



# Addressing Barriers

# to Learning

New ways to think . . .

Better ways to link



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## Rethinking How Schools Address Student Misbehavior & Disengagement

The essence of good classroom teaching is the ability to create an environment that first can mobilize the learner to pursue the curriculum and then can maintain that mobilization, while effectively facilitating learning. The process, of course, is meant not only to teach academics, but to turn out good citizens. While many terms are used, this societal aim requires that a fundamental focus of school improvement be on facilitating positive social and emotional development/learning.

Behavior problems clearly get in the way of all this. Misbehavior disrupts. In some forms, such as bullying and intimidating others, it is hurtful. And, observing such behavior may disinhibit others. Because of this, discipline and classroom management are daily topics at every school.

Concern about responding to behavior problems and promoting social and emotional learning are related and are embedded into the six arenas we frame to encompass the content of student/learning supports (e.g., see Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008). How these concerns are addressed is critical to the type of school and classroom climate that emerges and to student engagement and re-engagement in classroom learning. As such, they need to be fully integrated into school improvement efforts.

### Disengaged Students, Misbehavior, and Social Control

After an extensive review of the literature, Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) conclude: *Engagement is associated with positive academic outcomes, including achievement and persistence in school; and it is higher in classrooms with supportive teachers and peers, challenging and authentic tasks, opportunities for choice, and sufficient structure.* Conversely, for

many students, disengagement is associated with behavior and learning problems and eventual dropout. The degree of concern about student engagement varies depending on school population.

In general, teachers focus on content to be taught and knowledge and skills to be acquired – with a mild amount of attention given to the process of engaging students. All this works fine in schools where most students come each day ready and able to deal with what the teacher is ready and able to teach. Indeed, teachers are fortunate when they have a classroom where the majority of students show up and are receptive to the planned lessons. In schools that are the greatest focus of public criticism, this certainly is not the case.

What most of us realize, at least at some level, is that teachers in such settings are confronted with an entirely different teaching situation. Among the various supports they absolutely must have are ways to re-engage students who have become disengaged and often resistant to broad-band (non-

Inside	Page
<i>Security Measures in Schools: Mental Health Considerations</i>	8
<i>About Framing the Continuum of Intervention</i>	10
<i>Center News &amp; Resources</i>	15

personalized) teaching approaches. To the dismay of most teachers, however, strategies for re-engaging students in *learning* rarely are a prominent part of pre or in-service preparation and seldom are the focus of interventions pursued by professionals whose role is to support teachers and students (National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, 2004). As a result, they learn more about *socialization* and *social control* as classroom management strategies than about how to engage and re-engage students in classroom learning, which is the key to enhancing and sustaining good behavior.

### Reacting to Misbehavior

When a student misbehaves, a natural reaction is to want that youngster to experience and other students to see the consequences of misbehaving. One hope is that public awareness of consequences will deter subsequent problems. As a result, a considerable amount of time at schools is devoted to discipline and classroom management.

An often stated assumption is that stopping a student's misbehavior will make her or him amenable to teaching. In a few cases, this may be so. However, the assumption ignores all the research that has led to understanding *psychological reactance* and the need for individuals to maintain and restore a sense of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Deci & Ryan, 1985). 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.

Unfortunately, in their efforts to deal with deviant and devious behavior and to create safe environments, too many schools overrely on negative consequences and plan only for social control. Such practices model behavior that can foster rather than counter the development of negative values and often produce other forms of undesired behavior. Moreover, the tactics often make schools look and feel more like prisons than community treasures.

In schools, short of suspending a student, punishment essentially takes the form of a decision to do something that the student does not want done. In addition, a demand for future compliance usually is made, along with threats of harsher punishment if compliance is not forthcoming. The discipline may be administered in ways that suggest the student is seen as an undesirable

person. As students get older, suspension increasingly comes into play. Indeed, suspension remains one of the most common disciplinary responses for the transgressions of secondary students.

As with many emergency procedures, the benefits of using punishment may be offset by many negative consequences. These include increased negative attitudes toward school and school personnel. These attitudes often lead to more behavior problems, anti-social acts, and various mental health problems. Because disciplinary procedures also are associated with dropping out of school, it is not surprising that some concerned professionals refer to extreme disciplinary practices as "pushout" strategies.

In general, specific discipline practices should be developed with the aim of leaving no child behind. That is, *stopping misbehavior must be accomplished in ways that maximize the likelihood that the teacher can engage/re-engage the student in instruction and positive learning.*

The growing emphasis on positive approaches to reducing misbehavior and enhancing support for positive behavior in and out-of-the-classroom is a step in the right direction. (See the exhibit on next page). So is the emphasis in school guidelines stressing that discipline should be reasonable, fair, and nondenigrating (e.g., should be experienced by recipients as legitimate reactions that neither denigrate one's sense of worth nor reduce one's sense of autonomy).

Moreover, in recognizing that the application of consequences is an insufficient step in preventing future misbehavior, there is growing awareness that school improvements that engage and re-engage students reduce behavior (and learning) problems significantly. That is why school improvement efforts need to delineate:

- efforts to prevent and anticipate misbehavior
- actions to be taken during misbehavior that do minimal harm to engagement in classroom learning
- steps to be taken afterwards that include a focus on enhancing engagement.

(text continued on page 4)

## Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

One reaction to negative approaches to discipline has been development of initiatives for using positive behavioral interventions and supports. For various reasons, the first emphasis on this in schools came in the field of special education. As noted by the U.S. Department of Education:

“Students who receive special education as a result of behavior problems must have individualized education programs that include behavior goals, objectives, and intervention plans. While current laws driving special education do not require specific procedures and plans for these students, it is recommended that their IEPs be based on functional behavioral assessments and include proactive positive behavioral interventions and supports” (PBS).

PBS encompasses a range of interventions that are implemented in a systematic manner based on a student’s demonstrated level of need. It is intended to address factors in the environment that are relevant to the causes and correction of behavior problems.

While the focus was first on special education, the initiative has expanded into school-wide applications of behavioral techniques, with an emphasis on teaching specific social skills (Bear, 2008). In emphasizing use of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support (PBS), including universal, indicated, and individual interventions, the U.S. Department of Education states:

“Research has shown that the implementation of punishment, especially when it is used inconsistently and in the absence of other positive strategies, is ineffective. Introducing, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behavior is an important part of a student’s educational experience. Teaching behavioral expectations and rewarding students for following them is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehavior to occur before responding.”

“The purpose of school-wide PBS is to establish a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm. A major advance in school-wide discipline is the emphasis on school-wide systems of support that include proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create positive school environments. Instead of using a patchwork of individual behavioral management plans, a continuum of positive behavior support for all students within a school is implemented in areas including the classroom and nonclassroom settings (such as hallways, restrooms). Positive behavior support is an application of a behaviorally-based systems approach to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective environments that improve the link between research-validated practices and the environments in which teaching and learning occurs. Attention is focused on creating and sustaining primary (school-wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve lifestyle results (personal, health, social, family, work, recreation) for all children and youth by making problem behavior less effective, efficient, and relevant, and desired behavior more functional.”

“The school-wide PBS process emphasizes the creation of systems that support the adoption and durable implementation of evidence-based practices and procedures, and fit within on-going school reform efforts. An interactive approach that includes opportunities to correct and improve four key elements is used in school-wide PBS focusing on:

- Outcomes: academic and behavior targets that are endorsed and emphasized by students, families, and educators.
- Practices: interventions and strategies that are evidence based.
- Data: information that is used to identify status, need for change, and effects of interventions.
- Systems: supports that are needed to enable the accurate and durable implementation of the practices of PBS.

“All effective school-wide systems have seven major components in common a) an agreed upon and common approach to discipline, b) a positive statement of purpose, c) a small number of positively stated expectations for all students and staff, d) procedures for teaching these expectations to students, e) a continuum of procedures for encouraging displays and maintenance of these expectations, f) a continuum of procedures for discouraging displays of rule-violating behavior, and g) procedures for monitoring and evaluation the effectiveness of the discipline system on a regular and frequent basis.”

With the growing emphasis on *Response to Intervention* (RtI) initiatives, efforts are being made to tie PBS and RtI together into a shared problem solving approach, with greater emphasis on prevention.

## Focusing on Underlying Motivation to Address Concerns About Engagement

Moving beyond socialization, social control, and behavior modification and with an emphasis on engagement, there is a need to address the roots of misbehavior, especially underlying motivational bases. Consider students who spend most of the day trying to avoid all or part of the instructional program. An *intrinsic* motivational interpretation of the avoidance behavior of many of these youngsters is that it reflects their perception that school is not a place where they experience a sense of competence, autonomy, and or relatedness to others. Over time, these perceptions develop into strong motivational dispositions and related patterns of misbehavior.

***Misbehavior can reflect proactive (approach) or reactive (avoidance) motivation.*** Noncooperative, disruptive, and aggressive behavior patterns that are *proactive* tend to be rewarding and satisfying to an individual because the behavior itself is exciting or because the behavior leads to desired outcomes (e.g., peer recognition, feelings of competence or autonomy). Intentional negative behavior stemming from such approach motivation can be viewed as pursuit of deviance.

Misbehavior in the classroom may also be *reactive*, stemming from avoidance motivation. This behavior can be viewed as protective reactions. Students with learning problems can be seen as motivated to avoid and to protest against being forced into situations in which they cannot cope effectively. For such students, many teaching situations are perceived in this way. Under such circumstances, individuals can be expected to react by trying to protect themselves from the unpleasant thoughts and feelings that the situations stimulate (e.g., feelings of incompetence, loss of autonomy, negative relationships). In effect, the misbehavior reflects efforts to cope and defend against aversive experiences. The actions may be direct or indirect and include defiance, physical and psychological withdrawal, and diversionary tactics.

***Interventions for reactive and proactive behavior problems begin with major program changes.*** From a motivational perspective, the aims are to (a) prevent and overcome negative attitudes toward school and learning, (b) enhance motivational readiness for learning and overcoming problems, (c) maintain intrinsic motivation throughout learning and problem solving, and (d) nurture the type of continuing motivation that results in students engaging in activities away from school that foster maintenance, generalization, and expansion of learning and problem solving. Failure to attend to motivational concerns in a comprehensive, normative way results in approaching passive and often hostile students with

practices that instigate and exacerbate problems.

After making broad programmatic changes to the degree feasible, intervention with a misbehaving student involves remedial steps directed at underlying factors. For instance, with intrinsic motivation in mind, the following assessment questions arise:

- Is the misbehavior unintentional or intentional?
- If it is intentional, is it reactive or proactive?
- If the misbehavior is reactive, is it a reaction to threats to self-determination, competence, or relatedness?
- If it is proactive, are there other interests that might successfully compete with satisfaction derived from deviant behavior?

In general, intrinsic motivation theory suggests that corrective interventions for those misbehaving reactively requires steps designed to reduce reactance and enhance positive motivation for participation. For youngsters highly motivated to pursue deviance (e.g., those who proactively engage in criminal acts), even more is needed. Intervention might focus on helping these youngsters identify and follow through on a range of valued, socially appropriate alternatives to deviant activity. Such alternatives must be capable of producing greater feelings of self-determination, competence, and relatedness than usually result from the youngster's deviant actions. To these ends, motivational analyses of the problem can point to corrective steps for implementation by teachers, clinicians, parents, or students themselves (see references at end of this article).

## Promoting Social and Emotional Learning

One facet of addressing misbehavior proactively is the focus on promoting healthy social and emotional development. This emphasis meshes well with a school's goals related to enhancing students' personal and social well being. And, it is essential to creating an atmosphere of "caring," "cooperative learning," and a "sense of community" (including greater home involvement).

In some form or another, every school has goals that emphasize a desire to enhance students' personal and social functioning. Such goals reflect an understanding that social and emotional growth plays an important role in

- enhancing the daily smooth functioning of schools and the emergence of a safe, caring, and supportive school climate
- facilitating students' holistic development
- enabling student motivation and capability for academic learning
- optimizing life beyond schooling.

An agenda for promoting social and emotional learning encourages family-centered orientation. It stresses practices that increase positive engagement in learning at school and that enhance personal responsibility (social and moral), integrity, self-regulation (self-discipline), a work ethic, diverse talents, and positive feelings about self and others.

It should be stressed at this point that, for most individuals, learning social skills and emotional regulation are part of normal development and socialization. Thus, social and emotional learning is not primarily a formal training process. This can be true even for some individuals who are seen as having behavior and emotional problems. (While poor social skills are identified as a symptom and contributing factor in a wide range of educational, psychosocial, and mental health problems, it is important to remember that symptoms are correlates.)

***What is Social and Emotional Learning?*** As formulated by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), social and emotional learning (SEL) “is a process for helping children and even adults develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness. SEL teaches the skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work, effectively and ethically. These skills include recognizing and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically. They are the skills that allow children to calm themselves when angry, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices.”

CASEL also views SEL as “providing a framework for school improvement. Teaching SEL skills helps create and maintain safe, caring learning environments. The most beneficial programs provide sequential and developmentally appropriate instruction in SEL skills. They are implemented in a coordinated manner, school-wide, from preschool through high school. Lessons are reinforced in the classroom, during out-of-school activities, and at home. Educators receive ongoing professional development in SEL. And families and schools work

together to promote children’s social, emotional, and academic success.”

Because of the scope of SEL programming, the work is conceived as multi-year. The process stresses adult modeling and coaching and student practice to solidify learning related to social and emotional awareness of self and others, self-management, responsible decision making, and relationship skills.

***Natural Opportunities to Promote Social and Emotional Learning.*** Sometimes the agenda for promoting social and emotional learning takes the form of a special curriculum (e.g., social skills training, character education, assets development) or is incorporated into the regular curricula. However, classroom and school-wide practices can and need to do much more to (a) capitalize on *natural* opportunities at schools to promote social and emotional development and (b) minimize transactions that interfere with positive growth in these areas. Natural opportunities are one of the most authentic examples of “teachable moments.”

An appreciation of what needs more attention can be garnered readily by looking at the school day and school year through the lens of goals for personal and social functioning. Is instruction carried out in ways that strengthen or hinder development of interpersonal skills and connections and student understanding of self and others? Is cooperative learning and sharing promoted? Is counterproductive competition minimized? Are interpersonal conflicts mainly suppressed or are they used as learning opportunities? Are roles provided for all students to be positive helpers throughout the school and community?

The Center’s website offers specific examples of natural opportunities and how to respond to them in ways that promote personal and social growth (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/schoolsupport.htm> )

***The Promise of Promoting Social and Emotional Learning.*** Programs to improve social skills and interpersonal problem solving are described as having promise both for prevention and correction. However, reviewers tend to be cautiously optimistic because so many studies have found the range of skills acquired are quite limited and so is the generalizability and maintenance of outcomes. This is the case for training of specific skills (e.g., what to say and do in a specific situation), general strategies (e.g., how to generate a wider range of interpersonal problem-solving options), as well as efforts to develop cognitive-affective orientations,

such as empathy training. Reviews of social skills training over several decades conclude that individual studies show effectiveness, but outcome studies often have shown lack of generalizability and social validity. However, the focus has been mainly on social skills training for students with emotional and behavior disorders.

Recent analyses by researchers involved with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) suggest that “students who receive SEL programming academically outperform their peers, compared to those who do not receive SEL. Those students also get better grades and graduate at higher rates. Effective SEL programming drives academic learning, and it also drives social outcomes such as positive peer relationships, caring and empathy, and social engagement. Social and emotional instruction also leads to reductions in problem behavior such as drug use, violence, and delinquency” (CASEL, 2007).

### Promotion of Mental Health

Promotion of mental health encompasses efforts to enhance knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to foster social and emotional development, a healthy lifestyle, and personal well-being. Promoting healthy development, well-being, and a value-based life are important ends unto themselves and overlap primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions to prevent mental health and psychosocial problems.

Interventions to promote mental health encompass not only strengthening individuals, but also enhancing nurturing and supportive conditions at school, at home, and in the neighborhood. All this includes a particular emphasis on increasing opportunities for personal development and empowerment by promoting conditions that foster and strengthen positive attitudes and behaviors (e.g., enhancing motivation and capability to pursue positive goals, resist negative influences, and overcome barriers). It also includes efforts to maintain and enhance physical health and safety and *inoculate* against problems (e.g., providing positive and negative information, skill instruction, and fostering attitudes that build resistance and resilience).

While schools alone are not responsible for this, they do play a significant role, albeit sometimes not a positive one, in social and emotional development. School improvement plans need to encompass ways the school will (1) *directly facilitate* social and emotional (as well as physical) development and (2) *minimize threats* to positive development (see references at end of this article). In doing so,

appreciation of differences in levels of development and developmental demands at different ages is fundamental, and personalized implementation to account for individual differences is essential.

From a mental health perspective, helpful guidelines are found in research clarifying normal trends for school-age youngsters’ efforts to feel *competent, self-determining, and connected with significant others* (Deci & Ryan, 2002). And, measurement of such feelings can provide indicators of the impact of a school on mental health. Positive findings can be expected to correlate with school engagement and academic progress. Negative findings can be expected to correlate with student anxiety, fear, anger, alienation, a sense of losing control, a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness. In turn, these negative thoughts, feelings, and attitudes can lead to externalizing (aggressive, “acting out”) or internalizing (withdrawal, self-punishing, delusional) behaviors.

Clearly, promoting mental health has payoffs both academically and for reducing problems at schools. Therefore, it seems evident that an enhanced commitment to mental health promotion must be a key facet of the renewed emphasis on the whole child by education leaders (Association for Supervision and Curriculum, 2007).

### Concluding Comments

Responding to behavior problems and promoting social and emotional development and learning can and should be done in the context of a comprehensive system designed to address barriers to learning and (re)engage students in classroom learning. In this respect, the developmental trend in thinking about how to respond to misbehavior must be toward practices that embrace an expanded view of engagement and human motivation and that includes a focus on social and emotional learning.

Relatedly, motivational research and theory are guiding the development of interventions designed to enhance student’s motivation and counter disengagement. And, there is growing appreciation of the power of intrinsic motivation.

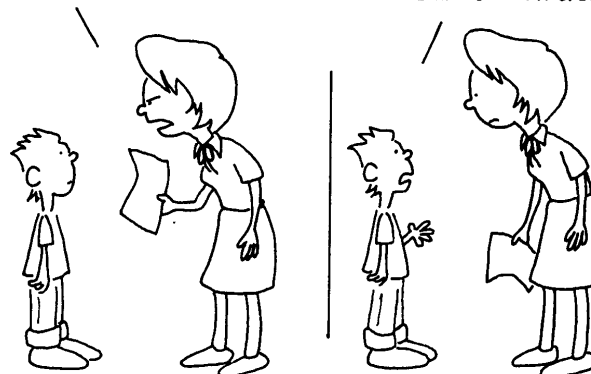
*Now, it is time for school improvement decision makers and planners to fully address these matters.*

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- Also note: The journal *Educational Psychologist* devoted all of volume 42 (2007) to motivational interventions. See contents at  
<http://www.leaonline.com/toc/ep/42/4>

I CAN HARDLY READ YOUR HANDWRITING.  
YOU MUST LEARN TO WRITE MORE CLEARLY.

AW, WHAT'S THE USE!  
IF I WRITE ANY CLEARER, YOU'LL  
COMPLAIN ABOUT MY SPELLING.



**Hot Topic****Security Measures at Schools: Mental Health Considerations**

These days, every school is confronted with the problem of providing security measures and crisis preparation without too much cost to a positive school climate and to the mental health of students.

One facet of this is reflected in the following request sent to the Center:

"I am charged with making sure that all of our schools continue to practice the district's crisis plans and procedures .... We have a number of drills during our school year that consist but are not limited to: lock-down, lock-out, severe weather, fire, emergency evacuation etc. We have been doing both announced and unannounced drills to prepare students and staff in the event a crisis occurs. I am seeking information, research and advice on psychological effect, if any, these drills have on children and adolescents."

**It's a Dilemma!**

This is a common and true dilemma (i.e., there is no win-win answer, only strategies to balance costs and benefits). And, it is noteworthy that much more attention has been paid to the school safety and security side of the matter than to minimizing the negative aspects. In part, this reflects the reality that most of what is observable in pursuing school security are the physical changes to increase safety (e.g., metal detectors, uniformed security officers, crisis response drills).

**Too Little Research**

For various reasons, there is little research on the effectiveness and possible unintended negative effects on students and on school climate. The dearth of research, of course, is no excuse for not considering matters such as the psychological effects of multiple emergency drills. Indeed, it is essential to reflect on such questions as:

- Do the frequent drills set a tone of heightened concern about personal safety for some students? Raise anxiety?
- Do frequent drills produce complacency on the part of some staff and students?
- Is there resentment from teaching staff because of the loss of time for instruction?
- Does the "excitement" of a drill disinhibit some students and result in deviant behaviors?
- Do some students view drills as an opportunity for disrupting the school day and thus is there an increase in false fire alarms, hoax phone calls regarding bombs, etc.?

Because of the widespread concern about all this, we have focused on the matter in our *Hot Topics* series. See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/hottopic.htm>

Here, we want to highlight the matter with a brief excerpt from a 2007 article by M. J. Mayer & P. E. Leone entitled "School Violence and Disruption Revisited: Equity and Safety in the School House" (in *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 40).

"... much attention has been directed to creating safer school premises, using environmental, equipment, and personnel-based measures. But effectiveness research on such school security measures is extremely limited.... Research by Ginsberg and Loffredo (CDC, 1993) suggested that metal detectors could curtail the number of weapons brought into schools; however, there was no concurrent reduction in school violence and disorder at the classroom level. Other research suggested that school administrators and other school stakeholders may develop an unjustified sense of security resulting from the implementation of equipment-based measures designed to lower the incidence of school crimes (Ascher, 1994; Schneider, 2001).

Drawing a slightly different picture, Wilson-Brewer and Spivak (1994) reported on a New York City school weapon-prevention approach that utilized school security staff with hand-held metal detectors. This approach led to a significant reduction in weapon-based incidents, with improved student attendance and indications that students felt safer at school.

Multiple research reports have suggested that using metal detectors, locking outside doors, searching lockers, and having hallway security patrols don't reduce classroom violence (Aleem et al., 1993; CDC, 1993; Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Gagnon & Leone, 2001). Causal research demonstrating beneficial effects of these technologies is rare. Researchers have suggested that a near-exclusive focus on school security measures



may alienate students, making schools seem like jails (Ascher, 1994; Brotherton, 1996; Juvonen, 2001; Mayer & Leone, 1999; Noguerra, 1995; Peterson, Larson, & Skiba, 2001)."

In a follow-up interchange with the Center, Mathew Mayer stressed:

"I believe more research in this area is needed because we lack hard proof of what works well, for whom, under what conditions, and why. When we engage in teaching and other school-based interventions based on some combination of personal beliefs and a variety of expert opinions, we gamble with the future of kids. Unfortunately, we have wasted huge amounts of money doing things that seemed right in our minds and made sense to us at first (e.g., original D.A.R.E. program), but produced minimal or no benefits. Even worse, we have engaged in interventions that have been documented to cause harm to young people (e.g., GGI, or guided group interaction, with some minor exceptions). We have little research on metal detectors and even less on security cameras in schools. The SRO research is quite marginal, but with some positive indicators. We have tried to import interventions from one field to others in the educational arena because it seemed to make sense, yet the results have not always been as beneficial as we would like to believe (e.g., recent literature on problems with and limitations of functional behavioral assessments). So the arguments about cameras and security measures being effective in some aspects of our societal gathering locations (malls, restaurants, etc.), and thus making sense for schools, don't automatically hold water. Bottom line: we can debate the issues endlessly or we can seek more definitive forms of proof to guide what we do.

Some of the commissions investigating school shootings tragedies (see Governor Bill Owens Commission report on Columbine) have commented how the most important longer-term prevention answers are not in the security measures such as metal detectors, guards, and cameras (not to suggest that they don't play a useful role), but in measures to address the risk factors leading to the problems.

Schools vary tremendously in their characteristics and needs. Clearly, there are dangerous schools where more highly focused and intensive security measures are necessary to ensure safety and welfare of the students and staff. But those in charge of such schools need to ask themselves how they are going to chart a course towards a more peaceful and productive school community and not be satisfied maintaining a status quo. There is no one size fits all approach. Drawing an analogy to some of the good work with school-wide positive behavior support-type approaches, we need to find as many ways as possible to teach and promote appropriate behaviors and engage as many students as possible into a bond with the school where problem behaviors are made less likely. But as with a positive behavior supports approach, we still need measures to appropriately consequence inappropriate behaviors. We certainly need security and safety programming in schools, but a great deal can be done to prevent us from having to rely on those programs as a primary strategy. Perhaps it's about striking an appropriate balance, given the realities of the school and local community."

### *What Can You Add?*

The Center will continue to focus on this hot topic. To help, please send whatever you can to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

*Has it come to this?*

*School budget planning:*

*Should we hire a music teacher or another security officer?*

adapted from F. Button

## About Framing the Continuum of Intervention

In response to requests, we have compiled a new resource aid summarizing the frameworks we have developed to guide systemic transformation of student and learning supports. Highlighted are four fundamental, systemic concerns related to transforming student and learning supports and frameworks for addressing these concerns. The frameworks encompass a focus on reframing intervention, expanding school improvement policy, reworking infrastructure, and rethinking the implementation problem. As with most Center resources, this aid is immediately accessible online at no cost and with no restrictions on its use.\*

Here, our focus is only on the matter of rethinking *intervention*, with the intent of further clarifying why we illustrate the continuum of intervention as we do (see Exhibit A). As can be seen from Exhibit A, one aim we have in emphasizing levels of intervention is to stress that a continuum is one facet of establishing, over time, a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach that strives to

- promote healthy development and prevent problems
- intervene early to address problems as soon after onset as is feasible
- assist with chronic and severe problems.

In keeping with public education and public health perspectives, we also emphasize that such a continuum encompasses efforts to enable academic, social, emotional, and physical development and to address behavior, learning, and emotional problems at every school and in every community.

From our perspective, the primary message to carry away from the following discussion is the need to develop a comprehensive *system* of learning supports at every school.\*\* We use the continuum figure as one step in moving in that direction and we stress the following points.

### The Aim is to Build a Comprehensive System

As graphically illustrated in Exhibit A, (a) each level represents a subsystem, (b) the three subsystems overlap, and (c) all three require integration into an overall system.

### A Comprehensive System Requires Weaving School and Community Resources Together

The school and community examples listed in the exhibit highlight programs focused on individuals, families, and the contexts in which they live, work, and play. There is a focus on mental and physical health, education, and social services. Some of the examples reflect categorical thinking about problems that has contributed to fragmentation, redundancy, and counterproductive competition for sparse resources.

Moving away from fragmented approaches requires weaving together school and community efforts at each level of the continuum in ways consistent with institutionalized missions and sparse resources. And, system building requires concurrent intra- and inter-program integration over extended periods of time.

Note that the continuum helps highlight the principle of using the least restrictive and nonintrusive forms of intervention necessary to respond appropriately to problems and accommodate diversity.

### Eventually, a Comprehensive System will Reduce the Number of Students Requiring Specialized Supports

Many problems are not discrete and must be addressed holistically and developmentally and with attention to root causes. An appreciation of these matters helps minimize tendencies to develop separate programs for each observed problem. In turn, this enables increased coordination and integration of resources which can increase impact and cost-effectiveness.

As graphically illustrated by the tapering of the three levels of intervention in the exhibit, development of a fully integrated set of interventions is meant to reduce the number of individuals who require specialized supports. That is, the aim is to prevent the majority of problems, deal with another significant segment as soon after problem onset as is feasible, and end up with relatively few students needing specialized assistance and other intensive and costly interventions. For individual students, this means preventing and minimizing as many problems as feasible and doing so in ways that maximize engagement in productive learning. For the school and community as a whole, the intent is to produce a safe, healthy, nurturing environment/culture characterized by respect for differences, trust, caring, support, and high expectations.

## Each Level has Content

As can be seen in Exhibit B, we stress that a conceptualization of intervention that only focuses on a continuum is incomplete. For example, “mapping” done with respect to three levels of intervention does not do enough to escape the tendency to generate laundry lists of programs/services at each level. By combining the three system levels with the *content* focus of interventions, we generate a matrix framework to provide a prototype for a comprehensive system of learning supports. Such a matrix can guide and unify school improvement planning for developing such a system. The matrix provides a unifying framework for mapping what is in place and analyzing gaps. Overtime, such mapping and analyses are needed at the school level, for a family of schools (e.g., a feeder pattern of schools), at the district level, and community-wide.

## Continuum + Content = An Enabling Component

In our work, we operationalize a comprehensive system of learning supports as an *Enabling or Learning Supports Component* (see Exhibit C). This helps to coalesce and enhance programs with the aim of ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. A critical matter is defining what the entire school must do to enable *all* students to learn and *all* teachers to teach effectively. School-wide approaches are especially important where large numbers of students are affected and at any school that is not yet paying adequate attention to equity and diversity concerns.

As illustrated, an enabling component involves first addressing interfering factors *and then* (re-)engaging

students in classroom instruction. The reality is that interventions that do not include an emphasis on ensuring students are engaged meaningfully in classroom learning generally are insufficient in sustaining, over time, student involvement, good behavior, and effective learning at school.

In essence, beginning in the classroom with differentiated classroom practices and by ensuring school-wide learning supports, an Enabling Component

- addresses barriers through a broader view of “basics” and through effective accommodation of individual differences and disabilities
- enhances the focus on motivational considerations with a special emphasis on intrinsic motivation as it relates to individual readiness and ongoing involvement and with the intent of fostering intrinsic motivation as a basic outcome
- adds remediation, treatment, and rehabilitation as necessary, but only as necessary.

To conclude: Clearly, these are important matters for the future of students, their families, schools, and neighborhoods. How a field frames its efforts determines how policy makers and planners address such efforts. If the current marginalization of student supports is to end, a framework that presents a coherent picture of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive set of interventions must be formulated and operationalized. Minimally, such a framework must delineate the essential scope and content focus of the enterprise.

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\*The document entitled: *Frameworks for Systemic Transformation of Student and Learning Supports* can be accessed directly – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/frameworksforsystemicttransformation.pdf>

\*\*The Center has designed a *toolkit* to provide ready access to a set of resources for developing a comprehensive system of student/learning supports. Online at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

The toolkit contains the *Frameworks* document and also has a set of self-study surveys related to developing a comprehensive system of student/learning supports. One of these is a survey of “systems” designed to help determine the degree to which a comprehensive system is being developed. (Directly accessible at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Surveys/Set1.pdf> )

What's your favorite subject at school?

Recess!



**Exhibit A**

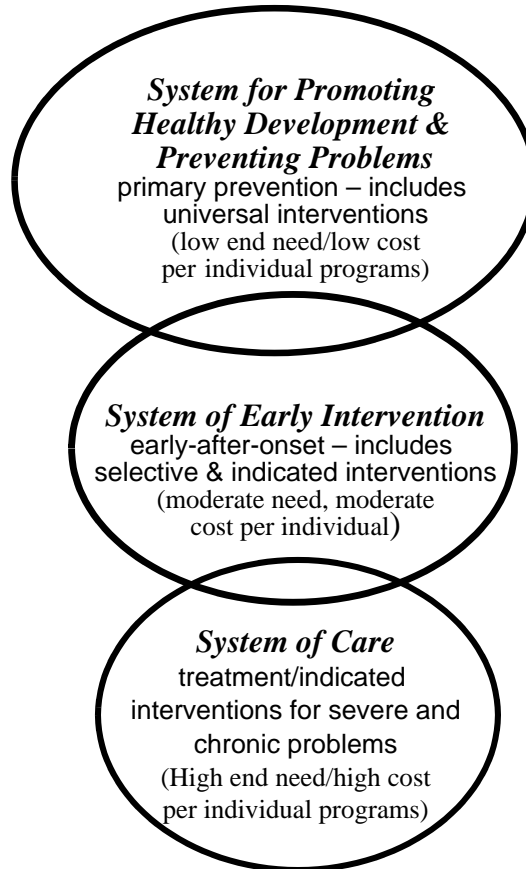
**Levels of Intervention:\***  
**Connected Systems for Meeting the Needs of All Students**

**School Resources**

(facilities, stakeholders, programs, services)

## Examples:

- General health education
  - Social and emotional learning programs
  - Recreation programs
  - Enrichment programs
  - Support for transitions
  - Conflict resolution
  - Home involvement
  - Drug and alcohol education
- 
- Drug counseling
  - Pregnancy prevention
  - Violence prevention
  - Gang intervention
  - Dropout prevention
  - Suicide prevention
  - Learning/behavior accommodations & response to intervention
  - Work programs
- 
- Special education for learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, and other health impairments

**Community Resources**

(facilities, stakeholders, programs, services)

## Examples:

- Recreation & Enrichment
  - Public health & safety programs
  - Prenatal care
  - Home visiting programs
  - Immunizations
  - Child abuse education
  - Internships & community service programs
  - Economic development
- 
- Early identification to treat health problems
  - Monitoring health problems
  - Short-term counseling
  - Foster placement/group homes
  - Family support
  - Shelter, food, clothing
  - Job programs
- 
- Emergency/crisis treatment
  - Family preservation
  - Long-term therapy
  - Probation/incarceration
  - Disabilities programs
  - Hospitalization
  - Drug treatment

Systemic collaboration is essential to establish interprogram connections on a daily basis and over time to ensure seamless intervention within each system and among *systems for promoting healthy development and preventing problems, systems of early intervention, and systems of care.*

Such collaboration involves horizontal and vertical restructuring of programs and services

(a) within jurisdictions, school districts, and community agencies (e.g., among departments, divisions, units, schools, clusters of schools)

(b) between jurisdictions, school and community agencies, public and private sectors; among schools; among community agencies

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\*Various venues, concepts, and initiatives permeate this continuum of intervention *systems*. For example, venues such as day care and preschools, concepts such as social and emotional learning and development, and initiatives such as positive behavior support, response to intervention, and coordinated school health. Also, a considerable variety of staff are involved. Finally, *note that this illustration of an essential continuum of intervention systems differs in significant ways from the three tier pyramid that is widely referred to in discussing universal, selective, and indicated interventions.*

**Exhibit B**

**Matrix for Reviewing Scope and Content of a Component to Address Barriers to Learning\***

		Scope of Intervention		
		System for Promoting Healthy Development & Preventing Problems	System for Early Intervention (Early after problem onset)	System of Care
Organizing around the <b>Content/ "curriculum"</b> (for addressing barriers to learning & promoting healthy development)	Classroom-Focused Enabling			
	Crisis/Emergency Assistance & Prevention			
	Support for transitions			
	Home Involvement in Schooling			
	Community Outreach/Volunteers			
	Student and Family Assistance			
		Accommodations for differences & disabilities	Specialized assistance & other intensified interventions (e.g., Special Education & School-Based Behavioral Health)	

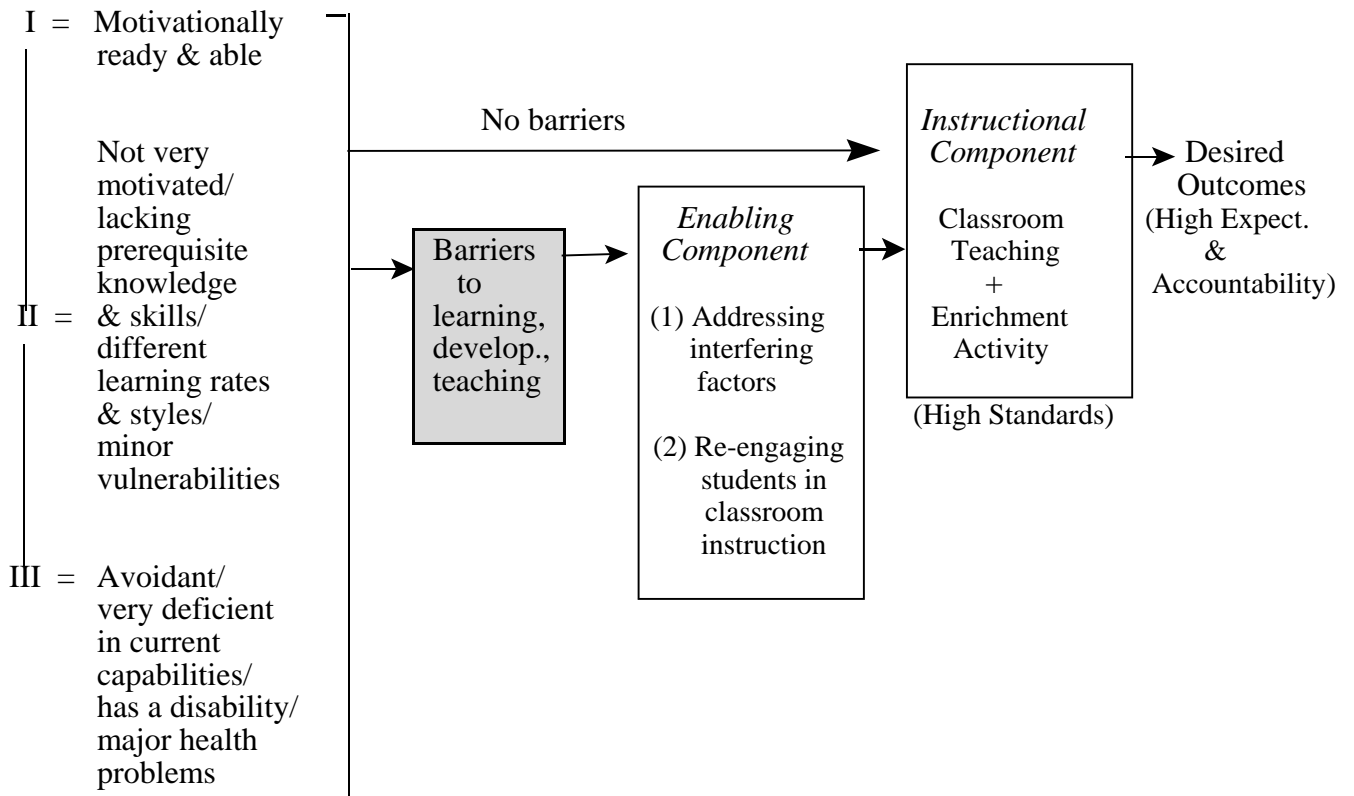
\*Note that specific school-wide and classroom-based activities related to positive behavior support, "prereferral" interventions, and the eight components of Center for Prevention and Disease Control's Coordinated School Health Program are embedded into the six content ("curriculum") areas.

**Exhibit C**

**An Enabling Component to Address Barriers and Re-engage Students in Classroom Instruction\***

**Range of Learners**

(categorized in terms of their response to academic instruction at any given point in time)



\*In some places, an Enabling Component is called a Learning Supports Component. Whatever it is called, the component is to be developed as a comprehensive system of learning supports at the school site.

Adapted from H.S. Adelman & L. Taylor (1994). *On understanding intervention in psychology and education*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

## Center News



### NEW RESOURCES

For the latest info on Center resources and activities, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> – click on *What's New*. A few items are highlighted below.

- **Two Major New Resources for Advancing the Field**

\*New Book

*Mental Health in School & School Improvement: Current Status, Concerns, and New Directions*

Hopefully, you have already accessed this new volume. In case you missed the announcement, this book is our latest effort to encourage reflection and engage discussion about advancing the field at this time when it is so urgent to move forward in creating a school environment that promotes mental health and reduces problems. We have put the volume online to make it immediately accessible at no cost and with no restrictions on its use. In deciding to bypass for a short while the publishing barriers of time, purchasing costs, and copyright limitations, we are hoping that this work will find its way to the broadest possible audience. With this in mind, we are encouraging everyone to let others know they can access and download any or all of the book at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/mhbook/mhbookintro.htm>

\*New Resource Aid

*Frameworks for Systemic Transformation of Student and Learning Supports*

A compilation of frameworks we have developed with respect to systemic transformation of student/learning supports. (1) Highlights four fundamental, systemic concerns related to transforming student and learning supports and (2) offers frameworks for addressing them. Here, too, this aid is online making it immediately accessible at no cost and with no restrictions on use. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/frameworksforsystemictransformation.pdf>

- **Also Note the Following New Publication**

Best Practices in the Use of Resource Teams to Enhance Learning Supports. In Thomas, A. & Grimes, J (Eds) (2008) *Best practices in school psychology-V*. Bethesda, MD. NASP Psychologists.

### UPDATED RESOURCES

Highlighted below are a few items -- all are online to make them immediately accessible at no cost and with no restrictions on use.

\**Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/burnout/burn1.pdf>

\**Transitions: Turning Risks into Opportunities for Student Support*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/transitions/transitions.pdf>

\**Learning Problems and Learning Disabilities*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/ldprobs/ldprobs.pdf>

\**Confidentiality and Informed Consent*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/confid/confid.pdf>

\**Early Development and Learning from the Perspective of Addressing Barriers*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/earlydevelop/earlydev.pdf>

### INITIATIVE WITH SCHOLASTIC INC.

As noted previously, the charitable Community Affairs arm of *Scholastic Inc.* and our Center have entered into a collaborative agreement for a nationwide school improvement initiative. We are at the stage of final editing of materials and strategic planning. Meetings have been held with staff and Scholastic's National Advisory Committee for the *Rebuilding for Learning*<sup>TM</sup> initiative. Among the planned activities for the next few months are:

- >Designing Scholastic Initiative Website
- >Social marketing campaign
- >Processing "Letters of Interest" related to planning grants
- >Planning Leadership Institutes/Presentations
- >Designing TA for Initiative
- >Training for those providing TA

(cont. on p. 16)

**Education is  
when you  
read the  
fine print.  
Experience is  
what you get  
if you don't**

Pete Seeger

Center Staff:

*Howard Adelman, Co-Director  
Linda Taylor, Co-Director  
Perry Nelson, Coordinator  
... and a host of graduate and  
undergraduate students*

## ENHANCING ACCESS TO PRACTITIONER RESOURCES

The reality is that most practitioner's working with schools have precious little time to search for info and resources. That is why we established the *Practitioners Listserv* – see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm> .

And, that is why we reformatted our website to better organize practitioner access to resources – click on *Practitioner Toolkit and Networks* on the homepage at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

There are seven features to this "toolkit."

- (1) **Quick Find Clearinghouse Topic Menu.** Find info on a specific problem or topic. 130 alphabetized topics with links to relevant Center resources, other online resources, and other relevant agencies.
- (2) **Practitioner Interchange.** See and discuss what others are doing in schools.
- (3) **Guides to Practice.** Quick overviews (1-2 pages) for ideas and/or to use in presentations and/or to share with teachers, families, or students – Guidance Notes, Practice Notes, guidebooks, and a guide for accessing info on evidence-based practices.

(4) **Self-Learning & Training Others.** Access a range of Quick Training Aids and Tutorials designed for your own learning and for aids in providing staff development to others (includes handouts and overheads). There is also access to more intensive continuing education resources.

(5) **Ideas for Enhancing Support at Your School.** Outlines monthly opportunities and related resources for promoting mental health that mesh nicely with the school year.

(6) **Gateway to More Resources.** Info about and direct links for accessing additional resources.

(7) **Free Technical Assistance.** Finally, if you don't have the time to find the information you need, please contact us using the link "Technical Assistance from our Center." Our intention is to respond with some help within a day, and as necessary, we reach out to others to provide resources and perspectives.

As we work to enhance and make user friendly what we offer, you can help by sharing what you have found useful from us and others.

**PLEASE LET US HEAR FROM YOU  
SO WE CAN DO A BETTER JOB  
IN HELPING!**

**Want resources?**

**Need technical assistance?**

**We can help!**

Contact us at: E-mail: [smhp@ucla.edu](mailto:smhp@ucla.edu) Ph: (310) 825-3634 Toll Free Ph: (866) 846-4843  
Write: Center for Mental Health in Schools, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563  
*Or use our website:* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

If you're not receiving our monthly electronic newsletter (ENEWS),  
*send your E-mail address to* [smhp@ucla.edu](mailto:smhp@ucla.edu)

>For access to the latest Center developed resources, go to – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/review.htm>

>Exchange info on MH practices in school and network with colleagues across the country by joining  
(1) the **Weekly Listserv for School MH Practitioners** and/or (2) **the Center's Consultation Cadre**.  
Sign up by email at [smhp@ucla.edu](mailto:smhp@ucla.edu) or by phone – Toll Free (866) 846-4843

>Also, phone, fax, E-mail, or snail mail us if you want to submit feedback, request resources, or send comments and info for us to circulate

**FOR THOSE WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS, ALL RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE BY CONTACTING THE CENTER.**

The Center for Mental Health in Schools is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project in the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA.

Support comes in part from the Office of Adolescent Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.