begin to practice and implement what they are learning.
b) Opening the Door to Assistance and Partnerships

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

Besides enhancing teacher learning, opening the classroom door allows for the addition of a variety of forms of assistance and useful partnerships.

Increasingly, it is becoming evident that teachers need to work closely with other teachers and school personnel, as well as with parents, professionals-in-training, volunteers, and so forth. Collaboration and teaming are key facets of addressing barriers to learning. They allow teachers to broaden the resources and strategies available in and out of the classroom to enhance learning and performance.

Student learning is neither limited to what is formally taught nor to time spent in classrooms. It occurs whenever and wherever the learner interacts with the surrounding environment. All facets of the community (not just the school) provide learning opportunities. Anyone in the community who wants to facilitate learning might be a contributing teacher. This includes aides, volunteers, parents, siblings, peers, mentors in the community, librarians, recreation staff, etc. They all constitute what can be called the teaching community. When a classroom successfully joins with its surrounding community, everyone has the opportunity to learn and to teach. Indeed, most schools do their job better when they are an integral and positive part of the community. The array of people who might be of assistance are:

- Aides and a variety of volunteers
- Other regular classroom teachers
- Family members
- Students
- Specialist teachers and support service personnel
- School administrators
- Classified staff
- Teachers-in-training and other professionals-in-training

A few examples are highlighted in the Exhibit on the next page; others will be stressed in the remaining units of this module.
Exhibit
Examples of Opening the Door to Assistance and Partnerships

Using Aides and Volunteers in Targeted Ways

Chronically, teachers find classroom instruction disrupted by some student who is less interested in the lesson than in interacting with a classmate. 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 find such strategies do not solve the problem. So, the next steps escalate the event into a form of Greek tragedy. 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 the lesson usually is disrupted.

In contrast to this scenario, you can train your aide (if you have one) or a volunteer who has the ability to interact with students to work in ways that target such youngsters. The training of such individuals focuses on what you want them to do when a problem arises and what they should be doing to prevent such problems. In reaction to a problem, the aide or volunteer should expect you to give a sign to go and sit next to the designated youngster. The focus is on re-engaging the student in the lesson. If this proves undoable, the next step involves taking the student for a walk outside the classroom. It is true that this means the student won’t get the benefit of instruction during that period, but s/he wouldn’t anyway.

Using this approach and not having to shift into a discipline mode has multiple benefits. For one, you are able to carry out your lesson plan. For another, the other students do not have the experience of seeing you having a control contest with a student. (Even if you win such contests, it may have a negative effect on how students perceive you; and if you somehow “lose it,” that definitely conveys a wrong message. Either outcome can be counterproductive with respect to a caring climate and a sense of community.) Finally, you have 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, you can reach out to the student after the lesson is over and start to think about how you can use your aide or volunteers to work with the student to prevent future problems.

Team Teaching

The obvious point here is that partnering with a compatible colleague enables the two of you to complement each others’ areas of competence, provide each other with nurturance and personal support, and allow for relief in addressing problems. (See Unit C)

Collaborating with Special Educators and other Specialists

Almost every school has some personnel who have special training relevant to redesigning the classroom to work for a wider range of students. These specialists range from those who teach music or art to those who work with students designated as in need of special education. They can bring to the classroom not only their special expertise, but ideas for how the classroom design can incorporate practices that will engage students who have not been doing well and can accommodate those with special needs.
c) Creating a Caring Context for Learning

As suggested in Module I, from a psychological perspective, it is important that teachers establish a classroom atmosphere that encourages mutual support and caring and creates a sense of community. Such an atmosphere can play a key role in preventing learning, behavior, emotional, and health problems. 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.*

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. That is, the classroom curriculum should encompass a focus on fostering 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 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 climate benefit from programs for cooperative learning, peer tutoring, mentoring, advocacy, peer counseling and mediation, human relations, and conflict resolution. Clearly, a myriad of strategies can contribute to students feeling positively connected to the classroom and school.
Given the importance of home involvement in schooling, attention also must be paid to creating a caring atmosphere for family members. Increased home involvement is more likely if families feel welcome and have access to social support at school. Thus, teachers and other school staff need to establish a program that effectively welcomes and connects families with school staff and other families to generate ongoing social support and greater participation in home involvement efforts.

Also, just as with students and their families, school staff need to feel truly welcome and socially supported. Rather than leaving this to chance, a caring school develops and institutionalizes a program to welcome and connect new staff with those with whom they will be working. And it does so in ways that effectively incorporates newcomers into the organization.

A new girl came to my class. I said hello to her with a smile. I became friends with her saying hello and eating lunch with her. I played games with her and we played at recess and lunch. I also played with her at P.E and after school.
Learning community

Learning is neither limited to what is formally taught nor to time spent in classrooms. It occurs whenever and wherever the learner interacts with the surrounding environment. All facets of the community (including the school) provide learning opportunities -- thus the term learning community.

Teaching

Whenever a surrounding environment tries to facilitate learning, the process can be called teaching. Teaching occurs at school, at home, and in the community at large. It may be formalized or informally transmitted. Teaching happens most positively when the learner wants to learn something and the surrounding environment wants to help the learner do so. That is, positive learning is facilitated when the learner cares about learning and the teacher cares about teaching. The whole process undoubtedly benefits greatly when all the participants care about each other.

Caring has moral, social, and personal facets

All facets need to be addressed. 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.

Teachers are all who want to facilitate learning

This includes professional teachers, aides, volunteers, parents, siblings, peers, mentors in the community, librarians, recreation staff, etc. They all constitute what can be called the teaching community.

Everyone is a learner and may be teachers

In the learning/teaching community, all are learners and probably play some role as teachers.

Teaching benefits from organizational learning

Organizational learning requires an organizational structure "...where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision and improve shared mental models" [Senge, 1990] by engaging in different tasks, acquiring different kinds of expertise, experiencing and expressing different forms of leadership, confronting uncomfortable organizational truths, and searching together for shared solutions" (Hargreaves, 1994).

Communities of colleagues

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

Now that you’ve covered Unit A, 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 you want to read more about the idea of a collaborative classroom and creating a climate for diversity, see two brief readings that have been included in the accompanying materials.
A Few Related References


Chaskin, R.J. & Rauner, D.M. (eds.) Youth and caring. A special section of the May 1995 issue of the *Phi Delta Kappan*.


*In addition, go to the Quick Find and other search features on the Center’s website, and you will find many relevant resources to topics discussed in this Unit. From the Center website, you can also access the ERIC system and other resource centers through the feature “A Gateway to a World of Resources.”*