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Addressing Barriers to Learning:

In the Classroom and Schoolwide

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While school systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students, when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge.

Carnegie Task Force on Education

Why do you think we'll do better at school this year?

Because I heard that Congress passed a law that says every student will succeed!

Contents

Introduction

Public education is at a crossroads. Moving in new directions is imperative. Just tweaking and tinkering with old ideas is a recipe for disaster.

Continuing challenges confronting public education highlight why moving school improvement policy and practice in new directions is imperative. With a view to enhancing graduation rates and successful transitions to post-secondary opportunities and well-being, pressing challenges include:

- Increasing equity of opportunity for every student to succeed, narrowing the achievement gap, and countering the school to prison pipeline
- Reducing unnecessary referrals for special assistance and special education;
- Improving school climate and retaining good teachers
- Reducing the number of low performing schools.

As education leaders well know, meeting these challenges requires making sustainable progress in

- improving supports for specific subgroups (e.g., English Learners, immigrant newcomers, lagging minorities, homeless students, students with disabilities)
- increasing the number of disconnected students who re-engage in classroom learning and thus improving attendance, reducing disruptive behaviors (e.g., including bullying and sexual harassment), and decreasing suspensions and dropouts
- increasing family and community engagement with schools
- responding effectively when schools experience crises events and preventing crises whenever possible.

In some schools, continuous progress related to these concerns is being made. For many districts, however, sustainable progress remains elusive – and will continue to be so as long as the focus of school improvement policy and practice is *mainly* on improving instruction. Efforts to expand the use of instructional technology, develop new curriculum standards, make teachers more accountable, and improve teacher preparation and licensing all have merit; but they are insufficient for addressing the many everyday barriers to learning and teaching that interfere with effective student engagement in classroom instruction.

Most policy makers and administrators know that good instruction delivered by highly qualified teachers cannot ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. *Even the best teacher can't do the job alone.* Teachers need student and learning supports in the classroom and schoolwide in order to personalize instruction and provide special assistance when students manifest learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Unfortunately, school improvement plans continue to give short shrift to these critical matters.

We recognize, as did a Carnegie Task Force on Education, that *school systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students.* But as the task force stressed: *when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge.*

The most pressing challenge is to enhance equity of opportunity by fundamentally improving how schools address barriers to learning and teaching. The future of public education depends on moving in new directions to accomplish this.

Now is the time to *fundamentally transform* how schools address factors that keep too many students from doing well at school. And while transformation is never easy, pioneering work across the country is showing the way. Trailblazers are redeploying existing funds allocated for addressing barriers to learning and weaving these together with the invaluable resources that can be garnered by collaboration with other agencies and with community stakeholders, family members, and students themselves.

The first step in moving forward is to escape old ideas. The second step is to incorporate a new vision in school improvement planning for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. Our analyses envision a plan that designs and develops a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student and learning supports. The third step is to develop a strategic plan for systemic change, scale-up, and sustainability.

This book highlights each of these matters. We invite you to join us in the quest to enhance equity of opportunity for all students to succeed at school and beyond. And we look forward to hearing from you about moving schools forward to make the rhetoric of the Every Student Succeeds Act a reality.

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Chapter 1

Barriers to Learning and Teaching

Different Causes

Watch Out for Labels

Barriers and Beyond

I failed every subject but algebra.

That's not too surprising since you didn't take algebra.

There are ample data indicating that too many students are experiencing learning, behavior, and emotional problems. In some schools, over half the students are not doing well, and many of these youngsters will eventually dropout.[1]

Different Causes

In understanding the causes of student problems, many professionals tend to view student problems as mainly stemming from something wrong within the person. Those using a person-oriented perspective look for biologically determined disorders/disabilities/illness, slow maturation, and individual differences. Others look for external (environmental) determinants, especially inadequate and debilitating living conditions.

A more encompassing paradigm recognizes that problems may be caused by within person factors (nature), the environment in which a person develops (nurture), or by how both sets of factors transact. That is, a broad transactional view acknowledges there are instances in which an individual's disabilities/disorders/differences predispose him or her to problems even in highly accommodating settings. Such a perspective also accounts for instances in which the environment is so inadequate or hostile that individuals have problems despite having no initial personal vulnerabilities. At the same time, it highlights the reality that problems frequently are reciprocally determined by the ongoing transaction of person and environment factors. In practice, *a transactional view provides an umbrella encompassing the other views and suggests an unbiased and comprehensive starting point for efforts to differentiate among causal factors.*

A transactional perspective considers each of the following as possible *primary* instigating causes of a student's problems:

- *the individual* (e.g., a neurological dysfunction; cognitive skill and/or strategy deficits; developmental and/or motivational differences)
- *the environment* (e.g., poor instructional programs, parental neglect)
- *the interplay of individual and environment.*

Let's illustrate this by looking at children growing up in conditions of poverty. For some time, official data for the United States have indicated that the greatest percentage living in poverty are those under 18. Poverty, of course, is highly *correlated* with school failure, high

school dropout, delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and other problems. But, from a causal perspective, the questions arise what are the factors that lead many who grow up in poverty to manifest learning, behavior, emotional, and physical problems and what enables some individuals to overcome the negative impact of such conditions.

Looking at living conditions, researchers emphasize that many young children residing in poverty have less opportunity than those from middle or higher income families to develop the initial capabilities and positive attitudes required to succeed at school. Most poverty families simply do not have the resources to provide the same preparatory experiences for their children as those who are better off financially. Moreover, many reside in the type of hostile environment that generates so much stress as to make school adjustment and learning excessively difficult. As a result, many youngsters from poor families enter kindergarten unready to meet the demands made of them and, over the years, fall further behind. Comparable causal factors exist for individuals who have recently migrated from a different culture.

There is a poignant irony in all this. Children of poverty and new immigrants often have developed a range of other cultural, subcultural, and language abilities that many schools are unprepared to accommodate, never mind capitalize upon. As a result, these youngsters often struggle to survive without access to compensatory strengths.

Of course, a youngster does not have to live in poverty or be a recent immigrant to lack readiness for elementary school. Some just develop a bit slower than their peers. When early school demands do not accommodate a wide range of developmental differences, these youngsters are vulnerable. For example, kindergarteners who simply have not yet developed the visual perceptual capacity to discriminate between letters or make the auditory discrimination between words are in trouble if the teacher demands they do so. And months later, when their development catches up to that demand, the class has moved on, leaving them behind.

Given the broad range of factors that can cause learning problems at school, it is no surprise that many youngsters have such problems. And when students have trouble learning, they commonly develop exacerbating behavior and emotional problems.

Watch Out for the Labels

"What's the use of their having names if they won't answer to them?"
"No use to them. But it's useful to the people who name them, I suppose."
Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

Diagnostic labels require cautious use because they can profoundly shape a person's future. Strong images are associated with such labels, and people act upon these notions. Sometimes the images are useful generalizations; sometimes they are harmful stereotypes that stigmatize. Sometimes they guide practitioners toward good ways to help; sometimes they produce self-fulfilling prophecies. And they can contribute to "blaming the victim" (e.g., by making young people the focus of intervention rather than attending to school and home factors causing a student's problems).[2]

Clearly, schools want to account for individual differences when they are important in preventing and correcting learning, behavior, and emotional problems. It's just not as easy to do as the public would like.

Diagnostic systems used in special education and by those who diagnose "mental disorders" tend to overemphasize symptoms (i.e., correlates) and focus on whether the symptoms reach criteria to qualify for one (or more) personal disorder labels. The result has been a bias that emphasizes person pathology and minimizes the role played by environmental factors.

The strong relationship among learning, behavior, and emotional symptoms makes it essential that practitioners, researchers, and policymakers strive to understand and counter the bias and other problems related to making valid differential diagnoses. A transactional model can help.

Two of the most frequent diagnostic labels assigned to students are Learning Disabilities (LD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The following conceptual example illustrates how a transactional perspective can offer a useful *starting* place for understanding where such labels fit on a causal continuum of behavioral, emotional, and learning problems.

As indicated in Exhibit 1-1, problems can be differentiated along a continuum that separates those *initially* caused by internal factors, environmental variables, or a combination of both.

Exhibit 1-1

Applying a Transactional View of the Primary Cause of Problems

| Problems primarily caused by factors in the environment (E) | Problems caused equally by environment and person | Problems primarily caused by factors in the person (P) |

E ———————— (E⟷p) ———— (E⟷P) ———— (e⟷P) ———— P

|--|--|

| Type I problems | Type II problems | Type III problems (e.g., LD, ADHD, other disorders) |

•caused primarily by environments and systems that are deficient and/or hostile

•caused primarily by a significant *mismatch* between individual differences and vulnerabilities and the nature of that person's environment

•caused primarily by personal disabilities/ disorders

•problems may be mild to moderately severe & narrow to moderately pervasive

•problems may be mild to moderately severe and pervasive

•problems may be moderate to profoundly severe and moderate to broadly pervasive

Problems caused by the environment are placed at one end of the continuum and referred to as Type I problems. For those growing up in impoverished and hostile environments, these conditions should be considered first in hypothesizing what initially caused an individual's behavioral, emotional, and learning problems. At the other end are problems caused primarily by factors within the person (disabilities, disorders); these are designated as Type III problems. The Type II group consists of persons who do not function well in situations where their individual differences and minor vulnerabilities are poorly accommodated or are responded to hostilely. The problems for individuals in this group are a relatively equal product of person characteristics and failure of the environment to accommodate that individual.

There are, of course, variations along the continuum that do not precisely fit a category. That is, at each point between the extreme ends, environment-person (nature and nurture) transactions are the cause, but the degree to which each contributes to the problem varies.

The above way of thinking about the causes of learning, behavior, and emotional can counter tendencies to jump prematurely to the conclusion that a problem is caused by deficiencies or

pathology within the individual. It can help combat practices that "blame the victim." It highlights the notion that improving the way the environment accommodates individual differences often is the appropriate focus for intervention. (For some specific examples of instigating factors, see Exhibit 1-2.)

Of course, no simple typology can do justice to the complexities involved in classifying students' problems. However, even a simple framework based on a transactional view can help in appreciating the range of potential instigating factors and their implications for policy and practice.

Barriers and Beyond

Another way to discuss why children have problems at school is to think in terms of barriers to learning. Such a perspective blends well with a transactional view of the causes of human behavior because it emphasizes that, for a great many students, *external* not *internal* factors often are the ones that should be the primary focus of attention.

Implicit in democratic ideals is the intent of ensuring that *all* students succeed at school (e.g., see the Every Student Succeeds Act and its predecessor the No Child Left Behind Act). If all students came ready and able to profit from "high standards" curricula, there would be little problem in achieving this ideal. But *all* encompasses those who are experiencing external and/or internal barriers that interfere with benefitting from what the teacher is offering. Providing all students an equal opportunity to succeed requires more than higher standards and greater accountability for instruction, better teaching, increased discipline, reduced school violence, and an end to social promotion. *It also requires addressing barriers to development, learning, and teaching.*

Exhibit 1-2
Factors Instigating Learning, Behavior, and Emotional Problems

Environment (E) **(Type I problems)**

1. Insufficient stimuli
   (e.g., prolonged periods in impoverished environments; deprivation of learning opportunities at home or school such as lack of play and practice situations and poor instruction; inadequate diet)

2. Excessive stimuli
   (e.g., overly demanding home, school, or work experiences, such as overwhelming pressure to achieve and contradictory expectations; overcrowding)

3. Intrusive and hostile stimuli
   (e.g., medical practices, especially at birth, leading to physiological impairment; contaminated environments; conflict in home, school, workplace; faulty child- rearing practices, such as long-standing abuse and rejection; dysfunctional family; migratory family; language used is a second language; social prejudices related to race, sex, age, physical characteristics, and behavior)

Person (P) **(Type III problems)**

1. Physiological insult
   (e.g., cerebral trauma, such as accident or stroke, endocrine dysfunctions and chemical imbalances; illness affecting brain or sensory functioning)

2. Genetic anomaly
   (e.g., genes which limit, slow down, or lead to any atypical development)

3. Cognitive activity and affective states experienced by self as deviant
   (e.g., lack of knowledge or skills such as basic cognitive strategies; lack of ability to cope effectively with emotions, such as low self-esteem)

4. Physical characteristics shaping contact with environment and/or experienced by self as deviant
   (e.g., visual, auditory, or motoric deficits; excessive or reduced sensitivity to stimuli; easily fatigued; factors such as race, sex, age, or unusual appearance that produce stereotypical responses)

5. Deviant actions of the individual
   (e.g., performance problems, such as excessive performance errors; high or low levels of activity)

Interactions and Transactions Between E and P **(Type II problems)**

1. Severe to moderate personal vulnerabilities and environmental defects and differences
   (e.g., person with extremely slow development in a highly demanding environment—all of which simultaneously and equally instigate the problem)

2. Minor personal vulnerabilities not accommodated by the situation
   (e.g., person with minimal disorders in auditory perceptual ability trying to do auditory-loaded tasks; very active person forced into situations at home, school, or work that do not tolerate this level of activity)

3. Minor environmental defects and differences not accommodated by the individual
   (e.g., person is in the minority racially or culturally and is not participating in many social activities because he or she thinks others may be unreceptive)

The reality is that some youngsters at every grade level come to school unready to meet the setting's demands. The situation will remain unchanged as long as school reforms fail to address barriers to learning and teaching in comprehensive, multifaceted, and equitable ways, especially in schools where large proportions of students are not doing well.

Based on an extensive literature review, researchers have identified common risk factors that reliably predict problems such as youth delinquency, violence, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, learning problems, and school dropout. These factors also are associated with such mental health concerns as school adjustment problems, relationship difficulties, physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and severe emotional disturbance. The majority of factors are external barriers to healthy development and learning. Such factors are not excuses for teachers not doing their best; they are, however, rather obvious impediments to good development and well-being. The terrible fact is that too many youngsters are growing up and going to school in situations that not only fail to promote healthy development, but are antithetical to the process.

Most school staff are painfully aware of barriers that must be addressed. Widespread emphasis on high stakes testing underscores how many students are not performing well. The irony is that such testing adds another barrier that keeps some students from having an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

All this leads to concerns about what the role of schools is and should be in handling barriers that interfere with learning. Critics point out that the tendency is for schools to be reactive – waiting until problems become severe and pervasive. At the same time, schools are accused of having a *deficit orientation* toward many youngsters and overemphasizing remediation when problems are identified. Such criticisms have increased attention to early indicators, and they have also underscored the importance of strengths, assets, resilience, and protective factors in coping with adversity.

Considerable bodies of research and theory have identified potential barriers, protective buffers, and developmental opportunities that are useful guideposts in designing relevant interventions (see Exhibit 1-3). As the examples in Exhibit 1-3 illustrate, there is a significant overlap in conceptualizing the various factors. Some risk factors (barriers) and protective buffers are mirror images; others are distinct. Many protective buffers are natural by-products of efforts to engender full development.

About risk factors. One way to think about risks is in terms of *potential external and internal barriers* to development and learning. Research indicates that the primary causes for most youngsters' learning, behavior, and emotional problems are external factors related to neighborhood, family, school, and/or peers. For a few, problems stem from individual disorders and differences. An appreciation of the research on the role played by external and internal factors makes a focus on such matters a major part of any comprehensive, multifaceted approach for addressing barriers to learning, development, and teaching.

About protective factors. Protective factors are conditions that *buffer* against the impact of barriers (risk factors). Such conditions may prevent or counter risk producing conditions by promoting development of neighborhood, family, school, peer, and individual strengths, assets, and coping mechanisms through special assistance and accommodations. The term *resilience* usually refers to an individual's ability to cope in ways that buffer. Research on protective buffers also guides efforts to address barriers.

About promoting full development. Being problem-free is not the same as healthy development. Efforts to reduce risks and enhance protection can help minimize problems but are insufficient for promoting full development, well-being, and a value-based life. Those concerned with establishing systems for promoting healthy development recognize the need for direct efforts to promote development and empowerment, including the mobilization of individuals for self-direction. In many cases, interventions to create buffers and promote full development are identical, and the pay-off is the cultivation of developmental strengths and assets. However, promoting healthy development is not limited to countering risks and engendering protective factors. Efforts to promote full development represent ends which are valued in and of themselves and to which most of us aspire.

How was schools today?

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

Exhibit 1-3

Examples of Barriers to Learning/Development, Protective Buffers, & Promoting Full Development [3]

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS*   PERSON FACTORS*

I. Barriers to Development and Learning (Risk producing conditions)

Neighborhood	*Family*	*School and Peers*	*Individual*
>extreme economic deprivation >community disorganization, including high levels of mobility >violence, drugs, etc. >minority and/or immigrant status	>chronic poverty >conflict/disruptions/violence >substance abuse >models problem behavior >abusive caretaking >inadequate provision for quality child care	>poor quality school >negative encounters with teachers >negative encounters with peers &/or inappropriate peer models	>medical problems >low birth weight/ neurodevelopmental delay >psychophysiological problems >difficult temperament & adjustment problems

II. Protective Buffers (Conditions that prevent or counter risk producing conditions – strengths, assets, corrective interventions, coping mechanisms, special assistance and accommodations)

Neighborhood	*Family*	*School and Peers*	*Individual*
>strong economic conditions/ emerging economic opportunities >safe and stable communities >available & accessible services >strong bond with positive other(s) >appropriate expectations and standards >opportunities to successfully participate, contribute, and be recognized	>adequate financial resources >nurturing supportive family members who are positive models >safe and stable (organized and predictable) home environment >family literacy >provision of high quality child care >secure attachments – early and ongoing	>success at school >positive relationships with one or more teachers >positive relationships with peers and appropriate peer models >strong bond with positive other(s)	>higher cognitive functioning >psychophysiological health >easy temperament, outgoing personality, and positive behavior >strong abilities for involvement and problem solving >sense of purpose and future >gender (girls less apt to develop certain problems)

III. Promoting Full Development (Conditions, over and beyond those that create protective buffers, that enhance healthy development, well-being, and a value-based life)

Neighborhood	*Family*	*School and Peers*	*Individual*
>nurturing & supportive conditions >policy and practice promotes healthy development & sense of community	>conditions that foster positive physical & mental health among all family members	>nurturing & supportive climate school-wide and in classrooms >conditions that foster feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness	>pursues opportunities for personal development and empowerment >intrinsically motivated to pursue full development, well-being, and a value-based life

*A transactional view of behavior recognizes the interplay of environment and person variables.

Concluding Comments

While it often is difficult to determine what caused a student's problems, a transactional understanding of external and internal barriers to learning, teaching, parenting, and development provides a helpful starting point. And when it comes to improving prevention, early intervention, and treatment, such a perspective also provides a useful lens with respect to protective buffers and the role of positive development.

You gave the wrong answer.

Well, why do you think I go to school!

Notes

[1] National Research Council's 2003 report on motivation stresses that upwards of 40 percent of high school students are chronically disengaged from school.

[2] Ryan (1971).

[3] For early and ongoing work on risk factors and protective buffers, see Hawkins & Catalano (1992), Adelman & Taylor (1994), Huffman, Mehlinger, & Kerivan (2000), Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, et al. (1998), Kim & colleagues (2015, 2016), Henderson & colleagues (2016), Deci & Ryan (2017), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC -- https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/riskprotectivefactors.html. Also see the discussion of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on the Substance and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) website –

https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/practicing-effective-prevention/prevention-behavioral-health/adverse-childhood-experiences

For more on full development, see Strader, Collins, & Noe (2000), Scales & Leffert (2004), Hutchinson, 2016. Lerner & colleagues (2005; 2015).

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Also see our Center's Resource Catalogue for a list of special resources related to the matters covered in this chapter. Available at no cost from the online clearinghouse of the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/.

For ease in finding and accessing specific topics (e.g., Barriers to Learning; Diversity, Disparities, and Promoting Healthy Development; Misdiagnosis), see the Center's Quick Find menu of over 130 topics – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm .

Chapter 2

About Schooling and Effective Teaching

Education is not the filling of a pail,
but the lighting of a fire.
William Butler Yeats

Good Schools
  Some Basic Principles
  Some Added Assumptions
  Being Equitable, Just, and Fair

Creating a Positive Context for Learning
  Toward Enhancing School and Classroom Climate
  An Emphasis on Caring

 Teachers Can't Do it Alone
  Opening the Door for Assistance and Partnerships
  Opening the Classroom Door to Enhance and Personalize Staff Development

Teachers deserve more credit.

**Sure, but they wouldn't need it
if we paid them better.**
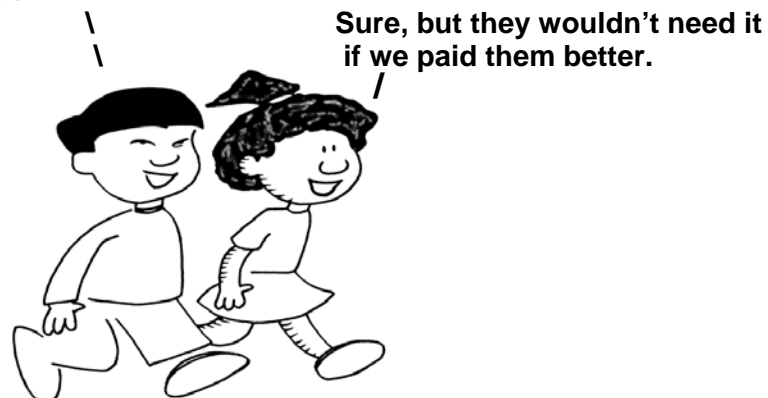
Every transaction at school results in something learned. Teachers play the primary role in formal instruction. Support staff, administrators, and others often are called on when a student is not doing well. In all instances, the student is learning – for better or for worse. In addressing barriers to learning, schools need to focus on ways to maximize positive learning and minimize problems. This and the following chapters highlight principles, concepts, and frameworks to guide school improvement in addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

In this chapter, we stress principles underlying good schools and good teaching, the importance of creating a caring context for learning, and the value of collaboration in the classroom as basic building blocks for good teaching, preventing problems, and responding quickly when problems first arise. We do so with awareness that learning and teaching are dynamic, nonlinear processes and that some learners experience problems that require additional and sometimes specialized assistance (see Exhibit 2-1).[1]

Good Schools

Underlying any discussion of schooling and teaching is a *rationale* regarding what constitutes the right balance between societal and individual interests under a system of compulsory education. Currently, most public school curriculum guides and manuals reflect efforts to prepare youngsters to cope with *developmental* or *life tasks*. Reading, math, biology, chemistry, social studies, history, government, physical and health education – all are seen as preparing an individual to assume an appropriate role in society as a worker, citizen, community member, and parent.

Most educators and parents also want to foster individual well-being, talents, and personal integrity. From this perspective, good schools must do more than facilitate the mastering of content and skills. Schooling and effective teaching require accomplishing society's intentions in ways that promote the full development of youngsters.

Exhibit 2-1

Good Schools: Promoting Well-being & Ameliorating Problems

```
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Promoting Learning &    │
│ Healthy Development     │        as necessary
│ ----------------------- │
│        plus             │
│ Prevention of Problems  │      ┌──────────────────────────────┐
└─────────────────────────┘      │ Intervening as early after   │
                                 │ onset of problems as is      │
                                 │ feasible                     │
                                 └──────────────────────────────┘
                                          as
           as                         necessary
        necessary
        ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
        │ Specialized assistance for those with │
        │ severe, pervasive, or chronic problems│
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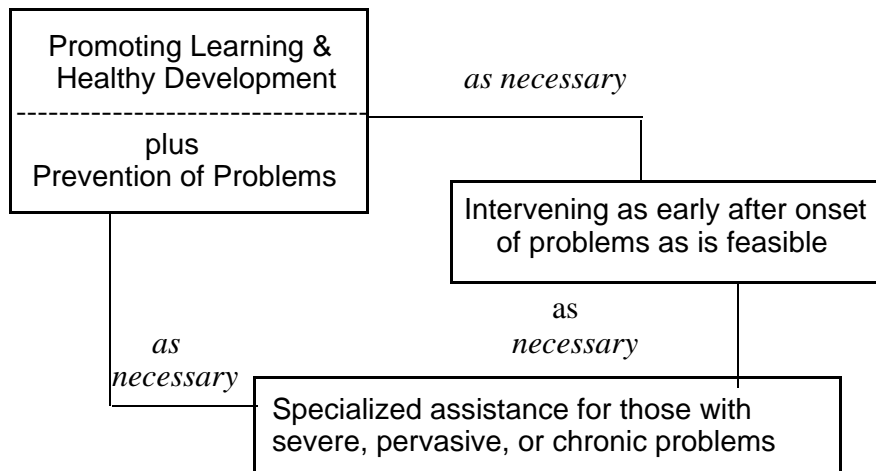
Some Basic Principles

Because the rationale adopted by teachers and other school staff is so important, we begin with a brief synthesis of principles, guidelines, and characteristics about what constitutes good schools and teaching (see Exhibits 2-2 and 2-3).

With respect to teaching, a commonsense view is captured by the old adage: *Effective teaching meets learners where they are.* Unfortunately, this adage often is interpreted only as a call for *matching* a student's current *capabilities* (e.g., knowledge and skills). The irony in this, of course, is that most school staff recognize that motivational factors play a key role in accounting for good and poor instructional outcomes. Indeed, one of the most common laments among teachers is: "They could do it, if only they *wanted* to!" The point is: Good teaching requires not only matching student capabilities, it calls for matching *motivation.* This encompasses use of practices that reflect an appreciation of *intrinsic* motivation and what must be done to overcome *avoidance* motivation. Enhancing intrinsic motivation also is critical to applying what is learned at school and pursuing learning outside of school.

Exhibit 2-2

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

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

(1) With respect to *stakeholders*, good schools and good teaching

- employ a critical mass of high quality leadership and line staff who believe in what they are doing, value the search for understanding, see errors as valuable sources of learning, and pursue continuing education and self-renewal,

- involve all staff and a wide range of other competent, energetic, committed and responsible stakeholders in planning, implementation, evaluation, and ongoing renewal,

- identify staff who are not performing well and provide personalized capacity building opportunities, support, or other corrective remedies.

(2) With respect to the *teaching process*, good schools and good teaching use the strengths and vital resources of all stakeholders to

- ensure the same high quality for all students,

- formulate and effectively communicate goals, standards, and quality indicators for cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development,

- facilitate continuous cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development and learning using procedures that promote active learning in-and out-of-school,

- ensure use of comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches (e.g., approaches that are extensive and intensive enough to ensure that students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school and develop in healthy ways),

- make learning accessible to all students (including those at greatest risk and hardest-to-reach) through development of a full continuum of learning supports (i.e., an enabling component),

- tailor processes so they are a good fit in terms of both motivation and capability and are no more intrusive and disruptive than is necessary for meeting needs and accounting for distinctive needs, resources, and other forms of diversity,

- deal with students holistically and developmentally, as individuals and as part of a family, neighborhood, and community,

- tailor appropriate measures for improving practices and for purposes of accountability.

(3) With respect to school and classroom *climate*, good schools and good teaching

- delineate the rights and obligations of all stakeholders,

- are guided by a commitment to social justice (equity) and to creating a sense of community,

- ensure staff, students, family members, and all other stakeholders have the time, training, skills, and institutional and collegial support necessary to create an accepting and safe environment and build relationships of mutual trust, respect, equality, and appropriate risk-taking.

And, in general, good schools and good teaching are experienced by all stakeholders as user friendly, flexibly implemented, and responsive.

*Synthesized from many sources including the vast research literature on good schools and good teaching; these sources overlap, but are not as restricted in their focus as the literature on effective schools and classrooms – see Exhibit 2-3.

Exhibit 2-3

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

Effective Schools

- Commitment to shared vision of equality
  >High expectations for student learning
  >Emphasis on academic work that is
    meaningful to the student

- Daily implementation of effective processes
  >Strong administrative leadership
  >Alignment of resources to reach goals
  >Professional development tied to goals
  >Discipline and school order
  >A sense of teamwork in the school
  >Teacher participation in decision making
  >Effective parental outreach and involvement

- Monitoring student progress through
  measured indicators of achievement
  >Setting local standards
  >Use of national standards
  >Use of data for continuous improvement of
    school climate and curricula

- Optimizing school size through limited
  enrollment, creation of small schools within
  big schools (e.g., academies, magnet
  programs), and other ways of grouping
  students and staff

- Strong involvement with the community and
  with surrounding family of schools
  >Students, families, and community are
    developed into a learning community
  >Programs address transitions between grades,
    school, school-to-career, and higher education

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

Effective Classrooms

- Positive classroom social climate that
  >personalizes contacts and supports in ways
    that build trust over time and meets learners
    where they are
  >offers accommodation so all students have
    an equal opportunity to learn
  >adjusts class size and groupings to
    optimize learning
  >engages students through dialogue and
    decision making and seizing "teachable
    moments"
  >incorporates parents in multiple ways
  >addresses social-emotional development

- Designing and implementing quality
  instructional experiences that
  >involve students in decision making
  >contextualize and make learning authentic,
    including use of real life situations and
    mentors
  >are appropriately cognitively complex and
    challenging
  >enhance language/literacy
  >foster joint student products
  >extend the time students engage in learning
    through designing motivated practice
  >ensure students learn how to learn and are
    prepared for lifelong learning
  >ensure use of prereferral intervention
    strategies
  >use a mix of methods and advanced
    technology to enhance learning

- Instruction is modified to meet students'
  needs based on ongoing assessments using
  >measures of multiple dimensions of impact
  >authentic assessment tools
  >students' input based on their self-evaluations

- Teachers collaborate and are supported with
  >personalized inservice, consultation,
    mentoring, grade level teaming
  >special resources who are available to come
    into the classroom to ensure students with
    special needs are accommodated
    appropriately

Some Added Assumptions

In Chapter 3, we approach good teaching from the perspective of personalizing instruction. As will be clear, that perspective stresses the addition of the following theory and research-based assumptions as underlying efforts to meet learners where they are.

- Learning is a function of the ongoing transactions between the learner and the learning environment.

- Optimal learning is a function of an optimal match between the learner's accumulated capacities and attitudes and current state of being and the program's processes and content.

- Matching both a learner's motivation and 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.

Being Equitable, Just, and Fair

School staff are expected to act in ways that are just and fair. The problem is that fairness for some may cause inequities for others. Questions inevitably arise about: Fair to whom? Fair according to whom? Fair using what criteria and procedures? Should staff treat everyone the same? How should cultural and individual differences and needs be handled? Should past performance be a consideration? These matters are especially salient in working with vulnerable and disenfranchised populations.[2]

Equity is the legal facet of distributive justice. It ensures and protects individual rights and addresses inequities related to access to "goods" in life and meeting needs. Fairness addresses a

range of ethical concerns. Clearly, what is fair for the society may not be fair for an individual; what is fair for one person or group may cause an inequity for another. A good example of the dilemma is provided by high stakes testing, which is experienced by some students as fair and others as cutting them off from future opportunities. Another example is provided by the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, which attempts to meet the special needs of a subgroup of individuals in ways that are fair to them, as well as to the rest of society.[3]

When students have similar backgrounds and capabilities, the tendency is to argue that an egalitarian principle of distributive justice should guide efforts to be fair. However, when there are significant disparities in background and capability, different principles may apply. Students who come from a different culture, students who have significant emotional and/or learning problems, young vs. older students, students who have a history of good behavior – all these matters suggest that fairness involves consideration of individual differences, special needs, and specific circumstances. For example, sometimes fairness demands that two students who break the same rule should be handled differently. To do otherwise with a student who has significant learning, behavior, and emotional problems may result in worsening the student's problems and eventually "pushing" the student out of school.

If the aim is to *help* all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school, then schools must avoid the trap of pursuing the all-too-simple *socialization* solutions of "no exceptions" and "zero tolerance" when enforcing rules. Society's obligation is to do more than exert power to control and punish. Social institutions, such as schools, must balance socialization interventions with interventions that help individuals in need. It is unfortunate whenever a school's role in socializing the young comes into conflict with the school's role in helping students who have problems.

In adopting a broad set of principles to guide fairness, the opportunity arises for teaching all students why there are exceptions. A caring school community teaches by example and by ensuring the principles being modeled are well-understood. Staff in a caring school go beyond exercising social control and socialization training. They integrate a comprehensive focus on promoting healthy social and emotional development in all interactions with and among students, including understanding of group and individual differences, empathy, and compassion.

> The many overlapping principles and philosophical concerns raise complex issues and problems. These are compounded because there are three involved parties in interventions such as schooling: the society, the intervener(s), and those who are identified as participants (e.g., students, families). Each is a stakeholder; each brings vested interests and motivations to the enterprise; each party wants to be treated equitably, fairly, and in ways that promote their empowerment. Conflicts are inevitable.

Creating a Positive Context for Learning

The concept of school climate currently is playing a major role in discussions about the quality of school life, teaching, learning, and support. A variety of studies indicate that a positive climate can have a beneficial impact on students and staff; a negative climate can be another barrier to learning and teaching. Analyses of research suggest significant relationships between classroom climate and matters such as student engagement, behavior, self-efficacy, achievement, and social and emotional development, principal leadership style, stages of educational reform, teacher burnout, and overall quality of school life. Studies report strong associations between achievement levels and classroom goal-direction, cohesiveness, and organization. Research also suggests that the impact of classroom climate may be greater on students from low-income homes and on groups that often are discriminated against.

Toward Enhancing School and Classroom Climate

School and classroom climates range from hostile/toxic to welcoming and supportive and can fluctuate daily and over the school year. School stakeholders all want schools to create a positive climate for learning, though they often have different views about how to make it happen.

Understanding the nature of classroom climate is a basic element in improving schools. School and classroom climate are temporal, fluid qualities of the immediate setting which *emerge* from the complex transaction of many factors. The climate reflects the influence of the underlying, institutionalized values and belief systems, norms, ideologies, rituals, and traditions that constitute the school *culture*. And, of course, the climate and culture at a school also are shaped by the surrounding political, social, cultural, and economic contexts (e.g., home, neighborhood, city, state, country).

Key concepts for understanding school and classroom climate are social system organization;

social attitudes; staff and student morale; power, control, guidance, support, and evaluation structures; curricular and instructional practices; communicated expectations; efficacy; accountability demands; cohesion; competition; "fit" between learner and classroom; system maintenance, growth, and change; orderliness; and safety. Moos groups such concepts into three dimensions: (1) relationship (i.e., the nature and intensity of personal relationships within the environment; the extent to which people are involved in the environment and support and help each other); (2) personal development (i.e., basic directions along which personal growth and self-enhancement tend to occur); and (3) system maintenance and change (i.e., the extent to which the environment is orderly, clear in expectations, maintains control, and is responsive to change).[4]

Given the correlational nature of school climate research, cause and effect interpretations remain speculative. The broader body of organizational research does indicate the profound role accountability pressures play in shaping organizational climate. For example, pressing demands for higher achievement test scores and control of student behavior often contribute to a classroom climate that is reactive, over-controlling, and over-reliant on external reinforcement to motivate positive functioning (more on this in Chapter 5).

A proactive approach to developing positive classroom climate requires enhancing the quality of life for students and staff not only in the classroom, but schoolwide. Three major components of this are (1) a curriculum that promotes not only academic, but also social and emotional learning and fosters intrinsic motivation for learning and teaching, (2) a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student and learning supports that addresses barriers to learning and teaching and that re-engages disconnected students in classroom learning, and (3) a governance approach that is inclusive of key stakeholders.

With respect to all this, there is considerable advocacy for establishing a healthy and attractive physical environment and a welcoming, caring, and hopeful atmosphere. This encompasses

- social and transition supports for students, staff, and families
- an array of options for pursuing goals
- meaningful participation in decision making by students, staff, and families

- personalized instruction

- transforming the classroom infrastructure from a big classroom into a set of smaller units organized to maximize intrinsic motivation for learning and not based on ability or problem-oriented grouping

- bringing student and learning support staff and volunteers into classrooms on a regular basis to help provide personalized special assistance in responding to problems

- use of a variety of strategies for preventing and addressing problems and crises as soon as they arise

- a range of ways for involving and engaging home and community.

Good schools and good teachers work diligently to create an atmosphere that encourages mutual support, caring, whole child development, and a sense of community. Such an atmosphere can play a key role in preventing learning, behavior, emotional, and health problems and promoting social and emotional learning and well-being.

An Emphasis on Caring

From a psychological perspective, learning and teaching are experienced most positively when the learner cares about learning and the teacher cares about teaching. *Moreover, the whole process benefits greatly when all the participants care about each other.*

Caring has moral, social, and personal facets. When all facets of caring are present and balanced, they can nurture individuals and facilitate the process of learning. At the same time, caring in all its dimensions should be a major focus of what is taught and learned. This means ensuring that the focus on fostering positive social and emotional development includes a balanced emphasis on empathy and compassion for others.[5]

To promote a sense of caring and community, schools develop and institutionalize procedures that start when newcomers arrive (e.g., students, their families, staff, volunteers and others from the community). The initial focus is on welcoming and connecting them with those with whom they will be working. The process continues with an emphasis on ensuring social and academic support and guidance, mentoring, advocacy, and. if necessary, special assistance.

For students, there are a myriad of strategies that can contribute to their feeling positively cared for and part of the classroom and school. Examples include practices such as personalized instruction, cooperative learning, regular student conferences, activity fostering social and

emotional development and positive human relations, conflict resolution and restorative justice, enrichment activities, and opportunities for students to attain positive status.

The importance of home involvement and engagement in schooling also underscores the need to create and maintain an inviting, caring atmosphere for family members. This involves an everyday focus on welcoming, social supports, various forms of guidance and assistance, volunteer opportunities, and participation in decision making. All this also applies to welcoming, orienting, inducting, and supporting school staff and others who come to help at a school.

About Diversity

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

Teachers Can't Do it Alone

Recently heard:

> *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 and their students have been on their own. On the positive side, the closed door limits outside inappropriate monitoring and meddling. The downside is that, in too many instances, teachers are deprived of essential supports and opportunities to learn from colleagues. Too often, negative classroom dynamics and the isolation from colleagues leads to feelings of alienation and "burn out." Students are cut off from a variety of resources and experiences that are essential to ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

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Isolated Teacher and Difficult Classroom Teaching Conditions

In too many schools, teachers are confronted with teaching conditions and classroom dynamics that are beyond one individual's ability to cope effectively. Here is how Jeffrey Mirel and Simona Goldin described the problem in an article entitled *Alone in the Classroom: Why Teachers Are Too Isolated*:

On the first day of their first year teaching, new teachers walk into their schools and meet their colleagues. They might talk about the latest state assessments, textbooks that have just arrived, or the newest project the district is spearheading. Some veteran teachers may tell the newcomers "how things are done" at the schools. And then, as teachers have done since the founding of public education in the U.S., they take leave of one another, walk to their classrooms to meet their students, and close the door.

In his classic 1975 book, Schoolteacher, Dan Lortie described teacher isolation as one of the main structural impediments to improved instruction and student learning in American public schools. Lortie argued that since at least the 19th century teachers have worked behind closed doors, rarely if ever collaborating with colleagues on improving teaching practice or examining student work. "Each teacher," Lortie wrote, "... spent his teaching day isolated from other adults; the initial pattern of school distribution represented a series of 'cells' which were construed as self-sufficient."

This situation continues to the present day. A recent study by Scholastic and the Gates Foundation found that teachers spend only about 3 percent of their teaching day collaborating with colleagues. The majority of American teachers plan, teach, and examine their practice alone.

In other countries ... where students outperform those in the U.S. in international tests ..., collaboration among teachers is an essential aspect of instructional improvement. The problem is not that American teachers resist collaboration. Scholastic and the Gates Foundation found that nearly 90 percent of U.S. teachers believe that providing time to collaborate with colleagues is crucial to retaining good teachers.

So what would it take structurally to enable teachers to work collaboratively for improved learning outcomes? Answering this question demands changes in some longstanding American public school structures."
(excerpt from *The Atlantic* – https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/04/alone-in-the-classroom-why-teachers-are-too-isolated/255976/

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Because the negatives outweigh the potential gains, there are increasing calls for "opening the classroom door" to enhance collegial collaboration, consultation, mentoring, and enable use of a variety of expert assistance, volunteers, family members, and the community-at-large.[1,6] These changes are especially important for preventing commonplace learning, behavior, and emotional problems and for responding early-after-the onset of a problem. Moreover, such fundamental changes in the culture of schools and classrooms are seen as routes to enhancing a caring climate, a sense of community, and overall teaching effectiveness.

We have already discussed some of these matters. Exhibit 2-4 and the discussion following it offer some additional details to consider.

Exhibit 2-4

Working Together

The following matters have a robust history of support:

Teaching benefits from organizational learning

Organizational learning requires an organizational structure where stakeholders commit to deepening their understanding of the vision and mission and how to deal effectively with complexity. This is achieved 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.

Collaboration and collegiality

Collaboration and collegiality are fundamental to improving morale and work satisfaction and to the whole enterprise of transforming schools to meet the needs of individuals and society. Hargreaves stresses that *collaborative cultures* foster collaborative working relationships which are spontaneous, voluntary, development-oriented, pervasive across time and space, and unpredictable.

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.

I told her I lost my homework because my computer crashed.

So she gave both me and my computer an F!

Sidebar

Using Aides and Volunteers in Targeted Ways

Every teacher has had the experience of planning a wonderful lesson and having the 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 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 snicker about what is happening and the lesson usually is disrupted.

In contrast to this scenario, teachers can train their aides (if they 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 the teacher wants 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 the teacher to indicate that it is time to go and sit next to a youngster who needs special guidance and support. The aim is to quietly try to re-engage the student. If necessary, the volunteer can take the student to a quiet area in the classroom and initiate another type of activity or even go out for a brief walk and talk if this is feasible. It is true that this means the student won't get the benefit of instruction during that period, but s/he wouldn't anyway.

None of this is a matter of rewarding the student for bad behavior. Rather, it is a strategy for avoiding the tragedy of disrupting the whole class while the teacher reprimands the culprit and in the process increases that student's negative attitudes toward teaching and school.

Moreover, using this approach and not having to shift into a discipline mode has multiple benefits. For one, the teacher is able to carry out the day's lesson plan. For another, the other students do not have the experience of seeing the teacher having a control contest with a student. (Even if the teacher wins such contests, it may have a negative effect on the teacher-student relationship; and if the teacher somehow "loses it," that definitely conveys a wrong message. Either outcome can be counterproductive with respect to a caring climate and a sense of community.) Finally, the teacher has not had a negative encounter with the targeted student. Such encounters build up negative attitudes on both sides which can be counterproductive with respect to future teaching, learning, and behavior. Because there has been no negative encounter, the teacher is likely to find the student more receptive to discussing things than if the usual consequences have been administered (e.g., loss of privileges, sending the student to time-out or to the assistant principal). This makes it possible to explore with the student ways to make the classroom a mutually satisfying place to be and prevent future problems.

Opening the Door for Assistance and Partnerships

Opening the classroom door allows for the addition of a variety of forms of assistance and useful 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."

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. Expanding and integrating social capital allows schools to improve resources and strategies for enhancing learning and performance in- and out-of-the-classroom. A few examples are highlighted in Exhibit 2-5 and 2-6.

Note: Anyone in the community who wants to facilitate learning might be a contributing teacher. When a classroom successfully joins with its surrounding community, everyone has the opportunity to learn and to teach. One way to improve schools is for them to become an integral and positive part of the community. The array of people who might be of assistance are aides and a variety of volunteers from the community and from institutions of higher education, other regular classroom teachers, family members, students, specialist teachers and student support personnel, school administrators, classified staff, and teachers-in-training and other professionals-in-training. Together they all constitute what can be called the teaching community.

Exhibit 2-5

Collaborative Teaming in Classrooms

The teaching community brings together many sources of talent who can team to enhance and enable teaching and learning. Partnering with a compatible others enables staff to complement each others' areas of competence, provide each other with nurturance and personal support, and allow for relief in addressing problems. And, with access to the Internet and distance learning, the nature and scope of collaborative teaming has the potential to expand in dramatic fashion.

Teaming may take the form of:

- *Parallel Teaching* – team members combine their classes or other work and teach to their strengths. This may involve specific facets of the curriculum (e.g., one teacher covers math, another reading; they cover different aspects of science) or different students (e.g., for specific activities, they divide the students and work with those to whom each relates to best or can support in the best way).

- *Complementary Teaching* – one team member takes the lead with the initial lessons and another facilitates the follow-up activity.

- *Special Assistance* – while one team member provides basic instruction, another focuses on those students who need special assistance.

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.

Volunteers – Volunteers can be a multifaceted resource in a classroom and throughout a school (see Exhibit 2-6). For this to be the case, however, the school staff must value volunteers and learn how to recruit, train, nurture, and use them effectively. When implemented properly, school volunteer programs can enable teachers to personalize instruction, free teachers and other school personnel to meet students' needs more effectively, broaden students' experiences through interaction with volunteers, strengthen school-community understanding and relations, enhance home involvement, and enrich the lives of volunteers. In the classroom, volunteers can provide just the type of extra support needed to enable staff to conference and work with students who require special assistance.

Working under the direction of the teacher and student support staff, they can help students on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. One-to-one assistance often is needed to establish a supportive relationship with students who are having trouble adjusting to school, to develop a positive relationship with a particularly aggressive or withdrawn student, to re-engage a student who has disengaged from classroom learning, and to foster successful task completion with a student easily distracted by peers. Volunteers can help enhance a student's motivation and skills and, at the very least, can help counter negative effects that arise when a student has difficulty adjusting to school.

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

Exhibit 2-6

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

I. Welcoming and Social Support

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

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

II. Working with Designated Students in the Classroom

    A. Helping to orient new students

    B. Engaging disinterested, distracted, and distracting students

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

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

   Helping develop and staff additional

    A. Recreational activity

    B. Enrichment activity

    C. Tutoring

    D. Mentoring

IV. Helping Enhance the Positive Climate Throughout the School --
     including Assisting with "Chores"

    A. Assisting with Supervision in Class and Throughout the Campus

    B. Contributing to Campus "Beautification"

    C. Helping to Get Materials Ready

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

Opening the Classroom Door to Enhance and Personalize Staff Development

New staff need as much on-the-job training and support as can be provided. All teachers need to learn more about how to enable learning in their classrooms. All school staff need to learn how to team in ways that enhance their effectiveness in supporting and learning from each other and improve student outcomes. *These are essential elements of capacity building and personnel development.*

In opening the classroom door to enhance support and staff development, the crux of the matter is to personalize capacity building. This requires selective assignments for teaming, mentoring, and other collegial activity. It involves identifying what needs to be learned at this time in an individual's learning curve. Again, as with students, it is a matter of meeting staff members where they are at and taking them the next step. And, it involves more than just talking and "consulting". It requires modeling and guiding change (e.g., demonstrating and discussing new approaches, guiding initial practice and eventual implementation, and following-up to improve and refine).

Teaming with a mentor or a colleague provides a more intensive form of shared and personalized learning. Mentors and colleagues include teachers, specialist personnel (such as resource teachers and student support staff), and administrators. For teachers, optimal learning opportunities are those carried out in their classrooms and through visits to colleagues' classrooms. In this respect, instead of just making recommendations about what to do about student learning, behavior, and emotional problems, specialists need to be prepared to go into classrooms to model, guide, and team with teachers as they practice and implement new approaches. Videos and workshops on good practices can provide supplementary learning activities.

Opening the classroom door to teaming and collaboration is key to significantly improving inservice personnel development. It also provides opportunities to improve preservice preparation.

Concluding Comments

. . . there's no bigger challenge than trying to insert kids in a one-size-fits-all [classroom] and then having to deal with the spillover of emotional and behavioral reactions. If kids are not in a place where they can learn, they let us know loud and clear.

<div align="center">Patricia Woodin-Weaver</div>

Good schools and good teaching are essential to prevent many learning and behavior problems at schools, minimize the impact of those that arise, and as the foundation upon which correction of problems must be built. Moreover, good teaching in a caring and supportive context contains the elements for countering staff burnout.

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact that current classroom and schoolwide approaches are insufficient for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. So now we turn to the matters of personalizing instruction and providing special assistance as needed.

Notes

[1] See Adelman & Taylor (2006).

[2] See Adelman & Taylor (in press), Beauchamp, Feinberg, Smith, (1996). More on this in Chapter 5.

[3] Equity and fairness do not guarantee empowerment. Empowerment is a multifaceted concept. In discussing power, theoreticians distinguish "power over" from "power to" and "power from." *Power over* involves explicit or implicit dominance over others and events; *power to* is seen as increased opportunities to act; power from implies ability to resist the power of others. See Hollander & Offermann (1990); Riger (2002).

[4] See Moos (e.g., 1979)

[5] See Center for Mental Health in Schools (2017)

[6] Hargreaves (1994); Hargreaves & Fullan (2012).

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Also see our Center's Resource Catalogue for a list of special resources related to the matters covered in this chapter. Available at no cost from the online clearinghouse of the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/.

For ease in finding and accessing specific topics (e.g., Ability Grouping, Classroom Climate), see the Center's Quick Find menu of over 130 topics – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm .

Chapter 3

Personalizing Learning: Making it More than another Buzzword

"Let the main object . . . be as follows: To seek and to find a method of instruction, by which teachers may teach less, but learners learn more; by which schools may be the scene of less noise, aversion, and useless labour, but of more leisure, enjoyment, and solid progress. . . .

Comenius (1632 A.D.)

Addressing Barriers to Learning in the Classroom

A Sequential and Hierarchical Framework for Enabling Classroom Learning

Understanding Personalization

Defining Personalization

Underlying Assumptions and Major Elements

So, What Does it Take to Personalize a Classroom?

Personalized Structure for Learning

Learner-Valued Options and Mutual Decision Making

Flexible Interest Grouping to Enable Personalization

Homework that Motivates Practice and Everyday Use

Conferencing

Response to Intervention (RtI): Assessment to Plan; Feedback to Nurture

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Why do you say you're wasting your time by going to school?

Well, I can't read or write – and they won't let me talk!

For every student to succeed, there must be equity of opportunity at school. So the question arises: How well do classrooms *enable* equity of opportunity for *all* students to learn what is being taught. The answer in too many instances is: *Not well.*

Addressing Barriers to Learning in the Classroom

Classroom instruction commonly is not designed to account for a wide range of individual differences and circumstances. Also, too little accommodation and specific help is provided to students who manifest learning, behavior, emotional, and physical problems. And, professional preparation generally has not equipped teachers to re-engage students who have become disconnected from classroom instruction.

To be more specific, the following conditions are prevalent in too many schools:

1. Teaching is organized in ways that *presume* classroom teachers can do the job alone.

2. Insufficient attention is being paid to creating a stimulating and caring, as well as manageable learning environment.

3. Efforts to personalize instruction mainly are interpreted in terms of using technology and are not adequately differentiating instruction with respect to motivational differences.

4. Classrooms are not focusing enough on promoting intrinsic motivation, preventing problems, responding as soon as feasible after problems arise, and providing appropriate special assistance when students display specific problems.

5. Teachers' professional development has not effectively prepared them with respect to understanding intrinsic motivation, and this contributes to a tendency to overrely on rewards and punishment as strategies for teaching and controlling behavior.

6. Classrooms are not designed to respond quickly when special assistance for a student and family is needed.

All this hinders and undermines efforts to engage students in learning. Moreover, these conditions contribute to the type of psychological reactance that generates behavior and emotional problems and works against re-engaging disconnected students.

Basic to school improvement is increasing in-classroom capacity to account for a wider range of individual differences, to foster a caring context, and to prevent and handle many more problems when they arise (see Exhibit 3.1).

Exhibit 3.1

Key Facets of Enhancing Learning Supports in Classrooms

- **Reframing the approach to classroom instruction to enhance teacher capability to prevent and intervene as soon after problems arise and reduce need for out of class referrals** (e.g. personalizing instruction; enhancing necessary special assistance in the classroom; developing small group and independent learning options; reducing negative interactions and over-reliance on social control; expanding the range of curricular and instructional options and choices; systematic use of response to intervention and related prereferral interventions)

- **Opening the classroom door to invite in various forms of collaboration, support, and personalized professional development** (e.g., co-teaching and team teaching with resource teachers; working with student support staff in the classroom; using volunteers in targeted ways to enhance social and academic support; bringing in mentors; creating a learning community focused on intrinsic motivation concepts, their application to schooling, how to minimize use of rewards and punishment, and how to re-engage students who have become disengaged from classroom learning)

- **Enhancing the capability of student and learning supports staff and others to team with teachers in the classroom** (e.g., enhancing student support staff understanding of personalized instruction and how to work as colleagues in the classroom with teachers and others to enhance success for all students)

- **Providing a broad range of curricular and enrichment opportunities** (e.g., stimulating instructional content and processes, ensuring open access to and choice from a variety of enriching options)

- **Contributing to a positive climate in the classroom and school-wide** (e.g., enhancing feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to others at school; reducing threats to such feelings; ensuring staff have good professional and social supports; providing for conflict resolution)

A Sequential and Hierarchical Framework for Enabling Classroom Learning

It is a given that the way the classroom setting is arranged and instruction is organized can help or hinder learning and teaching. From our perspective, a fundamental problem is that instructional practices rely too heavily on nonpersonalized instruction, and classrooms are not effectively designed to play a "early responder" role in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

The ideal is to have an environment where students and teachers feel comfortable, positively stimulated, and well-supported in pursuing the learning objectives of the day. Designing classrooms with this ideal involves enabling teachers to personalize and blend instruction for all students, provide a greater range of accommodations and enrichment options, and add special assistance in the context of implementing "Response to Intervention (RtI)" strategies. From a motivational perspective, the emphasis is on active learning (e.g., authentic, problem-based, and discovery learning; projects, learning centers, enrichment opportunities) and reducing negative interactions and overreliance on social control disciplinary practices.

To facilitate all this, big classes are transformed into a set of smaller workgroups by using small group and independent learning options. Properly implemented, the changes can increase the effectiveness of regular classroom instruction, prevent problems, support inclusionary policies, and reduce the need for specialized *services*. (Note the commonalities with Universal Design for Learning principles.)

Exhibit 3-2 outlines a classroom redesign that frames personalized instruction and special assistance as a sequential and hierarchical set of interventions. This framework can guide efforts to provide a good match and determine the use of the least restrictive environment and the type of interventions necessary for assisting individuals manifesting problems. The first step focuses on creating conditions for learning that are highly responsive to learner differences in *both* motivation and development. With this in place, the next step involves providing special assistance as needed (i.e., for learners who continue to have problems). As outlined in Exhibit 3-2, this second step involves three levels.

This chapter highlights the nature and scope of personalized instruction. Chapter 4 covers special assistance.
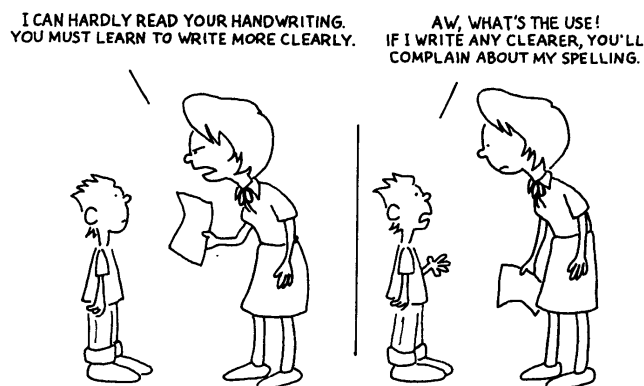
Exhibit 3-2

A Sequential and Hierarchical Approach to Enabling Learning*

First Shift to Personalized Instruction

| **Regular programs** (nonpersonalized) | (If it is not feasible to change a particular teacher's program, move students who manifest problems to a classroom that pursues personaled instruction.) | **Step 1. Personalized** *Instruction* |

(Step 2 is added only for students who continue to have problems)

Step 2. Special assistance*
(maintained only as long as needed)

*Overall the aim is create a good "match" or "fit" with the learner's capabilities *and* motivation and provide supports to enable learning.

Step 2 is introduced as necessary using best practices for special assistance (remediation, rehabilitation, treatment). These are applied differentially for minor and severe problems.

If needs are minor

Level A

Focus on observable factors required for performing contemporary tasks (e.g., basic knowledge skills, and *attitudes*)

As soon as feasible, move back to Level A

If necessary, move to Level B

Level B

Focus on prerequisite factors required for surface level functioning

As soon as feasible, move to Level B

If necessary, move to Level C

Level C

Focus on underlying interfering factors (e.g., serious external barriers, incompatible behavior and interests, faulty learning mechanisms that may interfere with functioning at higher levels)

Note: Responses to a sequential and hierarchical approach can help minimize false positive diagnoses (e.g., LD, ADHD) and identify those who should be referred for special education assessment.

Understanding Personalization

We have already introduced the concept of the *match* as applied to teaching (meeting learners where they are). This also often is referred to as the problem of "fit." For the most part, teaching practices can only approximate an *optimal* match.

Even in the best classrooms, there can be a serious mismatch (a very poor fit) for some students. As we have highlighted, many factors can produce such a mismatch. Indeed, the possibilities are so extensive that everyone has occasional learning problems.

When a teacher finds it difficult to create an appropriate match for any given student over many days, significant learning problems develop. With the learning problems comes emotional overlay and often behavior problems. In such situations, a first step for a school in countering the student's problems is personalizing instruction.

Defining Personalization

While the framework presented in Exhibit 3-2 looks linear, a reciprocal determinist understanding views personalized *learning* and *instruction* as a set of nonlinear, dynamic, transactional, and spiraling processes. As students change, so must teaching processes. For some time, efforts to improve the match for learning in the classroom have revolved around the idea of differentiated instruction. The terms used, often interchangeably, are individualized or personalized instruction. However, these are two different concepts.

Both concepts call for knowing when, how, and what to teach and when and how to structure the situation so students can learn on their own. And the two concepts overlap in their emphasis on developmental differences. Indeed, the major thrust in most *individualized* approaches is to account for individual differences in developmental capability.

In contrast, we define *personalization* as the process of accounting for individual differences not only in capabilities but also with respect to learner motivation. We all know individuals who have learned much more than we anticipated because they were highly motivated; and we certainly know others who learn and perform poorly when they are not invested in the work. So as essential as differences in capability are, motivational differences often are a primary consideration in creating a good fit, especially for students manifesting problems.

For motivated learners, either individualized or personalized instruction can be quite effective. For students with learning, behavior, and emotional problems, however, low and avoidance motivation for classroom learning is likely and must be addressed. In such cases, the concept of personalization provides the best guide to practice (and research).

From a psychological perspective, we also stress that it is the *learner's perception* that determines whether the instructional "fit" or "match" is good or bad. Given this, personalizing instruction means ensuring conditions for learning are *perceived by the learner* as a good match (e.g., will lead to personally valued goals). Thus, a basic concern is that of eliciting a learner's perceptions of how well what is offered fits. This has fundamental implications for all efforts to assess students, manage behavior, and enable learning.

Unfortunately, discussions of personalized learning often leave the impression that the process is mainly about incorporating technological innovations. For the most part, the discussions also fail to place personalized learning within the context of other conditions that must be improved in classrooms and school-wide to address factors interfering with student learning and performance.

As part of a series of special reports on the topic, Education Week issued *Taking Stock of Personalized Learning* in 2014. That report highlighted recent definitional efforts and some ongoing issues. http://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/personalized-learning-special-report-2014/index.html?intc=EW-PLSR_10.22-EML

For example. in 2010, the U.S. Department of Education included the following definition in its national technology plan (Administration's National Education Technology Plan, 2010):

> "Personalization refers to instruction that is paced to learning needs, tailored to learning preferences, and tailored to the specific interests of different learners. In an environment that is fully personalized, the learning objectives and content as well as the method and pace may all vary (so personalization encompasses differentiation and individualization)."
> http://www.ed.gov/technology/netp-2010/learning-engage-and-empower

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Indiscriminate use of the term personalization turns it into just one more buzzword, rather than a fundamental move forward in the unending quest to improve teaching to meet learners where they are.

Underlying Assumptions and Major Elements

Outlined in Exhibit 3-3 are the underlying assumptions and major elements of personalized instruction.[1] Properly designed and carried out, such instruction can reduce the need for special assistance. That is, matching motivation and developmental capability can be a sufficient condition for learning among youngsters whose difficulties are not due to interfering internal

factors (e.g., disabilities). Personalizing regular classroom programs also can prevent problems, support inclusionary policies, and appropriately reduce the need for specialized *services* and referrals for special education.

Exhibit 3-3
Underlying Assumptions and Major Elements of Personalized Instruction

I. *Underlying Assumptions*

   The following are basic assumptions underlying personalized instruction

 • Learning is a function of the ongoing transactions between the learner and the learning environment.

 • Optimal learning is a function of an optimal match between the learner's accumulated capacities and attitudes and current states-of-being and the program's processes and context.

 • Matching both learner motivation and capacities must be primary procedural objectives.

 • The learner's perception is the critical criterion for evaluating whether a good match 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.

II. *Major Elements*

 Major elements in personalizing instruction

 • regular use of informal and formal conferences for discussing options, making decisions, exploring learners' perceptions, and mutually evaluating progress;

 • a broad range of options from which learners can make choices with regard to types of learning content, activities, and desired outcomes;

 • a broad range of options from which learners can make choices with regard to facilitation (support, guidance) of decision making and learning;

 • active decision making by learners in making choices and in evaluating how well the chosen options match their motivation and capability;

 • establishment of plans and mutual agreements about the ongoing relationships between the learners and classroom personnel;

 • regular reevaluations of decisions, reformulation of plans, and renegotiation of agreements based on mutual evaluations of progress, problems, and learners' perceptions of the "match."

So, What Does it Take to Personalize a Classroom?

Given that a teacher is motivated to personalize instruction, making it a reality involves moving through a series of transition steps. Such steps start with establishing ways for some students to work independently and in small cooperative groups (and with other adults as available) while the teacher pursues one-to-one and small-group interactions. At the same time, the emphasis is on offering an appropriate variety of content, process, and outcomes options, ensuring students understand each option, and facilitating mutual decision making.

An objective at all times is to establish and maintain an appropriate working relationship with students. This involves practices that provide support and guidance and account for individual differences in ways that create a sense of trust and caring and open communication.

Elsewhere we provide an extensive presentation about personalizing instruction.[2] The rest of this chapter highlights the thinking behind some key features of a classroom that pursues personalization. Each feature discussed benefits from collaboration with other teachers and school staff and with a variety of volunteers.

Personalized Structure for Learning

In talking about classroom structure, some people seem to see it as all or nothing – structured or unstructured. The tendency also is to equate structure simply with limit setting and social control. The view of structure as social control is particularly prevalent in responding to student misbehavior. In such cases, it is common for observers to say that youngsters need "more structure." Sometimes the phrase used is "clearer limits and consequences," but the idea is the same. Youngsters are seen as being out of control, and the solution – more control.

Clearly, no one working at a school wants to be pushed around, and no teacher can work effectively with youngsters who are out of control. At the same time, it is evident that an overemphasis on control creates an authoritarian atmosphere which produces vicious cycles with respect to negative attitudes and misbehavior (e.g., producing psychological reactance and avoidance motivation). As school staff continue to push, prod, and punish, negative feelings increase all around, and this further exacerbates student misbehavior.

It also is evident that an overemphasis on controlling behavior can interfere with efforts to facilitate learning. For example, a teacher cannot teach youngsters who are sent to "time out" or for other disciplinary actions or who are suspended from school. And such practices are incompatible with developing working relationships that facilitate learning.

Using the term structure mainly to describe efforts to control behavior fails to recognize that structure is a basic facet of facilitating learning and performance. Good schools require a definition of structure that goes well beyond how much control a teacher has over students.

> Our definition views structure as *the type of support, guidance, and direction provided to the learner, and encompasses all efforts to clarify essential information – including communication of limits as necessary.* Structure can be *personalized* by varying it to match a learner's current motivation and capabilities with respect to specific tasks and circumstances.

The main point of personalizing structure is to provide a high level of support and guidance for students when they need it. A personalized approach encourages students to take as much responsibility as they can for identifying the types and degree of structure they require to learn and perform successfully. Some prefer lots of help on certain tasks but want to be left alone at other times. Many activities can be pursued without help, and should be, if the learners are to attain and maintain independence. Other tasks require considerable help if learning is to occur.

Figuring out the best way to provide personalized structure is one of the most important concerns a teacher faces in building working relationships with students. In general, a positive working relationship requires mutual respect; a warm working relationship requires mutual caring and understanding. Providing a continuum of structure and enabling students to indicate their preferences are significant facets in developing such relationships. Although teachers currently are the primary source of support and guidance in classrooms, as stressed in Chapter 2, effective personalization calls for collaborative teaming among a variety of staff, community resources, and students.

Learner-Valued Options and Mutual Decision Making

Concerns about structure are part of a more general instructional focus on personalizing options and involving learners in mutual decision making. The type of options available and processes used to make decisions can lead to perceptions of coercion and control or to perceptions of authentic choice (being in control of one's destiny, being self-determining). Such differences in perception can affect whether a student is mobilized to pursue or avoid planned learning activities or outcomes. The same is true for staff.

Students, staff, and families who have the opportunity to make decisions among valued and feasible options tend to be committed to follow through. In contrast, those not included often have little commitment to what is decided. If individuals disagree with a decision that affects them, they often react with hostility.

Optimally, teachers hope to maximize student perceptions of having a choice from among personally worthwhile options and attainable outcomes. At the very least, they want to minimize perceptions of having no choice, little value, and probable failure. In this respect, every teacher knows the value of variety.

Among students with learning and behavior problems, a significant proportion manifest avoidance or low motivation for learning at school. To them, few currently available options may be appealing. So more variety is required. How much greater the range of options needs to be depends mainly on how strong avoidance tendencies are. And, initially, re-engaging such students in classroom learning almost always requires accommodation of a wider range of behavior than usually is tolerated.

A guideline in developing valued options in a personalized classroom is to stimulate active learning (e.g., authentic, problem-based, and discovery learning; projects, learning centers, enrichment opportunities). Effective learning requires ensuring that a student is truly engaged. Student engagement is especially important in preventing learning, behavior, and emotional problems. And, it is a key factor in using *response to intervention* productively.

One definition of active learning is ". . . students actively constructing meaning grounded in their own experience rather than simply absorbing and reproducing knowledge transmitted from

subject-matter fields . . .".[3] Simply stated, active learning is *learning by doing*, *listening, looking, and asking;* but it is not just being active that counts. It is the mobilization of the student to seek out and learn. Options are designed to capitalize on student interests and curiosity, involve them in problem solving and guided inquiry, and elicit their thinking through reflective discussions and appropriate products. Moreover, activities are designed to do all this in ways that enhance intrinsically motivated engagement. Active methods can be introduced gradually so students learn how to benefit from them and can be provided appropriate support and guidance.

There are many ways to promote active learning at all grade levels. For example: small group discussions, problem-based and discovery learning, cooperative learning tasks, a project approach, involvement in "learning centers" at school, independent research projects, use of hands on manipulatives, scientific equipment, and arts and crafts materials, use of computer and video technology, and community-based projects such as surveys, oral histories, and volunteer service.

Active learning does much more than motivate learning of subject matter and academic skills. Students also learn how to cooperate with others, share responsibility for planning and implementation, develop understanding and skills related to conflict resolution and mediation, and much more.

<div style="border:2px solid red; padding:1em;">

Common instructional practices

All the following incorporate active learning.
- **Direct Instruction** (structured overviews; explicit teaching; mastery lectures; drill and practice; compare and contrast; didactic questions; demonstrations; guides for reading, listening, and viewing)
- **Indirect Instruction** (problem solving; case studies; inquiry; reading for meaning; reflective study; concept formation: concept mapping; concept attainment)
- **Interactive instruction** (debates; role playing; panels; brainstorming; peer practice; discussion; laboratory groups; cooperative learning groups; problem solving; circle of knowledge; tutorial groups; interviewing)
- **Independent study** (essays; computer assisted instruction; learning activity packages; correspondence lessons; learning contracts; homework; research projects; assigned questions; learning centers)
- **Experiential learning** (field trips; conducting experiments; simulations; games; focused imaging; field observations; role playing; model building; surveys)

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Flexible Interest Grouping to Enable Personalization

The report entitled *High Schools of the Millennium* states:

> "The structure and organization of a High School of the Millennium is very
> different than that of the conventional high school. First and foremost, [the school]
> is designed to provide small, personalized, and caring learning communities for
> students . . . . The smaller groups allow a number of adults . . . to work together
> with the students . . . as a way to develop more meaningful relationships and as a
> way for the teachers to better understand the learning needs of each student. . . .
> Time is used differently . . . . Alternative schedules, such as a block schedule or
> modified block schedule, create longer class periods that allow students to become
> more actively engaged in their learning through more in-depth exploration . . . . The
> longer instructional times also allow for multiple learning activities that better meet
> the different learning styles of students" (American Youth Policy Forum, 2000).

To provide time for personalized interface with students, flexible interest grouping is used to

turn big classes into smaller learning units. Clearly, students should never be grouped in ways

that harm them. This applies to putting students in low ability tracks and segregating those with

learning, behavior, or emotional problems. But grouping is essential for personalizing

instruction. *Appropriate* grouping and collaborative teaming enable spending time with a small

group and individual learners while others in the class work independently, in small cooperative

groups, and with other resource personnel.

Done appropriately, students are grouped and regrouped flexibly based on individual

interests, needs, and to derive benefits from diversity. Small groups are established for

cooperative inquiry and learning, concept and skill development, problem solving, motivated

practice, peer- and cross-age tutoring, and other forms of activity that can be facilitated by peers,

aides, and/or volunteers. In a small group (e.g., two to six members) students have more

opportunities to participate. In heterogeneous, cooperative learning groups, each student has an

interdependent role in pursuing a common learning goal and can contribute on a par with their

capabilities.

Unquestionably, it helps to have multiple collaborators in the classroom. An aide and/or

volunteers, for example, can assist with establishing and maintaining well-functioning groups, as

well as providing special support and guidance for designated individuals. As teachers

increasingly open their doors to others, assistance can be solicited from tutors, resource and

special education teachers, pupil services personnel, and an ever widening range of volunteers (e.g., tutors, peer buddies, parents, mentors, and any others who can bring special abilities into the classroom and offer additional options for learning). And, of course, team teaching offers a potent way to expand the range of options for personalizing instruction.

Common Forms of Grouping

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

All three types provide opportunities to enhance interpersonal functioning and an understanding of working relationships and of factors effecting group functioning.

Homework that Motivates Practice and Everyday Use

Most of us have had the experience of wanting to be good at something such as playing a musical instrument or participating in a sport. What we soon learned was that becoming good at it meant a great deal of practice, and practicing often wasn't fun. In the face of this fact, many of us turned to other pursuits. In some cases, individuals are compelled by parents to labor on, and many grow to dislike the activity. (A few, of course, later may commend their parents for pushing them, but be assured these are a small minority.)

Becoming good at reading, mathematics, writing, and other academic pursuits requires practice outside the classroom. So, schools demand *homework*. Properly designed, homework can benefit students. Inappropriately designed homework can lead to avoidance, parent-child conflicts, teacher disapproval, and student dislike of various arenas of learning. Personalized homework involves assignments that emphasize *motivated* practice.

As with all learning processes that engage students, motivated practice requires personalizing both in-class practice and homework. The emphasis is on activities a student perceives as worthwhile and do-able with an appropriate amount of effort.[4] Personalize instruction calls for determining what different students find engaging and providing three or four practice options from which students can choose.

The examples in Exhibit 3-4 illustrate ways in which activities can be varied to provide for motivated learning and practice. Because most people have experienced a variety of reading and writing activities, the focus here is on other types of activity. Students can be encouraged to pursue such activity with classmates and/or family members. Friends with common interests can provide positive models and support that enhance productivity and even creativity.

Within some limits, the stronger the sense of potential outcome satisfaction, the more likely practice will be pursued even when practice activities are rather dull. The weaker the sense of potential outcome satisfaction, the more the practice activities must be inherently motivating.

The most motivated practice stems from a desire to use what one has learned. The reason so many people are good readers probably has less to do with specific teaching approaches than with the fact that they were motivated to read at home. In contrast, youngsters who have reading problems have difficulty overcoming their deficits because their motivation for reading has been dampened, and they do not pursue reading away from the classroom. A problem with overrelying on extrinsic motivators in providing special reading assistance to such youngsters is that such strategies don't seem to enhance their intrinsic motivation for reading. As a consequence, they may learn to read 20 new words and various other skills at school and still not go home and use what they have learned, other than perhaps to do some assigned homework task. The result is they are unlikely to become good readers.

Effective practice is about attending as much to motivational differences as to differences in capabilities. Indeed, there are instances when the primary focus is on motivation. We spell this out in more detail in Chapter 5.

Exhibit 3-4

Homework and Motivated Practice

Learning and practicing by

(1) doing

- using movement and manipulation of objects to explore a topic (e.g., using coins to learn to add and subtract)
- dramatization of events (e.g., historical, current)
- role playing and simulations (e.g., learning about democratic vs. autocratic government by trying different models in class; learning about contemporary life and finances by living on a budget)
- actual interactions (e.g., learning about human psychology through analysis of daily behavior)
- applied activities (e.g., school newspapers, film and video productions, band, sports)
- actual work experience (e.g., on-the-job learning)

(2) listening

- reading to students (e.g., to enhance their valuing of literature)
- audio media (e.g., various aural formats offering music, stories, events)
- listening games and activities (e.g., aural word games imitating rhymes, rhythms, and sounds)

- analyzing actual oral material (e.g., learning to detect details and ideas in advertisements or propaganda presented on radio or television, learning to identify feelings and motives underlying statements of others)

(3) looking

- directly observing experts, role models, and demonstrations
- visual media (e.g., formats presenting pictures, illustrations, events)
- visual games and activities (e.g., puzzles, reproducing designs, map activities)
- analyzing actual visual material (e.g., learning to find and identify ideas observed in daily events at school and at home)

(4) asking

- information gathering (e.g., investigative reporting, interviewing, and opinion sampling at school and in the community)
- brainstorming answers to current problems and puzzling questions
- inquiry learning (e.g., learning social studies and science by identifying puzzling questions, formulating hypotheses, gathering and interpreting information, generalizing answers, and raising new questions)
- question-and-answer games and activities (e.g., twenty questions, provocative and confrontational questions)
- questioning everyday events (e.g., learning about a topic by asking people about how it effects their lives)

Will you do my
homework for me?

No! It wouldn't be right!

That's OK. I don't get
them all right either.

<div style="border:2px solid red">

Homework in a Socio-Political Context

Excerpt from a New York Times article entitled: *Never Mind the Students; Homework Divides Parents*

Last spring, when Public School 11, a prekindergarten through fifth-grade school in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood, banned mandatory traditional homework assignments for children up to fourth grade, you might have expected universal acclaim. Rather than filling out worksheets, students were encouraged to read nightly, and a website offered tips for parents looking for engaging after-school activities.

Instead, war broke out among the parents. Those who wanted to keep homework accused the anti-worksheet group of trying to force through a policy supported by a select few. Some privately called the plan "economically and racially insensitive," favoring families with time and money to provide their own enrichment. There was a series of contentious PTA meetings and jockeying to get on the school's leadership team, a board that some schools have had trouble getting parents to join. At least three families left the school.

Robin Broshi, a former education technology consultant, a parent of a third grader and one of the architects of the plan, said the changes gave students time to discover the things they were "really passionate about." Homework time with her son used to be a "huge battle," she added, but he now spends hours after school with innovative software programs that enthrall him.

But Ashley Sierra, an executive assistant and a single mother with three children at the school, said the policy had created an unwelcome burden on her and other less affluent families that could not afford extra workbooks, or software programs to supplement the new policy. "I hate it," Ms. Sierra said.

Researchers who study academic history said they were not surprised that debate over young children and homework had resurfaced now. Education and parenting trends are cyclical, and the nation is coming off a stress-inducing, federally mandated accountability push that has put standardized testing at the center of the national education debate. Further, many parents say that homework has become particularly stressful since the arrival of Common Core, a set of rigorous and often confusing learning goals adopted by many states.

Tom Hatch, a professor of education at Columbia University's Teachers College and co-director of the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching, said homework wars were really a proxy fight about what constitutes learning. He added that they were intrinsically linked to the debates over standardized testing that have fueled the national "opt-out" movement.

"It's a small part of a larger conversation about how kids should spend their time," Professor Hatch said. (4/25/17)

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As with all school work, homework can benefit from available technology. Personal computers, email, the world wide web, the various social network applications, podcasts, webinars, games and simulations, personal websites, smartphone photo and video cameras, ebooks and zines, and more. Given youngsters' motivation for using such devices, developing technology-based homework activities can be considered a growth industry.

Conferencing

The ability to talk *with* rather than *at* a student is critical. Personalized instruction is built on a foundation that appreciates what each student is thinking and feeling. Carrying on an ongoing dialogue with students offers the best opportunity to learn about such matters. Talking *with* involves an authentic dialogue – which, of course, depends on each participant truly listening to and hearing the other.

The mechanism for carrying on dialogues often is called a *conference*. However, the term does not convey the full sense of what is involved and, at times, is interpreted in ways contrary to the meaning used here. From a motivational perspective, conferences should be nurturing experiences designed to give, share, and clarify useful information as the teacher or a team member and a student plan the next steps for learning and teaching.

Conferences provide a time and context for

- exploring progress and problems
- clarifying and sampling options for pursuing next steps for learning and solving problems
- mutual planning and decision making
- modifying previous decisions whenever necessary.

The importance of the dialogue as a two-way process cannot be over-emphasized. A conference is a time for participants to indicate what they need, want, and are hoping for from each other. When problems exist, significant time is devoted to problem solving.

The process is ongoing and not always done in a formal manner. Indeed, some of the best dialogues are spontaneous (e.g., occur when a teacher or team member takes time to sit down next to a student during class for an informal chat). For some students, several informal chats need to occur each day backed up by a formal conference every few days. Such impromptu conferences are made feasible by maximizing small group and independent learning activities.

Some students like to keep *dialogue journals* as an aid for conferencing. A dialogue journal enables the student to carry on a conversation with the teacher or a team member. They write to

each other in a direct and informal manner about matters of mutual concern relevant to making learning in the classroom better. This mechanism not only can facilitate communication, it provides motivated practice related to writing and reading. And, as with face-to-face conferences, it encourages self-evaluation and critical reflection.

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

With multiple classes, regular personalized conferencing at the secondary level is challenging. Looping is seen as a way to address the challenge. Looping refers to an arrangement where a teacher remains with the same group of students for more than one school year. While the practice is more common at the elementary school level, some secondary schools are organized so that groups of students work with the same teacher over several years. The student groups may be referred to as teams or established as "houses" with designated counselors. In their research review of looping, Thompson and colleagues state: "Researchers posit that using looping in the middle school environment provides an opportunity to support meaningful relationships and learning because it enables teachers and students to develop long-term relationships where both parties are deeply invested in overall student achievement and growth."

Response to Intervention (RtI): Assessment to Plan; Feedback to Nurture

As with all assessment, Response to Intervention (RtI) is itself an intervention and as such can have a profound impact on a student. For example, along with conferences, RtI provides an personalized, interactive mechanism for everyday planning and for purveying evaluative

feedback in a direct and nurturing manner. Handled well, RtI can clarify directions for future

progress and also contribute to students' feelings of competence, self-determination, and

relatedness.

Authentic assessment for planning. Understood as authentic, dynamic, and personalized

assessment, RtI involves not only reviewing products, but using observation and discussion to

involve and clarify a learner's responses to specific efforts to guide and support performance and

learning. The process is meant to mobilize the student and provide another opportunity to

understand the student's motivation and capabilities.

Authentic assessment also has been proposed as a special approach to assessing complex

performance. The process focuses on performance-based evaluation using such tools as essays,

open-ended responses, responses to computer simulations, interview data, and analyses of

student journals and work that is accumulated over time in a "portfolio." The information

garnered from such ongoing assessments is essential for maintaining personalized instruction.

Providing nurturing feedback. A major consideration in assessment is how best to provide

feedback to the individual assessed. As anyone who has been evaluated knows, feedback can

enhance one's sense of well-being, but too often it is devastating. Relatedly, when rewards and

punishment are tied to feedback, they can complicate the situation greatly (e.g., too great an

emphasis on extrinsic rewards and punishment can be counterproductive to maintaining and

enhancing intrinsic motivation). A constant concern is that the impact of any evaluation can be

negative.

For these reasons, how a student is involved in RtI is critical for both producing good

information and providing feedback in ways that nurture the student's positive feelings about

self, learning, school, and teachers. To these ends, RtI needs to minimize interventions that may

be perceived as efforts to entice and control and include a focus on engaging the student in

self-monitoring, record keeping, self-evaluation, and planning next steps for enhancing learning

and performance.

A good context for providing feedback is use of a student conference as a part of the RtI

process. Discussion can focus on improving the fit between the student and what is planned (e.g.,

the appropriateness of current content, outcomes, processes, and structure can be reviewed;

agreements and schedules can be evaluated and revised as necessary).

Many students are ready to evaluate and say what's working well for them and what isn't; others need to develop the ability to do so. This is especially so for those motivated to make excuses, to overstate how well they are doing, or to avoid discussing the matter at all. The presence of students who have trouble with self-evaluation is not a reason to return to procedures that stress close supervision and unilateral adult decision-making. When students are not motivated to appropriately self-evaluate and be self-directive, they need opportunities to find out how personally valuable these "basic skills" can be. Sometimes all they need is to feel it's safe to say what's on their minds. If they already feel safe and just haven't acquired the skills, self-monitoring and regular record keeping provide a good framework for learning such competence.

Concluding Comments

In sum, *personalizing instruction* is designed to ensure a student *perceives* instructional processes, content, and outcomes as a good match with his or her motivation and capabilities.

- A first emphasis is on *motivation*. Practices focus on (re)engaging the student in classroom instruction, with special attention paid to increasing intrinsic motivation and minimizing psychological reactance.
- Matching *developmental capabilities* is a parallel concern. Practices focus on accounting for current knowledge and skills.

Personalized instruction is intended to enhance learning and to prevent many learning and behavior problems. And, it provides an essential foundation for ameliorating learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Indeed, just providing a student with a personalized program may be sufficient to reverse some problems. Other problems, of course, need *special assistance*.

What does it take to personalize a classroom? First of all, teacher and other school staff must expect and value individual differences in students' motivation, as well as their capabilities. They must be willing to engage students in a dialogue about their expectations and what interests them and, then, help them make decisions about a learning agenda that they perceive as a good match. And, as new information is acquired about what is and isn't a good match, they must be willing to change the agenda.

Beyond having potential for preventing and correcting learning and behavior problems, the personalized, sequential, and hierarchical approach outlined in this and the next chapter constitutes a RtI assessment. As such, it is seen as having promise for identifying different types of learning and behavior problems and for detecting errors in diagnosis. For example, when only personalized instruction is needed to correct a learning and/or behavior problem, it seems reasonable to suggest that the individual does not have a learning *disability* or ADHD. At the same time, when a highly mobilized individual still has extreme learning difficulties, hypotheses about such disabilities seems safer. Thus, we suggest that personalization is a necessary first step in facilitating valid identification of the different types of learning and behavior problems outlined in Chapter 1.

While policy makers have embraced the concept of personalized learning, the discussions often fail to place personalized learning within the context of other conditions that must be improved in classrooms and schoolwide to address factors interfering with student learning and performance. Sometimes such discussions leave the impression that the process is mainly about incorporating technological innovations. And personnel preparation for most school personnel has not included an in-depth focus on personalizing learning.

Personalization clearly is critical in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. Let's be sure it doesn't just become another school reform buzzword. We now turn to a deeper discussion of providing special assistance.

What did you learn in school today?
                                            Not enough I guess, they told me
                                            I have to go back tomorrow!

Notes

[1] Adelman & Taylor (1993, 1994)

[2] Adelman & Taylor (2006), Center for Mental Health in Schools (2012)

[3] Newman, Marks, & Gamoran (1996)

[4] National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine (2004), Sackstein & Hamilton (2016).

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Also see our Center's Resource Catalogue for a list of special resources related to the matters covered in this chapter. Available at no cost from the online clearinghouse of the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/.

For ease in finding and accessing specific topics (e.g., Classroom-Based Learning Supports, Prevention for Students At Risk, Response to Intervention, Technology), see the Center's Quick Find menu of over 130 topics – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm

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Chapter 4

Addressing Learning, Behavior, and Emotional Problems

If we learn from our mistakes,
then today should have made me pretty smart.

When personalized classroom instruction is not enough to enable learning, some form of special assistance is necessary. Special assistance combines with personalized instruction as a second step in a sequential approach to addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems (see Exhibit 3-2 again). Special assistance is an essential aspect of revamping in- and out-of-classroom systems to enhance equity of opportunity for success at school.

Special assistance often is an extension of general strategies; sometimes, however, more specialized interventions are needed. In either case, the objective is to improve the match with a learner's motivation and capabilities. The assistance not only overlaps regular instructional efforts, the practices add value to prevailing efforts to improve instruction and ameliorate learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

The first criteria for offering special assistance are straightforward indications of learning, behavior, and emotional problems. There is little difficulty identifying those who are extremely poor classroom learners. Students who are disruptive or harmful to self and/or others also are readily identified, as are those who appear to be extremely disinterested and disengaged. A bit harder to identify may be those doing mostly satisfactory work but not quite performing up to standards in one area of instruction. It is particularly poignant to see a student who is working hard, but retaining little.

> *Most teachers and parents have little difficulty identifying who needs special assistance. More difficult is determining what type of assistance to provide and how to provide it.*

Special assistance interventions enable schools to account for a wider range of individual differences and facilitate intervening as soon as problems are noted, thereby preventing problems from becoming worse. Properly personalized, the assistance can help re-engage disconnected students and enhance intrinsic motivation for learning.

Motivational Considerations

- *Motivation is an antecedent concern* affecting intervention. Poor motivational readiness often is (a) a cause of inadequate and problem functioning, (b) a factor maintaining such problems, or (c) both. Thus, strategies are required that reduce avoidance motivation and enhance motivational readiness so that the student is mobilized to participate.

- *Motivation is an ongoing process concern.* Processes must elicit, enhance, and maintain motivation so that the student stays mobilized (e.g., strategies to counter boredom).

- *Enhancing intrinsic motivation is a basic outcome concern.* A student may be motivated to work on a problem during an intervention session but not elsewhere. Responding to this concern requires strategies to enhance stable, positive attitudes that mobilize the student to act outside the intervention context and after the intervention is terminated.

Similar motivational considerations arise in providing special assistance to a student's family. And, staff motivation warrants attention as well.

Understanding Special Assistance

It is the struggle to find an appropriate intervention match for learners having problems that mainly differentiates special assistance from regular teaching. The ability of school staff to intervene appropriately, of course, depends on the availability and accessibility of an effective array of interventions in- and out-of-the classroom (see Exhibit 4-1). Sound practice calls for intervening only as necessary and when the benefits significantly outweigh the costs.

As with personalization, special assistance must focus on motivation systematically and comprehensively. This involves (a) assessing motivation about classroom learning and other school related concerns, (b) overcoming negative attitudes, (c) enhancing motivational readiness for classroom learning, (d) maintaining motivation throughout the learning process, and (e) nurturing the type of intrinsic motivation that results in youngsters choosing to apply what they have learned. Attending to these matters is the key to maximizing maintenance, generalization, and expansion of learning. Ignoring such matters means intervening with passive (and often hostile) learners. When such concerns are given short shrift, assessments and diagnoses are confounded, and intervention may just as readily exacerbate as correct students' problems.

Exhibit 4-1

Array of Special Assistance

Level of Concern	In the Classroom	Outside the Classroom
Observable Factors Required for Effective Learning at School Special assistance encompasses what often is called "prereferral" intervention and highly structured instruction. In a broad sense, it encompasses the approach referred to as *response to intervention.* The instruction remains focused on *directly* enabling acquisiton of the basic knowledge, skills, and interests with which students appear to have difficulty as they pursues age-appropriate life and learning tasks (e.g., reading, writing, inter- and intra-personal problem solving, positive attitudes).	Where feasible, special assistance should be implemented in the classroom. This may require the addition of an aide or mentor and the use of specialist staff at specific times during the school day. Essentially, at Level A, special assistance in the classroom involves *reteaching* – but not with the same approach that has failed. Alternative strategies must be used for students having difficulty. The approach involves further modification of activities to improve the match with the learners' current levels of motivation and capability. Teachers can use a range of environmental factors to influence the match, as well as techniques that enhance motivation, sensory intake, processing and decision making, and output.	As necessary, added assistance is provided outside class. Special attention is given to both external and internal barriers to learning and performance. Examples at this level include outside tutoring, supportive and stress reduction counseling for the student, and parent training related to supporting student learning and performance.
Missing Prerequisites (i.e., the readiness gap) Special assistance at this level focuses on identifying and *directly* enabling acquisition of missing prerequisites (knowledge, skills, attitudes) in order to fill the readiness gap.	The more that youngsters have missed key learning opportunities, the more likely they will have gaps in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for succeeding in the current grade. If the readiness gap is not filled, it grows. Thus, it is all too common to have high school students who can barely read. Where a readiness gap exists, teaching staff must be able to take the time to address the gap by identifying missing prerequisites and ensuring students acquire them. Procedures are the same as those used in facilitating learning related to current life tasks.	Examples at this level are tutoring, supportive and stress reduction counseling for the students, and parent training related to supporting student learning and performance. In addition, students may need additional counseling to restore feelings of competence and efficacy.
Underlying Problems and Interfering Factors Special assistance at this level focuses on identifying and then overcoming underlying deficiencies by directly correcting the problems (if feasible) or indirectly compensating for possible underlying problems interfering with learning and performance (e.g., major motivational problems – including disengagement from classroom learning; serious social and emotional problems, faulty learning mechanisms).	Special assistance in the classroom at this level involves assessment of underlying problems and/or serious interfering factors and use of remedial, rehabilitative, and/or compensatory strategies.	At this level, the need is for intensive interventions designed to address barriers related to a host of external and internal risk factors and interventions for promoting healthy development (including a focus on resiliency and protective factors). See examples in text. In extreme cases, full time outside interventions may be required for a limited period of time.

In the classroom, special assistance is an extension of general efforts to facilitate learning. Because the science-base is still limited, a great deal of the process remains a matter of rational trial and appraisal.[1]

Once it is clear that special assistance is required, the focus turns to determining what type of assistance to provide and how to provide it. Such determinations should reflect (a) an understanding of why the student is having problems, (b) an analysis of the nature and scope of the problems (current weaknesses and limitations, including missing prerequisites and interfering behaviors and attitudes), and (c) an appreciation of the student's strengths (in terms of both motivation and capabilities).

Exhibit 4-2 highlights some of the processes involved in planning for special assistance.

Exhibit 4.2

Processes Involved in Planning Special Assistance

Venue

In the Classroom*   Out of the Classroom**

Using responses to intervention (RtI) to initially identify and triage those who need such assistance

Conducting additional assessment to the degree necessary – including diagnosis and planning of an Individual education program (IEP) when appropriate

Providing consultation, triage, and referrals

Conducting ongoing management of care

Enhancing special assistance availability and quality

_____

*Provided primarily by the school's teaching, learning support staff, volunteers, and students

**Out of class special assistance may be provided at the school, at a district facility, and/or at a community facility. In some schools, professionals from the community connect with schools to co-locate their agency services.

Sequence and Hierarchy

Teachers and support staff must draw on a wide range of materials and techniques and be imaginative and flexible in using them to personalize instruction and provide special assistance. As discussed in Chapter 3, before providing special assistance, a logical first step is to ensure that general environmental causes of problems are addressed and that the environment is enriched. In many classrooms this first step usually requires some redesign to personalize instruction (again see Exhibit 3-2). Where redesign is unlikely, students experiencing problems should be moved to classrooms where instruction is personalized.

Improving the fit between classroom instruction and individual differences in motivation and capability is the first step in determining who needs special assistance. Continuing to think about intervening in a sequential as well as a hierarchical way provides a useful approach in determining what type of assistance to provide and how to provide it.

As noted above, special assistance is provided in the classroom and in some instances outside the classroom. The objective is to use the most direct and noninvasive approaches necessary to achieve appropriate and sustainable outcomes. Depending on problem severity and pervasiveness, the assistance involves one (or more) of three levels of intervention outlined in Exhibit 3-2 (the relevant portion of which is reproduced on the next page). As designated,

- *Level A* focuses on *observable factors* required for learning effectively at school (direct assistance with immediate problems related to successful pursuit of age-appropriate life and learning tasks).
- *Level B* focuses on *missing prerequisites* necessary for pursuing age-appropriate tasks.
- *Level C* focuses on *underlying problems* and factors that interfere with classroom learning (major external and internal "barriers"). As stressed in Chapter 1, interfering factors may be related to neighborhood, home, school, peer, and the individual; individual factors include disabling conditions, avoidance motivation, and serious interfering behaviors sometimes related to emotional disorders.

At all three levels, interventions may involve family members, peers, and other school staff – counseling them away from actions that interfere with a student's progress and guiding them to helpful strategies.

Sequence and Hierarchy of Special Assistance

> ***Step 2***. *Best special practices* (special assistance, such as remediation, rehabilitation, treatment) are used differentially for minor and severe problems

if needs are minor

Level A

Observable, factors required for performing contemporary tasks (e.g., basic knowledge skills, and attitudes)

As soon as feasible, move back to Level A

If necessary, move to Level B

Level B

Prerequisite factors required for surface level functioning

As soon as feasible, move to Level B

if needs are major

If necessary, move to Level C

Level C

Underlying interfering factors (e.g., serious external barriers, incompatible behavior and interests, faulty learning mechanisms that may interfere with functioning at higher levels)

Sequence and level in providing special assistance differ depending on whether students have minor and occasional problems or have severe and pervasive problems. The point is to ensure the right amount of assistance is provided so that first and foremost students' needs are addressed. At the same time, the idea is to keep interventions from becoming too life-intrusive and to ensure costs and benefits are appropriately balanced. At all three levels, interventions may involve family members, peers, and other school staff – counseling them away from actions that interfere with a student's progress and guiding them to helpful strategies.

Level A: The initial focus is on directly facilitating learning related to immediate tasks and interests and on expanding student interests. The procedures involve (1) continued adaptation of methods to match and enhance levels of motivation and development and (2) reteaching specific skills and knowledge when students have difficulty.

Level B: *If* problems continue, the focus shifts to identifying any missing prerequisites needed for functioning at the higher level. Again, procedures are adapted to improve the match, and reteaching is used when the learner has difficulty. If missing prerequisites are successfully developed, the focus returns to observable factors (Level A).

> Note: If available data indicate the presence of severe and pervasive motivation or developmental problems, instruction for missing prerequisites (Level B) is begun immediately.

Level C: *If* help in learning missing prerequisites (Level B) is not effective, the focus shifts to underlying interfering factors. These barriers to learning may be incompatible behaviors and interests and/or dysfunctional learning mechanisms. At this level, intervention stresses intensive and often *specialized* practices (e.g., clinical remediation, psychotherapy and behavior change strategies, medical and social services). This level includes

- direct actions to address major external/internal barriers to learning and behaving
- helping students strengthen themselves in areas of weakness or vulnerability
- helping students learn ways to compensate, as necessary, when confronted with barriers or areas of weakness
- expanding ongoing accommodations and use of specialized techniques and technology.

In pursuing underlying interfering factors (Level C), there is increased and intensified use of a wide range of instructional techniques. As soon as feasible, the focus shifts back to prerequisites (Level B) and then on to current tasks and interests (Level A). The special strategies are used whenever and as long as necessary.

> Note: Because of the frequency with which students may be misbehaving, school staff often feel they must deal directly with the behavior problem before they can work on engagement and accommodation. We take a closer look at this matter in Chapter 5.

Responses to intervention and classroom behavior are analyzed to determine level, sequence, and specific practices. This approach is supplemented, as necessary, with more in-depth assessment to identify external and internal factors that are interfering with a student's learning and positive functioning.[2] *Specific objectives* at any level are formulated initially through dialogue with the learners (and key family members) to identify processes and outcomes that students value and perceive as attainable. All changes result from ongoing dialogues that are informed by analyses of student performance and behavior.

About Remediation

Special assistance may require use of remedial practices. While such practices often appear quite different from those used in regular teaching, the differences often are not be as great as appearance suggests. Regular and remedial procedures generally draw on the same instructional models and basic principles. Some remedial practices are simply adaptations of regular procedures. This is even the case with some specially developed and packaged programs and materials for problem populations. (See *What Works Clearinghouse* – https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/ .)

What may make a remedial procedure effective is that it replaces practices a student has experienced as ineffective with strategies that enhance motivation and match current capabilities. Novel procedures, in particular, can have significant motivational and attention-inducing value. Exhibit 4-3 highlights features that make remedial strategies appear different.

Exhibit 4-3.
What makes remedial instruction different?

The answer involves the following factors:

- *Sequence of application.* Remedial practices are pursued after the best available nonremedial practices prove inadequate.
- *Level of intervention focus.* Specialized psychoeducational procedures to facilitate learning may be applied at any of three levels outlined above.
- *Staff competence and time.* Probably the most important feature differentiating remedial from regular practices is the need for a competent professional who has time to provide one-to-one intervention. While special training does not necessarily guarantee such competence, remediation usually is done by staff who have special training. Establishing an appropriate match for learners with problems is difficult and involves a great deal of trial and appraisal. Additional time is essential in developing an understanding of the learner (strengths, weaknesses, limitations, likes, dislikes).
- *Content and outcomes.* Remedial efforts often add other content and outcome objectives to address missing prerequisites, faulty learning mechanisms, or interfering behaviors and attitudes.
- *Instructional and other intervention processes.* Remediation usually stresses an extreme application of instructional principles. Such applications may include reductions in levels of abstraction, intensification of the way stimuli are presented and acted upon, and increases in the amount and consistency of direction and support – including added reliance on other resources in the classroom (e.g., paid aides, resource personnel, volunteers, peer tutors, technology). Use of special settings outside regular classrooms is a last resort.
- *Resource costs.* Because of the factors described above, remediation is more costly than regular teaching (allocations of time, personnel, materials, space, and so forth).
- *Psychological Impact.* The features of remediation are highly visible to students, teachers, and others. Chances are such features are seen as "different" and stigmatizing. Thus, the psychological impact of remediation can have a negative component. The sensitive nature of remediation is another reason it should be implemented only when necessary and in ways that strive to produce positive perceptions all around.

Basically, efforts to deal with interfering factors involve
- direct actions to address major external/internal barriers to learning and behaving
- helping students strengthen themselves in areas where they have weaknesses or vulnerabilities
- helping students learn ways to compensate, as necessary, when confronted with barriers or areas of weaknesses
- special accommodations.

For school staff, direct action at this level mainly encompasses a continuous process of trial and appraisal to find the best ways to help. This includes working with involved others such as family members, peers, and other school staff – counseling them away from actions that interfere with students' progress and guiding them to helpful strategies. Compensatory approaches may be used. These involve efforts to both enhance students' (families') motivation for addressing barriers and teaching specific strategies for circumventing barriers that can't be overcome.

In addition to direct and systematic teaching and behavior management, intervention strategies may draw on a variety of other teaching models and learning principles, as well as on psychotherapeutic principles. Practices encompass rapport building to reduce anxiety and increase positive involvement, mastery learning, instruction in using cognitive and general learning strategies, use of multisensory approaches, greater use of specific techniques to enhance engagement and guide and support learning, greater emphasis on facilitating social interactions, and so forth.

Technology and blended learning strategies can help in many ways. In particular, computers are a major compensatory tool for many students. Using a keyboard to write, for example, compensates for poor handwriting, which is especially important for students with weak fine motor abilities; various software programs help compensate for poor language skills. And, properly used, the internet provides many opportunities to engage and re-engage students.

Experienced practitioners often pursue "clinical teaching." This involves (1) authentic assessment (e.g., RtI) to provide information for planning the day's work, (2) formulation of the day's plan, (3) carrying it out, and (4) evaluating the effects (positive and negative). Evaluation findings are supplemented with additional assessment if necessary, and these data provide much of the bases for planning the next session. Over time, staff using this cycle acquire an appreciation of what is likely to work or will not work with a specific individual.[3]

The experiences of Larry and Joan may clarify matters a bit more. In Larry's case, the need was to address a minor reading problem. Joan's problem was somewhat more severe.

Mr. Johnston's first efforts to help Larry improve his reading skills involved a variety of reteaching strategies. The activity focused on current reading tasks in which Larry had indicated an interest. The reteaching strategies were not simply a matter of trying more of the same -- more drill, for example. He tried alternative procedures ranging from commonly used explanations, techniques, and materials (such as another example or analogy, a concrete demonstration, a memorization strategy) to less common, specialized, *remedial* techniques (such as a multisensory method). After working on this level for a week, Mr. Johnston found that over the preceding years, Larry had not learned a number of prerequisites widely viewed as reading-readiness skills. For example, Larry had difficulty following directions involving more than one point at a time, and he had problems ordering and sequencing events described to him. He also seemed to have little awareness of the relationship between the spoken and the printed word. As he assessed these problems in his daily work with Larry, Mr. Johnston pointed them out, and they agreed to include them as a major focus of instruction. As had happened with other students, Mr. Johnston found that once the missing prerequisites were learned, Larry had little problem learning basic reading skills.

Joan's situation, however, proved to be more difficult. Because her problem was more severe, Mr. Johnston focused from the start on absent reading prerequisites. As he worked with her over a period of several weeks, he found she had trouble learning most of the prerequisites he taught her and retained only a small amount of what she learned. Thus, he moved on to try to detect any dysfunctional learning mechanisms that might be interfering with her learning. Over a period of weeks, it became clear that Joan was having widespread difficulty discriminating sounds and was continuing to have severe trouble recalling what she had learned the day before. Rather than have her continue to experience failure, Mr. Johnston shifted the focus of instruction. The time usually spent on reading instruction was devoted to helping overcome factors interfering with her learning. Activities she wanted to do were identified; as she had trouble, he worked with her using techniques that stressed multisensory involvement. To improve her retention, he encouraged her to take smaller amounts, and together they identified a variety of interesting activities with which she could immediately apply and practice what she was learning. At first, Joan was hesitant to try things that she had failed at previously. Mr. Johnston did not push. He followed her lead and, at the same time, increasingly encouraged her to risk exploring new things. It should be noted that one of Mr. Johnston's goals with Joan was to help her increase her feelings of competence. When he first began working with her, however, she perceived the special help as another sign of her lack of competence, and this made her feel worse. Such a reaction is common. In the end, as was usually the case with such students, Mr. Johnston found Joan's progress to be slow but steady.

Providing Special Assistance *In the Classroom*

As stressed, when a teacher encounters difficulty with a youngster, a first step is to try addressing the problem in the regular class with personalized instruction. This usually requires enhancing the classroom's overall capability for accommodating a wide range of individual differences, teaching students to compensate for differences, vulnerabilities, and disabilities, and creating a caring conditions for learning. Enhancing classroom capabilities involves opening the door and inviting in others who can play a role in preventing and responding to barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. Ultimately, this involves redefining the roles and functions of student and learning support personnel so that they are able to work closely with teachers and students in the classroom. As regular classroom capability for preventing and responding to problems increases, this supports inclusionary policies and reduces the need for specialized services.

When step 2 is necessary, the hierarchical approach stresses *special* and sometimes *specialized* interventions that are provided in ways that minimize intrusive/restrictive/disruptive practices.

Specific objectives are formulated in discussions with the student (and key family members). The focus is on identifying processes and outcomes the student values and perceives as attainable. Interventions are modified based on ongoing dialogues with the student that are informed by analyses of task performance.

Motivation is a major consideration at all times.
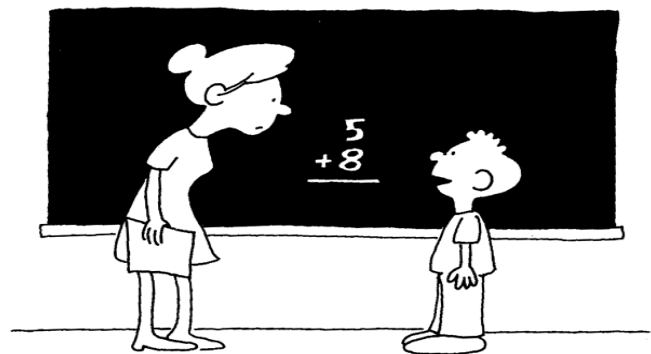
GOSH, MRS. THOMPSON, I WAS READY TO LEARN MATH YESTERDAY. TODAY I'M READY TO LEARN TO READ.

Focusing Directly on Observable Problems

At Level A, the emphasis is on re-teaching related to readily observable learning and behavior problems to bring the student's learning and behavior at least up to par with respect to her/his peers. However, since special assistance builds on personalized instruction, the methods used involve more than typical direct teaching. That is, a primary concern is on (re-)engaging the student using valued options and mutual decision making (e.g., about learning objectives and how to structure and sequence lessons). Particular attention is paid to being certain the student perceives instruction as a good match with his/her motivation and capabilities.

Developing Prerequisites

Some students may not have acquired certain "readiness" skills or attitudes that are prerequisites for effectively learning to read, do math, understand science, and negotiate other subjects. Individuals who have not learned to order and sequence events, follow learning directions, and so forth need to develop such skills to enable success with basic academics. Similarly, if students don't see much point in learning the three Rs or other school subjects, motivational readiness must be engendered. Exhibit 4-4 outlines a set of prerequisites relevant to the process of teaching basic academics. Special assistance at this level remains necessary only for the time required to facilitate acquisition of specific missing prerequisites.

I guess I have everything I need for school.

\   Except the right attitude.
/

Exhibit 4-4

Prerequisites for Classroom Learning

In general, individuals should have the following important prerequisites if they are to benefit appropriately from instruction in the three Rs.

Language

1. Expressive – working vocabulary and ability to speak clearly and plainly enough to be understood
2. Receptive – ability to understand what is said
3. Use – ability to use at least simple sentences and to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings; understanding of the relationship between spoken and written language

Perception

1. Visual discrimination – ability to discriminate differences and similarities in letters, words, numbers, and colors and to see the relationship of a part to a whole
2. Auditory discrimination -- ability to discriminate differences and similarities in sounds of letters

Cognition and Motivation (including attentional, memory, and conceptual skills)

1. First and foremost, *interest in what is being taught*
2. Then, the ability and desire to
   - follow simple directions
   - stay at one's desk for sufficient periods of time to complete a simple classroom task
   - remember simple facts
   - answer questions about a simple story
   - tell a story from a picture (i.e., associate symbols with pictures, objects, and facts)
   - stay focused on material (pictures, letters, words) presented to the class by the teacher
   - solve simple task oriented problems
   - tolerate failure sufficiently to persist on a task
   - make transitions from one activity to another
   - carry on with a task over several days
   - accept adult direction without objection or resentment
   - work without constant supervision or reminders
   - respond to normal classroom routines
   - suppress tendencies to interrupt others

Addressing Factors Interfering with Learning

If individuals have trouble learning and behaving appropriately in a personalized learning environment even after special assistance has engaged them and missing prerequisites are addressed, it is time to explore the possibility of major interfering problems. At this level of intervention, the focus shifts to more intensive special assistance designed to help individuals overcome underlying problems. Of concern are addressing any external and/or internal barriers interfering with classroom learning and performance.

<div align="center">

Reducing Unnecessary Referrals:
Response to Intervention and Accommodations

</div>

Special assistance always has been guided by some form of authentic assessment and has used a variety of personal accommodations. Over the years, these have helped to reduce referrals for specialized services.

Response to Interventions

As noted earlier, Response to Intervention (RtI) is a prominently advocated strategy in efforts to address learning problems as soon as they arise. The process involves analyses of authentic responses made to instruction, as well to other interventions designed to address problems. The goal is to identify not only students' needs but also their interests. Thus, the analyses must consider (a) motivational as well as developmental considerations and (b) whether the problem requires a deeper look. Does the problem stem from the student not having acquired readiness skills? Does it arise from "critical student dispositions" that have produced avoidance motivation to curricula content and instructional processes? What accommodations and interventions are needed to ameliorate the student's problems? And, when problems persist, what other external and internal factors must be considered? All this is consistent with an approach that first *personalizes* instruction and then assesses learning and behavior problems using a hierarchical set of interventions. And implementing these processes effectively is best accomplished through collaborative actions.

Special assistance adds an array of ways to pursue Response to Intervention (RtI). And by using a comprehensive range of student and learning supports, RtI can help reduce unnecessary referrals for specialized help (e.g., formal testing, counseling, special education service).

As part of a comprehensive approach to Response to Intervention, special assistance interventions provide critical assessment data for understanding a student's problems and intervention planning. Without a strong emphasis on providing special assistance, referral systems become flooded and help for many students with learning, behavior, and emotional problems grinds to a halt.

Indeed, seeking out-of-classroom support services should occur only after extensive special assistance efforts are pursued and proven unsuccessful in the classroom. And, as such services are added, processes need to be in place to ensure the interventions are coordinated with what is going on in the classroom, school-wide, and at home.

The key is to implement special assistance in ways that ensure students are mobilized to learn and perform and that the interventions are appropriately designed to match their capabilities. Particular attention is paid to eliciting student, and as feasible, family perspectives and involvement in decision making (see Exhibit 4-5).

Exhibit 4.5
Using Response to Intervention in Pursuing Special Assistance

Use individual conferences to find out more about the causes of a student's problems and what interventions may help, and in the process, work on enhancing a positive working relationship.
  • As feasible, include the family in the initial conference.
• Clarify assets (e.g. positive attributes, outside interests, hobbies, what the student
     likes at school and in class).
  • Clarify what the youngster doesn't like at school.
  • Explore the reasons for "dislikes" (e.g., Are assignments seen as too hard? as
     uninteresting? Is the student embarrassed because others will think s/he doesn't
      have the ability to do assignments? Is the youngster picked on? rejected? alienated?)
  • Try to determine other likely causal factors.
  • Explore what the youngster and those in the home think can be done to make things
      better (including extra support from a volunteer, a peer, friend, etc.).
  • Discuss some new strategies the youngster and those in the home would be *willing* to
      try to make the situation better.

And try the following:
  • Introduce some new learning and enrichment options with an emphasis on those
      that fit the student's specific interests and a deemphasis on areas that are not
      of interest.
  • If peers dislike the student, find ways for the youngster to have special, positive
      status in class and/or in others arenas around the school/community. (This not
      only can help counter a negative image among peers, but can reduce behavior problems and
      alleviate negative feelings about self and others.) Analyze the impact on learning and
      behavior.
  • Enhance use of aides, volunteers, peer tutors/coaches, mentors, those in the home, etc.
      not only to help support student efforts to learn and perform, but to enhance the student's
      social support networks. Analyze the impact on learning and behavior.
  • After trying all the above, add some tutoring specifically designed to enhance student
      engagement in learning and to facilitate learning of specific academic and social skills
      that are interfering with effective classroom performance and learning.

     For more, see *Response to Intervention* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtii.pdf.

It is a given that student engagement is a critical prerequisite for all assessment. When a student's motivation to learn and problem-solve is enhanced, a more valid assessment of special assistance needs and personal strengths is likely. When motivational considerations are given short shrift, assessments and diagnoses are confounded, and special assistance may be guided in wrong directions.

In sum, analyzing responses to special assistance interventions are a primary facet of assessment to address learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Over time, staff using authentic assessment can acquire an appreciation of what is likely to work with the student and what will not. Moreover, as student engagement is enhanced and as those who have become disconnected from learning at school re-engage, diagnostic accuracy can be improved and diagnostic errors corrected (e.g., special assistance can help identify false positive identifications of learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders).

A Wide Range of Accommodations

We take as a given that classrooms must offer a variety of content and process options and accommodations to personalize instruction and provide special assistance when necessary. This is especially essential in addressing learning, behavior, emotional, and physical problems.

Options and accommodations are intended not only to address differences in capability, but to affect students' motivation by involving them in activities they value and believe are attainable with appropriate effort. For example, classroom assignments and rules can be changed to better account for youngsters who are very active and/or distractable. For such students, this involves relaxing behavioral expectations and standards a bit, at least for a period of time (e.g., widening limits for them so that certain behaviors are not an infringement of the rules).

Accommodations help establish a good match for learning. For students with significant learning, behavior, and emotional problems, interveners use many special accommodations (see Exhibit 4-6). In fact, Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 encourages schools to pursue a range of such accommodations when students' symptoms significantly interfere with learning but do not qualify them for special education.

Exhibit 4.6

Examples of Accommodation Recommendations

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

- identify any specific environmental factors that distract students and make appropriate environmental changes

- have students work with a group that is highly task-focused

- let students work in a study carrel or in a space that is "private" and uncluttered

- designate a volunteer to help whenever students becomes distracted and/or start to misbehave, and if necessary, to help them make transitions

- allow for frequent "breaks"

- interact with students in ways that will minimize confusion and distractions (e.g., keep conversations relatively short; talk quietly and slowly; use concrete terms; express warmth and nurturance)

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

- develop and provide sets of specific prompts, multisensory cues, steps, etc. using oral,written, and perhaps pictorial and color-coded guides as organizational aids related to specific learning activities, materials, and daily schedules

- ensure someone checks with students frequently throughout an activity to provide additional support and guidance in concrete ways (e.g., model, demonstrate, coach)

- support student efforts related to self-monitoring and self-evaluation and provide nurturing feedback keyed to student progress and next steps

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

- modify the length and time demands of assignments and tests

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

See the following page for examples of the types of accommodations highlighted by federal law (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973).

(cont.)

Exhibit 4.6 (cont.)

504 Accommodation Checklist

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

Physical Arrangement of Room

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

Lesson Presentation

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

Assignments/worksheets

- giving extra time to complete tasks
- simplifying complex directions
- handing worksheets out one at a time
- reducing the reading level of the assignments
- requiring fewer correct responses to achieve grade (quality vs. quantity)
- allowing student to tape record assignments/homework
- providing a structured routine in written form
- providing study skills training/learning strategies
- giving frequent short quizzes and avoiding long tests
- shortening assignments; breaking work into smaller segments
- allowing typewritten or computer printed assignments prepared by the student or dictated by the student and

  recorded by someone else if needed.
- using self-monitoring devices
- reducing homework assignments
- not grading handwriting
- student not be allowed to use cursive or manuscript writing
- reversals and transpositions of letters and numbers should not be marked wrong, reversals or transpositions should be pointed out for corrections
- do not require lengthy outside reading assignments
- teacher monitor students self-paced assignments (daily, weekly, bi-weekly)

- arrangements for homework assignments to reach home with clear, concise directions
- recognize and give credit for student's oral participation in class

Test Taking

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

Organization

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

Behaviors

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

The concept of "looping" illustrates a school structure form of accommodation. Looping involves the teacher moving with students from one grade to the next for one or more years. The intent is to enhance teacher and student opportunities to work together in addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems. This accommodation can reduce student apprehension about a new school year and enables schools to provide more time for slower students, which counters the need for retention. And, it ensures more time for relationship and community building and bonding between teachers and students and teachers and parents and among students.

Situationally, student placement in a special classroom and school (e.g., special education classes, alternative public or private schools), while often a controversial move, often is recommended as another form of accommodation. And pursuit of a High School Equivalency Certificate is seen as a way to accommodate those who didn't get to graduate.

A Note about Learner Decision Making

Key to the success of special assistance is the involvement of students in making decisions from valued options. Fostering student perceptions of real choice (e.g., being in control of one's destiny, being self-determining) can help counter perceptions of coercion and control. Shifting such perceptions can reduce reactance and enhance engagement in classroom learning.

Helping student make personal and active decisions requires dialoguing with students and facilitating their efforts to identify a range of learning options they perceive as of considerable personal value and as attainable with an appropriate amount of effort and accommodation. It is worth reiterating an earlier point here: Before some students will decide to participate in a proactive way, they have to perceive the learning environment as positively different – and quite a bit so – from the one in which they had so much trouble. In specific cases, this may mean *temporarily* putting aside established options and standards to determine the most fundamental concern: Do they want to participate or not?

Only after all this is done and has not worked is it time to use the school's referral processes to ask for additional support services. As such services are added, of course they must be coordinated with what is going on in the classroom, school-wide, and at home.

Providing Special Assistance *Out of the Classroom*

Despite sound efforts to address a student's problems with personalized instruction and special assistance in a regular classroom, out-of-classroom assistance may become necessary. One reason out-of-the-classroom assistance is requested so often is because so many individuals with learning problems also manifest behavior problems. Such individuals are frequently described not only as having learning disabilities, but as hyperactive, distractable, impulsive, emotionally and behaviorally disordered, and so forth. Their behavior patterns can interfere with efforts to remedy their learning problems. When this is the case, the interfering behavior must be eliminated or minimized in order to pursue remediation. In addition to direct behavior control, programs are used to alter deviant and devious behavior by improving impulse control, selective attention, sustained attention and follow-through, perseverance, frustration tolerance, and social awareness and skills.

Added assistance outside class must be provided whenever necessary, but only when necessary. Special attention is given to both external and internal barriers to learning and performance. Examples include outside tutoring, supportive and stress reduction counseling for the student, and training for parents to support student learning and performance. If prerequisites are missing, students also may be offered counseling to restore feelings of competence and efficacy. For underlying interfering factors, intensive interventions address barriers related to a host of external and internal risk factors (including a focus on resiliency and protective factors). In extreme cases, full time outside interventions are provided for a limited period of time.

When Referral for Specialized Services is Necessary

When specialized services are necessary, additional concerns arise. These include providing all stakeholders with information clarifying available assistance and how to access help, facilitating requests for assistance, identifying and assessing problems, triaging in making referrals, planning and providing direct services, monitoring and managing care, managing resources, and interfacing with community outreach to fill gaps. The work also involves ongoing formative evaluations designed to improve quality, effectiveness, and efficiency.

With specific respect to severe and chronic problems and students mandated for special education programs, special assistance includes connecting what the school offers with whatever is available in the community and facilitating access. In implementing the activity, the emphasis is on enhancing a "system of care" and ensuring the special assistance is integrated with the other facets of the comprehensive system of learning supports.

Processes related to problem identification, triage, referral to and management of specialized services require systematic connections (see Exhibit 4-7).

A Cautionary Note

Too many schools tend to redefine and constrict the curriculum for individuals identified as needing special assistance. For example, remedial programs often focus primarily on students deficits. Always working on one's problems and trying to catch up can be grueling. Students must be tremendously motivated to keep working on their "problems" day in and day out.

Concerns arise particularly about research applications that encourage an overemphasis on assessing and remedying students' problems. When specific areas for remediation are overstressed, other areas tend to be deemphasized, resulting in a narrowing of curriculum and a fragmentation of instruction.

Limiting the focus to special assistance presumes the learner cannot learn when motivated to do so and risks making the whole curriculum rather deadening. Broadening the focus to an increased range of developmental tasks and enrichment activities not only can balance the picture, but also may be key to finding better ways to help individuals overcome their problems.

A comprehensive curriculum also is essential to minimizing delays in the degree to which students accomplish major developmental tasks not affected by the factors causing them problems. Even among those with pervasive and severe problems, areas are likely in which their learning problems are not severely handicapping. In these areas, learning can proceed without special assistance or, at least, the focus can be on missing prerequisites or observable factors. In such cases, individuals pursue learning at several levels at once.

Exhibit 4-7
Processes for Problem Identification, Triage, Referral, & Management of Interventions

Initial Problem Identification by Self or Others

(In schools, informal or formal screening leads to problem identification. When available information (e.g., from response to intervention) is insufficient to understand the problem, more in-depth assessment – including testing – is indicated.)

Initial Triage and Management of Care to Ensure Follow-through in addressing concerns

Formal Assessment Administered

(Given limited school resources, a first-level triage process is used to prioritize who is most in need; only essential assessment procedures are administered.)

Supplement Assessment by Collecting Data Through Informal Observations & Interviews & Review All Other Available Information

Intervention Triage

(Priority decisions are made about proceeding. These are based on analyses of the assessment findings indicating how pressing the need is).

Ongoing Monitoring of Special Assistance

Consultation and Referral

Open-Enrollment Programs

(e.g., social, recreational, and other development and enrichment programs;

Specialized Interventions to Address Individual Student and Family **Problems**

Academic Learning Supports

Physical & Mental Health Services

Social, Legal, & Economic Supports

Note: Proper application of special assistance involves ongoing assessment, information sharing, and care monitoring and management. These processes can be facilitated by a computerized information management system (with effective privacy safeguards).

Concluding Comments

Particular concerns for school improvement efforts are addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. To address these concerns, schools must go beyond prevailing instructional and assessment practices and build capacity for personalizing instruction and enhancing special assistance in classrooms. By doing so, they will more effectively account for a wider range of individual differences and disabilities and reduce unnecessary referrals for specialized services.

In addition, schools must rework the way they provide schoolwide student and learning supports. We turn to that matter after taking a deeper dive into the topic of behavior management in Chapter 5.

*Now that you're in third grade,
how do you like school?*

CLOSED!

Notes

[1] See Center for Mental Healht in Schools (2017)

[2] See Achenbach (2017)

[3] The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), has published *The Model Standards for Licensing General and Special Education Teachers of Students with Disabilities: A Resource for State Dialogue*. These standards outline what general and special education teachers should know and be able to do in order to meet the general classroom needs of students with disabilities. See the set of essential questions teachers ask http://serge.ccsso.org/site_map.html . Each has links to help quickly locate information and resources.

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Also see:

>*Self-Study Survey on Classroom-based Learning Supports* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/toolsforpractice/classroomsurvey.pdf

>Our Center's Resource Catalogue for a list of special resources related to the matters covered in this chapter. Available at no cost from the online clearinghouse of the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/.

>For ease in finding and accessing specific topics (e.g., Accommodation/Inclusion, Case/Care Management), see the Center's Quick Find menu of over 130 topics – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm .

Finally, in addition to resources cited in the reference list, below are examples of additional resources that can help in designing classrooms to be a better match for the full range of learners enrolled in a classroom.

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Chapter 5

Classroom Behavior Management: It's Not Just about Controlling Kids: It's about Engaging and Re-engaging Them in Learning

Managing Behavior at School:
 Overreliance on Strategies to Control Behavior
      About Punishment
      About Logical Consequences

      Is Skill Training an Answer?

A Broad Perspective on Addressing Behavior Problems

Engagement in Learning
      Engagement is About Motivation
      Valuing and Expectations: Key Components of Motivation
      Overreliance on Rewards
      Don't Lose Sight of Intrinsic Motivation

Re-engaging Disconnected Students
      Addressing Underlying Motivation
      General Strategies
      A Bit More About Options and Decision Making

Concluding Comments

Harrisbrugh PA., April, 2017 – Nearly half the students at a high school in Pennsylvania's capital city have been given suspension notices for missing too much class time. Officials at Harrisburg High School gave the notices to 500 students on Monday as part of a crackdown by the school's new principal. Officials say the students accumulated too many unexcused absences.

At least 100 students served one-day suspensions on Tuesday. School officials are working with the parents of other students and say many parents have provided documentation to explain the absences.

Principal Lisa Love says students often come to school but then skip class, instead loitering in hallways and other parts of the large school. She says she needed to do something "radical" to get students' attention.

I suspect that many children would learn arithmetic, and learn it better, if it were illegal. – John Holt

"If I was going to stay in education, I knew I had to get past the discipline issues. . . . I wrote down what I liked and hated about my own teachers . . . . I remembered how much I wanted the teachers I adored to like or notice me; I remembered how criticism bruised my fragile ego; I remembered how I resented teacher power plays. Mostly, I remembered how much I hated the infantilizing nature of high school. . . . I reminded myself that I already know a lot – just from the student side of the desk. If I could keep remembering, I could convey genuine empathy and have honest interactions."

Margaret Metzger

Clearly, student misbehavior can be a barrier to learning. Misbehavior disrupts; it may be hurtful; it may disinhibit others. When a student misbehaves, a natural reaction is to want that youngster to experience and other students to see the consequences of misbehaving. A hope is that public awareness of consequences will deter subsequent problems. As a result, schools spend considerable time and resources on *discipline* – sometimes embedding it all in the broader concept of *classroom management*.

Managing Behavior at School: Overreliance on Strategies to Control Behavior

In their efforts to deal with deviant and devious behavior and to create safe environments, schools unfortunately often overrely on social control strategies (e.g., rules, surveillance, consequences). Ironically, such practices model behavior that can foster rather than counter development of negative values and frequently produce other forms of undesired behavior.

An often stated assumption underlying many social control practices is that stopping misbehavior will make the student amenable to teaching. In a few cases, this may be so. However, the assumption ignores all the work that has led to understanding *psychological reactance* and the need to restore one's sense of self-determination. 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.

About Punishment

Student behavior management at schools usually takes the form of punishing misbehavior (e.g., doing something that the staff believes the student does not want to happen). In addition, a demand for future compliance usually is made, along with threats of harsher punishment if compliance is not forthcoming. Moreover, the discipline may be administered in ways that suggest a student is an undesirable person.

The benefits of using punishment to control behavior usually are offset by many negative consequences, including negative attitudes toward school and school personnel, anti-social acts, and various mental health problems. (It is worth noting the correlation between corporal punishment of adolescents and depression, suicide, alcohol abuse, and domestic violence.) Disciplinary procedures also are associated with school dropouts. Indeed, some concerned professionals refer to extreme disciplinary practices as "pushout" strategies.

About Logical Consequences

In punishing misbehavior, schools often refer to *logical consequences.* This idea is generalized from situations with naturally-occurring consequences (e.g., touch a hot stove, get burned). While there may be little ambiguity about the rules, unfortunately, the same often cannot be said about "logical" penalties. Even when the consequence for rule infraction is specified ahead of time, the logic may be more in the mind of the school staff than in the eyes of students. In the recipient's view, any act of discipline may be experienced as punitive – unfair, unreasonable, denigrating, disempowering.

Consequences run the gamut of depriving students of things they want to making them experience something they don't want. Consequences take the form of (a) removal/deprivation (e.g., loss of privileges, exclusion from an activity, suspension from school), (b) reprimands (e.g., public censure), (c) reparations (e.g., to compensate for losses caused by misbehavior), and (d) recantations (e.g., apologies, plans for avoiding future problems).

For instance, teachers commonly deal with acting out behavior by removing a student from an activity. Often described as "time out," such a response may be a logical way to stop students from disrupting others by isolating them, or the logic may be that students sometimes need a cooling off period. It may be reasoned that (a) the misbehavior shows that the student does not deserve the privilege of participating (assuming the activity is liked) and (b) the loss will lead to improved behavior in order to avoid future deprivation.

Most people have little difficulty explaining their reasons for using a consequence. However, if the intent really is to have students perceive consequences as logical and nondebilitating, it seems reasonable to determine whether recipients perceive the discipline as a legitimate response

to their misbehavior. It is difficult to administer consequences in a way that minimizes the negative impact on students' perceptions of self. Although the intent usually is to stress how bad the misbehavior and its impact are, students can too easily experience the process as characterizing them as bad people. The full impact of logical consequences must reflect understanding of students' perceptions and of negative repercussions.

Organized sports such as youth basketball and soccer offer a prototype of an established and accepted set of consequences administered with recipients' perceptions given major consideration. In these arenas, referees are able to use the rules and related criteria to identify inappropriate acts and apply penalties; moreover, they are expected to do so with positive concern for maintaining youngsters' dignity and engendering respect for all.

Note that most school guidelines for managing misbehavior emphasize that discipline should be reasonable, fair, and nondenigrating. This suggests that the practices should be experienced by recipients as legitimate reactions that neither denigrate their sense of worth nor reduce their sense of autonomy. To these ends: (a) consequences that are established publically are more likely to be experienced as socially just (e.g., reasonable, firm but fair) and (b) such consequences should be administered in ways that allow students to maintain a sense of integrity, dignity, and autonomy. All this is best achieved under conditions where students are "empowered" to make improvements and avoid future misbehavior and have opportunities for positive involvement and reputation building at school.

If discipline is to be perceived as a logical consequence, steps must be taken to convey that a response is not a personally motivated act of power (e.g., an authoritarian action) and, indeed, is a rational and socially agreed upon reaction. Also, if the aim is to reduce misbehavior over the long-term, it probably is necessary to take time to help students learn right from wrong, to respect others rights, to accept responsibility, and to re-engage with valued learning opportunities.

While, many people still see punishment/consequences as the primary recourse in dealing with misbehavior, advocacy is widespread for moving schools beyond overreliance on such practices. For example, there is ongoing advocacy for social skills training, (e.g., social-emotional learning, asset development, character education).

Is Skill Training an Answer?

Since poor social skills are identified as a symptom (a correlate) and contributing factor in a wide range of educational, psychosocial, and mental health problems, social skills training is at the core of many programs that move beyond punishment. Research in this area describes programs to improve social skills and interpersonal problem solving as having promise both for prevention and correction.

However, reviewers of research over the past few decades are only cautiously optimistic. Conclusions stress that individual studies show effectiveness, but outcomes continue to lack generalizability and external validity. The range of skills acquired remain limited and generalizability and maintenance of outcomes are poor. 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 (e.g., empathy training). None of this suggests that developing skills is irrelevant; the concern is that skill building is only one aspect of addressing misbehavior and often may be a secondary focus.

As with specific discipline practices, skill training programs ignore the context and underlying motivation for misbehavior. The focus on context has generated the adoption of positive behavior support initiatives. With a broader concern for context, some reformers are trying to transform schools so they are holistically-oriented and family-centered. They want curricula to enhance values and character, including responsibility (social and moral), integrity, self-regulation (self-discipline), and a work ethic and also want schools to foster self-esteem, diverse talents, and emotional well-being. All this is seen as creating a climate of "caring," "cooperative learning," and a "sense of community." Relatedly, there are calls for greater home involvement, with emphasis on enhanced parent responsibility for their children's behavior and learning.

The push for moving from punishment to positive approaches is in the right direction. However, most of the initiatives have not focused enough on a basic system failure. That is, various approaches have paid too little attention to helping teachers engage and re-engage students in classroom learning. The immediate objective of stopping misbehavior must be accomplished in ways that maximize the likelihood that students engage/re-engage in instruction and positive learning. Engaging/re-engaging students productively in instruction is key not only to reducing misbehavior but to maintaining positive behavior.

A Broad Perspective on Addressing Behavior Problems

Interventions for misbehavior are outlined in Exhibit 5-1 in terms of

- efforts to prevent and anticipate misbehavior
- actions to be taken during misbehavior
- steps to be taken afterwards.

We stress prevention, quick response, and a follow-up with special assistance.

>*Preventing misbehavior* (e.g., improve programs to enhance student engagement and minimize conditions that foment misbehavior; enhance home responsibility for childrens' behavior and learning; promote a school climate that embraces a holistic and family-centered orientation; work with students to establish a set of logical consequences that are reasonable, fair, and nondenigrating).

>*Responding quickly when misbehavior occurs* (e.g., reestablish a calm and safe atmosphere and apply established logical consequences in keeping with the framework for personalization and special assistance)

>*Following-up after an event* (e.g., make program changes if necessary; prevent further problems with those who misbehaved by following-up with special assistance).

As Exhibit 5-1 highlights, the concern involves more than the school. It also underscores that, while teachers must learn to use disciplinary practices effectively to deal with misbehavior, schools also must teach self-discipline and personal responsibility to students. The aim is not just to temporarily control bad behavior. Misbehavior presents a teachable moment for enhancing social and moral development. Students can learn about personal responsibility, integrity, self-regulation/self-discipline, a work ethic, appreciation of diversity, and positive feelings about self and others.
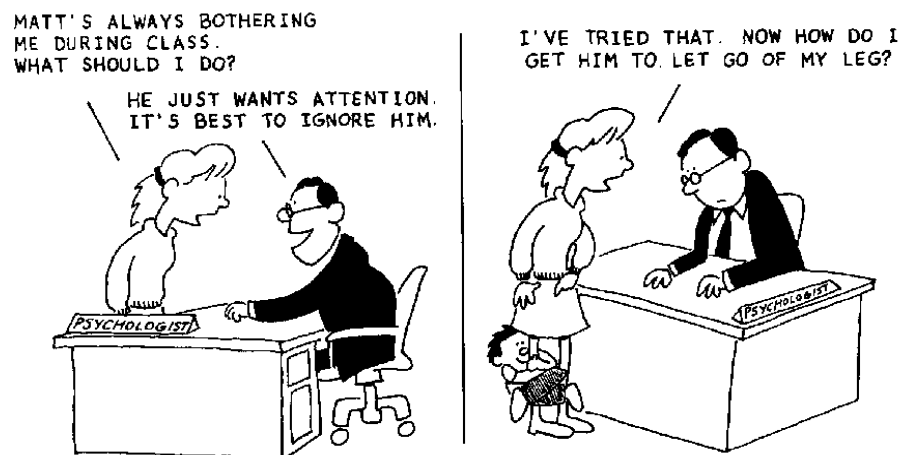
Exhibit 5-1

Dealing with Misbehavior

I. Preventing Misbehavior

A. Expand Social Programs

1. Increase economic opportunity for low income groups
2. Augment health and safety prevention and maintenance (encompassing parent education and direct child services)
3. Extend quality day care and early education

B. Improve Schooling

1. Personalize classroom instruction (e.g., accommodating a wide range of motivational and developmental differences
2. Provide status opportunities for nonpopular students (e.g., special roles as assistants and tutors)
3. Identify and remedy skill deficiencies early

C. Follow-up All Occurrences of Misbehavior to Remedy Causes

1. Identify underlying motivation for misbehavior
2. For unintentional misbehavior, strengthen coping skills (e.g., social skills, problem solving strategies)
3. If misbehavior is intentional but reactive, work to eliminate conditions that produce reactions (e.g., conditions that make the student feel incompetent, controlled, or unrelated to significant others)
4. For proactive misbehavior, offer appropriate and attractive alternative ways the student can pursue a sense of competence, control, and relatedness
5. Equip the individual with acceptable steps to take instead of misbehaving (e.g., options to withdraw from a situation or to try relaxation techniques)
6. Enhance the individual's motivation and skills for overcoming behavior problems (including altering negative attitudes toward school)

II. Anticipating Misbehavior

A. Personalize Classroom Structure for High Risk Students

1. Identify underlying motivation for misbehavior
2. Design curricula to consist primarily of activities that are a good match with the identified individual's intrinsic motivation and developmental capability
3. Provide extra support and direction so the identified individual can cope with difficult situations (including steps that can be taken instead of misbehaving)

B. Develop Consequences for Misbehavior that are Perceived by Students as Logical (i.e., that are perceived by the student as reasonable fair, and nondenigrating reactions which do not reduce one' sense of autonomy)

III. During Misbehavior

A. Try to base response on understanding of underlying motivation (if uncertain, start with assumption the misbehavior is unintentional)

B. Reestablish a calm and safe atmosphere

1. Use understanding of student's underlying motivation for misbehaving to clarify what occurred (if feasible involve participants in discussion of events)
2. Validate each participant's perspective and feelings
3. Indicate how the matter will be resolved emphasizing use of previously agreed upon logical consequences that have been personalized in keeping with understanding of underlying motivation
4. If the misbehavior continues, revert to a firm but nonauthoritarian statement
5. As a last resort use crises back-up resources
   a. If appropriate, ask student's friends to help
   b. Call for help from identified back-up personnel
6. Throughout the process, keep others calm by dealing with the situation with a calm and protective demeanor

IV. After Misbehavior

A. Implement Discipline -- Logical Consequences/ Punishment

1. Objectives in using consequences
   a. Deprive student of something s/he wants
   b. Make student experience something s/he doesn't want
2. Forms of consequences
   a. Removal/deprivation (e.g., loss of privileges, removal from activity)
   b. Reprimands (e.g., public censure)
   c. Reparations (e.g., of damaged or stolen property)
   d. Recantations (e.g., apologies, plans for avoiding future problems)

B. Discuss the Problem with Parents

1. Explain how they can avoid exacerbating the problem
2. Mobilize them to work preventively with school

C. Work Toward Prevention of Further Occurrences (see I & II)

And for more, see: *Behavioral Initiatives in Broad Perspective* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/behavioral/behini.pdf.

Engagement in Learning

It is commonplace to find that, when a student is not engaged in the lessons at hand, they tend to pursue other activity. After an extensive review of the literature (see Box below), Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris concluded: *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 problems, and behavior and learning problems and eventual dropout.

The review by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris notes that:

Engagement is defined in three ways in the research literature:

- *Behavioral engagement* draws on the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities and is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing dropping out.

- *Emotional engagement* encompasses positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school and is presumed to create ties to an institution and influence willingness to do the work.

- *Cognitive engagement* draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills.

Antecedents of Engagement can be organized into:

- *School level factors*: voluntary choice, clear and consistent goals, small size, student participation in school policy and management, opportunities for staff and students to be involved in cooperative endeavors, and academic work that allows for the development of products

- *Classroom Context*: Teacher support, peers, classroom structure, autonomy support, task characteristics

- *Individual Needs*: Need for relatedness, need for autonomy, need for competence

Engagement can be measured as follows:

- *Behavioral Engagement*: conduct, work involvement, participation, persistence, (e.g., completing homework, complying with school rules, absent/tardy, off-task)

- *Emotional Engagement*: self-report related to feelings of frustration, boredom, interest, anger, satisfaction; student-teacher relations; work orientation

- *Cognitive Engagement*: investment in learning, flexible problems solving, independent work styles, coping with perceived failure, preference for challenge and independent mastery, commitment to understanding the work

For engaged students, facilitating learning is a fairly straightforward matter and fits well with school improvements that primarily emphasize enhancing instructional practices (see Exhibit 5-2). The focus is on helping establish ways for students who are motivationally ready and able to achieve and, of course, to maintain and enhance their motivation. The process involves knowing when, how, and what to teach and also knowing when and how to structure the situation so they can learn on their own.

From the perspective of addressing barriers to learning, student engagement encompasses not only engaging and maintaining engagement, but also *re-engaging* those who have disengaged. Of particular concern is what is done when a student has disengaged and is misbehaving. In such cases, the problem of re-engagement may be exacerbated when the main strategy is the application of social control practices.

The degree of concern about student engagement varies depending on school population. Teaching goes well in schools where most students come each day ready and able to deal with what is being taught. 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-personalized) teaching approaches. To the dismay of most teachers, however, strategies for re-engaging students in *learning* rarely are a prominent part of preservice preparation and continuing professional development. And such strategies seldom are the focus of interventions applied by professionals whose role is to support teachers and students.

**You aren't paying attention to me.
Are you having trouble hearing?**

**I hear O.K.
I'm having trouble listening!**

Exhibit 5-2

Meaningful, Engaged Learning*

In recent years, researchers have formed a strong consensus on the importance of engaged learning in schools and classrooms. This consensus, together with a recognition of the changing needs of the 21st century, has stimulated the development of specific indicators of engaged learning. Jones, Valdez, Nowakowski, and Rasmussen developed the indicators described below . . . .

1. Vision of Engaged Learning

Successful, engaged learners are responsible for their own learning. These students are self-regulated and able to define their own learning goals and evaluate their own achievement. They are also energized by their learning, their joy of learning leads to a lifelong passion for solving problems, understanding, and taking the next step in their thinking . . . .

2. Tasks for Engaged Learning

In order to have engaged learning, tasks need to be challenging, authentic, and multidisciplinary. Such tasks are typically complex and involve sustained amounts of time. They are authentic in that they correspond to the tasks in the home and workplaces of today and tomorrow. Collaboration around authentic tasks often takes place with peers and mentors within school as well as with family members and others in the real world outside of school. These tasks often require integrated instruction that incorporates problem-based learning and curriculum by project.

3. Assessment of Engaged Learning

Assessment of engaged learning involves presenting students with an authentic task, project, or investigation, and then observing, interviewing, and examining their presentations and artifacts to assess what they actually know and can do. This assessment, often called performance-based assessment, is generative in that it involves students in generating their own performance criteria and playing a key role in the overall design, evaluation, and reporting of their assessment. The best performance-based assessment has a seamless connection to curriculum and instruction so that it is ongoing. Assessment should represent all meaningful aspects of performance and should have equitable standards that apply to all students.

(Cont.)

Exhibit 5-2 *(cont.)*

4. Instructional Models & Strategies for Engaged Learning

The most powerful models of instruction are interactive. Instruction actively engages the learner, and is generative. Instruction encourages the learner to construct and produce knowledge in meaningful ways. Students teach others interactively and interact generatively with their teacher and peers . . . .

5. Learning Context of Engaged Learning

For engaged learning to happen, the classroom must be conceived of as a knowledge-building learning community. Such communities not only develop shared understandings collaboratively but also create empathetic learning environments that value diversity and multiple perspectives. These communities search for strategies to build on the strengths of all of its members . . .

6. Grouping for Engaged Learning

Collaborative work that is learning-centered often involves small groups or teams of two or more students within a classroom or across classroom boundaries. Heterogeneous groups (including different sexes, cultures, abilities, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds) offer a wealth of background knowledge and perspectives to different tasks. Flexible grouping, which allows teachers to reconfigure small groups according to the purposes of instruction and incorporates frequent heterogeneous groups, is one of the most equitable means of grouping and ensuring increased learning opportunities.

7. Teacher Roles for Engaged Learning

The role of the teacher in the classroom has shifted from the primary role of information giver to that of facilitator, guide, and learner. As a facilitator, the teacher provides the rich environments and learning experiences needed for collaborative study. The teacher also is required to act as a guide--a role that incorporates mediation, modeling, and coaching. Often the teacher also is a co-learner and co-investigator with the students.

8. Student Roles for Engaged Learning

One important student role is that of explorer. Interaction with the physical world and with other people allows students to discover concepts and apply skills. Students are then encouraged to reflect upon their discoveries, which is essential for the student as a cognitive apprentice. Apprenticeship takes place when students observe and apply the thinking processes used by practitioners. Students also become teachers themselves by integrating what they've learned . . . .

*See B. Jones, G. Valdez, J. Nowakowski, & C. Rasmussen (1994). *Designing Learning and Technology for Educational Reform.* Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. Excerpted from article on NCREL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Engagement is About Motivation

   Engaging and re-engaging students in learning is the facet of teaching that draws on what is

known about human motivation. Let's look at some motivational differences.

>   Maria doesn't want to work on improving her reading. Not only is her *motivational readiness* for learning in this area low, but she also has a fairly high level of *avoidance motivation* for reading. Most of the time during reading instruction she is disengaged and acting out.
>
>   In contrast, David is motivationally ready to improve reading skills, but he has very little motivation to do so in the ways his teacher proposes. He has high motivation for the *outcome* but low motivation for the *processes* prescribed for getting there.
>
>   Matt often is highly motivated to do whatever is prescribed to help him learn to read better, but his motivation starts to disappear after a few weeks of hard work. He has trouble maintaining a sufficient amount of ongoing or *continuing motivation*, and his attention and behavior wander.
>
>   Helena appeared motivated to learn and did learn many new vocabulary words and improved her reading comprehension on several occasions over the years she was in special school programs. Her motivation to read after school, however, has never increased. It was assumed that as her skills improved, her attitude toward reading would too. But it never has.
>
>   No one expected James to become a good reader because of low scores on tests related to phonics ability and reading comprehension in 2nd grade. However, his teacher found some beginning level books on his favorite sport (baseball) and found that he really wanted to read them. He asked her and other students to help him with words and took the books home to read (where he also asked an older sister for some help). His skills started to improve rapidly and he was soon reading on a par with his peers.

   What the preceding examples illustrate is that

- motivation is a learning prerequisite, and its absence may be a cause of learning and behavior problems, a factor maintaining such problems, or both

- individuals may be motivated toward the idea of obtaining a certain learning outcome but may not be motivated to pursue certain learning processes

- individuals may be motivated to start to work on overcoming their learning and behavior problems but may not maintain their motivation

- individuals may be motivated to learn basic skills but maintain negative attitudes about the area of functioning and thus never use the skills except when they must

- motivated learners can do more than others might expect.

   An increased understanding of motivation clarifies how essential it is to avoid processes that

limit options, make students feel controlled and coerced, and focus mostly on "remedying"

problems. Such practices are seen as likely to produce avoidance reactions in the classroom and

to school and thus reduce opportunities for positive learning and for developing positive

attitudes.

Valuing and Expectations: Key Components of Motivation

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

Motivation theory has many facets. At the risk of over simplifying things, the following discussion is designed to make a few major points.

Can you decipher this?

E   x   V

(Don't go on until you've tried.)

Hint: the "x" is a multiplication sign.

If the equation stumped you, don't be surprised. See Exhibit 5-3 for an explanation.

> *You have to get up and go to school!*
>
> > *I don't want to. It's too hard and the kids don't like me.*
>
> *But, you have to go. You're the teacher.*

Exhibit 5-3

A Bit of Theory

The main introduction to motivational thinking that many people have been given in the past involves some form of reinforcement theory (which essentially deals with extrinsic motivation). Thus, all this may be new to you, even though motivational theorists have been wrestling with it for a long time, and intuitively, you probably understand much of what they are talking about.

"E" represents an individual's *expectations* about outcome (in school this often means expectations of success or failure). **"V"** represents *valuing*, with valuing influenced by both what is valued intrinsically and extrinsically. Thus, in a general sense, motivation can be thought of in terms of *expectancy times valuing*. Such theory recognizes that human beings are thinking and feeling organisms and that intrinsic factors can be powerful motivators. This understanding of human motivation has major implications for learning, teaching, parenting, and mental health interventions.

Within some limits (which we need not discuss here), high expectations and high valuing produce high motivation, while low expectations (E) and high valuing (V) produce relatively weak motivation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rewards and punishments may be material or social. For those with learning,

behavior, and emotional problems, there has been widespread use of such "incentives" (e.g., systematically giving points or tokens that can be exchanged for candy, prizes, praise, free time, or social interactions). Punishments have included loss of free time and other privileges, added work, fines, isolation, censure, and suspension. Grades have been used both as rewards and punishments. Because people will do things to obtain rewards or avoid punishment, rewards and punishment often are called *reinforcers*. Because they generally come from sources outside the person, they often are called *extrinsics*.

Extrinsic reinforcers are easy to use and can immediately affect behavior. Therefore, they have been widely adopted in the fields of special education and psychology. Unfortunately, the immediate effects are usually limited to very specific behaviors and often are short-term. Moreover, extensive use of extrinsics can have some undesired effects. And, sometimes the available extrinsics simply aren't powerful enough to get the desired results.

It is important to remember that what makes an extrinsic factor rewarding is the fact that it is experienced by the recipient as a reward. What makes it a highly valued reward is that the recipient highly values it. If someone doesn't like candy, there is not much point in offering it as a reward. Furthermore, because the use of extrinsics has limits, it's fortunate that people often do things even without apparent extrinsic reason. In fact, a lot of what people learn and spend time doing is done for intrinsic reasons. *Curiosity* is a good example. Curiosity seems to be an innate quality that leads us to seek stimulation, avoid boredom, and learn a great deal.

People also pursue some things because of what has been described as an innate *striving for competence*. Most of us value feeling competent. We try to conquer some challenges, and if none are around, we usually seek one out. Of course, if the challenges confronting us seem unconquerable or make us too uncomfortable (e.g., too anxious or exhausted), we try to put them aside and move on to something more promising.

Another important intrinsic motivator appears to be an internal push toward *self-*

determination. People seem to value feeling and thinking that they have some degree of choice and freedom in deciding what to do. And, human beings also seem intrinsically moved toward establishing and maintaining relationships. That is, we value the feeling of *interpersonal connection.*

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

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

Overreliance on Rewards

As Jerome Bruner stressed many years ago,

> *External reinforcement may indeed get a particular act going and may lead to its repetition, but it does not nourish, reliably, the long course of learning by which [one] slowly builds in [one's] own way a serviceable model of what the world is and what it can be.*

Motivation is not something that can be determined solely by forces outside the individual. Others can plan activities and outcomes to influence motivation and learning; however, how the activities and outcomes are experienced determines whether they are pursued (or avoided) with a little or a lot of effort and ability. Understanding that an individual's perceptions can affect motivation has led researchers to important findings about some undesired effects resulting from overreliance on extrinsics. (See the fable on the next page).

In a small town, there were a few youngsters who were labeled as handicapped. Over the years, a local bully had taken it upon himself to persecute them. In one recent incident, he sent a gang of young ragamuffins to harass one of his classmates who had just been diagnosed as having learning disabilities. He told the youngsters that the boy was retarded, and they could have some fun calling him a "retard."

Day after day in the schoolyard the gang sought the boy out. "Retard! Retard!" they hooted at him.

The situation became serious. The boy took the matter so much to heart that he began to brood and spent sleepless nights over it. Finally, out of desperation, he told his teacher about the problem, and together they evolved a plan.

The following day, when the little ones came to jeer at him, he confronted them saying,

"From today on I'll give any of you who calls me a 'retard' a quarter."

Then he put his hand in his pocket and, indeed, gave each boy a quarter.

Well, delighted with their booty, the youngsters, of course, sought him out the following day and began to shrill, "Retard! Retard!"

The boy looked at them -- smiling. He put his hand in his pocket and gave each of them a dime, saying, "A quarter is too much -- I can only afford a dime today."

Well, the boys went away satisfied because, after all, a dime was money too.

However, when they came the next day to hoot, the boy gave them only a penny each.

"Why do we get only a penny today?" they yelled.

"That's all I can afford."

"But two days ago you gave us a quarter, and yesterday we got a dime. It's not fair!"

"Take it or leave it. That's all you're going to get."

"Do you think we're going to call you a `retard' for one lousy penny?"

"So don't."

And they didn't.

(Adapted from a fable presented by Ausubel, 1948)

The point is that extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic reasons for doing things. Although this is not always the case and may not always be a bad thing, it is an important consideration in deciding to rely on extrinsic reinforcers in addressing learning, as well as learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

As Ed Deci cogently stressed:

> Rewards are generally used to control behavior. Children are sometimes rewarded with candy when they do what adults expect of them. Workers are rewarded with pay for doing what their supervisors want. People are rewarded with social approval or positive feedback for fitting into their social reference group. In all these situations, the aim of the reward is to control the person's behavior -- to make [the person] continue to engage in acceptable behaviors. And rewards often do work quite effectively as controllers. Further, whether it works or not, each reward has a controlling aspect. Therefore, the first aspect to every reward (including feedback) is a controlling aspect. However, rewards also provide information to the person about his effectiveness in various situations. . . . When David did well at school, his mother told him she was proud of him, and when Amanda learned to ride a bike, she was given a brand new two-wheeler. David and Amanda knew from the praise and bicycle that they were competent and self-determining in relation to school and bicycling. The second aspect of every reward is the information it provides a person about his competence and self-determination.
>
> When the controlling aspect of the reward is very salient, such as in the case of money or the avoidance of punishment, [a] change in perceived locus of causality . . . will occur. The person is 'controlled' by the reward and s/he perceives that the locus of causality is external.

Because of the prominent role they play in school programs, grading, testing, and other performance evaluations are a special concern in any discussion of the overreliance on extrinsics as a way to reinforce positive learning. Although grades often are discussed as simply providing information about how well a student is doing, many, if not most, students perceive each grade as a reward or a punishment. Certainly, many teachers use grades to try to control behavior – to reward those who do assignments well and to punish those who don't. Sometimes parents add to a student's perception of grades as extrinsic reinforcers by giving a reward for good report cards.

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

motivation for learning. *And if the impact of current practices is harmful to those who are able learners, imagine the impact on students with learning and behavior problems!*

Don't Lose Sight of Intrinsic Motivation

Psychological scholarship over the last sixty years has brought renewed attention to intrinsic motivation as a central concept in understanding learning and learning, behavior, and emotional problems. The implications are just beginning to find their way into applied fields and programs. The work clarifies the importance of accounting for

- feelings of self-determination
- feelings of competence and expectations of success
- feelings of interpersonal relatedness
- student expectations and what they value.

Paradoxically, what many of us have been taught about dealing with student misbehavior and learning problems runs counter to what we intuitively understand about human motivation. Teachers and parents, in particular, often learn to over-depend on reinforcement theory, despite the appreciation they have about the importance of intrinsic motivation. Those who argue we must focus on "basics" are right, as long as they include motivation.

The essence of teaching is creating an environment that mobilizes the student and maintains that mobilization, while effectively facilitating learning. And, when a student disengages, re-engagement in learning depends on minimizing conditions that negatively affect motivation and maximize conditions that have a positive motivational effect.

Of course, teachers, parents, and support staff cannot control all factors affecting motivation. Indeed, when any of us address learning and behavior concerns, we have direct control over a relatively small segment of the physical and social environment. We try to maximize the likelihood that opportunities to learn are a good fit with the current *capabilities* of a given youngster. And, with learning engagement in mind, we try to match individual differences in *motivation.*

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

- ***Motivation as a readiness concern.*** Optimal performance and learning require motivational readiness. The absence of such readiness can cause and/or maintain problems. If a learner does not have enough motivational readiness, strategies must be implemented to develop it (including ways to reduce avoidance motivation). Readiness should not be viewed in the old sense of waiting until an individual is interested. Rather, it should be understood in the contemporary sense of establishing environments that are perceived by students as caring, supportive places and as offering stimulating activities that are valued and challenging, and doable.

- ***Motivation as a key ongoing process concern.*** Many learners are caught up in the novelty of a new subject, but after a few lessons, interest often wanes. Some student are motivated by the idea of obtaining a given outcome but may not be motivated to pursue certain processes and thus may not pay attention or may try to avoid them. For example, some are motivated to start work on overcoming their problems but may not maintain that motivation. Strategies must be designed to elicit, enhance, and maintain motivation so that a youngster stays mobilized.

- ***Minimizing negative motivation and avoidance reactions as process and outcome concerns.*** Teachers and others at a school and at home not only must try to increase motivation – especially intrinsic motivation – but also take care to avoid or at least minimize conditions that decrease motivation or produce negative motivation. For example, care must be taken not to over-rely on extrinsics to entice and reward because to do so may decrease intrinsic motivation. At times, school is seen as unchallenging, uninteresting, overdemanding, overwhelming, overcontrolling, nonsupportive, or even hostile. When this happens, a student may develop negative attitudes and avoidance related to a given situation, and over time, related to school and all it represents.

- ***Enhancing intrinsic motivation as a basic outcome concern.*** It is essential to enhance motivation as an outcome so the desire to pursue a given area (e.g., reading, good

behavior) increasingly is a positive intrinsic attitude that mobilizes learning and behaving outside the teaching situation. Achieving such an outcome involves use of strategies that do not over-rely on extrinsic rewards and that do enable youngsters to play a meaningful role in making decisions related to valued options. In effect, enhancing intrinsic motivation is a fundamental *protective factor* and is the key to developing *resiliency.*

Students who are intrinsically motivated to learn at school seek out opportunities and challenges and go beyond requirements. In doing so, they learn more and learn more deeply than do classmates who are extrinsically motivated. Facilitating the learning of such students is a fairly straightforward matter and fits well with school improvements that primarily emphasize enhancing instructional practices. The focus is on helping establish ways for students who are motivationally ready and able to achieve and, of course, to maintain and enhance motivation. The process involves knowing when, how, and what to teach and also knowing when and how to structure the situation so they can learn on their own.

In contrast, students who manifest learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems may have developed extremely negative perceptions of teachers and programs. In such cases, they are not likely to be open to people and activities that look like "the same old thing." Major changes in approach are required if the youngster is even to perceive that something has changed in the situation. Minimally, exceptional efforts must be made to have them (1) view the teacher and other interveners as supportive (rather than controlling and indifferent) and (2) perceive content, outcomes, and activity options as personally valuable and obtainable. Thus, any effort to re-engage disengaged students must begin by addressing negative perceptions. School support staff and teachers must work together to reverse conditions that led to such perceptions.

Increasing intrinsic motivation involves affecting a student's thoughts, feelings, and decisions. In general, the intent is to use procedures that can potentially reduce negative and increase positive feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies with respect to learning. For learning and behavior problems, in particular, this means identifying and minimizing experiences that maintain or may increase avoidance motivation.

Re-engaging Disconnected Students

Although motivation has always been a concern to those who work with individuals with learning, behavior, and emotional problems, the emphasis in re-engaging students in classroom instruction has not been on how to capitalize on intrinsic motivation and how to minimize threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and relationships with significant others.

Students who manifest learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems often have developed extremely negative perceptions of teachers, programs, and school in general. Any effort to re-engage these students must begin by recognizing such perceptions. Thus, the first step in addressing the problem is for the school leadership to acknowledge its nature and scope. Then, teachers and school support staff must work together on re-engagement and reversing conditions that produce disconnection from classroom learning.

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

The point for emphasis here is that engaging and re-engaging students in learning involves matching motivation. Matching motivation requires an appreciation of the importance of a student's perceptions in determining the right mix of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. It also requires understanding the key role played in addressing underlying motivation related to misbehavior.

Addressing Underlying Motivation

Consider students who spend most of the day trying to avoid all or part of instructional activity. 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 feelings of competence, autonomy, and/or relatedness to significant others. Over time, these perceptions develop into strong motivational dispositions and related patterns of misbehavior.

Keep in mind that misbehavior can reflect *approach* or *avoidance motivation*. Disruptive, noncooperative, and aggressive behavior patterns that are *proactive* tend to be rewarding and

satisfying because the behavior itself is exciting or because the behavior leads to desired

outcomes (e.g., peer recognition, feelings of competence or autonomy).

Reactive misbehavior may be a protective form of coping stemming from motivation to avoid

and protest against situations in which the student feels unable to perform and/or is coerced to

participate (e.g., instruction that is too challenging; classrooms that seriously limits options;

teachers who are over- controlling). In such situations, individuals (especially students with

learning, behavior, and emotional problems) can be expected to react by trying to protect

themselves from the unpleasant thoughts and feelings 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 manipulative and diversionary

tactics.

From a motivational perspective, interventions to address chronic misbehavior are designed

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 continuing motivation so students

engage 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 special assistance directed at understanding and correcting

underlying factors. For instance, 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?

Special assistance for those misbehaving reactively require steps designed to reduce
reactance and enhance positive motivation for participating in an intervention. 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 youngsters' deviant actions. To these ends,
motivational analyses of the problem can point to corrective steps for implementation by
teachers, student support staff, other professionals, parents, or students themselves.

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

General Strategies

Below are four general strategies we recommend for re-engaging students in classroom
instruction:

Clarify student perceptions of the problem – It is desirable to create a situation where it is
feasible to talk openly with students about why they have become disengaged. This provides an
invaluable basis for formulating a personalized plan for helping to alter their negative
perceptions and for planning ways to prevent others from developing such perceptions.

Reframe school learning – As noted above, in the case of those who have disengaged,
major reframing in teaching approaches is required so that these students (a) view the teacher as
supportive (rather than controlling and indifferent) and (b) perceive content, outcomes, and
activity options as personally valuable and obtainable. It is important, for example, to eliminate
threatening evaluative measures; reframe content and processes to clarify purpose in terms of
real life needs and experiences and underscore how it all builds on previous learning; and clarify
why the procedures are expected to be effective – especially those designed to help correct
specific problems.

Renegotiate involvement in school learning – New and mutual agreements must be developed and evolved over time through conferences with the student and where appropriate including parents. The intent is to affect perceptions of choice, value, and probable outcome. The focus throughout is on clarifying awareness of valued options, enhancing expectations of positive outcomes, and engaging the student in meaningful, ongoing decision making. For the process to be most effective, students should be assisted in sampling new processes and content, options should include valued enrichment opportunities, and there must be provision for reevaluating and modifying decisions as perceptions shift.

Reestablish and maintain an appropriate working relationship – This requires the type of ongoing interactions that creates a sense of trust, open communication, and provides personalized support and direction.

To maintain re-engagement and prevent disengagement, the above strategies must be pursued using processes and content that:

- minimize threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to valued others
- maximize such feelings (included here is an emphasis on a school taking steps to enhance public perception that it is a welcoming, caring, safe, and just institution)
- guide motivated practice (e.g., providing opportunities for meaningful applications and clarifying ways to organize practice)
- provide continuous information on learning and performance in ways that highlight accomplishments
- provide opportunities for continued application and generalization (e.g., ways in which students can pursue additional, self-directed learning or can arrange for additional support and direction).

Obviously, it is no easy task to decrease well-assimilated negative attitudes and behaviors. And, the task is likely to become even harder with the escalation toward high-stakes testing policies (no matter how well-intentioned). It also seems obvious that, *for many schools, enhanced achievement test scores will only be feasible when the large number of disengaged students are re-engaged in learning at school.*

All this argues for (1) minimizing student disengagement and maximizing re-engagement by moving school culture toward a greater focus on intrinsic motivation and (2) minimizing psychological reactance and enhancing perceptions that lead to re-engagement in learning at school by rethinking social control practices.

A Bit More About Options and Decision Making

Reviews of the literature on human motivation suggest that providing students with options and involving them in decision making are key facets of addressing the problem of engagement in the classroom and at school. For example, numerous studies have shown that opportunities to express preferences and make choices lead to greater motivation, academic gains, increases in productivity and on-task behavior, and decreases in aggressive behavior. Similarly, researchers report that student participation in goal setting leads to more positive outcomes (e.g., higher commitment to a goal and increased performance).

The difficulty in working with disengaged students is that few currently available options may be appealing. How much greater the range of options needs to be depends primarily on how strong avoidance tendencies are. In general, however, the initial strategies for working with such students involve

- further expansion of the range of options for learning (if necessary, this includes avoiding established curriculum content and processes)
- primarily emphasizing areas in which the student has made personal and active decisions
- accommodation of a wider range of behavior than usually is tolerated (e.g., a widening of limits on the amount and types of "differences" tolerated)

From a motivational perspective, one of the most basic concerns is the way in which students are involved in making decisions about options. Those who have the opportunity to make decisions among valued and feasible options tend to be committed to following through. In contrast, those who are not involved in decision making often have little commitment to what is decided. And if individuals feel coerced, besides not following through they may react with hostility.

In working to re-engage disconnected students, it is well to remember that the most fundamental decision some of these youngsters have to make is whether they want to participate or not. That is why it may be necessary in specific cases temporarily to put aside established options and standards. As we have stressed, before some students will decide to participate in a proactive way, they have to perceive the learning environment as positively different – and quite a bit so – from the one in which they had so much failure.

I KNOW YOU LIKE LUNCH-TIME BEST, BUT THERE MUST BE SOMETHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO DO AT SCHOOL!
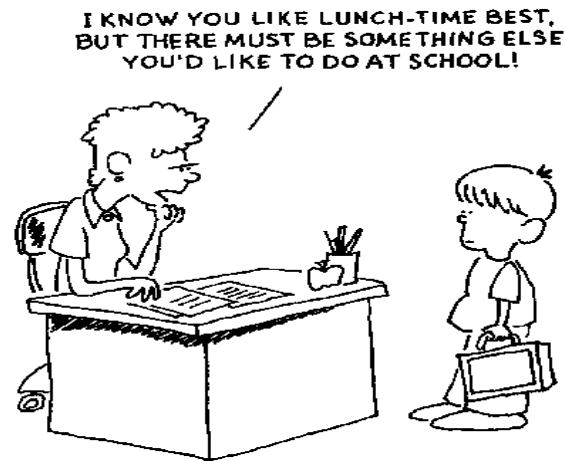
Moving Forward: Intervention thinking about addressing misbehavior can be viewed in terms of a developmental trend (see Exhibit 5-4). Schools are moving from punishment to more positive means of social control. The next development phase involves (1) applying an expanded view of motivation that draws on the latest thinking about intrinsic motivation and (2) embedding practices for preventing and responding to misbehavior into the type of unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and promoting healthy development discussed in Chapter 6.

Exhibit 5-4

Developmental Trend in Intervention Thinking About Addressing Misbehavior

Application of Motivational Thinking	*Intervention Approach*	*Proportion of Students Addressed*	*Focus of Intervention*
Expanded Views of Human Motivation	Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable Approach (incorporating a focus on intrinsic motivation & re-engagement)		Addressing Barriers & Promoting Healthy Development (proactive/reactive)
Positive Behavior Modification & Prevailing Behavioral Initiatives	Assets Development/ Character Education/ Positive Behavior Support		Problem Behaviors (reactive/proactive)
	Functional Behavior Analysis & interventions (skills training/ behavioral health)		Severe/Disruptive Students (reactive)
Negative Behavior Modification	Punishment	Most Misbehavior	Mostly Reactive

Concluding Comments

Getting students involved in their education programs is more than having them participate; it is connecting students with their education, enabling them to influence and affect the program and, indeed, enabling them to become enwrapped and engrossed in their educational experiences.

Wehmeyer & Sands

For many school personnel, it remains compelling to think that behavior problems can be exorcized by "laying down the law." However, for every student who "shapes up," too many others experience a trajectory that ends with the student being pushed-out of school through a progression of suspensions, "opportunity" transfers, and expulsions. Official dropout figures don't tell the tale. What we see in many high schools in urban areas is that only about half those who were enrolled in the eighth grade are still around to graduate from 12[th] grade.

Most of these students entered kindergarten with a healthy curiosity and a desire to learn to read and write. By the end of 2[nd] grade, we start seeing the first referrals by classroom teachers because of learning and behavior problems. From that point on, increasing numbers of students become disengaged from classroom learning, and most of these manifest some form of behavioral and emotional problems.

It is not surprising, then, that many are heartened to see the shift from punishment to positive behavior support in addressing unwanted behavior. However, as long as factors that lead to disengagement are left unaffected, we risk perpetuating the phenomenon that William Ryan identified as *Blaming the Victim.*

From an intervention perspective, the point for emphasis is that engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning involves matching motivation. Matching motivation requires factoring in students' perceptions in determining the right mix of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. It also requires understanding the key role played by expectations related to outcome. Without a good match, social control strategies can temporarily suppress negative attitudes and behaviors, but re-engagement in classroom learning is unlikely. And, without re-engagement in classroom learning, unwanted behavior is very likely to reappear.

To this point, the chapters have focused on addressing barriers to learning and teaching mainly in the classroom. We did begin to broaden the focus as we discussed interventions for misbehavior, and the remainder of this book stresses what needs to be done schoolwide and in collaboration with families and the community at large.

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Also see our Center's Resource Catalogue for a list of special resources related to the matters covered in this chapter. Available at no cost from the online clearinghouse of the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/.

For ease in finding and accessing specific topics (e.g., Behavior Problems, Classroom Management, Motivation), see the Center's Quick Find menu of over 130 topics – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm .

Chapter 6

Establishing a Schoolwide Student and Learning Supports Component

> **The Current State of Affairs**
>
> **Adopting a Component to Address Barriers to Learning**
>
> **Delineating the Nature and Scope of a Unified, Comprehensive,**
> **and Equitable System of Learning Supports**
> Reframing Student and Learning Supports
> Reworking the Infrastructure
>
> **School and Community Collaboration**
> What Resources are in the Community?
> Framing and Designing Interventions for Community Involvement
> and Collaborative Engagement

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights;
transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to
enabling equity of opportunity and promoting whole child development.

No more prizes for predicting rain

\   Prizes only for building arks
                  /

Most policy makers and administrators know that good instruction delivered by highly qualified teachers alone cannot ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. As a result, schools districts, regional units, and state departments allocate considerable resources to assisting students experiencing barriers to learning and teaching. Unfortunately, the supports are developed in an ad hoc and piecemeal manner.

The Current State of Affairs

Currently the majority of the resources allocated for interventions address discrete, categorical problems, often with specialized services for a relatively small number of students. The result, as illustrated in Exhibit 6-1, is that existing student and learning supports are highly fragmented. And the whole enterprise remains marginalized in policy and practice.

The marginalization and fragmentation of student and learning supports has resulted in poor cost-effectiveness. For example, in some schools, principals have reported that up to 25% of a school budget is used to address barriers to learning and teaching, and analyses indicate that the resources are used in too limited and often redundant ways. Sparse budgets contribute to the long-standing counterproductive competition among support staff and with community-based professionals who link with schools. Each new initiative compounds matters. All this is preventing schools from playing a significant role in stemming the tide with respect to low achievement, delinquent behavior, student and teacher dropouts, and a host of other serious problems.

The realities are that the problems are complex and overlap, and the complexity requires a comprehensive approach. Student/learning supports as they currently operate can't meet the needs of the many students whose problems are affecting their learning and performance at school. So, in planning, school policy makers and administrators must respond by making such supports an *essential component* in enabling *all* students to have an equal opportunity to learn at school.

School improvement and capacity building efforts (including pre- and in-service staff development) have yet to deal effectively with these matters. Most school improvement plans do not effectively focus on enhancing student outcomes by *comprehensively* addressing barriers to

Exhibit 6-1

A great deal of activity, but interventions are fragmented!

Pupil Services

Psychological Testing

Health Center

Violence & Crime Prevention

After-School Programs

HIV/Aids Prevention

Special Education

Physical Education

Health Services

Juvenile Court Services

Pregnancy Prevention

ESL

Nutrition Education

Mental Health Services

Response to Intervention

Positive Behavioral Supports

Health Education

Community-based Organizations

Drug Prevention

School Lunch Program

Social Services

Drug Services

Counseling

Newcomer Center

Child Protective Services

Family Resource Center

and many more

HIV/AIDS Services

Adult Education

DISTRICT/ SCHOOL

learning and teaching. For many students, such a focus is essential to (re)engaging them in classroom instruction and enabling classroom learning. And, the reality is that in schools where a large proportion of students encounter major barriers to learning, significant and sustainable progress with respect to achievement gains and dropout reductions require effectively addressing many of these barriers.

Exhibit 6-2 underscores that many students are encountering external and internal barriers that interfere with their benefitting from instruction (despite all the efforts to improve instruction).

Exhibit 6-2

Many Students Experience Barriers to Learning

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

On Track
Motivationally ready
 & able

No Barriers →

Instructional Component

(1) Classroom teaching

(2) Enrichment activity

High Standards

Desired Outcomes for All Students

(1) Academic achievement

(2) Social-emotional well-being

(3) Successful transition to post-secondary life

High Expectations & Accountability

Moderate Needs
Not very motivated/
lacking prerequisite
knowledge & skills/
different learning
rates & styles/minor
vulnerabilities

Barriers*
to learning,
development,
& teaching

High Needs
Avoidant/very
deficient in current
capabilities/ has a
disability/major
health problems

**Barriers can include neighborhood, family,
    school, peer, and personal factors.*

Adopting a Component to Address Barriers to Learning

Exhibit 6-3 graphically emphasizes that ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school necessitates more than just good instruction. It requires a component dedicated directly to both (1) addressing barriers to learning and teaching and (2) re-engaging disconnected students. Interventions that only focus on factors interfering with learning do not ensure students are engaged meaningfully in classroom learning generally and are insufficient in sustaining, over time, student involvement, good behavior, and effective learning at school.

Exhibit 6-3

A Learning Supports Component to Address Barriers and Re-engage Students

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

On Track
Motivationally ready
& able

No   Barriers

Moderate Needs
Not very motivated/
lacking prerequisite
knowledge & skills/
different learning
rates & styles/minor
vulnerabilities

Barriers
to learning,
development,
& teaching

*Learning
Supports
Component*

(1) Addressing
    barriers

(2) Re-engaging
    students in
    classroom
    instruction

*Instructional
Component*

(1) Classroom
    teaching

(2) Enrichment
    activity

*High
Standards*

*Desired
Outcomes
for
All Students*

(1) Academic
    achievement

(2) Social-emotional
    well-being

(3) Successful
    transition to
    post-secondary
    life

High Needs
Avoidant/very
deficient in current
capabilities/has a
disability/major
health problems

*Enhancing the
Focus on the
Whole Child*

*High Expectations
& Accountability*

Current school improvement planning is guided primarily by a two component school

improvement framework; that is, the focus primarily is on (1) instruction and (2)

governance/management. The result: all interventions for addressing barriers to learning and

teaching and re-engaging disconnected students are given secondary consideration at best. This

marginalization is an underlying and fundamental cause of the widely observed fragmentation

and disorganization of student and learning supports.

Transformation requires adopting a three component framework.
The third component identifies efforts to directly address barriers
as a primary component (e.g., a learning supports component) and
elevates the status of the work in school improvement planning.

Delineating the Nature and Scope of a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System of Learning Supports

In addition to expanding the policy framework, moving forward requires

- reframing traditional student and learning supports and redeploying resources

- reworking the organizational and operational infrastructure to enable the development, implementation, and sustainability of the new system.

Reframing Student and Learning Supports

The aim is to help districts and their schools unify all efforts to prevent and minimize the impact of problems interfering with learning and teaching. This includes programs, services, initiatives, and projects that promote and maintain safety, physical and mental health, school readiness and early school-adjustment services, social and academic supports, and compensatory and special assistance interventions. The point is to move away from discrete efforts to prevent and ameliorate specific learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Students have complex and overlapping problems, and schools require a *unified and comprehensive system* to address the complexity.

Strategically, given limited resources, developing a comprehensive system involves deploying, redeploying, and weaving together all existing resources used for student and learning supports. That is why the first consideration is unifying and weaving together all *school* resources currently expended for such assistance. *And then*, the focus is on rationally *braiding together all available school and community resources* to strengthen interventions and fill critical gaps. In this way, rather than responding to every pressing concern with another discrete program, districts and their schools will have a system in place where they can readily embed such concerns.

In reframing student and learning supports, a major emphasis is placed on developing a system to address all students and as full a range of barriers to learning and teaching as is feasible. Minimally, student and learning supports must address barriers that are interfering with the learning of a majority of students. And as we have stressed, while addressing barriers is essential, it is not a sufficient approach to enhancing equity of opportunity and enabling learning at school. Also essential is a potent approach for *re-engaging students in classroom instruction*. All conceptualizations of a learning supports component must encompass both these concerns.

Research and development has produced a intervention prototype for a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system to address barriers and re-engage students. The prototype has two facets:

- one conceives levels of intervention as a full continuum of integrated intervention subsystems that interweave school-community-home resources.
- the second organizes programs, services, and specific activities into a circumscribed set of content arenas.

Conceptualizing a Continuum of Intervention as an Integrated System. The Every Student Succeeds Act emphasizes a schoolwide tiered model (e.g., a *multitier* system of supports) as a framework for preventing and addressing problems. The tiered model is defined as "a comprehensive continuum of evidence-based, systemic practices to support a rapid response to students' needs, with regular observation to facilitate data-based instructional decision-making."

Few will argue against conceiving a continuum of intervention as a *starting point* for framing the nature and scope of student and learning supports. However, the multitier student support (MTSS) model is not the best way to depict such a continuum, and it is an insufficient organizing framework for developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

An example of another way to conceive the levels is in terms of the aims and as an inter-related, overlapping continuum of braided school and community subsystems. The subsystems focus on promoting effective schooling and whole child development, preventing problems experienced by teachers and students, addressing such problems as soon as feasible after they arise, and providing for students who have severe and chronic problems (see Exhibit 6-4).

Exhibit 6-4. **Reframing MTSS' Levels into a School-Community Intervention *Continuum of Interconnected Subsystems***

***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 placem't/group homes
  • Family support
  • Shelter, food, clothing
  • Job programs

  • Emergency/crisis treatment
  • Family preservation
  • Long-term therapy
  • Probation/incarceration
  • Disabilities programs
  • Hospitalization
  • Drug treatmen

Subsystem for Promoting Healthy Development & Preventing Problems
primary prevention – includes universal interventions
(low end need/low cost per individual programs)

Subsystem for Early Intervention
early-after-onset – includes selective & indicated interventions
(moderate need, moderate cost per individual)

Subsystem for Treatment of **severe and chronic problems**
indicated interventions as part of a "system of care"
(High need/high cost per individual programs)

As illustrated in Exhibit 6-4, we operationalize these as three subsystems. Each subsystem is seen as weaving together a wide range of school and community resources. The interrelated and overlapping subsystems are illustrated as tapering from top to bottom to indicate the view that if the top is well designed and implemented, the numbers needing early intervention are reduced and then, as more are helped through early-after-onset assistance, fewer students will need "deep-end" interventions.

Note: Efforts to enhance positive development and improve instruction clearly can improve readiness to learn. However, it is frequently the case that preventing problems also requires direct action to remove or at least minimize the impact of barriers, such as hostile environments and intrinsic problems. Without effective direct intervention, such barriers can continue to get in the way of development and learning.

Content Arenas of Activity. A system of student and learning supports requires more than conceiving a continuum of intervention. For example, "mapping" done with respect to the MTSS framework does not escape the trend just to generate laundry lists of programs and services at each level. Thus, in addition to the continuum, it is necessary to organize interventions cohesively into a circumscribed set of well-designed and delimited arenas that reflect the *content purpose* of the activity.

Our research and development efforts have categorized programs and services into six arenas reflecting basic concerns that schools actually are confronted with each day. In organizing the activity, it becomes clearer what supports are needed in and out of the classroom so that teachers can enable the learning of students who are not doing well. The six arenas encompass:

- *Enhancing regular classroom strategies to enable learning* (e.g., improving instruction for students who have become disengaged from learning at school and for those with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems; includes a focus on prevention, early intervening, and use of strategies such as response to intervention)

- *Supporting transitions* (i.e., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions)

- *Increasing home and school connections and engagement*

- *Responding to, and where feasible, preventing crises*

- *Increasing community involvement and support* (outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers)

- *Facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance* as needed

The six basic arenas been introduced in a variety of venues across the country over the last decade (see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/nind7.htm).

Continuum + Content. Combining the continuum and arenas of content activity moves MTSS thinking forward. It provides an intervention framework that can guide development of a

total system designed to unify the resources a school devotes to student and learning supports, as well as braiding in community resources to fill critical gaps and strengthen the system (see Exhibit 6-5).

Exhibit 6-5. Intervention Framework for the Third Component

Integrated Intervention *Continuum* (levels)
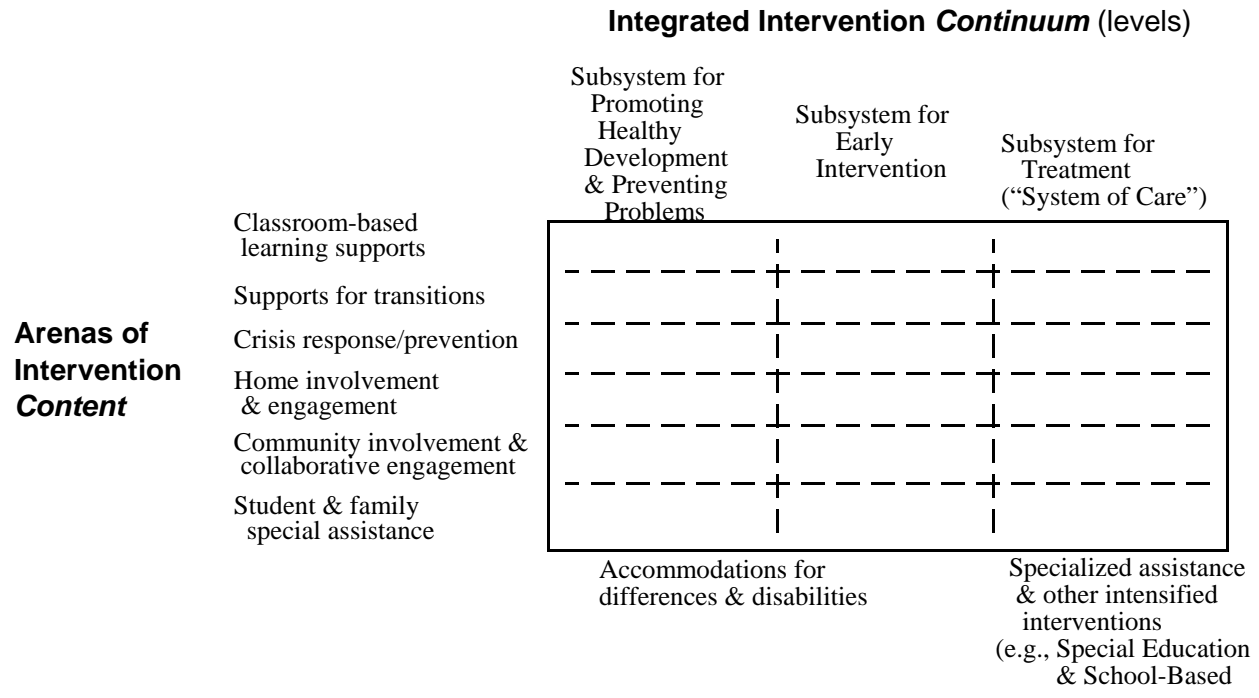
Note: The above matrix provides a guide for organizing and evaluating a system of student and learning supports and is a tool for mapping existing interventions, clarifying which are evidence-based, identifying critical intervention gaps, and analyzing resource use with a view to redeploying resources to strengthen the system. The framework can guide efforts to embed supports for compensatory and special education, English learners, psychosocial and mental health problems, use of specialized instructional support personnel, adoption of evidence-based interventions, integration of funding sources, and braiding in of community resources.

The illustrated framework encompasses what is essential to a school's ability to accomplish its instructional mission; it is not an added agenda to that mission. Moreover, the emphasis on classroom, school, home, and neighborhood helps create a school-wide culture of caring and nurturing. In turn, this helps students, families, staff, and the community-at-large feel a school is a welcoming, supportive place that accommodates diversity, prevents problems, enhances youngsters' strengths, and is committed to assuring equal opportunity for all students to succeed at school.

In sum, the intent is to unify and develop a comprehensive and equitable intervention system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. Establishing such a system requires coalescing ad hoc and piecemeal policies and practices. Doing so will help end the fragmentation of student and learning supports and related system disorganization and will provide a foundation for weaving together whatever a school has with whatever a community is doing to confront barriers to equity of opportunity. This implementation of learning supports as a primary school improvement component is essential to the focus on whole child, whole school, and whole community (including fostering safe schools and the emergence of a positive school climate).[1]

What are learning supports?

Ultimately, all school interventions to address barriers to learning and teaching are about supporting learning. As defined for policy purposes, *learning supports* are the resources, strategies, and practices that support physical, social, emotional and intellectual development and well-being to enable all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school.

To enable effective use of learning supports, school and community resources are unified in a learning supports component and fully enmeshed with instructional efforts and interventions and professional development.

Learning Supports are deployed in classrooms and schoolwide as a comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

The aim of state and district policy for student and learning supports is to ensure a unified approach and an operational infrastructure for developing a comprehensive and equitable system is in place at the school level and at all schools in a district.

---

*School improvement plans mean little if they do not
play out effectively at schools throughout a district.*

Reworking the Infrastructure

We know that none of what is presented above is easy. No one who understands the complexity of enhancing equity of opportunity expects to accomplish essential systemic changes easily. Michael Fullan stresses that effective systemic change requires leadership that "motivates people to take on the complexities and anxieties of difficult change." We would add that such leadership also must develop a refined understanding of how to *facilitate* and *sustain* difficult

systemic change. That is, successful systemic transformation of established institutions requires

organized and effective facilitation, especially when change is to take place at multiple sites and

at several levels.

 Because student and learning supports are so-marginalized, development of a unified,

comprehensive, and equitable system of student and learning supports clearly requires reworking

the existing operational infrastructure at all levels. A learning supports component must have an

administrative leader. The leader needs the support of a system development leadership team and

workgroups. Together they ensure the component is (1) fully developed and integrated as a

primary and essential facet of school improvement, (2) working with a family of schools, and (3)

outreaching to the community to fill critical system gaps.

 Thus, as the state and districts develop innovative plans to address barriers to learning and

teaching and re-engage disconnected students, the strategic plans will focus on

- *reworking operational infrastructures* to ensure effective daily implementation, ongoing

  development and sustainability of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for

  addressing barriers to learning and teaching (e.g., see our discussion of administrative and

  team leadership and workgroups whose primary role and functions are dedicated to this –
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/infrastructure/anotherinitiative-exec.pdf

  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentsupport/toolkit/aidk.pdf
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkitb4.htm)

- *enhancing mechanisms and strategic approaches for systemic change and replication to

  scale* (e.g., coaches, mentors, collaborators for personalized personnel development,

  consultation, technical assistance; provision of guides and aids; use of technology to

  enhance needs assessments, communication, transparency, visibility, formative evaluation

  and problem solving, capacity building -- see

  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/coaching.pdf)

- *developing standards and expanding the accountability framework* to account for the third

  component and to do so in ways that encompass both formative and summative evaluation

  (see – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/commcore.pdf

  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/account.pdf)

As noted, staff development will play a key role by facilitating personnel development as a key facet of building capacity for unifying and then developing a comprehensive and equitable system of student and learning supports and taking it systemwide.

> Note: All this has implications for enhancing in-classroom student and learning supports by retooling what ESSA labels as specialized instructional support personnel (e.g., student and learning support personnel – psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses, Title I staff, dropout/graduation support staff, special educators, etc.). The jobs of these personnel need redefining to include working collaboratively with teachers *in classrooms* for part of each day. Improving student and learning supports in classrooms requires such collaboration, and such collaboration is essential to ending the myths and expectations that teachers can do it all and can do it alone.

School and Community Collaboration

With roots in the 1960's human service integration movement, the last few decades have seen many initiatives to connect community services to schools to better meet the needs of children and their families. These have generated terms such as school-linked services, integrated services, one-stop shopping, wraparound services, seamless service delivery, coordinated school health, co-location of services, integrated student supports, full-service schools, community schools, systems of care, and more. All this has been bolstered by recent policy-oriented reports have come from Child Trends using the term "Integrated Student Supports" and from the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP) and the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health focusing on "Systems of Care." And, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has revamped their "Coordinated School Health Program."

For community agencies, connection with schools is seen as providing better access to families and their children, promoting greater engagement, and enhancing opportunities for having an impact on hard-to-reach clients. Moreover, the hope is that integrated interventions will increase the pool of resources for student and learning supports and address disparities. For school policy makers, connecting school-home-community is seen as an essential facet of promoting the well-being of children and youth and enhancing equity of opportunity for them to succeed at school and beyond.

While schools represent a key commodity in communities, too many currently are viewed as unconnected "islands." This works against addressing barriers to learning and teaching such as school and community safety – especially in poor neighborhoods.

Schools and the community in which they reside are dealing with multiple, interrelated concerns – poverty, child development, literacy, violence, crime, safety, substance abuse, housing, employment. For schools to be seen as more effective and caring places, they must take steps to engage and collaborate with a wide range of community stakeholders. And they must play a key role in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and strengthening family and community life.

A potent approach requires multifaceted and collaborative efforts. The goal is to maximize mutual benefits, including better student progress, positive socialization of the young, higher staff morale, improved use of resources, an enhanced sense of community, community development, and more. In the long run, the aims are to strengthen students, schools, families, and neighborhoods.

In too many schools, outreach to the community has a highly limited focus. Policy and related funding initiatives mostly support efforts to link community social services and physical and mental health services to schools. After school programs also involve community providers. In addition, some schools recruit volunteers and solicit other forms of resource contributions, as well as encouraging positive votes for school-related ballot measures. The downside of such well-meaning outreach is that it narrows thinking about the role and functions of school-community collaboration and about transforming how schools provide student and learning supports.

What Resources are in the Community?

Researchers have mapped a wide range of community entities whose missions overlap that of the local schools. These include county and municipal agencies, mutual support/self-help groups, service clubs and philanthropic organizations, youth organizations, community based organizations, faith institutions, legal assistance groups, ethnic associations, artists and cultural institutions, businesses/corporations/unions, media, family members, local residents, senior citizens groups, and more. Districts/schools need to consider outreach to the full range of resources that exist, especially in neighborhoods where poverty reigns.

**Framing and Designing Interventions for Community Involvement
and Collaborative Engagement**

School/district efforts to enhance community connections can encompass four types of
activities: (1) outreaching to a broad range of community entities, (2) developing immediate
links and connections with community resources that can help fill critical intervention gaps for
addressing shared problems, (3) establishing an effective operational infrastructure for a school-
community collaborative and (4) blending/weaving/redeploying school and community
resources where feasible to help with system development (see Exhibit 6-6).

Exhibit 6.6

**Framework for Schools and Community Collaboration in Developing a
Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports**

*Focus of Efforts to Develop
System of Learning Supports*

School/District   Community

Activities

Outreaching to All
Community Stakeholders*

→ Outreach →

Developing Mechanisms to Link &
Connect with Community Entities
to Help Fill Critical Intervention
Gaps

Forming Linkages
← →

Establishing a Collaborative
Operational Infrastructure

Operational cooperation & coordination

Blending Resources to Improve
System Development

Interweaving & redeploying resources
as appropriate and feasible

*Outreach is to all available
community resources and decision
makers (e.g., those associated with
public and private agencies, colleges
and universities, artists and cultural
institutions, businesses and
professional organizations, and service,
volunteer, faith-based organizations).

In practice, all four activities are seldom pursued, especially when the focus is mainly on connecting a few community services to a school. However, all are vital in developing a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports.

It should be noted, because community resources in many neighborhoods are sparse, a school-by-school approach often leads to inequities (e.g., the first school to contact an agency might tie up all that a given agency can bring to a school). Therefore, district leadership needs to (a) help develop mechanisms that connect a "family" of schools (e.g., a high school feeder pattern, schools in the same neighborhood) and (b) play a role in outreaching and connecting community resources equitably to schools. A family of schools (e.g., a elementary to high school feeder pattern) also provides a good nucleus for creating a school-community collaborative.

Based on the available literature, below are examples of strategies related to pursuing the activities highlighted in Exhibit 6-6.

Outreach to the Community:
- a social marketing campaign to inform and invite participation of all community stakeholders with respect to
  >district and school plans to work with the community to address barriers to
    student success and develop a cohesive and comprehensive system and
  >the variety of opportunities for involvement at schools
- interventions to (re)engage students and families who don't interact with the school on a regular basis (e.g., the disengaged, truants, dropouts)
- outreach to specific stakeholder groups to recruit a steady increase in the number of volunteers available to the schools

Developing Mechanisms to Link and Connect with Community Entities:
- using school improvement planning to include a focus on analyzing and filling critical gaps in efforts to develop a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports
- establishing and training a multi-school workgroup to focus on recruiting and equitably integrating individuals and agencies who have resources that can help fill critical gaps

Establishing a Formal Collaborative and Building an Operational Infrastructure:

- identifying community stakeholders who are interested in establishing a school-community collaborative

- formulating aims, short-term goals, and immediate objectives

- organizing participants into an effective operational infrastructure and establishing formal working agreements (e.g., MOUs) about roles and responsibilities

- forming and training workgroups to accomplish immediate objectives

- monitoring and facilitating progress

Blending Resources to Improve System Development:

- mapping school and community resources used to address barriers to student success

- analyzing resource use to determine redundancies and inefficiencies

- identifying ways resources can be redeployed and interwoven to meet current priorities

What Are Priorities in Enhancing Community Involvement & Collaborative Engagement?

Analyses related to school improvement can use the framework in Exhibit 6-6 to identify next steps for enhancing school-community connections. A self-study survey also is available online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/toolsforpractice/communityoutreachsurvey.pdf).

Immediate priorities usually involve establishing policy and operational mechanisms for (a) a broad based social marketing outreach campaign aimed at connecting with a wide range of community entities and initiating work with those who indicate interest and (b) exploring the feasibility of building a school-community collaborative.

Toward Developing a School-Community Collaborative

With a view to establishing an effective school-community collaborative, the early priority is to create a workgroup charged with developing an operational infrastructure for the collaborative. The prototype illustrated in Exhibit 6-7 indicates the type of mechanisms needed to provide oversight, leadership, capacity building, and ongoing support as a collaborative plans and implements strategic actions. Establishing such an infrastructure requires translating policy into authentic agreements about shared mission, vision, decision making, priorities, goals, roles, functions, resource allocation, redeployment, and enhancement, strategic implementation, evaluation, and accountability.[2]

Exhibit 6.7

Prototype of a School-Community Collaborative Operational Infrastructure[1]

Steering Group
(e.g., drives the initiative, uses political clout to solve problems)

*Paid Staff plus Work Group**
For pursuing *operational* functions/tasks
(e.g., daily planning, implementation, & evaluation)

*Paid Staff
>Executive Director
>Organization Facilitator

Who should be at the table?
schools[2] - community[3] - families[4]

Collab. Body

Ad Hoc Work Groups
For pursuing *process* functions/tasks
(e.g., mapping, capacity building, social marketing)

Standing Work Groups
For pursuing *programmatic* functions/tasks
(e.g., instruction, learning supports, governance, community organization, community development)

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[1]Connecting the resources of schools, families, and a wide range of community entities through a formal collaborative facilitates developing a unified and comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning. Effectiveness, efficiencies, and economies of scale can be achieved by connecting a "family" (or complex) of schools (e.g., a high school and its feeder schools, schools in the same neighborhood). In a small community, the feeder pattern often is the school district.

[2]*Schools*. This encompasses all institutionalized entities that are responsible for formal education (e.g., pre-K, elementary, secondary, higher education). The aim is to draw on the resources of these institutions.

[3]*Community entities*. These encompass the many resources (public and private money, facilities, human and social capital) that can be brought to the table (e.g., health and social service agencies, businesses and unions, recreation, cultural, and youth development groups, libraries, juvenile justice and law enforcement, faith-based community institutions, service clubs, media). As the collaborative develops, additional steps must be taken to outreach to disenfranchised groups.

[4]*Families*. All families in the community should be represented, not just representatives of organized family advocacy groups. The aim is to mobilize all the human and social capital represented by family members and other home caretakers of the young.

Interest in connecting school and community resources is growing at an exponential rate. A temporary connection often is established in the wake of a crisis or to address a particular problem. In the long-run, however, school-community connections must be driven by a comprehensive vision about the shared role schools, communities, and families can play in strengthening youngsters, families, schools, and neighborhoods. This encompasses a focus on safe schools and neighborhoods, positive development and learning, personal, family, and economic well-being, and more.

While it is relatively simple to outreach and make informal linkages, establishing major long-term formal working relationships requires systemic changes involving formal and institutionalized sharing of a wide spectrum of responsibilities and resources. In this context, we caution against *limiting* school-community connections to coordinating a few community health and social services, recreation, and enrichment activities and co-locating some on school sites. Focusing primarily on a few linkages and coordination, usually results in downplaying and undervaluing the role of existing school and other community and family human and social capital. And at the same time, the narrow focus tends to work against the type of fundamental transformation of student and learning supports presented in this book. Remember that increasing access to services is only one facet of any effort to establish a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system.

Concluding Comments

Developing a unified and comprehensive learning supports component in all schools requires phasing in significant systemic changes over a period of years. Initially, the emphasis is on weaving together what schools already have (e.g., pupil services, special and compensatory education and other categorical programs). Then, the focus expands to development of an integrated set of systems. Over time, this includes an increasing effort to link school resources with those in homes and communities (e.g., formally connecting school programs with assets at home, in the business and faith communities, and neighborhood enrichment, recreation, and service resources).

Notes

[1] For more details on the intervention framework and it's research base, see
>*Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/bookrev.pdf
>*Addressing Barriers to Student Learning & Promoting Healthy Development: A Usable Research-Base* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefs/BarriersBrief.pdf
>*What's the Research-base for Moving Toward a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports?* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/WhatstheEvidenceBase.pdf

[2] A guidebook is available for establishing a productive collaborative (see *School-Community Partnerships: A Guide* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/guides/schoolcomm.pdf .)

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Also see our Center's Resource Catalogue for a list of special resources related to the matters covered in this chapter. Available at no cost from the online clearinghouse of the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/.

For ease in finding and accessing specific topics (e.g., Learning Supports Component, Mapping School and Community Resources, Change Agents, Job Descriptions), see the Center's Quick Find menu of over 130 topics – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm .

The Parable of the Lamppost

It was a dark and stormy night.

I left the building and started to run across the street to the parking lot. As I reached the curb, I bumped into a somewhat dazed acquaintance who was down on hands and knees searching for something.

What did you lose, I asked.

My keys, he said.

He looked so frazzled I just had to help. A half hour later, soaked to the skin and frustrated, I said,

We need to do this more systematically.
Tell me just where you think you dropped them.

Oh, he said, *across the road in the parking lot.*

What! I screamed. *Then why are we looking over here.*

Well, he said – looking a bit sheepish, *the light is so much better here under this lamppost.*

Moral: If we want to solve the problem, we'd better cross the road.

Chapter 7

Getting From Here to There

The Problems of System Change Implementation and Scale-up

It's About What Happens at the School and in the Classroom

Some Key Facets of Facilitating System Change

Operational Infrastructure for Accomplishing Systemic Change

Creating Readiness, Commitment, and Engagement

Design Document

Multi-year Strategic Plan

Ensuring Policy Facilitates Transformation

Reworking Daily Operational Infrastructure

Moving Schools Forward

Educational Reform Strategies   Plan for getting from here to there

THEN A MIRACLE OCCURS   INCREASED ACHIEVEMENT

GOOD WORK, BUT I THINK WE NEED JUST A LITTLE MORE DETAIL RIGHT HERE!

> Ultimately, only three things matter about educational reform. Does it have depth: does it improve important rather than superficial aspects of students' learning and development? Does it have length: can it be sustained over long periods of time instead of fizzling out after the first flush of innovation? Does it have breadth: can the reform be extended beyond a few schools, networks or showcase initiatives to transform education across entire systems or nations?
>
> Andy Hargreaves & Dean Fink

For our society to provide the opportunity for all students to succeed at school, fundamental changes are needed so that teachers can personalize instruction, and teachers along with other school staff can address barriers to learning. Policy makers can call for higher standards and greater accountability, improved curricula and instruction, increased discipline, reduced school violence, and on and on. None of it means much if the reforms enacted do not ultimately result in substantive changes in the classroom and throughout a school site. Moreover, such reforms have to be sustained over time. If the intent is to ensure every student succeeds, then such reforms have to be replicated in all schools in a district.

The Problems of System Change Implementation and Scale-Up

The organizational change literature has a long history, but implementation science is in it's infancy. Much of the current discussion about implementation related to schools focuses on the policy that stresses adoption of science-based practices. There are many issues and problems associated with this policy. Our emphasis here, however, is not on that policy. It is on matters that arise when any school improvement is pursued that requires major systemic changes.

Exhibit 7-1 outlines practical matters that must be considered related to planning, implementing, sustaining, and going-to-scale. This tool can be used as a framework for planning, implementing, sustaining, and going-to-scale. It also can be used as a template for establishing benchmarks for formative evaluation.

How many change agents does it take to change a light bulb?   *Only one, but the bulb has to want to change!*
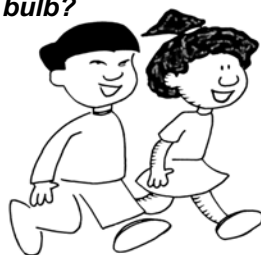
Exhibit 7-1
New Initiatives: Considerations Related to Planning, Implementing, Sustaining, & Going-to-Scale

NATURE & SCOPE OF FOCUS

	Intervention/ Program Prototype Development	Adoption/Adaptation of the Prototype at a Particular Site	System-Wide Replication/ Scale-Up
Social Marketing			
Vision & Policy Commitment			
Partnership Negotiation & Leadership Designation			
Infrastructure Enhancement/Develop. (e.g., mechanisms for governance, steering, operation, coordination)			
Resources -- Redeployed & New (e.g., time, space, funds)			
Capacity Building (especially development of personnel & addressing personnel mobility)			
Standards, Evaluation, & Accountability			

SOME KEY FACETS

Creating Readiness

Initial Implementation

PHASES OF THE CHANGE PROCESS   Institutionalization

Ongoing Evolution/ Creative Renewal

As outlined, changes may encompass introducing one or more interventions, developing a demonstration at a specific site, or replicating a prototype on a large-scale. Whatever the nature and scope of focus, all the *key facets* outlined come into play.

As illustrated, the focus related to an initiative to improve schools begins with the prototype for an improved approach. Such a prototype usually is developed and initially implemented as a pilot demonstration at one or more sites. Efforts to reform schooling, however, require much more than implementing demonstrations at a few sites. Improved approaches are only as good as a school district's ability to develop and institutionalize them on a large scale. This process often is called diffusion, replication, roll out, or scale-up.

While education researchers and reformers increasingly discuss the complexities of large-scale diffusion, major research initiatives delineating and testing models for widespread replication of education reforms are sparse. In addition, change agents are used who have relatively little specific training in facilitating large-scale systemic changes. Furthermore, leadership training has given short shrift to the topic of scale-up processes and problems.[1]

It is not surprising, then, that debates over how best to improve schools are not accompanied with sufficient resources to accomplish prescribed changes throughout a school-district. Common deficiencies are failure to address the four phases of the change process outlined in Exhibits 7-1 and 7.2. Examples include failure to pursue adequate strategies for creating motivational readiness among a critical mass of stakeholders, especially principals and teachers, and for accommodating job changes. Time frames for building capacity to accomplish desired institutional changes usually are unrealistic. Typically, given a high level policy commitment and appropriate capacity building support, implementation of a major system change requires several years and replication to scale take a longer period.

Exhibit 7-2

Prototype Implementation and Scale-up: Phases and Parallel and Linked Tasks

System Change Staff

Phase I
Creating Readiness:

Enhancing the
Climate/Culture
for Change

Disseminates the prototype to
create interest (promotion and
marketing)

Evaluates indications of
interest

Makes in-depth presentations
to build stakeholder consensus

Negotiates a policy framework
and conditions of engagement
with sanctioned bodies

Elicits ratification and
sponsorship by stakeholders

Implementation *Team*
works at site with
***Organization
Leadership*** to

Redesign the organizational
and programmatic
infrastructure

Clarify need to add temporary
mechanisms for the
implementation process

Restructure time (the school
day, time allocation over the
year)

Conduct stakeholder
foundation-building activity

Phase II
**Initial
Implementation:**

Adapting and Phasing-
in the Prototype with
Well-Designed
Guidance and Support

Establish temporary
mechanisms to facilitate the
implementation process

Design appropriate prototype
adaptations

Develop site-specific plan to
phase-in prototype

Team works at
site with appropriate
Stakeholders

Plans and implements ongoing
stakeholder development/
empowerment programs

Facilitates day-by-day
prototype implementation

Establishes formative
evaluation procedures

Phase III
Institutionalization:

Ensuring the
Infrastructure
Maintains and
Enhances
Productive Changes

Institutionalize ownership,
guidance, and support

Plan and ensure commitment to
ongoing leadership

Plan and ensure commitment to
maintain mechanisms for
planning, implementation, and
coordination

Plan for continuing education
and technical assistance to
maintain and enhance
productive changes and
generate renewal (including
programs for new arrivals)

*System **Change Staff***
continues contact with
***Organization
Leadership***

Phase IV
**Ongoing Evolution &
Creative Renewal**

Facilitates expansion of the
formative evaluation system
(in keeping with summative
evaluation needs)

Clarifies ways to improve the
prototype

Compiles information on
outcome efficacy

***Organization
Leadership***
works with
Stakeholders
in evolving the
prototype

For many years, our work revolved mainly around developing demonstration programs. Then, we moved into the world of replicating new approaches on a large-scale. Confronted with the problems and processes of scale-up, we analyzed a broad range of psychological and organizational literature and delineated the approach for scale-up outlined in Exhibit 7-2.[2]

To appreciate the point, think about the best model around for how schools can improve the way they address barriers to student learning. Assuming the model has demonstrated cost-effectiveness and that a school-district wants to adopt/adapt it, the problem becomes *How do we get from here to there?*

With this question in mind, we think about Seymour Sarason's caution that

> *Good ideas and missionary zeal are sometimes enough to change the thinking of individuals; they are rarely, if ever, effective in changing complicated organizations (like the school) with traditions, dynamics, and goals of their own.*

And we heed the words of John Maynard Keynes:

> *The real difficulty in changing the course of any enterprise lies not in developing new ideas but in escaping old ones.*

Given this wisdom, pursuing substantive, scalable, and sustainable system school improvement requires addressing the complications associated with institutional culture and proceeding in ways that enable key stakeholders to move beyond established ways of thinking and operating.

Whether the focus is on establishing a prototype at one site or replicating it at many, the systemic changes can be conceived in terms of the four overlapping phases highlighted in Exhibits 7-1 and 7-2: (1) *creating readiness* – increasing a climate/culture for change through enhancing the motivation and capability of a critical mass of stakeholders, (2) *initial implementation* – change is carried out in stages using a well-designed infrastructure to provide guidance and support, (3) *institutionalization* – accomplished by ensuring there is an infrastructure to maintain and enhance productive changes, and (4) *ongoing evolution and creative renewal* – through use of mechanisms to improve quality and provide continuing support in ways that enable stakeholders to become a community of learners and facilitates periodic creative renewal.

As indicated in Exhibit 7-2, a change *mechanism* is needed. One way to conceive such a mechanism is in terms of *system implementation staff*. Such staff provides a necessary organizational base and skilled personnel for disseminating a prototype, negotiating decisions about replication, and dispensing the expertise to facilitate implementation of a prototype and eventual scale-up. They can dispense expertise by sending out a *team* consisting of personnel who, for designated periods of time, work with the staff onsite where the prototype is to be implemented/replicated. A change team of perhaps two-to-four staff works closely with a site throughout the process. The team is augmented whenever a specialist is needed to assist in replicating a specific element of the prototype design. Implementation and scaling-up of a comprehensive prototype almost always requires *phased-in* change and the addition of *temporary infrastructure mechanisms* to facilitate changes.

Exhibits 7-1 and 7-2 briefly highlight key facets and specific tasks related to the four phases of prototype implementation and scale-up. Note in particular the importance of

- ongoing social marketing of a clear, shared vision for the work
- designating qualified and motivated leadership
- ensuring there is a major, written policy commitment from all participating partners
- enhancing/developing an infrastructure based on a clear articulation of essential functions (e.g., mechanisms for governance, design, strategic planning, priority setting, steering, operations, resource mapping and coordination; strong facilitation related to all mechanisms)
- redeploying resources and establishing new ones based on formative evaluation data
- building capacity (especially personnel development and strategies for addressing personnel and other stakeholder mobility)
- establishing standards, evaluation processes, and accountability procedures.

Each facet and task requires careful planning based on sound intervention fundamentals. This means paying special attention to the problem of the match between intervention and those who are to change.

The point is to make certain that there is a greater appreciation for and more attention paid to the problems of systemic change. Those who set out to change schools and schooling are confronted with two enormous tasks. The first is to develop prototypes; the second involves large-scale replication. One without the other is insufficient. Yet considerably more attention is paid to developing and validating prototypes than to delineating and testing scale-up processes. Clearly, it is time to correct this deficiency.

It's About What Happens at the School and in the Classroom

Improving student outcomes and closing the achievement gap require expansion and replication of good practices for every school in a district. Moreover, the type of innovations we have outlined requires avoiding the mistakes of past "district-centric" planning and resource allocation. In too many districts, there remains a disconnect between central office policy and operations and how programs and services evolve in classrooms and schools. The simple truth about school improvement policies is that, if they don't play out at a school and in the classroom, they don't mean much.

The time is opportune for schools and classrooms to truly become the center and guiding force for all planning. Such planning begins with a clear image of what the classroom and school must do to teach all students effectively. Then, the focus can move to planning how a family of schools and the surrounding community can complement each other's efforts and achieve economies of scale. With all this clearly in perspective, policy can be reoriented to the role of developing the best ways to support efforts for school improvement.

There are fundamentals that permeate all efforts to improve schools and schooling and that should continue to guide policy, practice, research, and training. Here are examples of some fundamental matters confronting all school improvement efforts:

- The curriculum in every classroom must include a major emphasis on acquisition of basic knowledge and skills. However, such basics must be understood to include whole child development. A major example is all the work underway to enhance social and emotional learning. Moreover, an appreciation of individual differences recognizes the need for accounting for and accommodating diversity.

- Every classroom must address student motivation as an antecedent, process, and outcome concern.

- Special assistance must be *added* to instructional programs for certain individuals, but only after classroom capacity to provide personalized instruction has been enhanced. Special assistance must be designed to build on strengths and also promote healthy development.

- Schoolwide supports to address barriers to learning must have policy, leadership, and mechanisms for ongoing development. Some of the work will need to be in partnership with other schools, some will require weaving school and community resources together. The aim is to evolve a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. Such a system encompasses a continuum ranging from primary prevention through early intervention to treatment of serious problems. Our work suggests the importance of also grouping interventions into six arenas designed to (1) enhance supports in the classroom to enable learning, (2) provide support for the many transitions experienced by students and their families, (3) increase home involvement, (4) respond to and prevent crises, (5) offer special assistance to students and their families, and (6) expand community involvement (including volunteers).

- Leaders for education reform at all levels are confronted with the need to foster effective scale-up of promising reforms. This encompasses a major research thrust to develop efficacious demonstrations and effective models for replicating new approaches to schooling.

- Relatedly, policy makers at all levels must revisit current policy using the lens of addressing barriers to learning with the intent of both realigning existing policy to foster cohesive practices and enacting new policies to fill critical gaps.

Some Key Facets of Facilitating System Change

Substantive change begins with a design, a well-developed multi-year strategic plan, and resources to facilitate making it a sustainable reality

Challenges in making systemic changes include giving sufficient strategic attention and time to

- underwriting and establishing an effective systemic change operational infrastructure

- creating readiness, commitment, and engagement among a critical mass of key stakeholders (e.g., policy makers, district/school personnel, union leaders, parents, students, community leaders)

- developing a design document to communicate and guide the work

- developing a multi-year strategic plan

- ensuring policy is instituted that makes the changes a high priority

- reworking an organization's daily operational infrastructure and job descriptions to support development and sustainability of the changes.
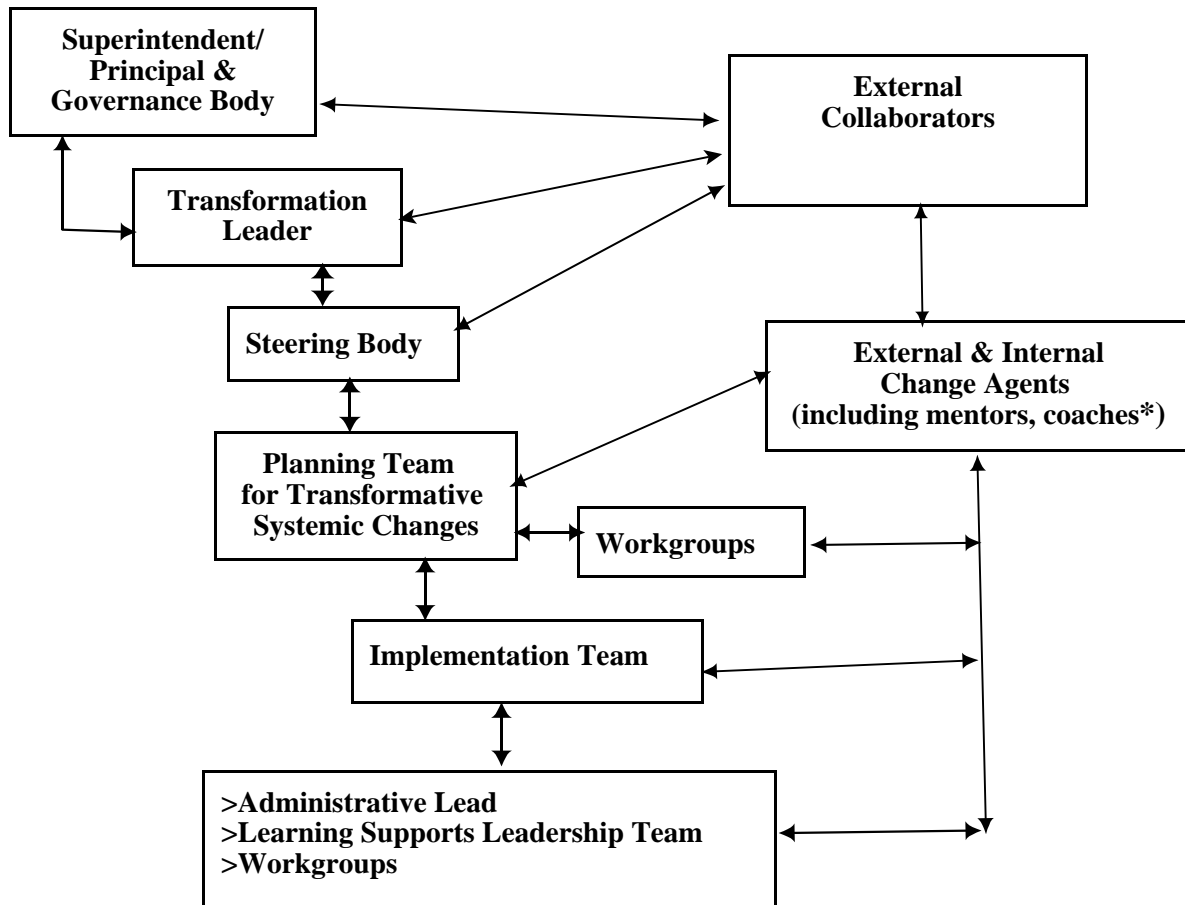
In what follows, we explore facets of each of these matters and share some lessons learned. The intent is to offer insights from research and practice as aids to those formulating strategic plans for facilitating implementation.

Operational Infrastructure for Accomplishing Systemic Change

In addition to the daily operational infrastructure, effective transformation require change mechanisms that can be customized at district, school, state, regional education agency levels. This temporary infrastructure for *facilitating* major systemic changes remains in place until the transformation is accomplished (see Exhibit 7-3).

Dedicated, well-prepared and coordinated leadership is key to the success of systemic changes in a complex organization. Everyone must be aware of who is leading the way. And leaders must be sitting at key decision making tables when budgetary and other fundamental decisions are discussed. This is critical because the facilitative infrastructure requires appropriate resource allocation (e.g., staffing, budget, systemic change training, guidance materials, technical assistance).

Exhibit 7.3

Prototype for a Temporary Operational Infrastructure to Facilitate Transformation

```
┌─────────────────┐                          ┌──────────────────┐
│ Superintendent/ │                          │    External      │
│  Principal &    │◄────────────────────────►│  Collaborators   │
│ Governance Body │                          │                  │
└─────────────────┘                          └──────────────────┘
     ┌──────────────────┐
     │ Transformation   │
     │     Leader       │
     └──────────────────┘
       ┌───────────────┐                     ┌──────────────────────┐
       │ Steering Body │                     │ External & Internal  │
       └───────────────┘                     │    Change Agents     │
                                             │(including mentors,   │
   ┌──────────────────┐                      │     coaches*)        │
   │  Planning Team   │                      └──────────────────────┘
   │for Transformative│   ┌──────────────┐
   │ Systemic Changes │◄─►│  Workgroups  │
   └──────────────────┘   └──────────────┘
     ┌──────────────────────┐
     │ Implementation Team  │
     └──────────────────────┘
  ┌────────────────────────────────┐
  │ >Administrative Lead           │
  │ >Learning Supports Leadership  │
  │  Team                          │
  │ >Workgroups                    │
  └────────────────────────────────┘
```

*Mentors/coaches are used to guide establishment of the systemic change
   infrastructure, with a focus on

- preparing a broad enough range of key leaders and staff (e.g., leaders directly
  involved with student and learning supports and others, such as leaders for
  instruction, school improvement, data/evaluation; a given staff member may be
  part of several workgroups/teams)
- ensuring general understanding of each mechanism's functions and
  interrelationship (see Appendix F for examples)
- providing capacity building that ensures members understand the essence of
  what needs to be accomplished and are committed to making it happen
- assisting in development of clear action plans.

   With respect to staffing, it is essential to avoid just adding the work as another assignment to

those who already are overly committed. Job descriptions must be modified to reflect new

responsibilities and accountabilities. Professional development related to carrying out the

essential functions as part of a team also requires special attention.[3]

Teamwork is essential!
/

Sure it is; it lets you blame someone else.

Some Lessons Learned

Operational infrastructure for change. We find that the need for a transformation leader and implementation team is readily comprehended; however, the importance of establishing temporary mechanisms to facilitate systemic changes is less appreciated. In observing efforts to transform schools, we rarely find an infrastructure for *facilitating* implementation. More characteristically, ad hoc mechanisms (e.g., a coach, an implementation team) have been set in motion with personnel who often have too little training for the job and without adequate processes for formative evaluation. And, it is common to find individuals and teams operating without clear understanding of functions and major tasks. The importance of reworking daily operational infrastructures and building an effective set of mechanisms to facilitate systemic changes cannot be overstated.

Champions/advocates. A well-chosen steering group can champion, guide, and remove barriers to moving the work forward. To do all this, the group needs a core of high level decision makers. In addition, we find it invaluable to cultivate an additional cadre of influential advocates who are highly motivated not just to help get things underway, but to ensure sustainability.

Administrative leadership. There is a tendency to just tack responsibility for the work onto already overworked administrators. When this happens, we find that leaders start strong but given the many challenges of their jobs and the complexities of systemic transformation, they become distracted and/or overwhelmed. Leadership for fundamental and major transformation is a job unto itself.

Outreach to resistant parties. It is common to find staff who are resistant to change. Some view the work as a distraction from and/or a competition with their current job descriptions. To counter this, we make continuous efforts to reach out and include such folks in work groups so that they become invested in the changes.

Revisiting agreements. As understanding of what is involved deepens, we have learned to review and revise initial agreements and procedures as necessary.

Protecting those making change. Because they are called upon to do many things that may be unpopular with some stakeholders, it is essential to put appropriate protections in place for those on the front line of change.

Continuous monitoring is required to watch for and strategically address all this

Creating Readiness, Commitment, and Engagement

New initiatives often spend too little time creating readiness for change. Stakeholders must perceive proposed changes as worth the effort. The process must make them feel they are valued contributors to a collective identity, destiny, and vision. From the perspective of intrinsic motivation theory, change must be facilitated in ways that enhance participants' feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness with and commitment to each other.

Specific planning for creating readiness, commitment, and engagement is critical. Drawing on the system change literature, we stress the following as conditions that can enhance readiness for system change:

- adoption of a high level policy commitment that is translated into appropriate resources, including space, budget, time, dedicated, respected, and accountable leadership and champions, and social marketing;

- mechanisms that ensure open and effective communication about goals and procedures, including processes for countering uninformed gossip;

- providing incentives for change, such as intrinsically valued outcomes, expectations for success, recognition, and rewards and protections for when problems arise;

- offering procedural options from which those expected to implement change can select the ones they see as most workable;

- systemic change mechanisms that are perceived as likely to improve organizational health, enhance a sense of community, and empower stakeholders;

- change agents who are perceived as pragmatic – maintaining ideals while embracing practical solutions;

- formal and flexible plans for accomplishing change in stages and with realistic timelines;

- development of formal agreements (with provision for revisions);

- procedures for engaging and empowering stakeholders who enter the system after the efforts are underway.[4]

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Some Lessons Learned

In our experience, the complexity of communication means it is almost always the case that initial introductory presentations are only partially understood. This interferes with creating *informed* readiness. Planning for creating readiness, commitment, and engagement must account for a variety of strategies to deepen understanding and counter misinterpretations of intended changes. It is essential to do this early to minimize the problems that will arise from uninformed rumprs. Of particular importance is ensuring understanding and commitment to the *essential elements* that must be implemented and sustained if substantive, rather than superficial, change is to emerge. Furthermore, given the inevitability of staff turnover, a plan for bringing newcomers up to speed is vital.

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Design Document

Design documents provide a clear vision of intended school improvements. Development of a design document is key to communicating and guiding the work at state and local levels. See the state department examples developed in Alabama, Louisiana, and Iowa.[5] For an example of work at the district level, see the overview document and case study from Gainesville (GA) City School District.[6]

A design document articulates:

- *the imperative* for the proposed transformative changes (e.g., why the changes are essential to enhancing equity of opportunity for all students)

- *policy changes* that ensure the intended transformation is not marginalized (e.g., that policy explicitly supports, at a high priority level, the development and sustainability of the impending changes and guides changes in strategic planning)

- an *intervention framework* (e.g., that illustrates the nature and scope of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student and learning supports)

- a framework for an *organizational and operational infrastructure* (e.g., that illustrates how existing mechanisms can be reworked to support, develop, and sustain the transformation)

- how the systemic changes will be facilitated and sustained

As can be seen in the online examples of designs, it is common for organizations to adopt/adapt prototypes to account for situational opportunities, strengths, and limitations.

Some Lessons Learned

Mentors/coaches and working relationships. Mentors and and change coaches have played instrumental roles in planning and guiding design document preparation. Such professionals can be invaluable resources.

At the same time, we have found that not all mentors and change coaches understand the complexity of their role. (References to coaching are provided at the end of this chapter.)

For instance, mentors/coaches often state: *It's all about relationship building.* However, many fail to understand the difference between just building a few good personal relationships and the importance of helping develop an extensive and long-lasting network of informed and productive *working relationships.*

Fundamental and sustained system changes require effective *working* relationships among a critical mass of stakeholders. Such relationships emerge from establishing a set of steering, planning, and implementation mechanisms and weaving them into an effective operational infrastructure for systemic change. From this perspective, mentors and coaches and the relationships they establish are only one element in such an infrastructure.

It is worth remembering that some key stakeholders will not be interested in developing *personal* relationships with a coach or others involved in the transformation; this doesn't mean that such individuals won't play an effective role in working for change.

Multi-year Strategic Plan

Once the design is completed and shared widely, the next step is to develop a multi-year strategic plan. A multi-year plan is essential because implementing and scaling-up a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports requires *phased-in* change over several years . Such a plan and related yearly action planning are key to effective implementation, sustainability, and replication to scale of any major transformation. (See our *General Guide for Strategic Planning Related to Developing a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports.*)[7]

In brief, strategic planning is a systematic process that translates a desired future into (a) a broad set of goals or objectives and (b) a sequence of strategic activity to accomplish the major phases and tasks involved in achieving the transformation design. The plan spells out an answer to: *How do we get there from here?*

In general, based on analyses of data from needs assessments, policy reviews, and resource mapping, sites need to develop a multi-year strategic plan that

(1) provides an *overview* of how the intended transformation will be pursued,

(2) conveys a *detailed plan for initial direct implementation and its facilitation* (with an emphasis on strategies that anticipate sustainability, renewal, summative evaluation and accountability),

(3) delineates strategic approaches to each key facet of facilitating implementation, such as establishing a temporary operational change infrastructure, capacity building, and formative evaluation.

The multi-year plan stresses objectives, steps, and tasks for each phase of systemic change and general strategies for accomplishing them. The plan accounts for implementing the design in a given setting and facilitating replication and scale-up.

In formulating plans, keep in mind that schools and classrooms are the central focus. The simple truth is that: *If planned changes do not end up playing out effectively at schools and in classrooms, they mean little.*

Some Lessons Learned

Regular reviews of plans and monitoring how they are carried out also is essential. And as noted, initial agreements and procedures often must be revised as the work proceeds and understanding deepens.

Good strategic and action planning accounts for situational opportunities, strengths, and limitations. Such plans also address matters that can block change. This includes concerns raised by those who are reluctant or resistant to making the transformation.

For example, we hear it argued that there is no money for the work. Effective responses to such challenges are essential to ensuring that the work is not undermined. Our response with respect to the financial argument is that, for many LEAs and schools, it is estimated that about 25% of the budget is expended on addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Strategic planning focuses on redeploying such resources to develop a more cost-effective system.

Ensuring Policy Facilitates Transformation

Accountability and standards for guiding practice are two fundamental policy drivers.

Therefore, the policy for a learning supports component requires (1) an expanded accountability

framework that includes leading indicators of direct outcomes and (2) standards for a learning

supports component.[8]

Finally, with scale-up and sustainability in mind, policy makers must ensure that sufficient

resources are allocated for establishing and building the capacity of the temporary operational

infrastructure for accomplishing systemic change.

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Some Lessons Learned

Demonstrations, pilots, and projects can be counterproductive for system-wide change.
Transformation of student and learning supports requires policy for effective replication
and sustainability that addresses the scale of need. Frequent problems are decisions to
only implement demonstrations and pilots (e.g., at one or two sites) rather than
establishing a policy for phasing in changes at all schools over several years.
Demonstrations in a district rarely are scaled-up.

A related problem is escaping "project mentality" (sometimes referred to as "projectitis").
We find a common tendency is for those involved in the transformation process to think
about their work only as a temporary project (e.g., "It will end when this
superintendent/principal leaves." 'It will end when the special funding runs out."). This
mind set often leads to a general view that the work doesn't warrant serious engagement.
The history of schools is strewn with valuable innovations that were not sustained.

Of course, frequent leadership changes (e.g., superintendents, principals, other key
stakeholders) do tend to reverse efforts that are underway. Countering this requires
institutionalizing transformation policies and procedures as early as feasible. It also calls
for planning strategies to effectively engage new decision makers and system shapers.

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Reworking Daily Operational Infrastructure

To ensure continuing development, sustainability, and creative renewal of a learning

supports component, the functions of a temporary infrastructure for facilitating systemic changes

eventually are subsumed by the daily operational infrastructure. As mentioned, a reworking of

the daily operational infrastructure is done at school and district levels, with school needs

supported by the district. The new infrastructure ensures a unified system by merging

fragmented student and learning support functions into a cohesive component and establishing an administrative leader and leadership team.

In addition, steps are taken to enhance outcomes, generate efficiencies, and achieve economies of scale by establishing mechanisms to connect a family or complex (e.g., feeder pattern) of schools and building collaborations with community resources.[9]

Concluding Comments About Getting From Here to There

Transforming education requires processes that facilitate substantive and sustainable systemic change. Such processes include articulating the design for innovative new directions and a multi-year strategic plan for phasing in the changes.

Supporting the work requires a temporary district/school operational infrastructure for facilitating implementation of the strategic plan. It also involves a reworking of the ongoing daily operational infrastructures at school and district levels and for connecting schools with each other and the community.

In underwriting transformation, the emphasis is first on weaving together what education agencies already allocate (e.g., pupil services, special and compensatory education and other categorical programs). Over time, increasing efforts are made to link school resources with those from home and community (e.g., formally connecting school programs with assets at home, neighborhood enrichment, recreation, and service agencies, businesses, service clubs, faith-based organizations).

Finally, well-designed and carried out leadership coaching and mentoring at every level is invaluable in producing substantive and sustainable school transformation and making replication to scale a reality.

Notes

[1] Elmore (2004), Fullan (2005), (Glennan, Bodilly, Galegher, & Kerr (2004), Thomas (2002).

[2] For more details, examples, and benchmark tools, see Section D of the Center's System Change toolkit online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaidsD.htm. There is also a link to the Center's Quick Find on Systemic Change and the Diffusion of Innovation in Schools; the Quick Find provides links to other resources across the country.

[3] See examples of job descriptions online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm .

[4] Engagement is enhanced by empowering participants. Note, however, that Empowerment is a multi-faceted concept. Theoreticians distinguish "power over" from "power to" and "power from." *Power over* involves explicit or implicit dominance over others and events; *power to* is seen as increased opportunities to act; *power from* implies ability to resist the power of others (Riger, 2002).

[5] See http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/trailblazing.htm.

[6] Design (online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/wheresithappening/gainesvillebroch.pdf); case study at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/casestudy.pdf .

[7] http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/genguide.pdf .

[8] For an expanded accountability framework, see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rethaccount.pdf .
For standards for a leaning supports component, see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/commcore.pdf .

[9] For more on reworking operational infrastructure, see the Center's Systemic Change Tool kit – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkitb3.htm.

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Also see our Center's Resource Catalogue for a list of special resources related to the matters covered in this chapter. Available at no cost from the online clearinghouse of the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/.

For ease in finding and accessing specific topics (e.g., System Change, Sustainability), see the Center's Quick Find menu of over 130 topics – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm

Coda

Moving Schools Forward

Clearly, there is ample direction for improving how schools address barriers to learning and teaching. The time to do so is now. Unfortunately, too many school professionals and researchers are caught up in the day-by-day pressures of their current roles and functions. Everyone is so busy "doing" that there is no time to introduce better ways. One is reminded of Winnie-the-Pooh who was always going down the stairs, bump, bump, bump, on his head behind Christopher Robin. He thinks it is the only way to go down stairs. Still, he reasons, there might be a better way if only he could stop bumping long enough to figure it out.

Do not follow where the path may lead.
Go, instead, where there is not path and leave a trail. (Anonymous)