Improving School Improvement

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To facilitate efforts to address barriers to learning, this resources is freely accessible online.
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/improve.pdf

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PREFACE

In opening this volume, you might be thinking:

Is another book on school improvement really needed?

Clearly our answer is yes. Our analyses of prevailing school improvement legislation, planning, and literature indicates fundamental deficiencies, especially with respect to enhancing equity of opportunity and closing the achievement gap.

Here is what our work uniquely brings to policy and planning tables:

(1) *An expanded framework for school improvement* – We highlight that moving from a two- to a three-component policy and practice framework is essential for closing the opportunity and achievement gaps. (That is, expanding from focusing primarily on instruction and management/government concerns by establishing a third primary component to improve how schools address barriers to learning and teaching.)

(2) *An emphasis on integrating a deep understanding of motivation* – We underscore that concerns about engagement, management of behavior, school climate, equity of opportunity, and student outcomes require an up-to-date grasp of motivation and especially intrinsic motivation.

(3) *Clarification of the nature and scope of personalized teaching* – We define personalization as the process of matching learner motivation and capabilities and stress that it is the learner's perception that determines whether the match is a good one.

(4) *A reframing of remediation and special education* – We formulate these processes as personalized special assistance that is applied in and out of classrooms and practiced in a sequential and hierarchical manner.

(5) *A prototype for transforming student and learning supports* – We provide a framework for a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system designed to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students and families.

(6) *A reworking of the leadership structure for whole school improvement* -- We outline how the operational infrastructure can and must be realigned in keeping with a three component school improvement framework.

(7) *A systemic approach to enhancing school-community collaboration* – We delineate a leadership role for schools in outreaching to communities in order to work on shared concerns through a formal collaborative operational infrastructure that enables weaving together resources to advance the work.

(8) *An expanded framework for school accountability* – We reframe school accountability to ensure a balanced approach that accounts for a shift to a three component school improvement policy.

(9) *Guidance for substantive, scalable, and sustainable systemic changes* – We frame mechanisms and discuss lessons learned related to facilitating fundamental systemic changes and replicating and sustaining them across a district.

The frameworks and practices presented are based on our many years of work in schools and from efforts to enhance school-community collaboration. We incorporate insights from various theories and the large body of relevant research and from

lessons learned and shared by many school leaders and staff who strive everyday to do their best for children.

Our emphasis on new directions in no way is meant to demean current efforts. We know that the demands placed on those working in schools go well beyond what anyone should be asked to do. Given the current working conditions in many schools, our intent is to help make the hard work generate better results. To this end, we highlight new directions and systemic pathways for improving school outcomes. Some of what we propose is difficult to accomplish. Hopefully, the fact that there are schools, districts, and state agencies already trailblazing the way will engender a sense of hope and encouragement to those committed to innovation.

It will be obvious that our work owes much to many. We are especially grateful to those who are pioneering major systemic changes across the country. These leaders and so many in the field have generously offered their insights and wisdom. And, of course, we are indebted to hundreds of scholars whose research and writing is a shared treasure. As always, we take this opportunity to thank Perry Nelson and the host of graduate and undergraduate students at UCLA who contribute so much to our work each day, and to the many young people and their families who continue to teach us all.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,

Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor

Our current school system follows a one-size-fits-all model that does not account for differences in backgrounds, assets or opportunities. And so we tend to overlook strategies that are responsive to the differentiated characteristics of families, communities and schools. My concern is that an exclusively instructional focus optimizes teaching and content, but if the students aren't present and able to concentrate then we'll never be able to truly support all children on their path to realizing their full academic potential, which is the aspirational goal of education reform. In other words, ***instruction alone is not enough to help all students succeed.***

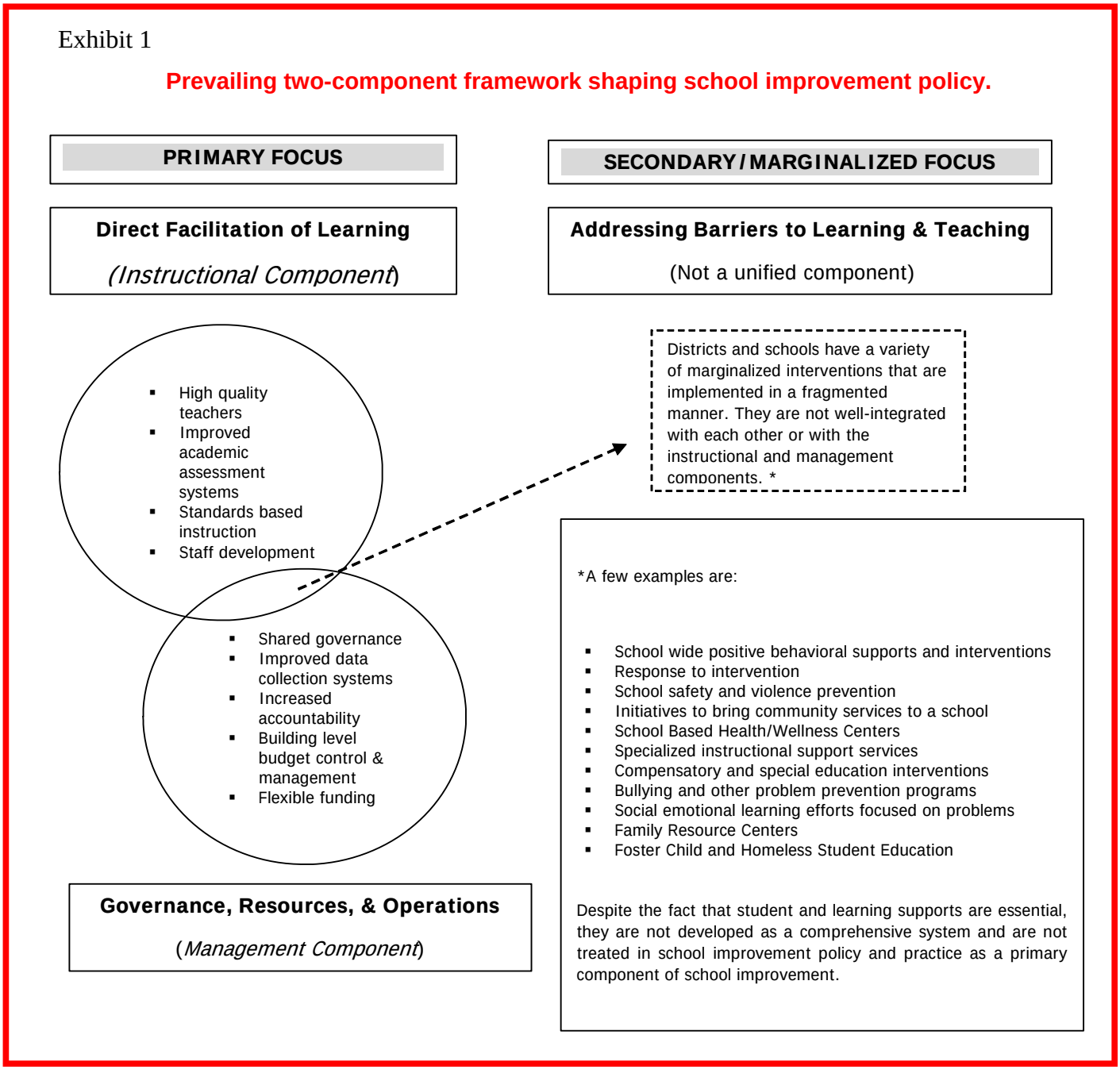
Paul Reville, former Secretary of Education for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts & Founding Director, Harvard Graduate School of Education's Education Redesign Lab (posted at http://edublog.scholastic.com/post/instruction-alone-not-enough-help-all-students-succeed)

Introduction: Expanding School Improvement Policy: *Moving from a Two- to a Three-Component Framework*

As illustrated in Exhibit 1, 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. Some plans also are made for ways to address concerns about safety and specific problems that can interfere with students learning and teachers teaching. However, the focus on such concerns has and continues to be marginalized, and this has and continues to produce ad hoc, piecemeal, and counterproductively fragmented and competitive initiatives, programs, and services.

Exhibit 1

Prevailing two-component framework shaping school improvement policy.

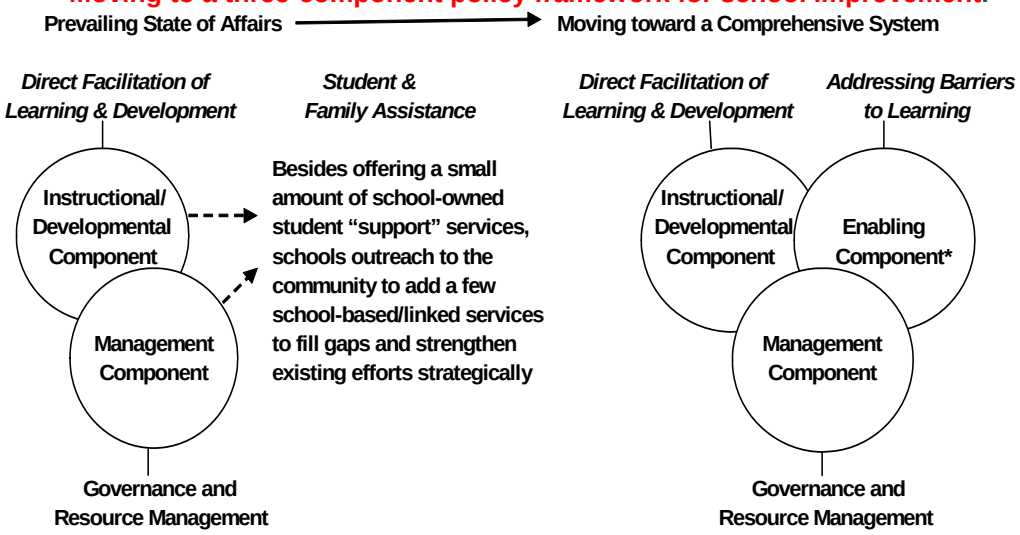


While adopting a three component school improvement policy framework will benefit any school, the predominantly two component approach has worked in schools where most students perform up to expectations. However, it is grossly insufficient in schools where large numbers of students are not doing well. Substantial improvement in "low performing" schools requires a unified and comprehensive third component that is pursued as a primary and essential system.

Exhibit 2 graphically illustrates a shift from a two- to a three-component framework. The third component becomes the umbrella under which all efforts and resources to address barriers to learning and teaching are woven together to develop a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system.

Exhibit 2

Moving to a three-component policy framework for school improvement.



***The Enabling Component is designed to enable learning by (1) addressing factors that interfere with learning, development, and teaching and (2) re-engaging students in classroom instruction. The component is established in policy and practice as *primary and essential* and is developed into a unified, comprehensive system by weaving together school and community resources. Some venues where this comprehensive approach is adopted refer to the third component as a Learning Supports Component**

About the Three Components

When the three components are fully interconnected with each other and well integrated into school improvement policy and practice, they provide the essential foundation for promoting whole student development, enabling equity of opportunity for all students to succeed at school, and enhancing school climate. Here is a brief sketch of each.

Instructional Component. Society's interest in public education remains that of having schools play a role in (1) socializing the young, (2) ensuring the economic viability of the country, and (3) preserving the prevailing political system. These aims shape school curricula, with special initiatives introduced when policy makers become convinced of specific needs and benefits. One example of a current special

initiative is the focus on enhancing curricula related to STEM – science, technology, engineering, and math (with some advocacy for increasing this initiative to include the arts -- turning the acronym into STEAM). Another example is the increasing emphasis on developing the whole child, with a particular focus on social and emotional learning and character education.

The process of facilitating learning at school takes place throughout the school day in the classroom and in other school venues. It involves broadband teaching practices, classroom management, and strategies for accounting for individual differences, often referred to as differentiated instruction. Currently, concerns for differentiated instruction are stressing the term personalized learning.

Addressing Barriers to Learning/Teaching Component. Even the best instruction is insufficient to ensure all students succeed at school. Providing every student with equity of opportunity to succeed certainly requires higher standards and greater accountability for instruction, better teaching and classroom management, reduced school violence, etc. And it also requires an effective system for *directly* addressing barriers to development, learning, and teaching.

A transactional view of the causes of human behavior emphasizes that both *external* and *internal* factors can interfere with learning and teaching. Addressing such factors requires not only good teaching but a system of supports that directly counters interfering factors. Such a system encompasses a range of specific supports in the classroom and schoolwide and sometimes at home and/or through community agencies. This component involves all school staff and collaboration with family members and community resources focused on preventing problems, implementing personal assistance, and, as necessary, providing specialized interventions. So, while teachers are a core focus, this component highlights that they can't and shouldn't be expected to act alone in addressing barriers to learning/teaching.

Management/Governance Component. The emphasis in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on devolving the federal role in education is the latest shift in governance and management of resources. The devolution is increasing state and district exploration of how to improve policy, allocate and redeploy resources, enhance whole school improvement and accountability, support implementation-to-scale, and sustain innovations.

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In appreciating each of the three components, it is essential not to lose sight of the whole. The aims are whole school and whole student development. To these ends:

- the three components must be fully interconnected and well integrated into school improvement policy and practice;
- concerns about whole student development, equity, and school climate all must be understood and pursued as qualities that *emerge* from the effective implementation, over time, of all three components at a school;
- effective implementation must be pursued through major reorganization of school infrastructure to operationalize each of the three components as primary and essential;
- district, regional, state, and federal efforts to support school improvement must be redesigned to ensure schools have the capacity to make the substantive systemic changes involved in moving to a sustainable three component school improvement approach.

Part I

Good Schools and Classrooms

Schools are expected to do their best for *all* students. This, of course, reflects our society's commitment to equity, fairness, and justice. Ultimately, this translates into school improvement efforts that stress applying the best practices known to date.

Yet, if the commitment to ensuring equity, fairness, and justice is to be meaningful, it cannot be approached simplistically. As Jeanie Oakes has lamented:

> *Popular reforms over the past three and a half decades have done little to close opportunity and achievement gaps, and some reforms actually increase those gaps.*[1]

For schools, school improvement starts with designing instruction in ways that account for a wide range of individual differences and circumstances. But, the work can't stop there if we are to assure all students an equal opportunity to succeed at school and beyond. Administrators, teachers, and all student and school support staff must be prepared to design schools to promote positive development, prevent problems, and accommodate and assist with the various learning, behavior, and emotional styles and problems that are encountered each day. Such preparation involves considerably more than most school staff will have learned to do before being hired.

Fortunately, good policy makers, administrators, teachers, and student support staff are continuing learners. They are keenly interested in what others have found works. As a result, most end up being rather eclectic in pursuing their daily functions.

Thoughtfully put together, an eclectic set of practices can be a healthy alternative to fads, fancies, and dogmaticism. But care must be taken to avoid grabbing hold of almost every new idea. This is naive eclecticism and can result in more harm than good.

The way to avoid naive eclecticism is to build one's approaches on a coherent and consistent set of

- underlying concepts
- practice guidelines that reflect these concepts
- best practices that fit the guidelines
- valid scientific data as they become available.

Each of these considerations guide our discussion of good schools and classrooms. The aim in Part I is to synthesize and reframe what currently are seen as good directions for school improvement.

[1]Jeannie Oakes (2018), Public scholarship: Education research for a diverse democracy. *Educational Researcher, 47,* 91-104.

1. Improving Schools and Teaching

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

Good Schools Ensure Equity of Opportunity

Principles/Guidelines Underlying Good Schools and Teaching

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

A Rationale for Personalizing Instruction

Coda: A note about adopting principles

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)

Every encounter results in something learned – for better or for worse. So, every transaction with an adult in the school setting is teaching youngsters something. Good schools not only teach well; they also prevent and help address learning, behavior, and emotional problems. And they do not expect teachers to do it all by themselves.

Teachers, of course, play the primary role in formal instruction. Learning, however, takes place throughout the school day in and out of classrooms. And when a student is not doing well, support staff, administrators, and others often are called on to play a primary "teaching" role. (Generally, this happens after a problem has worsened over a period of time.)

Our concern throughout this book is on all students and all who are called on to ensure equity of opportunity for student success at school and beyond. We start with a brief exploration of what schooling is all about and syntheses of the principles and characteristics that define good schools and good teaching. We do so with awareness that learning and teaching are collaborative, dynamic, nonlinear processes and that some learners experience problems that require additional and sometimes specialized assistance.

Good Schools Ensure Equity of Opportunity

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. One rationale is that, in the context of society's institutions for educating the young, good schooling and teaching require accomplishing society's intentions in ways that promote the well-being of all students. For *all* to benefit, school improvement must ensure equity of opportunity.

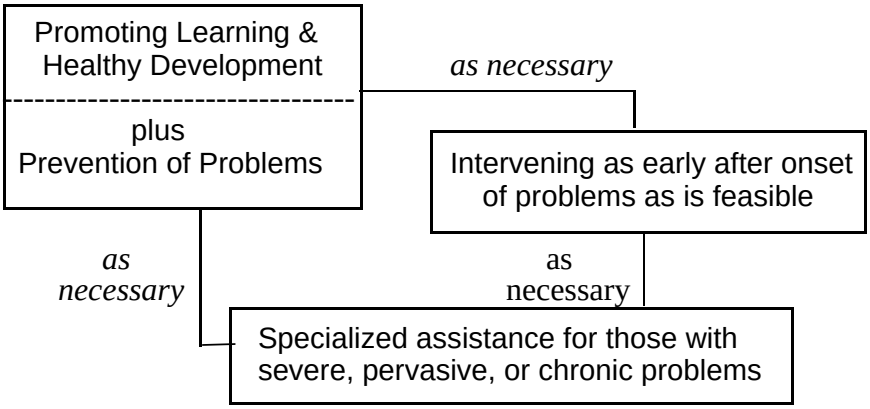
Most public school curriculum guides and manuals reflect efforts to prepare youngsters to cope with what may be called *developmental* or *life tasks*. Reading, math, biology, chemistry, social studies, history, government, physical and health education – all are seen as preparing an individual to assume an appropriate role in society as a worker, citizen, community member, and parent. Most educators and parents, however, also want to foster individual well-being, talents, and personal integrity. From this perspective, good teaching is not simply a matter of conveying content and mastering instructional techniques.

And, good schools are expected to play a role in helping to address learning, behavior, and emotional problems. This expectation underscores the importance of a three component framework for school improvement. As illustrated in Exhibit 1-1, the need is for well-designed and effective interventions to (1) promote assets and prevent problems, (2) address problems as early after onset as feasible and, (3) provide specialized assistance as necessary.

Because the rationale adopted by teachers and other school staff is so important, this chapter presents brief syntheses of principles, guidelines, and characteristics that encapsulate some of the best thinking about these matters. As stakeholders revisit and articulate their plans for school improvement, they need to reflect on and discuss such matters. (The complexity, of course, warrants more exploration than we can provide here; the references at the end of the book indicate a variety of resources for continuing education.)

Exhibit 1-1

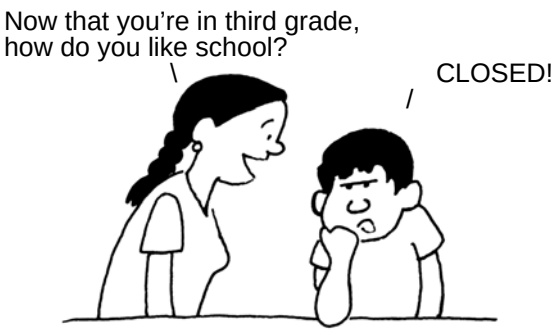
Good Schools Promote Assets, Prevent Problems, & Address Problems Early and, as necessary, with Specialized Assistance



Principles/Guidelines Underlying Good Schools and Teaching

Consensus is emerging about what constitutes good schools and classrooms. Because the research literature on effective schools and classrooms is restricted in its focus by methodological and other limitations, we drew on a variety of additional resources in generating the following syntheses.

The commonsense view of good teaching is captured by the old adage: *Good 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, skills). The irony in this is that most school staff recognize that motivational factors often play a key role in accounting for poor instructional outcomes. One of the most common laments among teachers is: "They could do it, if only they *wanted* to!" Teachers also know that good abilities are more likely to emerge when students are motivated not only to pursue class assignments, but also are interested in using what they learn in other contexts. So while matching current knowledge and skills is a basic concern, it is evident that good teaching also requires matching *motivation* (e.g., attitudes) and encompasses practices that reflect an appreciation of *intrinsic* motivation and what must be done to overcome *avoidance* motivation. We will elaborate on these matters in subsequent chapters.



The following widely advocated guidelines provide a sense of the underlying philosophy for school efforts to improve schools and teaching. This synthesis is organized around concerns for (1) stakeholders, (2) the teaching process, and (3) school and classroom climate.

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

- employ a critical mass of high quality leadership and 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 unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports (i.e., an enabling/learning supports 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 and accounting for distinctive needs, assets, 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 fairness) 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, the aim is to have schools and practices experienced by all stakeholders as user friendly, flexibly implemented, and responsive.

Recently the American Psychological Association (APA) generated what they term "the most important principles from psychology" for use in pre-K to 12 classroom teaching and learning (see Exhibit 1-2).The APA encourages consideration and practice of these principles throughout all teacher preparation programs "to ensure a solid foundation of psychological knowledge in pre-K to 12 instruction."

Exhibit 1-2

APA's *Top 20 Principles for Pre-K to 12 Education*

http://www.apa.org/ed/schools/teaching-learning/top-twenty-principles.aspx

Principles 1-8 – about *Thinking and learning*

1. Students' beliefs or perceptions about intelligence and ability affect their cognitive functioning and learning.
2. What students already know affects their learning.
3. Students' cognitive development and learning are not limited by general stages of development.
4. Learning is based on context, so generalizing learning to new contexts is not spontaneous but instead needs to be facilitated.
5. Acquiring long-term knowledge and skill is largely dependent on practice.
6. Clear, explanatory, and timely feedback to students is important for learning.
7. Students' self-regulation assists learning, and self-regulatory skills can be taught.
8. Student creativity can be fostered.

Principles 9-12 – about *Motivation*

9. Students tend to enjoy learning and perform better when they are more intrinsically than extrinsically motivated to achieve.
10. Students persist in the face of challenging tasks and process information more deeply when they adopt mastery goals rather than performance goals.
11. Teachers' expectations about their students affect students' opportunities to learn, their motivation, and their learning outcomes.
12. Setting goals that are short term (proximal), specific, and moderately challenging enhances motivation more than establishing goals that are long term (distal), general, and overly challenging.

Principles 13-15 – about *Social-emotional learning*

13. Learning is situated within multiple social contexts.
14. Interpersonal relationships and communication are critical to both the teaching-learning process and the social-emotional development of students.
15. Emotional well-being influences educational performance, learning, and development.

Principles 16-17 – about *Classroom management*

16. Expectations for classroom conduct and social interaction are learned and can be taught using proven principles of behavior and effective classroom instruction.
17. Effective classroom management is based on (a) setting and communicating high expectations, (b) consistently nurturing positive relationships, and (c) providing a high level of student support.

Principles 18-20 – about *Assessment*

18. Formative and summative assessments are both important and useful but require different approaches and interpretations.
19. Students' skills, knowledge, and abilities are best measured with assessment processes grounded in psychological science with well-defined standards for quality and fairness.
20. Making sense of assessment data depends on clear, appropriate, and fair interpretation.

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

In drawing on the vast research literature on effective schools and classrooms, we have extrapolated the following:

Effective Schools demonstrate

- commitment to a shared vision of equity of opportunity, with high expectations for student learning and an 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 of student progress through measured indicators of achievement

  >setting local standards
  >use of national standards
  >use of data for continuous improvement of school climate & curricula

- optimizing of 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

Effective Classrooms

- have a positive classroom social climate that

  >personalizes contacts and supports in ways that build trust over time and meets learners where they are
  >offers accommodations so all students have an 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

- design and implement 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 personalized and in-classroom special intervention strategies prior to referring students for specialized services
>use a mix of methods and advanced technology to enhance learning

- modify instruction 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

- enable teachers to collaborate and supports them 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

The top five qualities listed for "a great teacher" reported in a survey of U.S. students 15-19 years old conducted by the Pearson company were:

1. The ability to develop relationships with their students
2. Patient, caring, and kind personality
3. Knowledge of learners
4. Dedication to teaching
5. Engaging students in learning

https://www.pearsoned.com/top-five-qualities-effective-teachers/

A Rationale for Personalizing Instruction

In Part II, we approach good teaching from the perspective of personalizing instruction. As will be clear, that perspective stresses the addition of the following underlying rationale for meeting 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 content and process options that can be offered and the more the learner is made aware of the options and has a deciding role in choosing 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.

Coda

A note about adopting principles: Discussions of principles related to most interventions have become so diffuse that almost every guideline is called a principle. With respect to school and classroom practice, especially with vulnerable and disenfranchised populations, a principled approach certainly is needed. The literature discussing the fundamental social philosophical concerns raised by schooling, teaching, and other intervention decisions suggests that what must be addressed first and foremost are overlapping concerns about distributive justice (equity and fairness) and empowerment.

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 is the more social philosophical application that deals with such ethical questions as: Fair for whom? Fair according to whom? Fair using what criteria and what procedures for applying the criteria? Obviously, 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 and to the rest of society.

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.

From the perspective of school and classroom practice, the above overlapping principles raise complex concerns because there are three involved parties in any intervention: the society, the intervener(s), and those who are identified as participants (e.g., students, families). Each is a stakeholder; each brings vested and often conflicting interests to the enterprise; each party wants to be treated equitably, fairly, and in ways that promote empowerment. The profound implications of all this require greater attention, especially with an eye to stakeholder motivation, setting standards, and cost-benefit analyses.

2. About School and Classroom Climate: Opening Doors

School and classroom climate are qualities that emerge from effective school improvement

Improving School Climate Starts with
Understanding it's an Emerging Quality

Creating a Collaborative and Caring Classroom:
Teachers Can't Do it Alone

Opening the Classroom Door for Assistance and Partnerships

Opening Doors to Enhance and Personalize Staff Development

Coda: A note about caring

Do you think going to school is important?

Sure! Everyone needs an education, even if they already know everything.

We must indeed all hang together,
or most assuredly we shall all hang separately.
Benjamin Franklin

The concept of school climate currently is playing a major role in discussions about the quality of school life, teaching, learning, and support. School and classroom climates range from hostile/toxic to welcoming and supportive and can fluctuate daily and over the school year.

School and classroom climate reflect 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 surrounding political, social, cultural, and economic contexts (e.g., home, neighborhood, city, state, country).

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. 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.

Because of 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.

Improving School Climate Starts with Understanding it's an Emerging Quality

A range of concepts have been put forth for consideration in discussing school and classroom climate. These include 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).

What research and theorizing have not articulated well is that school and classroom climate are *emerging* qualities. That is, climate is a temporal, fluid quality of the immediate setting, and it emerges from the complex transaction of many factors.

Given current ideas about what factors affect school and classroom climate, good schools and good teachers work diligently to create an atmosphere that encourages and supports whole child learning and wellness and prevents learning, behavior, emotional, and health problems. The focus is on enhancing the quality of life for students and staff not only in the classroom, but school-wide. With respect to the three component framework for school improvement, this includes calls for (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/learning supports that addresses barriers to learning and teaching and re-engages disconnected students in classroom learning, and (3) a governance/management approach that is inclusive of key stakeholders.

Creating a Collaborative and Caring Classroom: Teachers Can't Do it Alone

A positive school environment frequently is described as welcoming, supportive, caring, respectful, and as promoting whole child development, a sense of community, and feelings of hope for the future. The emergence of a such an environment requires the efforts of a critical mass of stakeholders working collaboratively. The poignant irony about this is how often teachers are isolated from other adults once they enter their classrooms.

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: (excerpt from *The Atlantic* – https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/04/alone-in-the-classroom-why-teachers-are-too-isolated/255976/)

"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."

Collaborative efforts in classrooms require the opening of doors. When teachers go into their classroom and shut the door, they are deprived of essential support and learning opportunities. Too often, negative classroom dynamics and the isolation from colleagues lead to feelings of alienation and "burn out." And, students are cut off from a variety of resources and experiences that can enhance learning and prevent problems.

Exhibit 2-1 and the ensuing discussion highlight considerations related to opening school doors to enhance collegial collaboration, consultation, mentoring, and enable use of a variety of expert assistance, volunteers, family members, and the community-at-large. Such collaboration is especially important for preventing commonplace learning, behavior, and emotional problems and for responding early-after-the onset of problems. Effective collaboration is seen as essential in fostering a caring climate, a sense of community, and overall teaching effectiveness.

Exhibit 2-1

Working Together

Collaboration and collegiality

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

Welcoming for new staff and ongoing social support for all staff

Just as with students and their families, those working together at a school need to feel they are truly welcome, connected, and have a range of social supports. Thus, a major focus for stakeholder development is 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.

Organizational, collaborative learning

As Senge stresses, organizational learning requires an organizational structure "where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision and improve shared mental models" 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.

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 schools to establish effective problem solving mechanisms to eliminate or at least minimize such barriers. 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.

Opening the Classroom Door for Assistance and Partnerships

Opening the classroom door allows for a variety of forms of assistance and useful partnerships. Collaboration and teaming are key facets of improving school climate. Teachers need to work closely with other teachers and school personnel, as well as with parents, professionals-in-training, volunteers, and so forth (see Exhibits 2-2 and 2-3). 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.*

Exhibit 2-2

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 compatible others enables staff to complement each others' areas of competence and provide each other with nurturance and personal support, and allows 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.

Aides & Volunteers – Aides and volunteers can be a multifaceted resource in a classroom and throughout a school (see Exhibit 2-3). For this to be the case, however, the school staff must value the resource and learn how to recruit, train, nurture, and use them effectively. Aides and volunteers can enable teachers to personalize instruction, free teachers and other school personnel to meet students' needs more effectively, broaden students' experiences through interaction with such individuals, strengthen school-community understanding and relations, enhance home involvement, and enrich the lives of the aides and volunteers. In the classroom, aides and 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. Aides and 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.

*When a classroom successfully joins with its surrounding community, anyone at a school and in the community who wants to facilitate student learning might be a contributing teacher (e.g., aides, volunteers, family members, students, specialist teachers. student support staff, school administrators, classified staff, professionals-in-training). Together the array of school and community people constitute a teaching community.

Exhibit 2-3

Potential Roles for Aides & 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, AmeriCorps, 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 enhancing school climate.

An Example of Improving Classroom Climate: Using Support Staff, Aides, and Volunteers to Provide Special Assistance

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 collaborate with support staff and train their aides (if they have one) or a capable volunteer to provide guidance and support for disruptive youngsters. The emphasis is on ensuring that someone is present and prepared to respond immediately when the teacher indicates the need. The tactic involves sitting next to the student and quietly trying to re-engage her/him. If necessary, the student is taken to a quiet area in the classroom and provided with the opportunity to choose an engaging activity. In extreme instances, the two may even go out for a brief walk and talk if this is feasible. It is true that all this means the student won't get the benefit of the planned 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 positive strategy for avoiding the tragedy of (a) the teacher reprimanding the culprit and increasing that student's negative attitudes toward teaching and school and (b) in the process, disrupting learning for the rest of the class.

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 engage in a control contest with a student. (Even if the teacher wins such a contest, 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 counter-productive with respect to a caring climate and a sense of community.) Finally, note that the teacher has not had a negative encounter with the disruptive 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 Doors to Enhance and Personalize Staff Development

Personnel development is a critical element of improving school and classroom climate. 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 improving student outcomes.

Opening the school and classroom doors to enhance support and staff development enable personalizing staff development through selective assignments for teaming, mentoring, and other collegial activity. The process involves identifying what an individual currently needs to learn. (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 allows for an 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.

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Opening school and classroom doors to teaming and collaboration is key to significantly improving inservice personnel development for all staff. And, of course, improving continuous staff development is essential to job satisfaction and enhancing a positive climate at school.

Coda

A note about caring. From a psychological perspective, learning and teaching are experienced most positively when the learner cares about learning and the teacher cares about teaching. School climate benefits greatly when all the participants care about each other.

Caring has moral, social, and personal facets. It encompasses empathy and compassion for others. When all facets of caring are present and balanced, they can nurture individuals and facilitate the process of learning. Whole child development calls for a focus on caring in all its dimensions.

To promote a sense of caring and community, schools can develop and institutionalize procedures that start when newcomers arrive (e.g., students, their families, staff, volunteers and others from the community). This involves an initial focus on welcoming and connecting them with those with whom they will be interacting. A supportive school welcomes and provides social supports to ensure that students (and their families) make a good adjustment to school, and to address initial adjustment problems if they arise. The welcoming and transition processes continue with an emphasis on ensuring social and learning supports and guidance, mentoring, advocacy and, if necessary, special assistance.

Remember that all this applies to inducting and supporting school staff and others who come to help at a school.

There are a myriad of strategies that can contribute to students feeling positively cared for and connected in the classroom and school. Besides creating a welcoming and supportive climate, 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 special assistance, volunteer opportunities, and participation in decision making.

3. Creating a Stimulating and Manageable Learning Environment

It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge. – Albert Einstein

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

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

Everyone trying to improve schools knows that the way the classroom setting is arranged and instruction is organized can help or hinder learning and teaching. 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. To these ends and from the perspective of enhancing intrinsic motivation, a classroom benefits from (1) ensuring that available options encourage active, engaged learning (e.g., authentic, project- and problem-based discovery learning, blended and flipped learning practices, enrichment opportunities) and (2) grouping students in ways that turn big classes into smaller learning units to better enhance positive attitudes and support learning. As will be evident in Part II, these are basic processes in moving toward personalized instruction.

Designing the Classroom for Engaged Learning

Teachers are often taught to group instructional practices under topics such as:

- **Direct Instruction** (e.g., structured overviews; explicit teaching; mastery lectures; drill and practice; compare and contrast; didactic questions; demonstrations; guides for reading, listening, and viewing)
- **Indirect Instruction** (e.g., problem-based projects and discovery learning; case studies; inquiry; reading for meaning; reflective study; concept formation: concept mapping; concept attainment)
- **Interactive instruction** (e.g., debates; role playing; panels; brainstorming; peer practice; discussion; laboratory groups; cooperative learning groups; group problem solving and projects; circle of knowledge; tutorial groups; interviewing)
- **Independent study** (e.g., essays; computerized instruction; learning activity packages; correspondence lessons; learning contracts; homework and flipped learning; research projects; assigned questions; learning centers)
- **Experiential learning** (e.g., field trips; community service or action projects; conducting experiments and surveys; simulations; games; arts and crafts; focused imaging; field observations; oral histories; role playing; model building)

All these forms of instruction can be effective if the student is truly engaged. Student engagement is especially important in preventing learning, behavior, and emotional problems and is essential at the first indications of such problems. And, it is the key to using *response to intervention* as an authentic assessment tool. Thus, one focus of school improvement is always on engaged learning and approaches designed to enhance motivation to learn.

One indication of engaged learning is that students are actively constructing meaning grounded in their own experience rather than simply memorizing and reproducing what they are taught. Active learning calls for *doing, listening, looking, and asking;* engaged learning calls for mobilizing the student to seek out and learn. To these ends, instruction is 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 not only minimize threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to others, but enhance such feelings. As we discuss in Chapter 4, these are key intrinsic motivation concerns.

Active, engaged learning does much more than enhance learning of subject matter and academic skills. It provides opportunities for students to 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. An appendix to this volume provides brief overviews of a variety of approaches that encompass strategies for actively engaging students in learning and practicing what has been learned.

Grouping Students and Turning Big Classes into Smaller Units

In their report entitled *High Schools of the Millennium*, the workgroup 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.*

Grouping. Aside from times when a learning objective is best accomplished with the whole class, a well-designed classroom enables (1) working directly with a group while the rest of the students work in small groups and on independent activities and (2) rotating among small groups and individual learners. When staff team teach or collaborate in other ways, such grouping can be done across classrooms.

Grouping is essential for effective teaching. It turns large classrooms into a set of simultaneously operating small classes, facilitates differentiated instruction, and is a step toward personalized teaching and learning. We hasten to stress that differentiated instruction is not a form of tracking. It enables teachers to give every child access to the curriculum and ensures that each makes appropriate progress. Clearly, students should never be grouped in ways that harm them. School improvement involves not putting students in low ability tracks and working to end racial and special education segregation.

The literature is replete with ways to minimize whole-class instruction through use of flexible small group teaching and facilitating independent learning. In general, students are grouped and regrouped flexibly and regularly based on individual interests, needs, and for benefits to be derived from diversity. Three common types of groupings are:

- **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 for active, engaged learning and for improving interpersonal functioning by enhancing understanding of working relationships and of factors effecting group functioning.

Small learning 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. In a small group students have more opportunities to participate. In heterogeneous, cooperative learning groups, each

student has an interdependent role in pursuing a common learning goal, and all can contribute on a par with their capabilities.

Obviously, 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 resource and special education teachers, student support personnel, and an ever widening range of volunteers who can bring special abilities into the classroom and offer additional options and supports for learning. And, of course, technology is a fundamental resource.

Recognizing and Accommodating Diversity. Every classroom is diverse to some degree. Diversity arises from 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 grouping students across ethnic lines to bring different perspectives to a 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.

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School improvement calls for the entire curriculum and all instructional activities to focus more attention on engaged learning. Important facets of this are ensuring grouping practices are implemented in ways that appreciate and appropriately accommodate individual differences and diversity.

Coda

A note about effective teaching. School improvement efforts always emphasize expanded thinking about what constitutes effective teaching. The literature on the elements of effective teaching presents comparative data. That is the research indicates what factors seem to produce *better* outcomes than others. It is wise to remember that better doesn't always mean *good.*

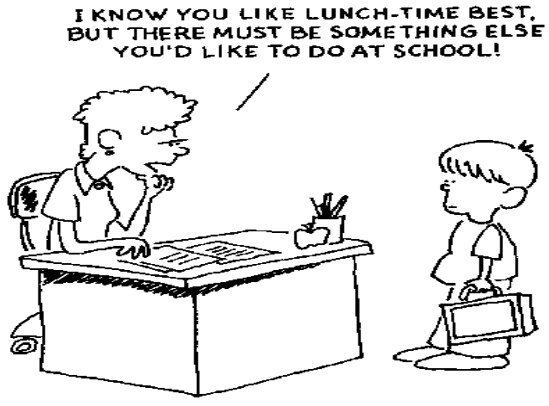
Research has yet to adequately investigate many of the most valued matters that concerned parents and informed citizens want schooling to encapsulate in the best interests of children and society. Given current limitations, teachers can draw on, but must not be restricted to, the existing research on effective teaching. Rather, in creating a stimulating and manageable learning environment, staff need to think in terms of working as a team to enhance the quality of teaching, learning, and caring in the classroom and school-wide. Staff need to understand what enables effective collaboration. They will need to draw on the literature on student engagement, personalized instruction, and more.

We now turn to a more detailed discussion of student engagement, disengagement, and how engagement relates to classroom management.

Note: The references used in preparing this volume are included in the general list at the end of the book.

4. Enhancing Engagement in Learning at School

A core focus of school improvement must be on
increasing engagement in learning by enhancing intrinsic motivation



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 Exhibit 4-1), 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 and learning problems and eventual dropout.

Exhibit 4-1

Engagement Definitions, Antecedents and Measures

A 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

More About 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 guides for enhancing engaged learning that can inform school improvement efforts.

The following points are excerpted from the work of Jones, Valdez, Nowakowski, and Rasmussen.

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.

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.

The degree of concern about student engagement may vary 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. For engaged students, facilitating learning 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 then maintain and enhance their motivation.

In schools that are the greatest focus of public criticism, a more intense emphasis on student engagement is necessary. The focus encompasses not only engaging and maintaining engagement, but also *re-engaging* many students who have become disengaged from classroom instruction. 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.

Regardless of school population, among the various supports teachers must have are ways to re-engage disconnected students. To the dismay of many, however, strategies for re-engaging students in classroom instruction rarely are a prominent facet of school improvement. As a result, little attention is given to the matter in preservice preparation and continuing professional development for teachers, administrators, or student/learning support professionals.

Engagement is about motivation. Given the importance of engagement, school improvement needs to imbue school personnel with a better understanding of motivation. In particular, the need is for addressing basic motivational considerations such as those highlighted in this chapter.

Shifting Thinking About Motivation

Can you decipher this? **E x V** (Don't go on until you've tried.)
Hint: the "x" is a multiplication sign.

At the risk of over simplifying motivational theory, the following discussion highlights the type of shift in thinking about motivation that is essential if schools are to make significant improvements in reducing the achievement and opportunity gaps.

If the above equation stumped you, the reason probably stems from the fact that the main introduction to motivational thinking that so many people have been given in the past involves some form of reinforcement theory (i.e., extrinsic motivation). The equation is intended to capture the notion that *what we value interacts with our expectations, and motivation is one product of this interaction.*

For example: **"E"** represents a student'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* (i.e., *Expectancy x Valuing = Motivation).* Such theory recognizes that human beings are thinking and feeling organisms and that intrinsic factors can be powerful motivators.

Within some limits (which we need not discuss here), high expectations and high valuing produce high motivation, while high expectations (E) and low valuing (V) or low expectations and high valuing produce relatively weak motivation. Two common reasons people give for not engaging are "It's not worth it" and "I know I won't be able to do it."

About Expectations

Youngsters usually value the idea of learning to read. But, sometimes they don't value and even dislike some of the processes the teacher asks them to pursue. They may do some exercises just to earn points to go on a field trip and to avoid the consequences of not cooperating. Often, however, they don't fully engage in learning and may even try to get out of doing activities they don't value – even though they know they can readily do them.

Similarly, the oft-cited remedial strategy of guaranteeing success by designing very easy tasks 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 (e.g., Expectancy x Value – 1.0 x 0 = 0). In such cases, a strong negative value is attached to the activities, and this contributes to poor (often avoidance) motivation.

Students may value something a great deal; but if they believe they can't do it or can't obtain it without paying too great a personal price, they are likely to look for other valued activities and outcomes to pursue. Expectations about these matters are influenced by past experiences. In particular, where there has been a lack of success, a student is unlikely to perceive a good path to valued extrinsic rewards or intrinsic satisfactions.

About Valuing

Do prizes, money, merit awards, praise make students perceive some things as worth doing? 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. There is widespread use of such "incentives" in schools (e.g., systematically giving points or tokens that can be exchanged for prizes, praise, free time, social interactions). In response to misbehavior, 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 education and psychology. Unfortunately, the immediate effects are usually limited to very specific behaviors and often are short-term. Moreover, as discussed in the next section, overreliance on 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.*

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. For example, past failure may be perceived as the result of lack of ability or as requiring more effort than the student was willing to give. Some may feel that the help they needed to succeed was not available. If all this remains unchanged, engagement is unlikely. The point for school improvement is that school staff need to embrace these motivational realities and learn how to address the implications in daily school practices.

Addressing 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 wanders.

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 improved 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.

In addressing motivational differences, school improvement efforts must pay greater attention to a range of motivational concerns that affect student learning and performance. See, for example, Exhibit 4-2.

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 4-2

Focusing School Improvement on Motivational Concerns

- ***Motivation is 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 is 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 are 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 overrely 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 is 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 overrely 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.

Stopping the 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.*

As the preceding discussion underscores, 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.

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 to improve learning and behavior.

As Ed Deci cogently stresses

> *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.

Most of us have 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!*

Attending More to Intrinsic Motivation

Paradoxically, what many school personnel have been taught about reinforcement theory runs counter to what they intuitively understand about human motivation. Teachers and parents often learn to over-depend on extrinsics, despite the appreciation they have about the importance of intrinsic 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. Obviously school staff cannot control all factors affecting motivation. A critical goal of school improvement is to enhance how staff use those facets of the physical and social environment over which they have control to positively affect a student's intrinsic motivation.

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.

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 and identify what such students intrinsically value learning about and expect to be able to accomplish at school.

Coda

A note about enhancing intrinsic motivation. A core focus of school improvement must be on increasing engagement in learning by enhancing intrinsic motivation. As Ryan and Deci stress:

> *By deciding to focus on the processes that result in positive development rather than trying to directly control, pressure, or extrinsically incentivize desired outcomes, more truly eudaimonic cultures will emerge, cultures within which human beings flourish as they regulate themselves.*

Such processes involve practices that can reduce negative and increase positive feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies with respect to learning at school.

5. About Re-engaging Disconnected Students

Getting students involved in their educ ation 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

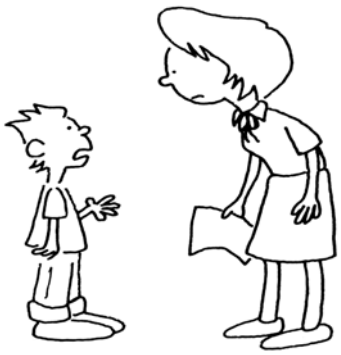
Options, Decision Making, and Engagement

Personalized Strategies for Re-engagement

Maintaining Re-engagement and Preventing Recidivism

Coda: School improvement is about engagement

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



Engaging students is a constant motivational concern; re-engaging disconnected students is a major motivational problem. School staff usually have received at least a bit of preparation for the former, but almost no professional development for the latter.

As a result, staff often are at a loss in working with disengaged students, especially those students who spend much of the day trying to avoid most or all instructional activity. Disconnected students are a critical focus for school improvement efforts.

One motivational interpretation of the avoidance behavior is that the youngsters perceive school as a place that threatens their feelings of competence, autonomy, and/or relatedness to significant others. Under such circumstances, 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 experienced at school (e.g., feelings of incompetence, loss of autonomy, negative relationships). Over time, the students tend to develop strong motivational dispositions to avoid schooling.

Decreasing well-assimilated negative attitudes and behaviors is no easy task. Broadband activities may work for students who have disengaged from one or two aspects of schooling. Personalized strategies are necessary for the rest. Teachers and school support staff must learn (a) how to reverse conditions that produce disconnection from classroom learning and (b) how to re-engage disconnected students.

A student may *proactively* disconnect (e.g., engage in truancy to pursue some preferable, desired activities). Or the disconnection may be *reactive* – 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). The underlying motivational differences have profound implications for success in re-engaging students.

Options, Decision Making, and Engagement

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).

One difficulty in reversing conditions that produce disconnection is that too few currently available options may be appealing and some may even be eliciting strong avoidance tendencies. The emphasis for school improvement with respect to engaging and maintaining engagement is on

- expanding the range of curricular and instructional options (content and processes)
- enhancing opportunities for the student to make personal and active decisions
- accommodating a wider range of individual differences (e.g., matching a student's motivation and capabilities, widening limits on behavior).

Given a good range of options, the importance of involving students in decision making cannot be overstated. Those who have the opportunity to make decisions among valued and feasible options tend to be committed to following through. In contrast, those not involved in decision making may manifest little commitment. And if individuals feel coerced, besides not following through they may react with hostility.

Personalized Strategies for Re-engagement

Some disconnected students are at a point where the most fundamental decision they have to make is whether they want to participate or not. As we have noted, before such students will re-engage, they have to perceive the learning environment as positively different – and quite a bit so – from the one in which they have come to dislike. This raises the question of how far a school is willing to go to re-engage such students since it usually requires temporarily putting aside standard practices and proceeding with a set of intensely personalized strategies.

Schools willing to proceed with such students need to enhance staff capability for entering into a *dialogue* with a disengaged youngster. The discussion is a starting point for (a) understanding the motivational underpinnings of the disconnection, (b) formulating a personalized plan for re-connecting the youngster with school learning, and (c) continuing to modify the plan when necessary. (The information accumulated from discussions with a number of these students also provides a basis for planning ways to prevent others from disengaging.)

Dialogue to Establish Personalized Re-engagement Strategies

The focus of the dialogue is on

Clarifying the student's perceptions of the problem – talking openly about why the student has become disengaged.

Reframing school learning – exploring changes that help the student (a) view the teacher as supportive (rather than controlling and indifferent) and (b) perceive content, outcomes, and activity options as personally valuable and obtainable. Examples include eliminating threatening evaluative measures; reframing content and processes to convey purpose in terms of real life needs and experiences; enhancing expectations of personal benefits.

Renegotiating involvement in school learning – developing new and mutual agreements that will be evolved over time through conferences (including parents where appropriate). The intent is to affect perceptions of choice, value, and probable outcome. The focus throughout is on clarifying awareness of valued options (including valued enrichment opportunities), enhancing expectations of positive outcomes, and engaging the student in meaningful, ongoing decision making. Arriving at and maintaining an effective mutual agreement involves assisting the student in sampling what is proposed and ensuring provision for reevaluating and modifying decisions as perceptions shift.

Reestablishing and maintaining an appropriate working relationship – ensuring that ongoing interactions are designed to create a sense of trust, open communication, and provide personalized support and direction.

Maintaining Re-engagement and Preventing Recidivism

As school improvement enhances the focus on addressing barriers to learning and teaching, the practices will help maintain re-engagement and prevent relapses. Special attention must be given to

- minimizing threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to valued others
- maximizing such feelings (included here is an emphasis on a school taking steps to enhance its image as a welcoming, caring, safe, and just institution)
- providing a wide range of potentially interesting options and including students in decision making
- guiding and supporting motivated learning and providing opportunities for continued application and generalization (e.g., ways in which students can pursue additional, self-directed learning or can arrange for additional academic and social supports and guidance)
- ensuring a range of enrichment opportunities
- providing continuous information on learning and performance in ways that highlight accomplishments and strengths
- implementing special assistance as needed.

Coda

School improvement is about engagement. Most students enter kindergarten with a healthy curiosity and a desire to learn to read and write. By the end of 2nd grade, the first flood of referrals are generated with respect to learning and behavior problems. From that point on, increasing numbers of students become disengaged from classroom learning, and most of these manifest some related behavioral and emotional problems.

Rather than addressing the reasons for disengagement, the focus often turns to managing the behavior problems. As we discuss in the next chapter, this tends to lead to overrelying on social control strategies. Such strategies can temporarily suppress negative behaviors but are not usually effective in re-engaging a student in classroom learning. And, without re-engagement in classroom learning, unwanted behavior will very likely reappear.

Ultimately, school improvement efforts must maximize practices that engage and re-engage students in ways that sustain their involvement in classroom instruction. This is fundamental to minimizing learning, behavior, emotional problems at school. It is critical to closing the opportunity and achievement gaps.

6. Managing Behavior at School: Beyond Overrelying on Behavior Control Strategies

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

Moving Away from Punishment

Making Consequences Reasonable, Fair, and Nondenigrating

About Addressing Behavior Problems Broadly

Coda: A note about PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) and Skill Training

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.

A basic school improvement problem is that it remains compelling for many school personnel 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 12th grade.

Moving Away from Punishment

In too many schools, student behavior management continues to take the form of punishing misbehavior (e.g., doing something that the staff believes the student does not want to happen). In addition, demands for future compliance usually are made, along with threats of harsher punishment if compliance is not forthcoming. And, the ways discipline is administered often stigmatizes a student.

An often stated assumption underlying many disciplinary practices is that stopping misbehavior will make the student amenable to teaching. In a few cases, this may be so. However, the assumption ignores the motivational dynamic called *psychological reactance*. This dynamic arises when people feel a threat to their self-determination and then are motivated to restore personal control. The irony here is that rather than reducing behavior problems, social control practices often generate more misbehavior and interfere with engaging and re-engaging students in classroom instruction. This state of affairs is counterproductive to enhancing achievement.

It is clear that 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. 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.

The benefits of using punishment to control behavior usually are offset by many negative outcomes, including negative attitudes toward school and school personnel, anti-social acts, and mental health problems. Disciplinary procedures also are associated with school dropouts. (Some concerned professionals refer to extreme disciplinary practices as "pushout" strategies.)

School improvement stresses a move from punishment to positive approaches. This is a move in the right direction but it needs to be accompanied with supports that help teachers engage and re-engage students in classroom learning. Productive engagement in instruction is key not only to reducing misbehavior but to maintaining positive behavior.

Making Consequences Reasonable, Fair, and Nondenigrating

In responding to 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 at a school, 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 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. It may be reasoned that the misbehavior shows that the student doesn't deserve the privilege of participating (assuming the activity is liked) and the loss will lead to improved behavior in order to avoid future deprivation. Also such "time outs" are seen as a way to stop students from disrupting others by isolating them, or the logic may be that students sometimes need a cooling off period.

Most people have little difficulty explaining the logic of consequences they administer. They rarely consider whether recipients perceive that logic and pay too little attention to how a student's perceptions affect subsequent functioning at school.

School improvement requires countering the use of consequences that have negative repercussions. In this respect, we 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. For discipline 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 rational and socially just (e.g., reasonable, firm but fair).

To these ends, school improvement efforts can promote practices that ensure consequences are administered in ways that allow students to

- maintain a sense of integrity, dignity, and autonomy
- learn right from wrong
- learn respect for others rights
- learn to accept responsibility.

> 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.

About Addressing Behavior Problems Broadly

While some misbehavior is unintentional, much of what is seen at school is intentional. Intentional misbehavior may be *proactive* or *reactive*. The actions may be direct or indirect and include defiance, physical and psychological withdrawal, and manipulative and diversionary tactics. Given the nature and scope behavior problems, Exhibit 6-1 highlights the need for school improvements that enhance the focus on prevention, quick response, and a follow-up with special assistance.

Exhibit 6-1

A Broad Outline for 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 and Enrich Schooling

1. Personalize and enrich classroom instruction (e.g., to accommodate and engage 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 Supports 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 so as not to reduce the student's sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness to significant others)

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 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/Restorative Justice

B. Discuss the Problem with Parents

1. Explain ways to avoid exacerbating the problem
2. Mobilize them to work preventively with school

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

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

Here are a few examples of what can be done:

>*Preventing misbehavior* – improve and enrich programs to enhance student engagement and minimize conditions that foment misbehavior; strengthen home responsibility for children's 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* – reestablish a calm and safe atmosphere; apply established logical consequences and a commitment to restorative justice in a personalized manner

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

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. 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.

After making broad programmatic changes to the degree feasible, intervention with a misbehaving student involves personalized special assistance. The initial focus is on enhancing understanding of the student's underlying motivation (e.g., Is the behavior reactive or proactive? If reactive, is it a reaction to threats to self-determination, competence, or relatedness?) Motivational analyses of the problem help design appropriate corrective steps.

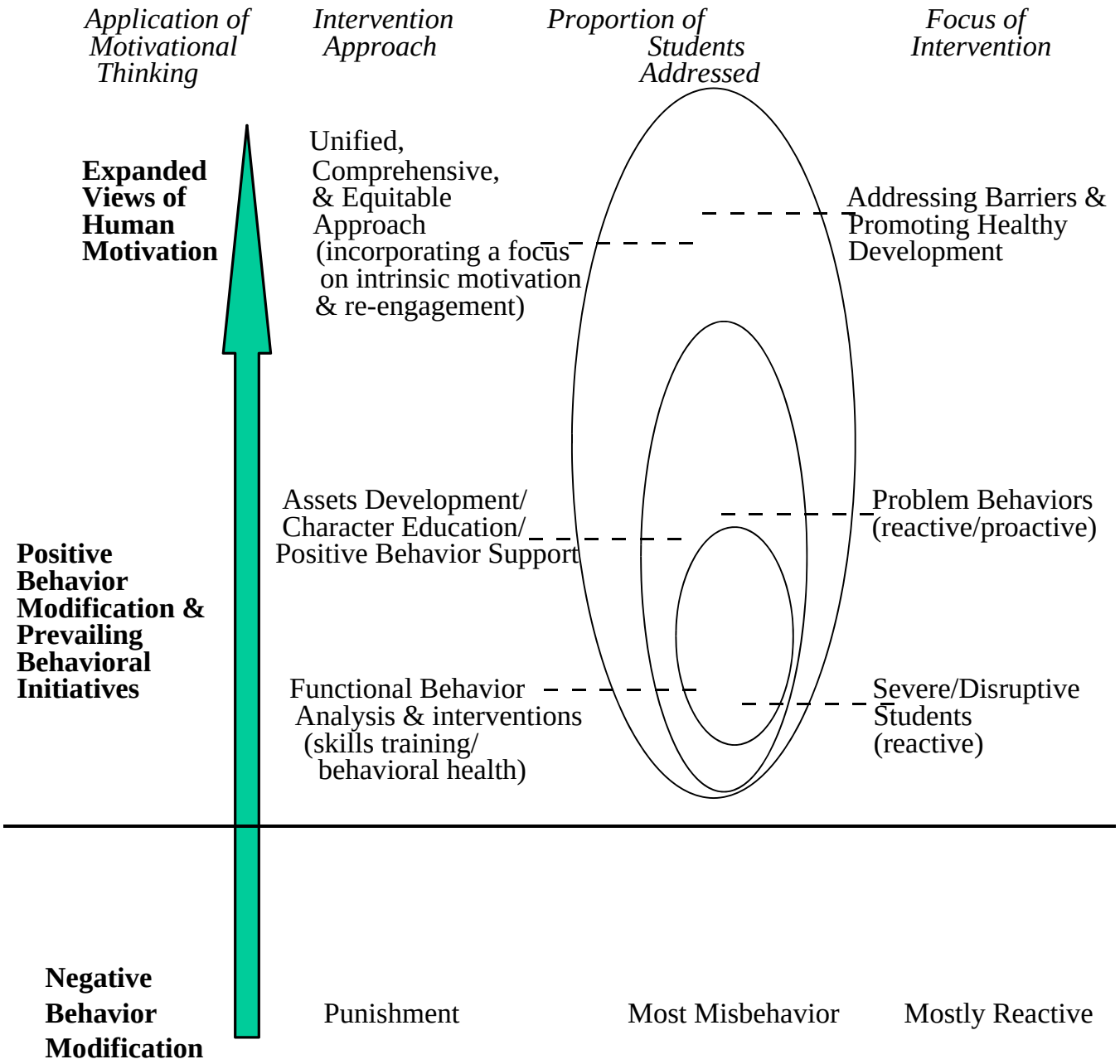
As emphasized in the discussion of re-engaging disconnected students, all this calls for improving staff understanding of underlying motivation and working with the community to develop a comprehensive, systemic approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and promoting healthy development.

Looking to the future, Exhibit 6-2 graphically illustrates the next school improvement phase related to addressing behavior problems. It highlights that a trend to (1) apply an expanded view of motivation that draws on the latest thinking about intrinsic motivation and (2) embed practices for preventing and responding to misbehavior into the type of unified, comprehensive, and equitable system discussed in Part III of this volume.

I told her the dog ate my homework.
So she gave my dog an F and sent me to the doghouse!

Exhibit 6-2

Developmental Trend in Intervention Thinking About Addressing Misbehavior

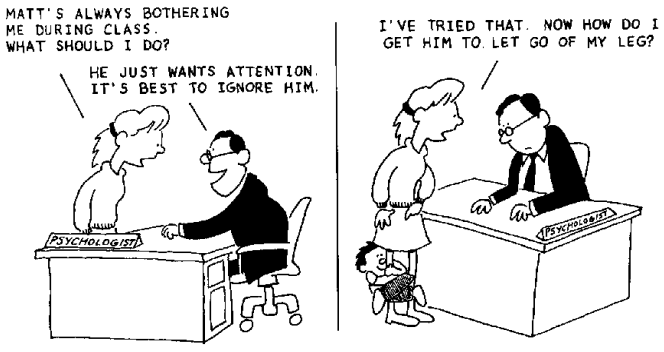


Coda

A note about Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and skill training. While there is strong advocacy for PBIS, the practice usually is not implemented as part of a broad-based framework that addresses student misbehavior and engagement. Moreover, as the previous discussion of engagement in learning at school underscores, maintaining positive classroom behavior requires effectively re-engaging students in classroom instruction and sustaining their engagement. As a widely practiced strategy for addressing behavior problems, PBIS stops short of helping teachers engage and re-engage students. PBIS is best viewed as an early step in the developmental trend in intervention thinking about addressing misbehavior (see Exhibit 6-2).

Since poor social skills are identified as a contributing factor in a wide range of educational, psychosocial, and mental health problems, another widespread trend in dealing with misbehavior is to teach students the problem solving and social skills they seem to lack (e.g., drawing ideas from programs for social-emotional learning, asset development, character education). However, reviewers of research over the past few decades are only cautiously optimistic about the promise of focusing just on improving skills. They stress that individual studies show effectiveness, but the range of skills acquired remain limited and generalizability and maintenance of outcomes are poor. This is the case for training 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.

Critics of the above approaches want to transform how schools manage behavior. They want a holistic curricula that enhances 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, and enhanced parent responsibility for their children's behavior and learning.



A Few Online Resources from the Center at UCLA Relevant to Part I

Over the years, the Center has developed resources for use in school improvement efforts, especially professional development. The following are a few examples containing material related to Part I. These online resources provide more extensive coverage of some of the topics highlighted in Part I.

- *Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom-Focused Enabling* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/cfe.pdf
- *Turning Big Classes into Smaller Units* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/small classes.pdf
- *Volunteers as an Invaluable Resource* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/voluntresource.pdf
- *Engaging and Re-engaging Students in Learning at School* – http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagingandre-engagingstudents.pdf
- *Working with Disengaged Students* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/disengagedstudents.pdf
- *School Engagement, Disengagement, Learning Supports, & School Climate* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/schooleng.pdf
- *Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families*
  (Four modules for continuing education)
  I: *Motivation: Time to Move Beyond Behavior Modification*
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagei.pdf
  II: *Strategic Approaches to Enhancing Student Engagement and Re-engagement*
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageii.pdf
  III: *Enhancing Family Engagement and Re-engagement*
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageiii.pdf
  IV: *Embedding Engagement and Re-engagement into a Unified and Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports*
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageiv.pdf
- *Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/naturalopportunities.pdf

Part II

Moving toward Personalized Instruction and Special Assistance

An emerging focus for school improvement is personalized instruction. The term has been widely embraced by policy makers and education reformers. Unfortunately, definitions of the concept substantively differ and preparation for most school personnel has not included an in-depth focus on how to operationalize the practice. Discussions of personalization often leave the impression that the process is mainly about incorporating technological innovations. For the most part, discussions also fail to place personalized instruction within the context of other conditions that must be improved in classrooms and schoolwide to enhance student learning and performance. A growing concern is that personalized instruction is becoming just another buzzword in the school improvement lexicon.

In Part I, we introduced the concept of the match as applied to teaching (meeting learners where they are). This also is widely referred to as the problem of "fit." Formal teaching strives to design instruction that is a close enough fit to engender good learning. Current school improvement efforts view personalized instruction as the best way to approximate a good match.

Of course, even in the best classrooms, there are serious mismatches for some students, which results in them not learning what they are taught. As is widely recognized, many factors can produce a poor fit. Indeed, the possibilities are so extensive it is hardly surprising that there are frequent occasions when learning and teaching are problems.

When a teacher finds it difficult to create an appropriate match for any given student over many days, significant learning problems develop. With learning problems comes an emotional overlay and often behavior problems. It doesn't take long before it is evident that a student needs some special assistance.

Part II (a) presents a framework for improving classroom learning that emphasizes a broad and psychological conception of personalized instruction, (b) outlines practices for operationalizing such instruction, and (c) highlights a framework for improving special assistance. The discussion underscores why school improvement must pursue both the instructional and learning supports components as high priorities.

Chapter 7. Understanding Personalized Instruction: Addressing Differences in *Both* Motivation & Capability

Learning is an ongoing, dynamic, and transactional process. As students change, so must practices. Personalized instruction is meant to enable school staff to effectively pursue the art, craft, and science of teaching in ways that more optimally match the range of individual differences in ***both*** *motivation and capabilities that exist in every classroom.*

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!

For some time, efforts to improve the match for learning in classrooms have revolved around the idea of differentiated instruction – often referred to either as individualized or personalized instruction. The two terms overlap in their emphasis on accounting for developmental differences. However, while most *individualized* approaches mainly focus on individual differences in developed capabilities (i.e., skills and knowledge), *personalization* is defined here as accounting for individual differences in both capabilities *and motivation* (e.g., current interests, attitudes). Some discussions describe personalization as "customizing education to each students' strengths, weaknesses, and personal interests."

For motivated learners, either individualized or personalized instruction can be quite effective. For students with learning, behavior, and emotional problems, motivation for classroom learning often has waned. In such cases, motivation is a primary consideration, and personalized instruction is the best practice. And, properly designed and carried out, such instruction can reduce the need for special assistance and referrals for special education.

Defining Personalization for School Improvement in Psychological Terms

Definitions and formulations of personalized learning and instruction abound. Missing in most presentations is a psychological perspective.

Personalization needs to be understood as a psychological construct. That is, the *learner's perception* is a critical factor in defining what is a good fit. From this perspective, a basic assessment concern is that of eliciting a learner's perceptions of how well classroom practices and schoolwide experiences match her/his interests and abilities. Thus, we define personalization as the process of matching learner motivation and capabilities and stress that it is the learner's perception that determines whether the match in a good one.

In keeping with the above definition, outlined in Exhibit 7-1 are some underlying assumptions and major program elements of personalized programs.

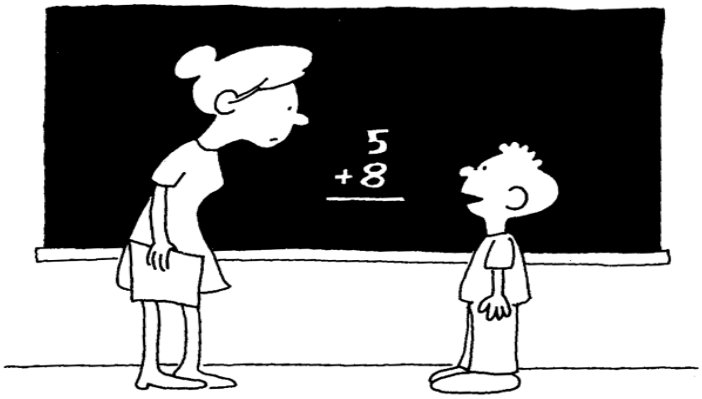


Exhibit 7-1

Underlying Assumptions and Major Program Elements of a Personalized Program

I. *Underlying Assumptions*

The following are basic assumptions underlying personalized programs as we conceive them.

- 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 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 deciding role in choosing 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. *Program Elements*

Major elements of personalized programs as we have identified them are:

- 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 program plans and mutual agreements about the ongoing relationships between the learners and the program 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."

Enhancing Motivation: A Core Personalization Concern

> Matt and Jerry both are in Mr. Phillips' class. Jerry may not say so in so many words, but the class seems to fit him very well. He likes most of what he does in class each day, and he finds it just challenging enough (not too easy and not too hard). All indications suggest he experiences the situation as a good match motivationally and developmentally. And, this should continue as long as the situation changes in ways that reflect his ongoing learning and development.
>
> Matt finds few things to like about the class. Although the teacher planned remedial activities that Matt is able to do rather easily, they don't interest him. He is bored and feels unhappy. From his perspective, the learning environment is not a good one.

Because the practices used in too many schools still reflect a limited appreciation of human motivation, we need to emphasize a few implications of our discussion in Part I. The following points warrant particular attention in improving schools:

(1) *Optimal performance and learning require motivational readiness.* Readiness is understood in terms of offering stimulating environments where learning can be perceived as vivid, valued, and attainable.

Motivation is a key antecedent condition in any learning situation. It is a prerequisite to student attention, involvement, and performance. Poor motivational readiness may be a cause of poor learning and a factor maintaining learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Thus, strategies are called for that can result in a high level of motivational readiness (including reduction of avoidance motivation) so students are mobilized to participate.

(2) *Motivation represents both a process and an outcome concern.* Individuals may value learning something, but may not be motivated to pursue the processes used. Many students are motivated to learn when they first encounter a topic but do not maintain that motivation.

Processes must elicit, enhance, and maintain motivation so that students stay mobilized. Instruction and special assistance must be designed to maintain, enhance, and expand intrinsic motivation for pursuing current learning activities and also for involving students in learning activities that go beyond the immediate lesson and extend beyond the schoolhouse door.

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

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

(3) *School staff not only need to increase motivation – especially intrinsic motivation – but also to avoid practices that decrease it.* Increasing intrinsic motivation requires focusing on students' thoughts, feelings, and decisions. In general, the intent is to use procedures that can reduce negative and increase positive feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies. In addressing learning and behavior problems, it is especially important to identify and minimize experiences that maintain or may increase avoidance motivation. Of particular concern is the need to avoid overreliance on extrinsics to entice and reward since such strategies can decrease intrinsic motivation.

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

Clearly, personalization's emphasis on motivation has fundamental school improvement implications. In particular, it calls for offering a broad range of content, outcomes, and procedural options, including a personalized structure to facilitate learning. With real options comes real opportunities for involving learners in decision making. The focus on motivation also stresses the importance of developing nonthreatening ways to provide ongoing information about learning and performance. We have more to say about these matters in the next chapter.

Personalization First; Adding Special Assistance as Necessary

The framework outlined in Exhibit 7-2 can guide efforts to provide a good instructional match for learning and for enabling learning with special assistance when needed. The first step focuses on changing regular classrooms if they are not designed to personalize instruction. The changes are meant to ensure a caring context for learning and instruction that is highly responsive to learner differences in motivation and development. With this in place, the next step involves adding special assistance as necessary. That is, step 2 is introduced only if personalization is insufficient.

As outlined in Exhibit 7-2, this second step involves three levels. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

Exhibit 7-2

Learning Sequence and Levels

Regular programs

(nonpersonalized)

Modify programs →

(If it is not feasible to change a particular teacher's program, move students who manifest problems learning to another classroom that can make accommodations.)

← - - - - - - - - - -

(Students who have learned effectively can transition back if desired.)

Personalized programs

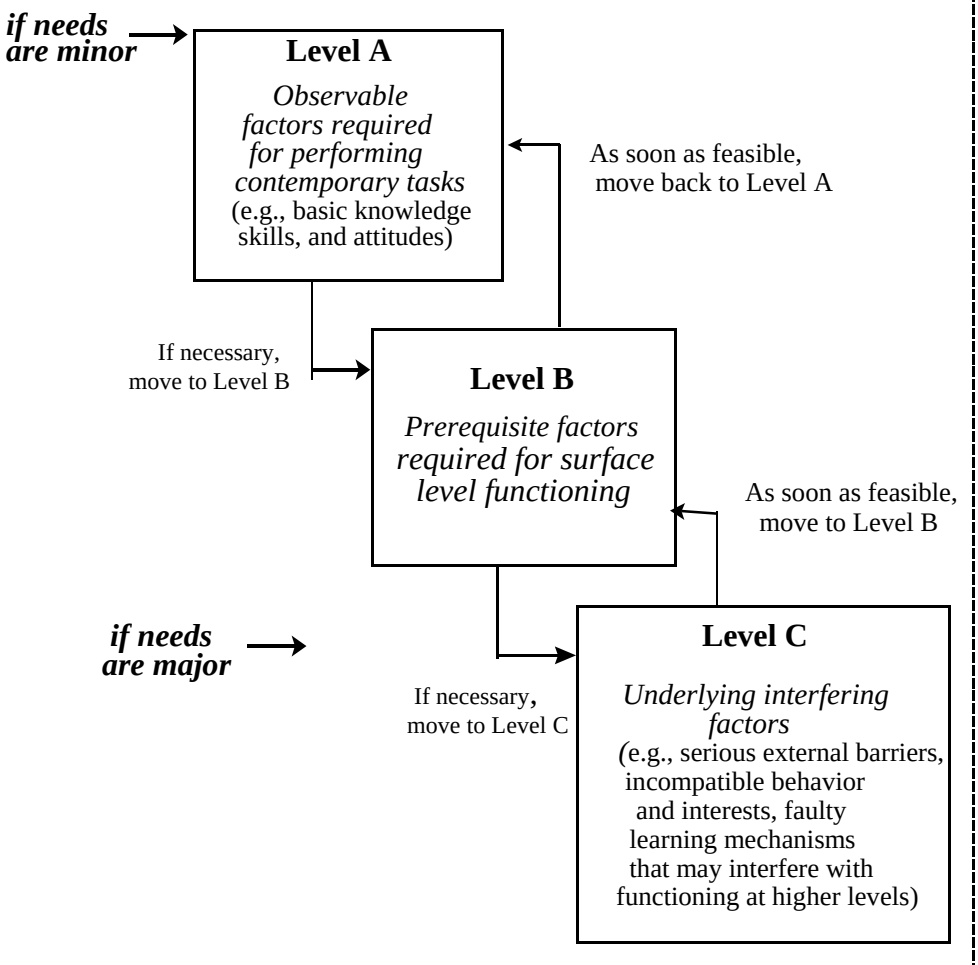
Step 1. Personalizing the environment and program

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

Step 2. Special assistance*

(maintained only as long as needed;* see below)

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



Coda

A note about the essence of learning and teaching. Teaching and learning are fascinating and somewhat mysterious processes. Teaching is one of the most basic forms of human interaction. We've all been taught; we've all experienced satisfaction when we succeed in helping others learn; and we've all experienced frustration when those we teach don't "get it." In classrooms, teaching and learning are nonlinear, dynamic, and spiraling transactions.

A primary challenge for school improvement is to enable school staff to teach in ways that more optimally match the range of individual differences in *both* motivation and capabilities. Personalized instruction strives to meet the challenge.

The teaching/learning challenge increases when students manifest learning, behavior, and emotional problems. In situations where many students require special assistance, teachers can't and shouldn't be expected to do it alone. Various forms of collaboration in and out of the classroom are essential to ensuring every student has an equal opportunity to succeed.

The following chapters flesh out the framework presented in Exhibit 7-2.

8. School Improvement & Personalizing Classroom Instruction

Properly conceived and implemented personalized instruction and student and learning supports are essential to enabling equity of opportunity, closing the achievement gap, assuring civil rights, promoting whole child development, and fostering a positive school climate.

Establishing a Structure for Personalized Learning

Enhancing Options and Learner Decision Making

Turning Homework into Motivated Practice

Conferencing

Using Assessment to Plan and Feedback to Nurture

Increasing the Range of Instructional Techniques

Coda: A note about great teaching

Will you do my homework for me?

No! It wouldn't be right!

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

As of this writing, at least 15 states already have legislative or regulatory steps in place promoting personalized learning. Creating personalized classrooms involves fundamental changes in instructional practices. This Chapter highlights key facets of such practices.

Establishing a Structure for Personalized Learning

A critical aim of school improvement and especially of efforts to personalize learning is to establish and maintain an appropriate working relationship with all students. This requires creating a sense of mutual respect, trust, and caring, open communication, and providing support and guidance as needed. To these ends, classroom structure must be neither too controlling nor too permissive.

Some people seem to see classroom structure as a dichotomy – structured or unstructured. From this perspective, they equate structure with social control (rule and limit setting and behavior management). An overemphasis on structure as control
can have a negative impact on students' motivation (e.g., producing psychological reactance), which makes it harder to teach.

As long as students do not value the classroom, the teacher, and the activities, poor learning and inappropriate behavior are likely outcomes. This increasingly can lead school staff to push, prod, and punish. Such a vicious cycle results in the whole enterprise of schooling taking on a negative tone for students and staff.

> 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.
>
> Most teachers wish it were that easy. The reality is that some procedures used to control behavior interfere with efforts to facilitate learning. A teacher cannot teach youngsters sent out of the classroom or suspended from school, and students may be less receptive to the teacher upon returning to class.
>
> In general, efforts to use external means to control behavior (e.g., isolating students in a "time out" situation, sending them for discipline) are incompatible with developing working relationships that facilitate learning. Using the term *structure* to describe extreme efforts to control behavior fails to recognize that the objective is to facilitate learning and performance, not just control behavior.

Personalization requires a definition of structure that goes well beyond how much control a teacher has over students. Structure must be viewed as *the type of support and guidance provided the learner, and the concept encompasses all efforts to clarify essential information – including communications about direction and limits as necessary*. From each student's perspective, structure is *personalized* when the student perceives the support and guidance as not controlling and as a good match with her/his current motivation and capabilities.

Personalized support and guidance in the classroom facilitates active interactions between students and their environment, and these interactions are meant to lead to a relatively stable, positive, ongoing working relationships. How positive the relationships become depends on the learner's perceptions.

With specific respect to staff-student communication, the emphasis is on consistently conveying a sense of appropriate and genuine warmth, interest, concern and respect. This is particularly important in clarifying the nature and purpose of evaluative processes and applying them in ways that deemphasize feelings of failure. Examples are explaining to students the value of feedback about learning and performance, providing feedback in ways that minimize any negative impact, clarifying ways to pursue additional, self-directed learning and, as needed, arranging for additional support and direction.

A personalized continuum of structure encourages students to take as much responsibility as they can for identifying the types and degree of structure they require. Some will request a great amount of support and guidance; others prefer to work autonomously. Some like 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. When considerable help is needed to ensure good learning, teachers benefit from aides, other students, volunteers, and opening the classroom door to team with other staff.

Enhancing Options and Learner Decision Making

Every teacher knows the value of variety. For some students, more variety seems necessary than for others. Among those not learning well avoidance or low motivation for learning at school is common. For these individuals, few currently offered options may be appealing.

With respect to decision-making processes, perceptions of control are a critical concern. A student may experience the process as coercive and controlling or as having made a personal choice (i.e., experiencing a feeling self-determination). Such differences in perception can affect whether a student is mobilized to pursue or avoid planned learning activities or outcomes.

As noted in an earlier chapter, students who have the opportunity to make decisions among valued and feasible options tend to be committed to following through. In contrast, people who are not involved in decisions may manifest little commitment. If individuals disagree with a decision that affects them, they may react negatively.

Optimally, teachers hope to maximize 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 Ms. Hopkins classroom, David, Maria, James, and Matt all are not doing well with reading. David refuses to have anything to do with reading. Maria wants to improve her reading, but on most days she just doesn't like any of the materials she is given. James indicates he will read about science but nothing else. Matt will try anything if someone will sit and help him with the work.

Students differ in important ways with respect to topics and procedures that currently interest or bore them. Clearly, motivation is a primary consideration in facilitating the learning of David, Maria, James, and Matt. As we have stressed, the place to start generally involves expanding the range of options related to content, processes, outcomes, and support so that these youngsters perceive classroom activity as a good fit with what they value and believe they can do. And, re-engaging students in classroom learning almost always requires accommodation of a wider range of behavior than usually is tolerated.

Turning Homework into Motivated Practice

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. We soon learned 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.

Becoming good at reading, mathematics, science, writing, and other academic pursuits requires practice outside the classroom. With this in mind, schools require 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.

Personalization calls for designing homework that emphasizes motivated practice. As with all learning processes that engage students, motivated practice requires activities students perceive as worthwhile and do-able with an appropriate amount of effort. In effect, the intent is to personalize both in-class practice and homework. This does not mean every student has a different practice activity. Good teachers quickly learn what their students find engaging and can provide three or four practice options that will be effective for most (e.g., challenging task options that are neither too easy nor too hard).

Research on motivation indicates that one of the most powerful factors keeping a person on task is the expectation of feeling some sense of satisfaction when the task is completed. 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 motivating in and of themselves.

The examples in Exhibit 8-1 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.

> For students who seem impulsive and easily distracted, enhancing options and decision making are key to determining whether the problem is mostly motivational. True learning disabilities and ADHD should only be diagnosed when a student is well-motivated to learn and perform and is unable to stay focused. We discuss all this in more detail in subsequent chapters.

One other point: 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 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.

Exhibit 8-1

Homework and Motivated Practice

Learning and practicing by

(1) doing

- using movement and manipulation of objects to explore a topic (e.g., using a variety of materials in learning math and science concepts)
- dramatization of events (e.g., historical, current)
- role playing, simulations, gaming (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, 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, listening games, and activities (e.g., music, stories, events)
- analyzing actual oral material (e.g., learning to detect details and ideas in advertisements or propaganda presented on television, learning to identify feelings and motives underlying statements of others)

(3) looking

- directly observing experts, role models, and demonstrations
- internet and other media
- 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 activity)

(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., provocative issues and confrontational questions)
- questioning everyday events (e.g., learning about a topic by asking people about how it effects their lives)

Conferencing

The ability to talk *with* rather than *at* a student is critical for personalizing teaching. Talking *with* involves a true dialogue – which, of course, depends on each participant authentically listening and hearing. Personalized instruction is built on a base 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.

The mechanism for carrying on dialogues often is called a *conference*. 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 conference as a dialogue cannot be over-emphasized. Conferences are meant as a time for those involved to say what they need, want, and are hoping for from each other. When problems exist, conferences focus on problem solving.

Formal conferences vary in length, depending first on how much time is available and second how much time is needed by a specific student. Informal conferences happen spontaneously (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 particularly feasible when the classroom is designed to maximize use of small group and independent learning activities.

Some students like to use *dialogue journaling* as an aid for conferencing. Whether handwritten or on a computer, the process provides a means for the student to carry on a direct and informal *conversation* with the teacher or a team member. The emphasis is on 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 school staff. Conferencing is pivotal in enhancing student engagement and re-engagement in learning. Dialoguing with a student allows a teacher or team member to 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 planning ppurposes, dialogues yield information on motivational factors (e.g., student hopes, goals, desires, interests, attitudes, preferences, expectations, concerns). 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).

A few ideas and guidelines for conferencing are presented in Exhibit 8-2.

In situations where the teacher is having difficulty establishing a working relationship with a student, the school's student support staff can be an invaluable resource. For example, a counselor, psychologist or social worker can join in and facilitate a conference. Such staff can also follow up in concerns raised by the student about out of the classroom problems (e.g., bullying on the playground, family matters).

Properly conducted conferences convey positive regard, valuing of the student's perspective, and belief that the student should play a meaningful role in defining options and making decisions. Conferences also are one of the best contexts for providing feedback in a nurturing way and for conveying the staff's sincere desire to help the student succeed.

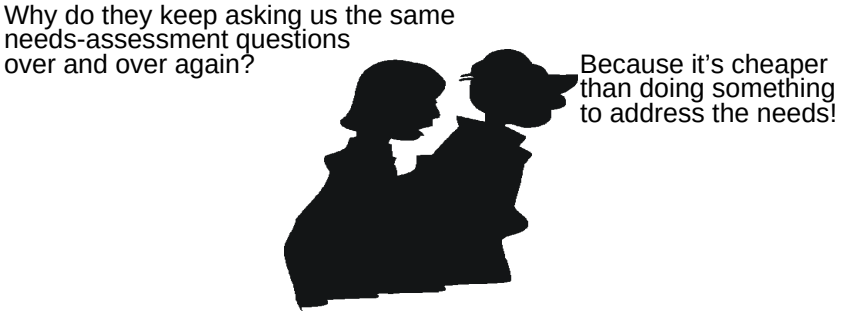


Exhibit 8-2

Some Guidelines for Conferencing

Scheduling: Each day the teacher or another team member can plan to meet formally with about five individuals. The list for the day is generated as a combination of students who request a meeting and students with whom the staff asks to meet. Sometimes a decision may be made to hold a group conference when the focus is on matters that can benefit from a group discussion. Students are asked to sign-up for specific times and to take responsibility for preparing for and coming to the designated place for the conference.

Another variation, particularly for secondary level, uses a "conferencing teacher" for a group of students. Every teacher and student support staff member are assigned a set of students. They conference with these students every two weeks to review how their entire schedule is working out, review work samples (portfolios), and record progress.

Involving Parents. Periodically, staff-student conferences should involve parents or parent surrogates. Here, too, care must be taken to ensure true dialogues take place and that mutual sharing, planning, and decision making are intended. These conferences can take place at designated times and as needed. Because face-to-face conferences are costly and difficult to arrange, phone and email exchanges need to become the rule rather than the exception. Although not always feasible, conferences with family members should include the student. Indeed, a good idea is that of student-led parent-staff conferences.

Some Process Guidelines

- Start out on a positive note: Ask about what the student currently likes at school and in the class and clarify areas of strength. (During first conferences, ask about outside interests, hobbies, areas of success.)
- In exploring current progress, be certain to ask the student about the reasons for their successes.
- In exploring current problems, be certain to ask the student about the reasons for the problems (including what aspects they don't like about school and the class). Clarify details about these matters (e.g. Are assignments seen as too hard? Is the student embarrassed because others will think s/he does not have the ability to do assignments? Are the assignments not seen as interesting? No support at home? Are there problems with peers or at home?)
- When necessary, use some of the time to analyze academic abilities and learning styles (e.g., listen to the student read aloud, review and discuss the work in a student's portfolio).
- Explore what the student thinks can be done to make things better (e.g., different assignments, extra support from a volunteer/peer, etc.).
- Arrive at some mutual agreements that the student values and expects to be able to do with a reasonable amount of effort.

Using Assessment to Plan and Feedback to Nurture

Assessment is used for a variety of purposes in schools. It is used to screen and identify those who need special assistance; it is used to help make decisions about a special placement for a student; it is used to evaluate programs and personnel. But, from a teaching perspective, the need is for assessment that helps plan instruction and provide feedback in ways that enhance learning.

Planning Instruction

Given that personalization calls for assessing both motivation and capabilities, increasing efforts have gone into exploring how to do so. One direction focuses on enhancing available tools. As Shepard notes:

> *. . . a broader range of assessment tools is needed to capture important learning goals and processes and to more directly connect assessment to on going instruction. The most obvious reform has been to devise more open-ended performance tasks to ensure that students are able to reason critically, to solve complex problems, and to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts.*

In personalizing instruction, assessment uses a broader range of tools *and* is pursued as an *interactive* process. The process draws on the work done related to “dynamic” and “authentic” assessment.

Interactive assessment involves not only reviewing products, but clarifying, through observation and discussion, learners’ responses to specific efforts to guide and support performance and learning. The information garnered from such assessments helps to design next steps related to both what and how to proceed. Dynamic and authentic assessment are the genesis for the practice referred to as *response to intervention* (RtI).

Providing Nurturing Feedback

As much as feasible, personalization (a) emphasizes success, including feedback on effectiveness in making decisions, and (b) underscores how well the outcomes match the student's intrinsic reasons for pursuing them. And, with a view to enhancing positive attitudes, feedback is conveyed in ways that nurture the student’s feelings about self, learning, school, and teachers. *Handled well, the information should contribute to students' feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness and should clarify directions for future progress.*

Individual and small group conferences are a good context for providing feedback. Products and work samples can be analyzed; the appropriateness of current content, outcomes, processes, and structure can be reviewed; agreements and schedules can be evaluated and revised as necessary. The exchanges often are the easiest and most direct way to find out learners' views of the match between themselves and their experiences at school.

Regardless of the format in which feedback is given, the point is to maintain student motivation and feelings of well-being while providing appropriate information to improve learning. For students who make many errors, this means providing personalized support and guidance that anticipates and strives to prevent errors and also gives feedback selectively. In this last respect, the emphasis is on errors that must be reviewed because they are most relevant to planning the next instructional encounter. Others can be ignored until a later time. In all this, student self-monitoring, record keeping, and self-evaluation are especially helpful; close supervision and external rewards are used sparingly.

Many students are ready to evaluate and say what's working well for them and what isn't; others need to develop the motivation and ability to do so. This is especially so for those making excuses, overstating how well they are doing, or avoiding 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.

An example may help further clarify the matter.

> Matt wants to improve his spelling. From various options, he has chosen to learn five interesting words each day, which he will pick for himself from his experiences at school or at home. He agrees to bring a list of his five chosen words to school each day.
>
> On the first day, Matt shows up without his list. "I lost it," he explains. The next day, still no list. "We had to go visit my grandmother she's sick."
>
> Naturally, Ms. Evans, his teacher, is suspicious. She knows that many students with learning problems use elaborate excuses and blame everything but themselves for their poor performance. Her first thought is: Matt is telling tales. He really doesn't want to work on his spelling. He's lazy. Probably I should assign his spelling words. But then she thinks: Suppose he's telling the truth. And even if he isn't, what will I accomplish by accusing him of lying and by going back to procedures that I know were unsuccessful in working with him before. I must work with what he says and try to help him see that there are other ways to cope besides saying he will do something and then giving excuses for not following through.
>
> Ms. Evans tells Matt: "I want you to think about your program. If you don't want to work on spelling, that's O.K. Or if you want to choose another way to work on it, we can figure out a new way. I won't check up on what you do. When we meet, you can just let me know how you're doing and what help you want."
>
> Matt seemed greatly relieved by this. The next day he told Ms. Evans that he'd decided to find his five words at school each day, and he'd like some help to do so.

Increasing the Range of Instructional Techniques

Improving instruction involves increasing use of a variety of “techniques” to engage, guide, support, and nurture students in a personalized way. To this end, personnel development must enhance teaching capacity to apply a range of technical strategies.

Instructional techniques alter the structure provided for an activity. Personalized instruction emphasizes using techniques that enhance student engagement and guide learning and performance. The emphasis is on techniques that make activities more attractive and accessible and that minimize interfering factors (factors that lead to avoidance and distraction).

The same activity can be pursued with different degrees of support and direction by varying the amount of cueing and prompting. Some variations are "built in" when an activity is developed (such as special formatting in published materials); others are added as the activity is pursued.

From a psychological perspective, techniques are intended to enhance

- motivation (attitudes, commitment, approach, follow-through),
- sensory intake (perceptual search and detection),
- processing and decision making (evaluation and selection), and
- output (practice, application, demonstration).

In personalizing instruction, it is useful to group techniques into (1) those that enhance motivation (see Exhibit 8-3) and (2) those used to guide performance and learning (see Exhibit 8-4) . Both sets of techniques can enhance a student's feelings

of competence, self-determination, and connectedness and minimize threats to such feelings.

The concept of *scaffolding* provides a good example of combining several techniques to guide and support student performance and learning. Scaffolding requires awareness of students' capabilities and cognitive and affective states of being. The objective is to create a good match with learner capabilities and motivation. Scaffolding uses explanations, invites student participation (often using a Socratic style of interaction), verifies and clarifies student understandings, models and coaches thinking processes and desired behaviors, invites students to contribute clues through use of cues and prompts, and provides feedback in ways that nurture students and encourages them to summarize what they have learned and to self-evaluate progress. Clearly, scaffolding is a tool for improving the match (enhancing "fit," working in the "zone of proximal development"), thereby enabling personalized instruction.

Exhibit 8-3

Examples of Techniques that Nurture and Encourage Exploration for Learning

A. *Nurturing Learning* (including positive regard, acceptance and validation of feelings, appropriate reassurance, praise, and satisfaction)

Specific examples:

- eliciting and listening to problems, goals, and progress
- making statements intended to reassure students that change is possible
- increasing the number of interpersonal, but nonauthoritarian and nonsupervisary, interactions
- increasing the frequency of positive feedback and positive public recognition
- reducing criticism, especially related to performance
- avoiding confrontations

B. *Creating an Atmosphere for exploration and change* (including encouragement and opportunity)

Specific examples:

- increasing availability of valued opportunities
- establishing and clarifying appropriate expectations and "set"
- modeling expression of affect (self-disclosing) when relevant
- encouraging pursuit of choices and preferences
- reducing demand characteristics such as expanding behavioral and time limits, reducing the amount to be done

C. *Ensuring a Sense of Protection for exploration and change* (including principles and guidelines – rights and rules – to establish "safe" conditions)

Specific examples:

- reducing exposures to negative appraisals
- providing privacy and support for "risk taking"
- making statements intended to reassure learners when risk taking is not successful
- reducing exposure to negative interactions with significant others through eliminating inappropriate competition and providing privacy
- establishing nondistracting and safe work areas
- establishing guidelines, consistency, and fairness in rule application
- advocating rights through statements and physical actions

Also important, of course, are techniques that provide support and guidance to facilitate effectiveness. Such techniques are outlined in Exhibit 8-4.

Exhibit 8-4

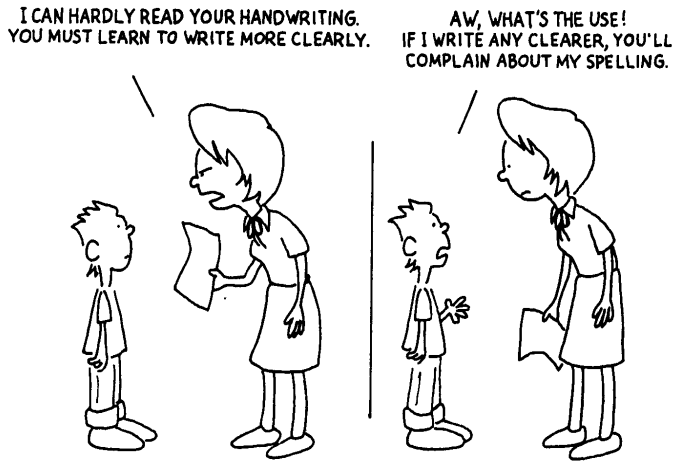
Examples of Techniques that Help Guide and Support Learning

A. *Meaning* (including personal valuing and association with previous experiences)
Specific examples:
- using stimuli of current interest and meaning
- introducing stimuli through association with meaningful materials, such as analogies and pictorial representation of verbal concepts, stressing emotional connections
- presenting novel stimuli
- participating in decision making

B. *Structure* (including amount, form, sequencing and pacing, and source of support and guidance)
Specific examples:
- presenting small amounts (discrete units) of material and/or information
- increasing vividness and distinctiveness of stimuli through physical and temporal figure-ground contrasts (patterning and sequencing), such as varying context, texture, shading, outlining, use of color
- varying levels of abstraction and complexity
- using multisensory presentation
- providing models to emulate, such as demonstrations, role models
- encouraging self-selection of stimuli
- using prompts, cues, and hints, such as color coding, directional arrows, step-by-step directions
- using verbally mediated "self “-direction ("stop, look, and listen")
- grouping material
- using formal coding/decoding strategies such as mnemonic devices, word analysis and synthesis
- rote use of specified study skill and decision-making sequences
- allowing responses to be idiosyncratic with regard to rate, style, amount, and quality
- reducing criteria for success
- using mechanical devices for display, processing, and production, such as projectors, tape recorders, and other audio visual media, typewriters, calculators, computers
- using person resources such as teachers, aides, parents, peers to aid in displaying, processing, and producing

C. *Active contact and use* (including amount, form, and sequencing, and pacing of interaction with relevant stimuli)
Specific examples:
- using immediate and frequent review
- allowing for self-pacing
- overlearning
- small increments in level of difficulty, such as in "errorless training"
- using play, games, and other personally valued opportunities for practice
- role playing and role taking
- using formal reference aids, such as dictionaries, multiplication charts
- using mechanical devices and person resources to aid in interactions

D. *Feedback* (including amount, form, sequencing and pacing, and source of information/ rewards)
Specific examples:
- providing feedback in the form of information/rewards
- immediate feedback provided related to all processes and/or outcomes or provided on a contingency basis (reinforcement schedules or need)
- peer and/or self-evaluation
- using mechanical monitoring and scoring



Coda

A note about great teaching. As a leading writer of the twentieth century, John Steinbeck was asked to address a convention of teachers. Part of what he said to them was:

> *School is not easy and it is not for the most part very much fun, but then, if you are very lucky, you may find a teacher. Three real teachers in a lifetime is the very best of luck. My first was a science and math teacher in high school, my second a professor of creative writing at Stanford and my third was my friend and partner, Ed Rickets.*
>
> *I have come to believe that a great teacher is a great artist and that there are as few as there are any other great artists. It might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit.*
>
> *My three had these things in common – they all loved what they were doing. They did not tell – they catalyzed a burning desire to know. Under their influence, the horizons sprung wide and fear went away and the unknown became knowable. But most important of all, the truth, that dangerous stuff, became beautiful and very precious.*

It is well to acknowledge that great teaching rises to the level of art. However, while schools aspire to recruit great teachers, recruitment and retention are ongoing problems. And given that most new teachers have much to learn, so is inservice continuing education. (See the discussion of personnel recruitment, preservice preparation, and induction at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newteach.pdf.)

The pressing reality is that school improvement policy requires investing much more in enhancing how every school increases capacity to personalize instruction with a view to engaging and maintaining the engagement of students. Furthermore, because improving classroom teaching doesn't stop with personalizing instruction, teachers also need to learn more about improving special assistance. We highlight this in Chapters 9 and 10.

9. Improving Special Assistance

Addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems that arise everyday at school is a complex matter. Current school improvement policy and practice marginalizes the matter and this leads to approaching the problems simplistically.

As H.L. Mencken cautioned: *For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong.*

Special Assistance In-and Out-of the Classroom

Levels of Special Assistance

Coda: A cautionary note

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 effective teaching. This step is critical for ameliorating learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

Special assistance often is simply an extension of general strategies. Sometimes, however, a student requires a set of highly specialized and complex interventions. Providing special assistance prevents problems by accounting for a wider range of individual differences. It also facilitates providing help as soon as problems are noted, thereby preventing problems from worsening. Properly personalized, the assistance can help re-engage disconnected students and enhance intrinsic motivation for learning.

Current school improvement policy and practice has done little to advance this essential facet of efforts to reduce the opportunity and achievement gaps. This chapter highlights ways to move forward.

Identifying Students Who Need Special Assistance

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

There is little difficulty identifying students who are not learning well. 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 mostly doing satisfactory work but not quite performing up to standards in one area of instruction.

Special Assistance In-and Out-of the Classroom

Once it is clear that special assistance is required, the focus turns to determining the degree of need, what type of assistance is appropriate, and how best to provide it. Such decisions require (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), (c) an appreciation of the student's strengths (in terms of both motivation and capabilities), and (d) an indication that the benefits of what is decided will significantly outweigh the costs.

Providing appropriate special assistance depends on the availability and accessibility of an effective array of interventions in and out of the classroom. See Exhibit 9-1. Because special assistance currently is given short shrift, much of what is outlined in the Exhibit is not available at most schools. This undermines efforts to enhance equity of opportunity and too often leads to a worsening of a student's problems.

When special assistance is provided, the practices require an intense focus on motivation. 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 while intervening, and (e) nurturing the type of intrinsic motivation that results in youngsters choosing to apply what they have learned. Attending to these matters is key to maximizing maintenance, generalization, and expansion of learning and minimizing behavior problems. Ignoring such matters means intervening with passive (and often hostile) learners.

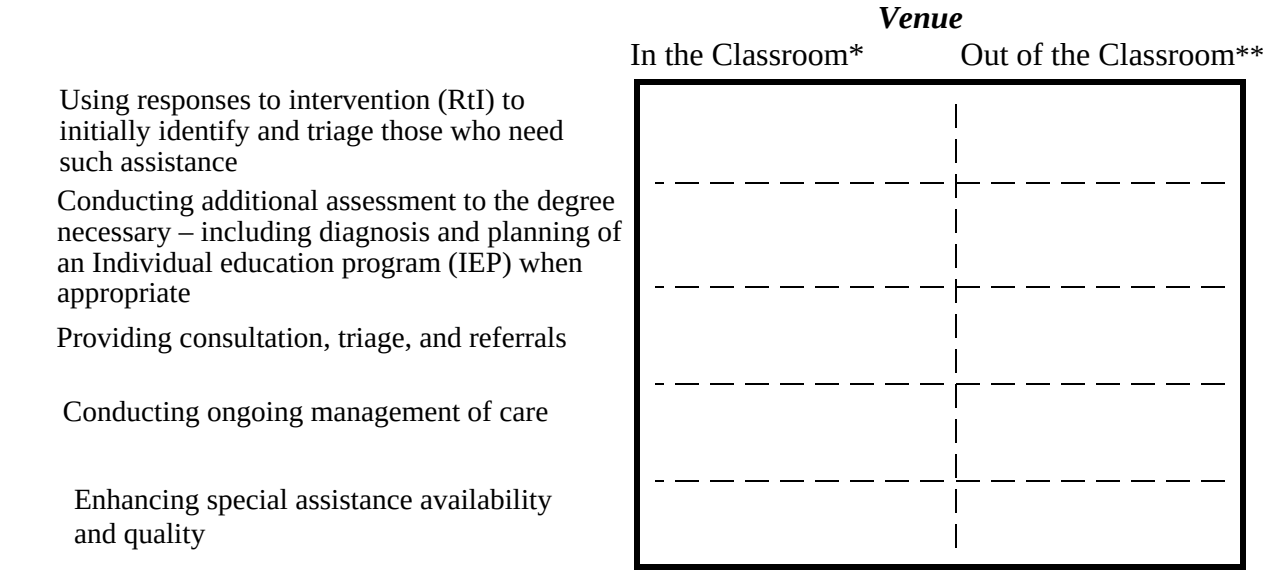
Exhibit 9-1 **Array of Special Assistance**

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.

Exhibit 9-2 highlights some of the processes involved in planning for special assistance.

Exhibit 9-2

Processes Involved in Planning Special Assistance



*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.

Levels of Special Assistance

Efforts to improve the fit between classroom instruction and individual differences in motivation and capabilities are prerequisites to providing special assistance. Where this is unfeasible, a logical first step in addressing a student's problems is to move the student to a classroom where instruction is personalized. In some instances, this step may ameliorate the problems and eliminate the need for special assistance. When problems persist, special intervention is introduced as a second step.

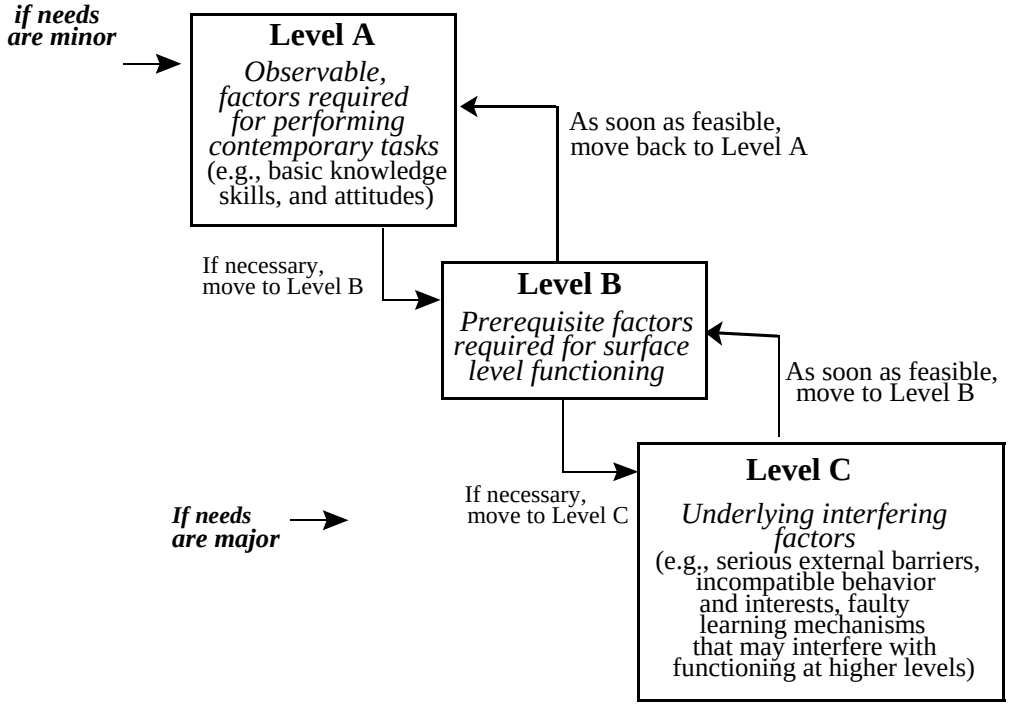
As highlighted in Exhibit 9-3, depending on problem severity and pervasiveness, the assistance involves one (or more) of three levels of intervention. Starting in the classroom, the objective is to use the most direct and noninvasive approaches necessary to achieve appropriate and sustainable outcomes.

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.

Exhibit 9-3

Levels of Special Assistance

Step 2. Special and specialized assistance are conceived hierarchically and applied in a different sequence for minor and severe problems.



As illustrated, sequence and level in providing special assistance differ depending on whether students have minor and occasional problems or have severe and pervasive problems.

At Level A: The focus is on *observable factors* related to age-appropriate life and learning tasks required for functioning effectively at school. The procedures involve (1) continued adaptation of methods to match and enhance levels of motivation and development and (2) directly reteaching specific skills and knowledge when students have difficulty.

Note: If available data indicate the presence of severe and pervasive motivation or developmental problems, Level C interventions are begun immediately.

At 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. As missing prerequisites are successfully developed, the focus returns to observable factors (Level A).

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

Responses to intervention and classroom behavior are analyzed to determine level, and sequence. As necessary, more in-depth assessment is used to identify external and internal factors that are interfering with a student's learning and positive functioning.

Specific objectives at any level are formulated based on analyses of assessment findings and through discussion with the learner (and key family members). The emphasis is on identifying processes and outcomes that the student values and perceives as attainable. Subsequent changes in plans are made based on analyses of student performance and behavior.

As noted in an earlier chapter, factors leading to students requiring special assistance 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. In responding to such factors, the focus is on

- direct actions to address the barriers
- 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.

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.

****

Properly implemented, a sequential and hierarchical approach ensures the right amount of assistance is provided in effectively addresssing students' needs. At the same time, the idea is to keep interventions from becoming too life-intrusive and to ensure costs and benefits are appropriately balanced.

Coda

A Cautionary Note. Concerns arise when schools redefine and constrict the curriculum for individuals identified as needing special assistance. For example, remedial programs often focus primarily on students' deficits.

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. Providing a comprehensive curriculum also is essential for minimizing delays in the degree to which students accomplish major developmental tasks not affected by the factors causing them problems.

10. Providing More Special Assistance *In the Classroom*

School improvement efforts need to increase attention to how to enhance special assistance in the classroom. This requires enhancing both understanding of the process and enabling new forms of staff collaboration.

School Improvement Must Broaden the Approach to Response to Intervention

Doing More to Demystify Remediation & Special Education

Ensuring a Wide Range of Accommodations

Coda: A note about special assistance and ESSA

As we have stressed, if personalization is insufficient, school improvement needs to ensure that special assistance is provided in the classroom and is pursued in a sequential and hierarchical manner. Because the science-base is still limited, a great deal of the process remains a matter of rational trial and appraisal. Over time, staff using authentic/dynamic assessment can acquire an appreciation of what is likely to work with the student and what will not.

Teacher Johnson's work with Larry's minor reading problem and Joan's more severe problem may clarify matters a bit more and highlight implications for school improvement.

> 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.

School Improvement Must Broaden the Approach to Response to Intervention

A personalized special assistance plan is informed by analyses of learning and performance, and specific objectives are formulated in discussions with the student and key family members. The focus is on identifying the levels of intervention needed and processes and outcomes that the student values and perceives as attainable. Subsequent modifications are based on continuous analyses and frequent conferences. Broadly conceived and implemented as authentic/dynamic assessment, Response to Intervention (RtI) can play a key role.

Although RtI is a prominently advocated strategy, it generally is used in too limited a way. That is, the tendency is to use it mainly to analyze responses made to *instruction*.

Special assistance adds an array of interventions that provide critical assessment data for understanding a student's problems and for refining intervention plans. A broad analysis considers (a) motivational as well as developmental considerations and (b) whether the problem requires a deeper look. For example, a broad approach to RtI can help answer such questions as: 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?

Doing More to Demystify Remediation & Special Education

Special assistance may require use of remedial practices. Such practices too often are viewed as the sole province of special education. This perception has to change as efforts are made in regular classes to enhance special assistance and include more special education students.

While remedial practices are perceived as being quite different from those used in regular teaching, the differences often are not as great as appearance suggests. One facet of school improvement involves helping staff understand that regular and remedial procedures generally draw on the same instructional models and basic principles. Some remedial practices are simply adaptations of regular procedures, with the added application of psychotherapeutic principles. This is even the case with some packaged programs and materials specially developedfor 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 10-1 highlights features that make remedial strategies appear different.

Exhibit 10-1

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, use of multisensory practices, technological applications, 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.

Ensuring a Wide Range of Accommodations

School improvement calls for classrooms to offer a variety of content and process options and accommodations. This is especially essential in addressing learning, behavior, emotional, and physical problems.

Accommodations to Address Individual Differences

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 10-2). School improvement plans need to ensure a full array of accommodations are used in personalizing instruction and providing special assistance.

Exhibit 10-2

Examples of Special Assistance Accommodations

For easily distracted students:

- 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)

For students needing more support and guidance:

- 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

For students having difficulty finishing tasks as scheduled:

- 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).

Exhibit 10-2 (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

Given the intervention principle of placement in the least restrictive environment needed, a student may be assigned to a special classroom and school (e.g., special education classes, alternative public or private schools). While often a controversial move, such placements frequently are recommended as another form of accommodation.

Some school organizational changes also are accommodation opportunities. "Looping" is an example (i.e., the teacher moving with students from one grade to the next for one or more years). Beside reducing student apprehension about a new school year and a new teacher, this allows for teacher continuity in providing special assistance and for relationship and community building and bonding between teachers and students and teachers and parents and among students.

Accommodations, Options, and Decision Making to Re-engage Students

It is worth reiterating that re-engaging a disconnected student requires increasing the range of valued options, facilitating the student's efforts to explore the options, and helping the student in making decisions about which options to pursue. The aim is to counter perceptions of coercion and control and enhance the student's feelings of self-determination. Shifting such perceptions can reduce reactance and enhance engagement in classroom learning.

For some disconnected students, it may be necessary to make changes to classroom content and processes that are perceived as quite different from those associated with previous bad experiences. This may mean *temporarily* putting aside current curricula and behavior expectations. The aim, first and foremost, is to reconnect the student with schooling.

Reducing Unnecessary Referrals

The motivation emphasis of personalization and in-classroom special assistance is key to reducing the number of youngsters seen as in need of out-of-classroom help. When motivational considerations are given short shrift, assessments and diagnoses are confounded, and special assistance may be guided in wrong directions. Concersely, as student engagement is enhanced and as those who have become disconnected from learning at school re-engage, assessment accuracy can be improved and errors corrected (e.g., special assistance can help identify false positive identifications of learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders).

A major aim of school improvement must be to ensure that referrals for special services occur only after extensive special assistance efforts in the classroom are pursued appropriately and proven unsuccessful. And, when 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.

Coda

A note about special assistance and ESSA. The Every Student Succeeds Act **(**ESSA) pays little attention to the implications of the many barriers to learning and teaching that arise daily at schools. In doing so, the legislation continues the marginalization of the host of school staff who provide special assistance to address students' learning, behavior, and emotional problems. An implicit message conveyed by the legislation is that the schools' role in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students mainly involves improving instruction, enhancing safety, and establishing school-community partnerships that primarily focus on enhancing connections with community *services.* This message has hindered developing the type of approaches to improving instruction and special assistance highlighted in this volume.

Of particular importance to improving special assistance in the classroom is retooling what ESSA labels as specialized instructional support personnel. The jobs of these personnel need redefining to include working collaboratively with teachers *in classrooms* for part of each day. Such collaboration is essential to ending the myths and expectations that teachers can do it all and can do it alone.

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Properly conceived and implemented personalized instruction and special assistance when needed expand the classroom's overall capability for accommodating a wider range of individual differences, vulnerabilities, and disabilities. This supports inclusionary policies, reduces unnecessary referrals for specialized services, and enhances equity of opportunity for success at school and beyond.

Schooling, of course, involves much more than classroom instruction. Whole child development and whole school improvement calls for reworking the way schoolwide student and learning supports are provided. We turn to this matter in Part III.

A Few Online Resources from the Center at UCLA Relevant to Part II

Over the years, the Center has developed resources for use in school improvement efforts, especially professional development. In addition to those listed at the end of Part I, the following are a few examples containing material related to Part I. These online resources provide more extensive coverage of some of the topics highlighted in Part II.

- *Classroom Learning Support Survey* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/toolsforpractice/classroomsurvey.pdf
- *Addressing School Adjustment Problems* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/adjustmentproblems.pdf
- *Response to Intervention (RtI)* (four modules for continuing education)

  I: RtI: Improving Conditions for Learning in the Classroom – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtii.pdf

  II: Implementing Response to Intervention Sequentially & Effectively http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtiii.pdf

  III. Response to Intervention: Beyond Personalization http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtiiii.pdf

  IV: Pursuing Response to Intervention as One Strategy in a Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtiiv.pdf

Part III

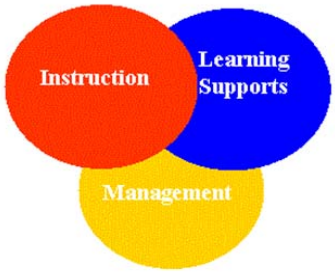
New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

While good teaching is the foundation for learning at school, personalized instruction alone cannot ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to meet expectations. Many barriers to learning and teaching interfere with equity of opportunity for school success. To address such barriers, schools, districts, regional units, and state departments allocate a significant amount of resources.

A major part of these resources is embodied in specialized student and learning support personnel. This includes, *but is not limited to*, the Specialized Instructional Support Personnel designated in the Every Student Succeeds Act. The legislation's list of such personnel encompasses school counselors, school nurses, psychologists, school psychologists, social workers and school social workers; occupational and physical therapists; art, dance/movement, and music therapists; and, speech-language pathologists, and audiologists. Other personnel involved in efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students include administrators, staff for federal "title" programs, those involved in special projects and initiatives, special education staff, paraprofessionals, volunteers, community professionals collocating at schools, and students and their families.

Unfortunately, the considerable activity performed by the various entities usually is developed and implemented in an ad hoc and piecemeal manner and plays out in fragmented, unsystematic ways. In great part, this reflects the marginalization of the work resulting from the prevailing two component approach to school improvement.

Expanding school improvement policy into a three component framework provides a path to ending the marginalization and improving outcomes. Establishing learning supports as a fundamental and primary school improvement component can help focus schools on the need to (a) unify all student/ learning supports and (b) develop the component over time into a comprehensive and equitable system.



As highlighted in Parts I and II, the learning supports component overlaps the instructional component by bringing learning supports into the classroom. In doing so, it stresses a psychological approach to personalization and a sequential and hierarchical approach to special assistance.

Part III delineastes the entire component and discusses how to operationalize classroom and schoolwide supports into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. The discussion stresses how schools can collaborate with families and the community at large in establishing such a system.

11. Current Status of Student/Learning Supports

The status quo is unacceptable.

Major Barriers Interfering with Learning and Teaching

Efforts to Address Barriers: Fragmented and Marginalized

Comprehensive School Improvement Requires Adopting
a Unified Component to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching

Coda: A note about school readiness

Can you tell me what "status quo" means?

Sure. It's a fancy name for the mess were in.

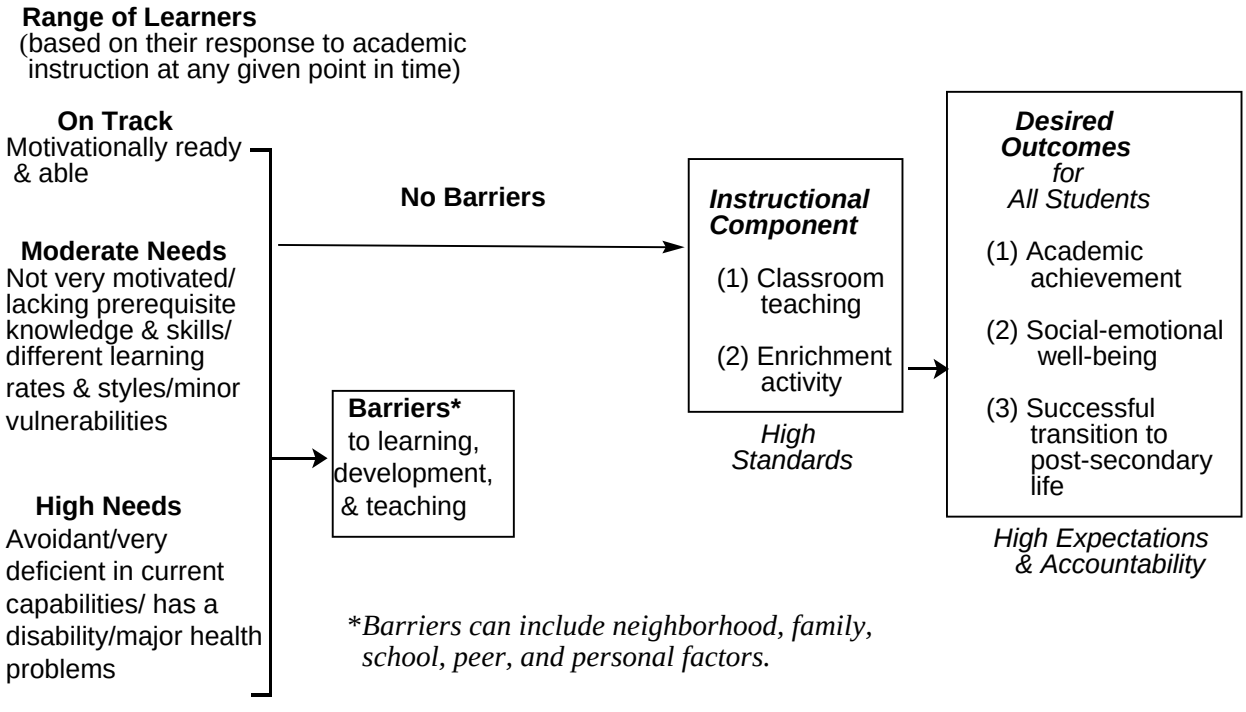
To be clear about why new directions for student/learning supports are a school improvement imperative, one need only consider the nature and scope of factors that regularly interfere with learning and teaching and the fragmented and marginalized way such factors are addressed at schools.

Major Barriers to Learning and Teaching

Implicit in democratic ideals (and ratified in ESSA) is the intent of ensuring that *every student* will succeed at school. If all students came ready and able to profit from "high standards" curricula, then there would be little problem. But *all* encompasses those who are experiencing external and/or internal barriers. As exhibit 11-1 highlights, such barriers interfere with many of these students benefitting from what the teacher is offering. Providing equity of opportunity to succeed at school requires more than better teaching, increased discipline, and safer schools. It also requires addressing barriers to development, learning, and teaching.

Exhibit 11-1

Many Students Experience Barriers to Learning



There is widespread agreement that barriers to development, learning, and teaching include neighborhood, family, school, peer, and personal factors. Exhibit 11-2 provides a synthesis of such factors.

Exhibit 11-2

External and Internal Barriers to Learning and Teaching

External Factors*

Community
- Availability of drugs
- Availability of firearms
- Community laws and norms favorable toward drug use, firearms, and crime
- Media portrayals of violence
- Transitions and mobility
- Low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization
- Extreme economic deprivation

Family
- Family history of the problem behavior
- Family management problems
- Family conflict
- Favorable parental attitudes and involvement in the problem behavior

School
- Academic failure beginning in late elementary school

Peer
- Friends who engage in the problem behavior
- Favorable attitudes toward problem behavior

Internal Factors (biological and psychological)

Differences (e.g., being further along toward one end or the other of a normal developmental curve; not fitting local "norms" in terms of looks and behavior; etc.)

Vulnerabilities (e.g., minor health/vision/hearing problems and other deficiencies/deficits that result in school absences and other needs for special accommodations; being the focus of racial, ethnic, or gender bias; economical disadvantage; youngster and or parent lacks interest in youngster's schooling, is alienated, or rebellious; early manifestation of severe and pervasive problem/antisocial behavior)

Disabilities (e.g., true learning, behavior, and emotional disorders)

*Other examples of external factors include exposure to crisis events in the community, home, and school; lack of availability and access to good school readiness programs; lack of home involvement in schooling; lack of peer support, positive role models, and mentoring; lack of access and availability of good recreational opportunities; lack of access and availability to good community housing, health and social services, transportation, law enforcement, sanitation; lack of access and availability to good school support programs; sparsity of high quality schools.

Efforts to Address Barriers: Fragmented and Marginalized

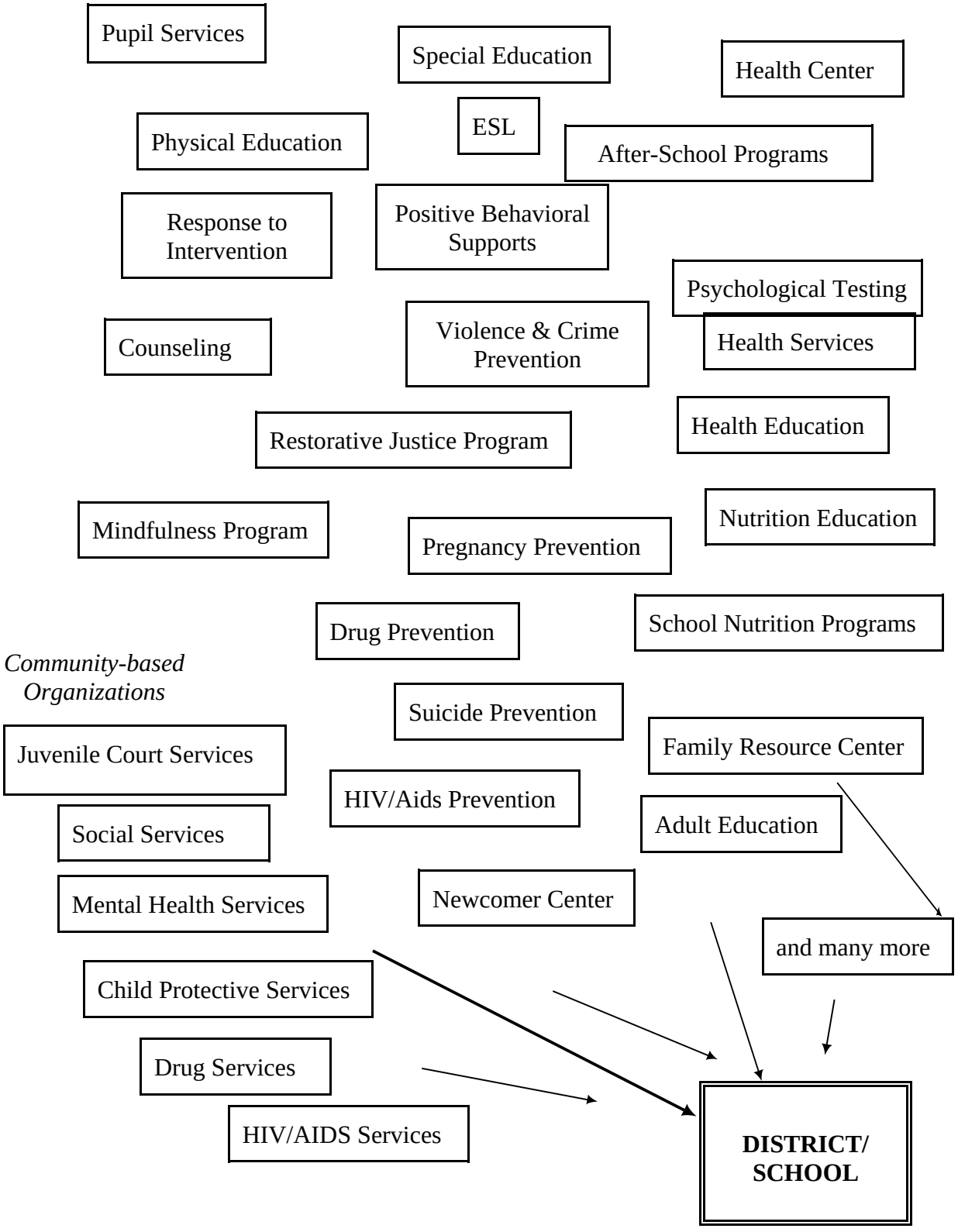
While the causes and numbers vary, every school has students who are not doing well. All schools devote resources to address this reality (see Exhibit 11-3).

In general, resources are allocated for interventions that address discrete, categorical problems. Some are designed to reach the entire student body. A few are specialized services that can only be provided to a relatively small number of students.

For a variety of reasons, schools differ with respect to the student/learning supports they have in place. Common, however, is the fragmented and disorganized way the supports are developed and implemented. The status quo is maintained because school improvement policy and practice continue to marginalize student/learning supports. Ending the marginalization is essential.

Exhibit 11-3

Much may be happening, but it all tends to be fragmented!



The problems encountered by students and schools are complex and overlapping. The number of students not doing well at a school can be staggering. Student/learning supports as they currently operate can't meet the need, especially in schools serving low wealth families.

School budgets always are tight; cost-effectiveness is a constant concern. In some schools, principals report that up to 25% of their budget is consumed in efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching. Analyses indicate extremely limited results and redundancy in resource use.

Rivalry for sparse resources also has produced counterproductive competition among support staff and with community-based professionals who link with schools. Each new initiative compounds matters.

All this works against schools 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. School improvement and related capacity building efforts (including pre- and in-service staff development) have yet to deal effectively with these concerns.

Comprehensive School Improvement Requires Adopting a Component to Address Barriers to Learning

Most school improvement plans do not prioritize efforts to enhance student outcomes by *directly* and *comprehensively* addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Exhibit 11-4 graphically emphasizes that ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school necessitates a component dedicated directly to both (1) addressing barriers to learning and teaching and (2) re-engaging disconnected students. Some student/learning supports focus only on factors interfering with learning. Interventions that do not ensure students are engaged meaningfully in classroom learning usually are insufficient in sustaining, over time, student involvement, good behavior, and effective learning at school.

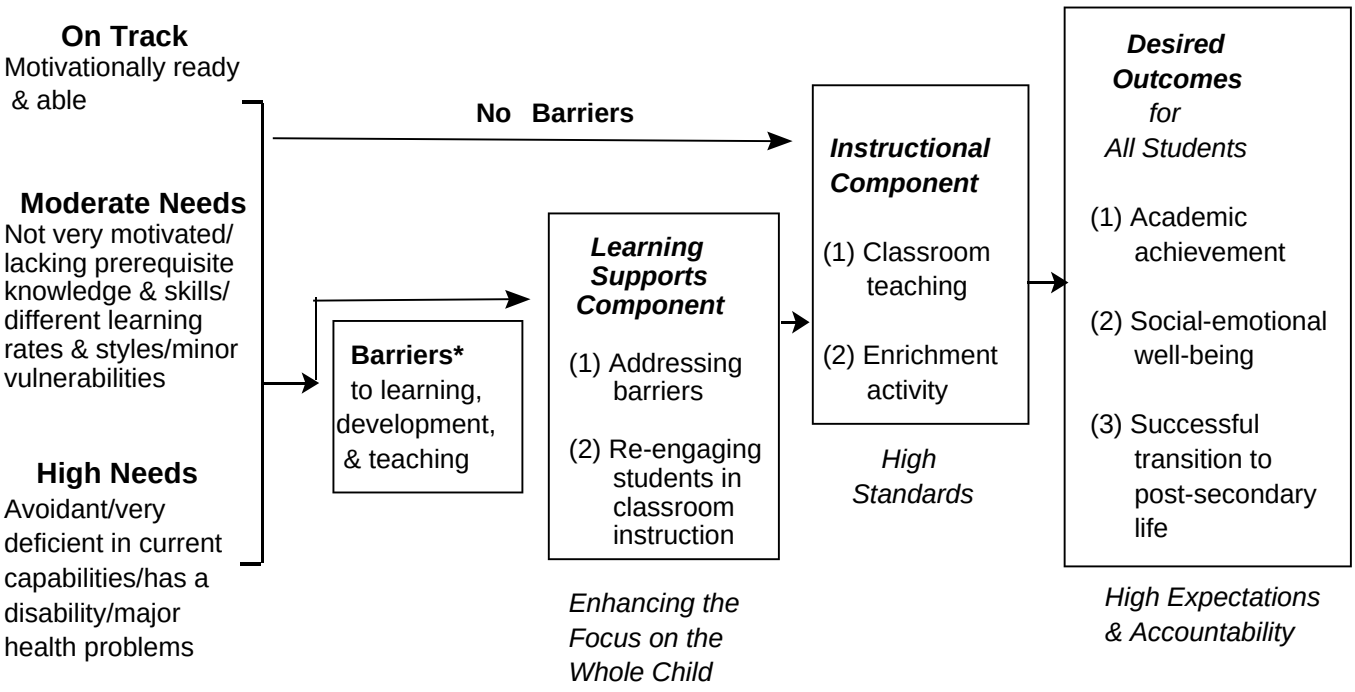
I hear they've been using a carrot and stick approach to improve your learning.

Well, I never saw a carrot, but the stick felt like a 2X4, and I'm dropping out before they hit me with it again!

Exhibit 11-4

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)



***Examples of Barriers to Learning and Development**

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS **PERSON FACTORS**

Barriers to Development and Learning (Risk producing conditions)

Neighborhood
>extreme economic deprivation
>community disorganization, including high levels of mobility
>violence, drugs, etc.
>minority and/or immigrant status

Family
>chronic poverty
>conflict/disruptions/violence
>substance abuse
>models problem behavior
>abusive caretaking
>inadequate provision for quality child care

School & Peers
>poor quality school
>negative encounters with teachers
>negative encounters with peers &/or inappropriate peer models

Individual
>medical problems
>low birth weight/ neurodevelopmental delay
>psychophysiological problems
>difficult temperament & adjustment problems

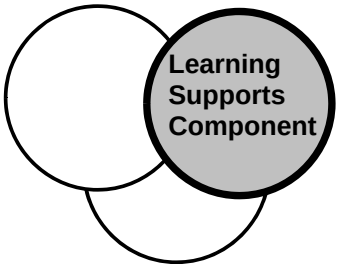
Coda

A note about school readiness. Critical concerns for school improvement are enhancing school readiness when children start school and ensuring everyday readiness from then on. At one time or another, most students bring problems with them to school that affect their learning and that often interfere with the teacher's efforts to teach.

While some youngsters are hindered by personal factors that make learning and performing difficult, many are growing up in situations that not only fail to promote school readiness, but are antithetical to the process. As a result, there are students at every grade level who come to school unready to meet the setting's demands effectively. As long as the status quo related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching is maintained, the achievement and opportunity gaps will endure.

12. Rethinking Schoolwide Student/Learning Supports

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

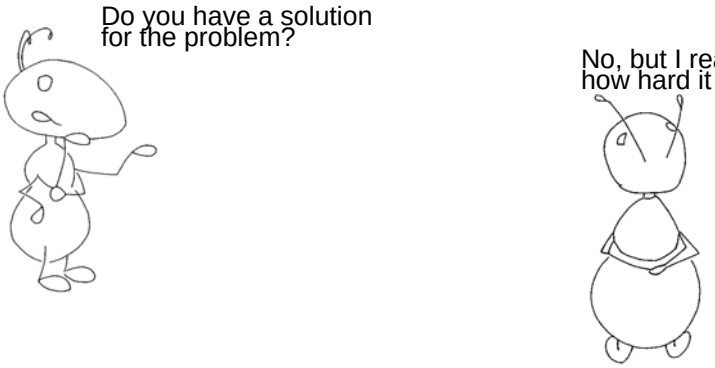


Reframing Student and Learning Supports

A Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System of Learning Supports

Essential Elements

Coda: A note about rethinking current efforts



At this point, it will help to define 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.* Learning Supports are deployed in classrooms and schoolwide.

In adopting a third component to school improvement policy, the aim is to (1) unify all student/learning supports designed to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students and (2) institutionalize a leadership infrastructure for developing, over time, a comprehensive and equitable system. To be effective, such a system is established in ways that fully enmesh it with instructional efforts and professional development. To be equitable, such a system is established at all schools in a district. To develop into a comprehensive component, such a system weaves together school and community resources.

Reframing Student and Learning Supports

In addition to expanding the policy framework, moving forward requires

- reframing traditional student and learning supports
- reworking the organizational and operational infrastructure and redeploying resources to enable the development, implementation, and sustainability of the new system.

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 provide compensatory and special assistance and promote and maintain safety, physical and mental health, school readiness, early school-adjustment, and social and academic functioning. The point is to move away from approaching such concerns as if they had no relationship to each other. Students have complex and overlapping learning, behavior, and emotional 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. The focus is on *braiding together all available school and community resources* to equitably strengthen interventions and fill critical gaps.

In reframing student and learning supports, a major emphasis is placed on developing a system to address all students and, as feasible, a wide range of barriers to learning and teaching. Minimally, student/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 an intervention prototype for a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system to address barriers and re-engage students. The prototype has two facets:

- one facet conceives levels of intervention as a full continuum of integrated intervention subsystems that interweave school-community-home resources

- the second facet 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. Figure 12-1 portrays such a continuum in ways that take the multitier system several steps beyond prevailing conceptualizations.

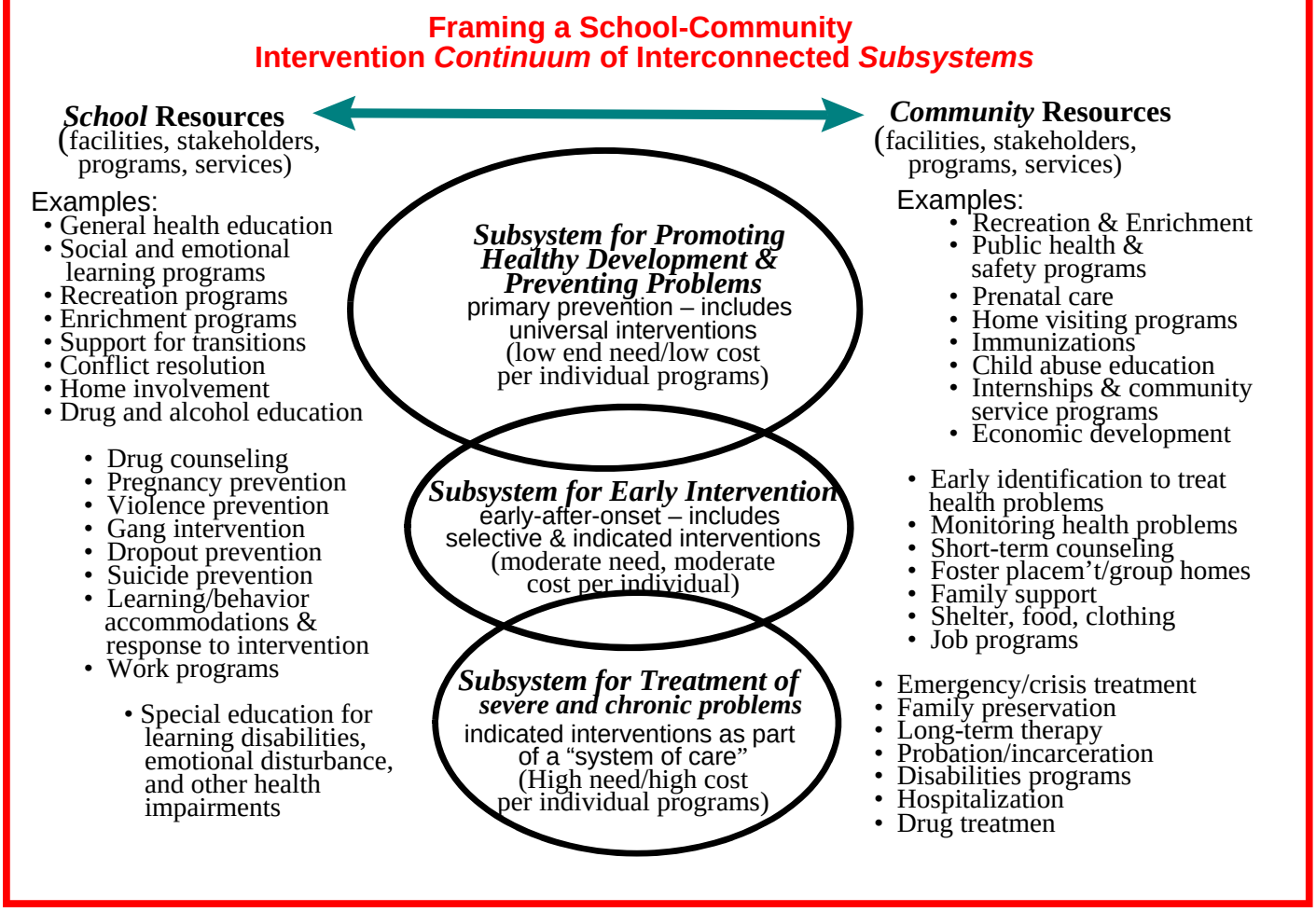
As illustrated, the continuum is an interconnected, overlapping set of school and community *subsystems.* The intent at each subsystem level is to weave together a wide range of school and community resources. The subsystems focus on promoting effective schooling and whole child development, preventing problems, addressing problems as soon as they arise, and providing for students who have severe and chronic problems.

The interrelated and overlapping subsystems are illustrated as tapering from top to bottom to indicate a cascading effect. That is, it is meant to convey 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.

About MTSS

The multitier student support (MTSS) model as emphasized in ESSA and as widely portrayed in school improvement plans usually is illustrated simply in terms of levels rather than as a set of intervention subsystems. The simplicity of the tiered presentation is appealing, and the framework does help underscore differences in levels of intervention. However, the simple graphic illustration is not a powerful way to depict the continuum, and it is an insufficient framework for organizing student/learning supports. Specific concerns about the MTSS framework are that (1) it mainly stresses levels of intensity, (2) it does not address the problem of systematically connecting interventions that fall into and across each level, and (3) it does not address the need to connect school and community interventions. As a result, most adoptions of MTSS in school improvement plans do little to guide better directions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

Exhibit 12-1



Content Arenas of Activity

A system of student/learning supports requires more than conceiving a continuum of intervention. 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* of activity at each level.

Moving from the typical "laundry listing" of programs and services, our research and development efforts have categorized activities aimed at addressing barriers 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 to 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 are manifesting mild-moderate learning and behavior problems and those who have become disengaged from learning at school; includes a focus on prevention, personalization, response to intervention, and early intervening with special assistance in the classroom)

- *Supporting transitions* (i.e., assisting students and families as they negotiate the many transitions encountered daily and throughout the school year, such as school and grade changes, getting to school each day)
- *Increasing home and school connections and engagement*
- *Responding to, and where feasible, preventing crises*
- *Increasing community involvement and support* (e.g., 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 have 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 provides an intervention framework that can guide development of a total system designed to unify the resources a school devotes to addressing barriers to learning and teaching (e.g., student/learning supports), as well as braiding in community resources to fill critical gaps and strengthen the system. As illustrated in Exhibit 12-2, the framework for the third component is seen as essential to a school's ability to accomplish its instructional mission; it is not an added agenda to that mission.

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 learning and teaching. Implementation of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system 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). Properly implemented, the component increases the likelihood that a school will be experienced as a welcoming, supportive place that accommodates diversity, prevents problems, enhances youngsters' strengths, and is committed to assuring equity of opportunity for all students to succeed at school.

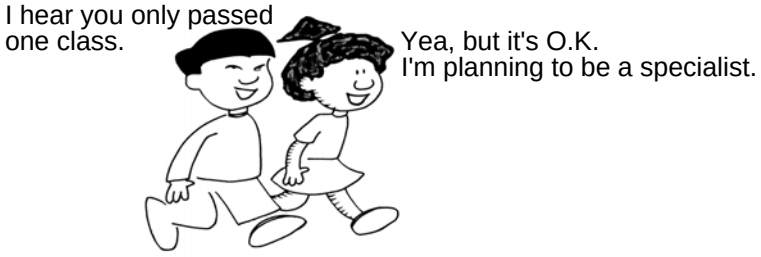
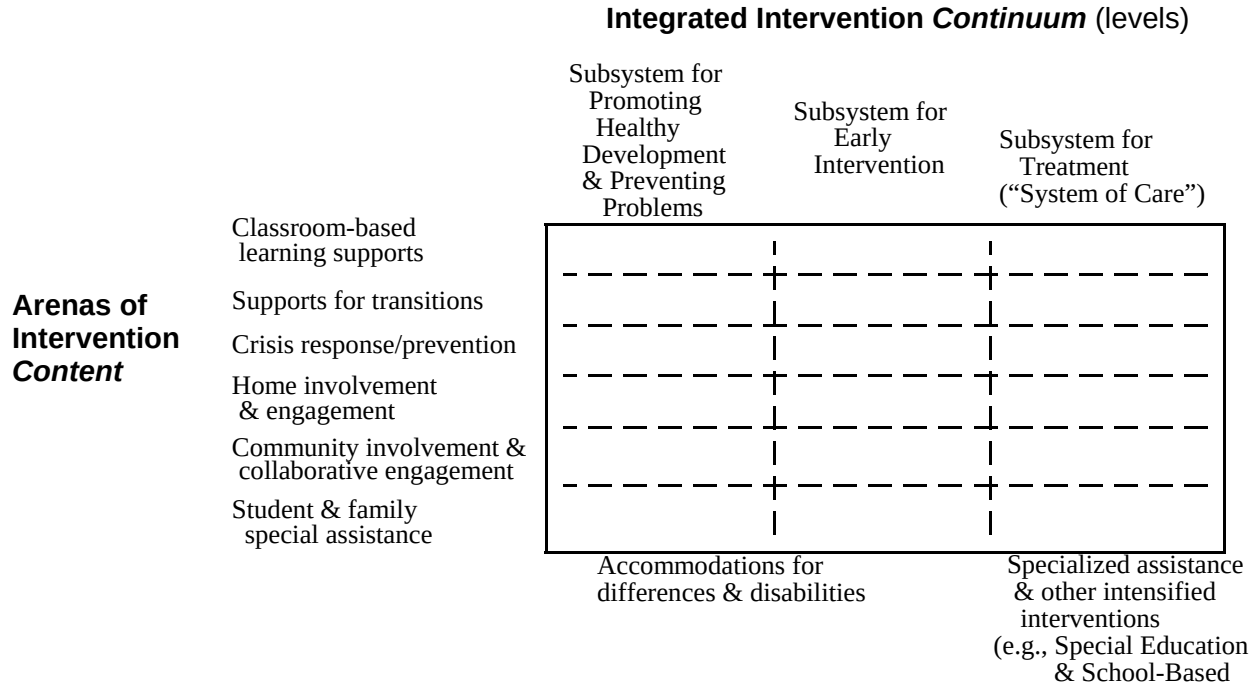


Exhibit 12-2

Intervention Framework for the Third Component



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.

Essential Elements

While reasonable adaptation of the third component to fit localities is wise, care must be taken not to eliminate elements that are essential to a fundamental *transformation* of how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. An unfortunate tendency is for some places to adopt the terminology and not the substance of the intended system transformation.

To counter this tendency, Exhibit 12-3 highlights five essential elements that should be evident in any SEA, LEA, and school that indicates it is developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports.

Exhibit 12-3

Five Essential Elements of a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System of Learning Supports

(1) A three component policy for schools – To enable all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school, schools must directly address barriers to learning and teaching. This requires elevating such efforts so that they are a third primary and essential component for school improvement. The third component might be called a learning supports component, or any other term that is descriptive of a component to address barriers to learning and teaching.

Obviously, it is desirable that the three component policy be adopted at all levels (SEA, LEA, and schools), however, most schools can move forward once the district has enacted such a policy.

As a basis for ensuring the policy is pursued with fidelity, policy makers must be certain it is translated into a *design document* and *strategic plan.* These documents are critical guides for unifying student/learning supports and then developing them into a comprehensive and equitable system that provides supportive interventions in classrooms and school-wide. The design and strategic plans for the third component must be fully integrated with the strategic plans for improving instruction and management at schools. (For examples of policy statements and design and strategic planning, see Sections A and B of the Center's System Change Toolkit – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm.)

(2) A transformative intervention framework for addressing barriers to learning and teaching – As illustrated in this chapter, a unified, comprehensive, and equitable intervention framework combines (a) a continuum of school and community interventions (that goes well beyond what is typically presented by a simple MTSS framework) and (b) an organized set of content arenas.

(3) An operational infrastructure dedicated to the third component – We discuss this in Chapter 13.

(4) Continuous capacity building (especially professional development) – Capacity building plans and their implementation must include a specific focus on unifying and developing the system. Professional development must provide on-the-job opportunities and special times focused specifically on enhancing the capability of those directly involved in the learning supports component. Professional development of teachers, administrators, other staff and volunteers, and community stakeholders must also include and emphasis on learning about how best to address barriers to learning and teaching. (For capacity building resources, see Sections B and C of the Center's System Change Toolkit – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm.)

(5) Monitoring for improvement and accountability – Essential facets of the ongoing development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports involve (a) continuous monitoring all factors that facilitate and hinder progress and then (b) ensuring actions are taken to deal with interfering factors and to enhance facilitation.

As significant progress is made in developing the system, the monitoring expands to evaluate the impact on student outcomes with specific reference to direct indicators of the effectiveness of learning supports (e.g., increased attendance, reduced misbehavior, improved learning). (See *Standards for a Learning Supports Component* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/commcore.pdf. This resource includes indicators for monitoring, evaluation, and accountability).

Coda: A note about rethinking current efforts: **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.

13. Reworking the School Leadership Infrastructure into a Three Component Framework

Improving the way schools address barriers to learning and teaching requires reworking existing operational infrastructures following the basic organization principle that *structure follows function*.

Structure Follows Function

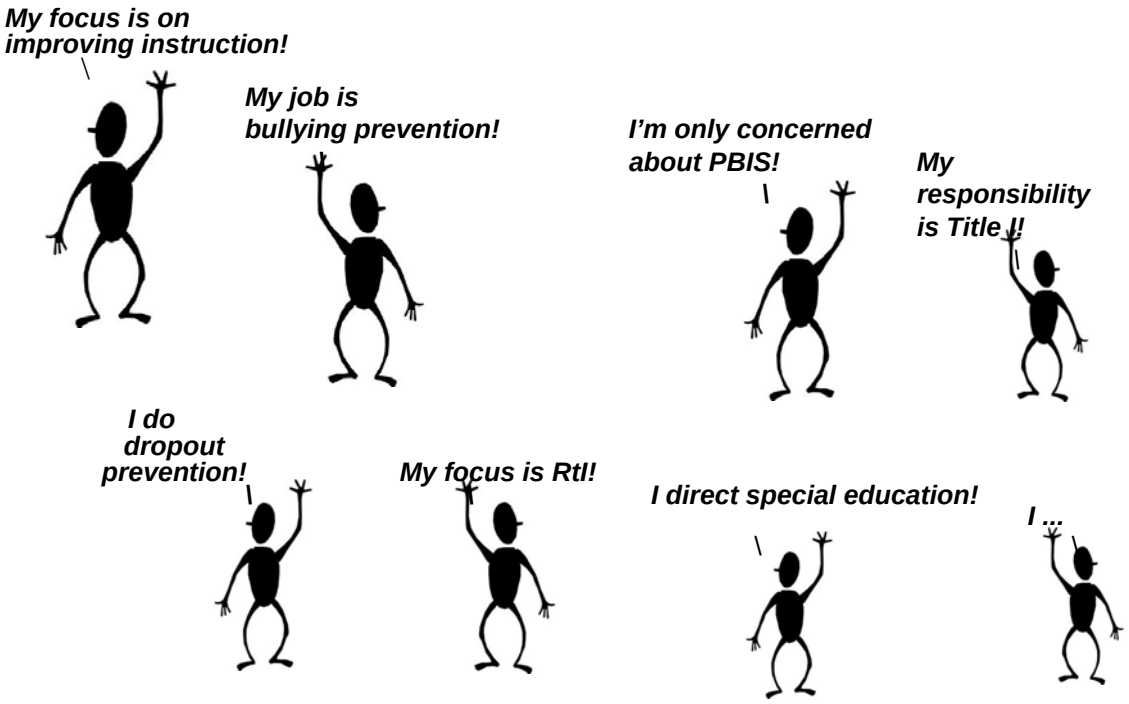
School Infrastructure for Daily Operations and Ongoing Development

Connecting a Complex or "Family" of Schools

A Prototype for Reworking District Infrastructure

Coda: A note about a collaborative infrastructure

A Snapshot of Fragmentation & Marginalization



No one who understands the complexity of school improvement expects to accomplish fundamental 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.

We focus here on reworking existing operational infrastructures for the daily implementation of school improvements. In Part IV, we discuss mechanisms to facilitate the complex processes involved in facilitating fundamental systemic changes.

Structure Follows Function

School improvement requires following the basic organization principle that *structure follows function.* This applies to

- reworking the current operational infrastructure at a school
- developing *formal* mechanisms for a school to work with other schools and with the community to improve outcomes and achieve economies of scale
- redesigning district level mechanisms to effectively support the many functions schools must carry out as they pursue improvements.

Examples of school improvement functions are offered in Exhibit 13-1. Reworking the operational infrastructure with such functions in mind requires revamping staff job descriptions and enhancing the involvement of parents, students, and other representatives from the community.

Exhibit 13-1

Examples of School Improvement Functions

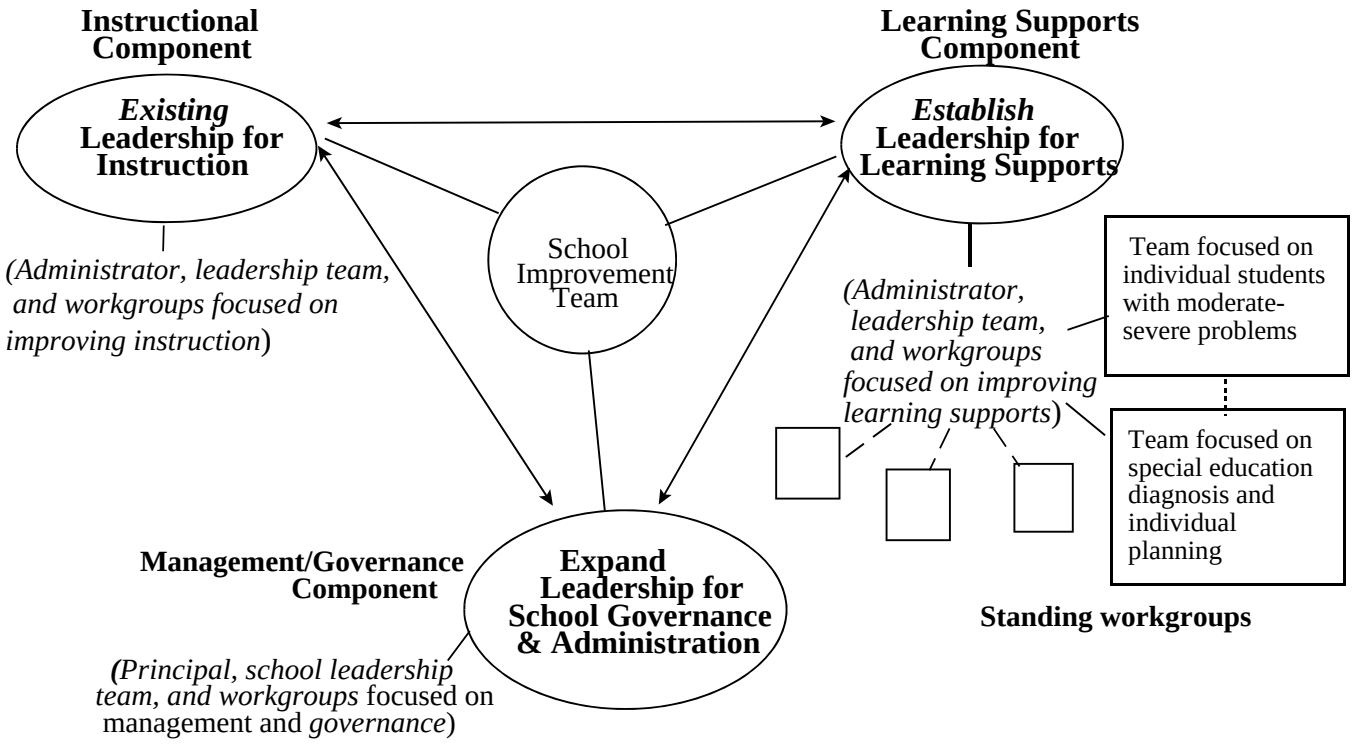
- Identifying what needs improvement based on analyses of student, staff, and other stakeholder data
- Mapping and analyzing school and community resources
- Decision making about priorities and cost-effective resource allocation and redeployment to strengthen promising approaches and developing new ones
- Creating formal working relationships with community resources to bring some to schools and establish special linkages with others
- Coordinating and integrating school resources and weaving in community resources
- Planning and facilitating ongoing capacity building to strengthen promising approaches and developing new ones
- Upgrading and modernizing all activities to reflect the best intervention thinking and use of technology
- Maximizing strategic planning, implementation, and oversight of changes
- Performing formative and summative evaluation of improvement efforts (e.g., capacity building, maintenance/sustainability of changes, and impact on students)
- Developing strategies for acquiring additional resources
- Planning and implementing social "marketing" related to improvements

School Infrastructure for Daily Operations and Ongoing Development

As illustrated in Exhibit 13-2, each of the three primary and essential components for school improvement requires (1) administrative leadership, (2) a leadership team to work with the leader on system development, and (3) standing and occasionally ad hoc work groups to accomplish specific tasks. The leaders for the instructional and learning supports components join with the management/governance component to ensure all three facets of school improvement are integrated and that the learning supports component is not marginalized.

Exhibit 13-2

Prototype for an Integrated Operational Infrastructure at the School Level*



Note: Each of the three primary and essential components for school improvement requires

- administrative leadership and other advocates/champions with responsibility and accountability for ensuring the vision for the component is not lost,
- a leadership team to work with the administrative lead on system development,
- standing workgroups with designated ongoing functions and occasional ad hoc workgroups to accomplish specific short-term tasks; the teams that currently focus on processing students referred for out-of-classroom assistance are identifed as two standing work groups.

*A parallel reworking should be done at the district level see Exhibit 13-4.

To ensure coordination and cohesion, the leader for the instructional component and the newly established leader for the learning supports component are full members of the management/governance component. If a special team is assigned to work on school improvement, the leaders for all three components are on that team. The intent is for each component's administrative lead to be responsible and accountable not only for improving her/his component's performance but for fully weaving it into the other two.

Note that most schools already have an operational infrastructure that designates leadership and workgroups for improving instruction and management functions. This generally is not the case for a learning supports component. Without such mechanisms, efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students cannot operate as a primary and essential facet of school improvement.

A commitment to a three component school improvement policy calls for every school to establish an administrative lead, a leadership team, and workgroups to guide and monitor daily implementation and continuous improvement of student/learning supports. Initial tasks include mapping and analyzing all resources and ensuring appropriate budget allocations for student and learning supports.* Resource analyses are conducted to identify critical gaps, redundancies, and which resources can be redeployed to develop the system and priorities are set for moving forward.

Connecting a Complex or "Family" of Schools

Schools in the same geographic (catchment) area have shared concerns, and feeder schools often are interacting with students from the same family. All three components of school improvement can benefit when a "family" of schools works together.

For example, some programs and personnel are (or can be) shared by several neighboring schools, thus minimizing redundancy and reducing costs. Think about overall capacity building and personnel development. Think about supports for transitions, shared crises, and working with families who have youngsters attending more than one level of schooling in the same cluster. (When a family has several children in need of special attention, it is neither cost-effective nor sound practice for each school to work with the family separately.)

School leaders from a "family" of schools can establish a multi-site leadership council to help ensure cohesive and equitable deployment of resources and also can enhance the pooling of resources to reduce costs. Such a mechanism can be particularly useful for integrating the efforts of high schools and their feeder middle and elementary schools (see Exhibit 13-3).

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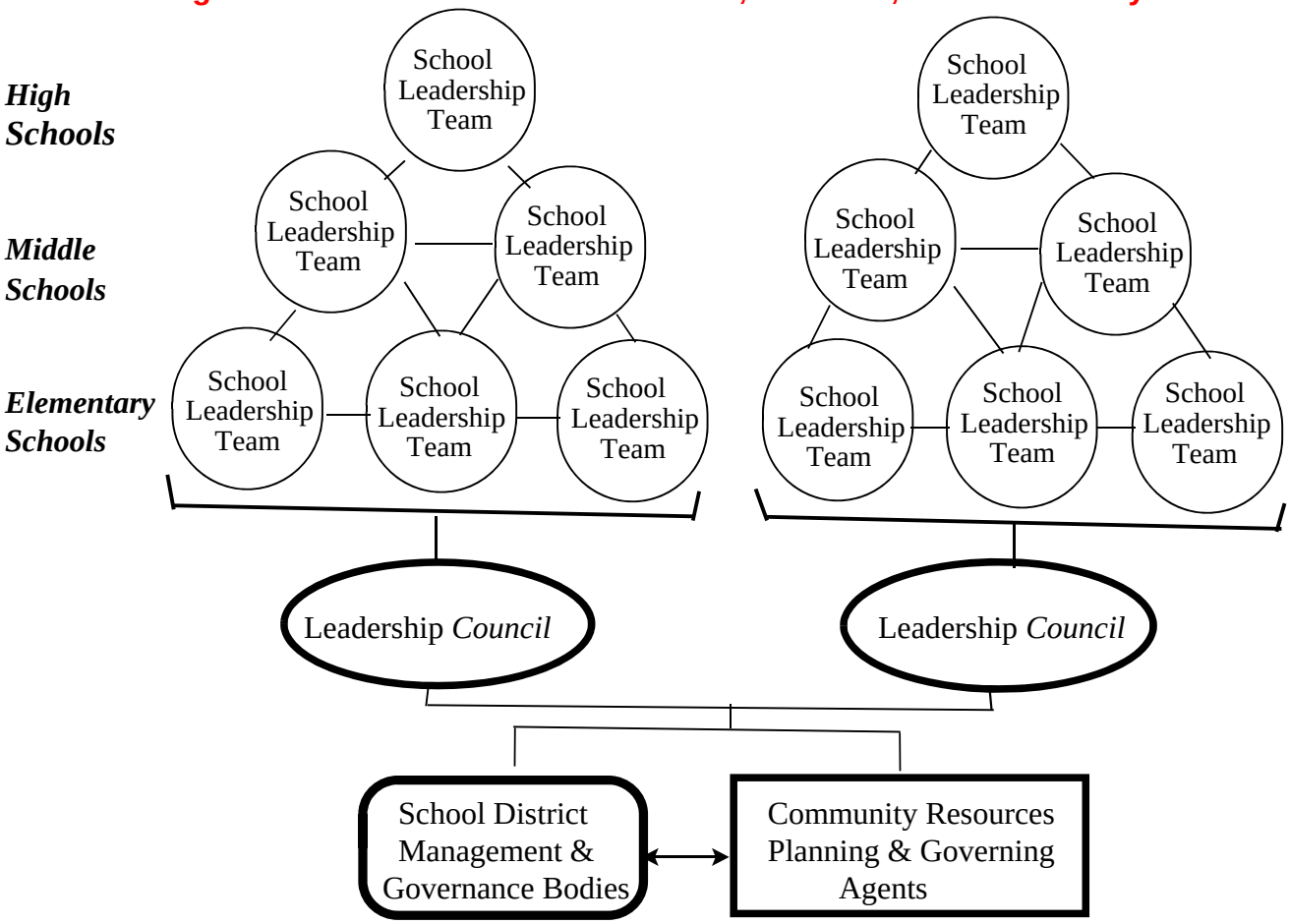
*Learning support resources include student support personnel (e.g., counselors, school psychologists, social workers, nurses; compensatory and special education staff); specialized services; special initiatives; grants; programs for afterschool, wellness, dropout prevention, attendance, drug abuse prevention, violence prevention, pregnancy prevention; parent/family/health centers; volunteer assistance; community resources linked to schools, and more. Allocated funds come from the general budget, compensatory and special education, and special projects (including those supported by extra-mural sources).

Exhibit 13-3

Connecting Resources Across Feeder Schools, a District, and Community-Wide



Natural starting points for sharing include analyses of each school's needs assessment, resource mapping, and recommendations about priorities for system improvement. Specific attention is paid to how each school can work together on common concerns such as improving instruction, enhancing attendance, safe school plans, and reducing violent behavior.

As illustrated in Exhibit 13-3, the multi-site team or Leadership *Council* brings together representatives from each participating school's Leadership Teams to meet (e.g., once a month). The objectives are to

- identify and meet common needs with respect to mandates and other functions and personnel development
- create processes for communication, linkages, coordination, and collaboration among schools and with community resources (note: multi-school councils are especially attractive to community agencies lacking the time or personnel to link with each individual school)

- ensure cohesive and equitable deployment of resources
- weave together human and financial resources from public and private sectors and encourage the pooling of resources to minimize redundancy, reduce costs, and achieve economies of scale.

If the schools are not ready to connect with a whole school focus, we recommend starting with the leadership for the learning supports component (e.g., Learning Supports Leadership Teams and Councils).

A Prototype for Reworking District Operational Infrastructure

As illustrated in Exhibit 13-4, a reworked operational infrastructure at the district parallels the revamped one at the school level. As with schools, most districts do not have a unified approach to student/learning supports and so a major step involves unifying such supports into a third primary and essential component. The job description for the leaders of each component must be revised to reflect the new responsibilities and accountabilities. With respect to capacity building, special attention is paid to cross-component and cross-disciplinary training to broaden the perspective of personnel and enable them to work collaboratively on the improvement agenda for schools.

It is crucial that the leads for each component be established at a high enough level to ensure that each is always an active and influential participant at key planning and decision-making tables. Relatedly, all three components must be a regular part of the agenda at school board meetings.

Leadership teams for each component focus on system design and strategic planning for development and implementation across the district. This involves the type of functions highlighted in Exhibit 13-1.

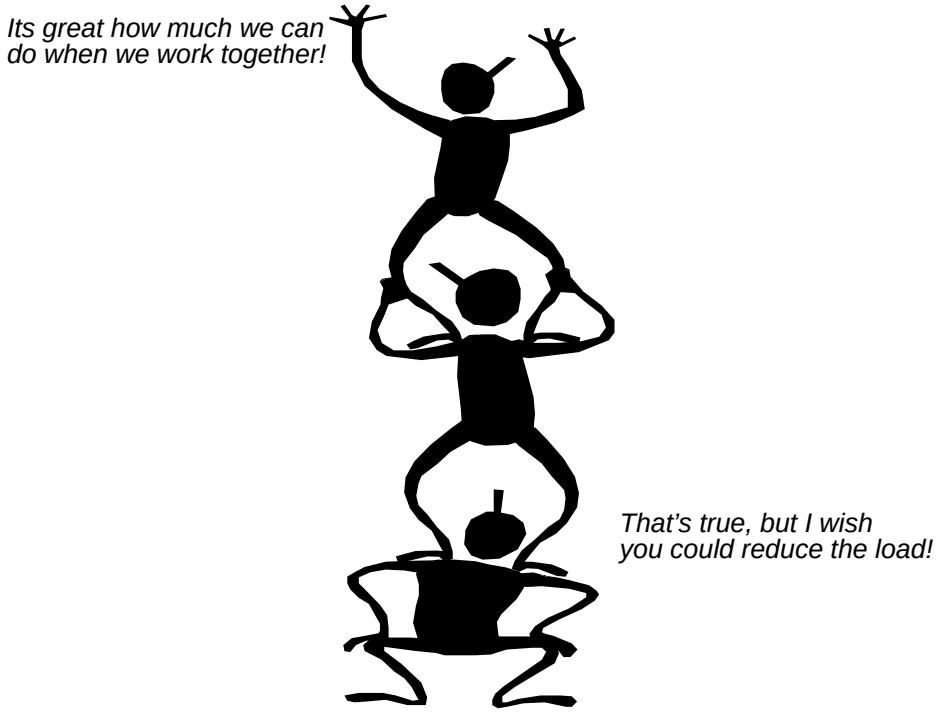
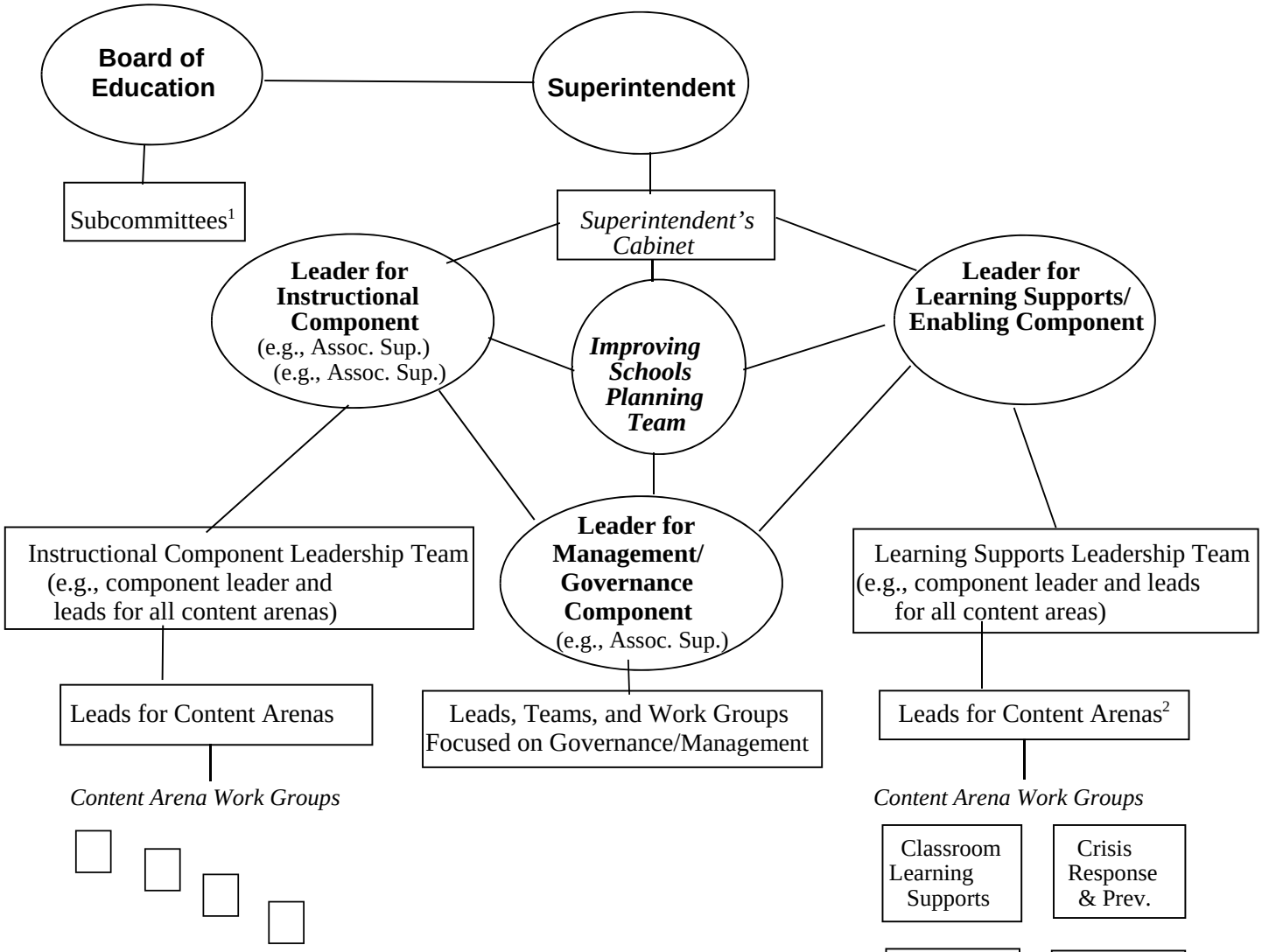


Exhibit 13-4

Prototype for Operational Infrastructure at the District Level



Notes:

1. If there isn't one, a board subcommittee for learning supports should be created to ensure policy and supports for developing a comprehensive system of learning supports at every school(see Center documents *Restructuring Boards of Education to Enhance Schools' Effectiveness in Addressing Barriers to Student Learning* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/boardrep.pdf and Example of a Formal Proposal for Moving in New Directions for Student Support http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newdirections/exampleproposal.pdf

2. All resources related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching (e.g., student support personnel, compensatory and special education staff and interventions, special initiatives, grants, and programs) are integrated into a refined set of major content arenas such as those indicated here. Leads are assigned for each arena and work groups are established.

Coda

A note about collaborative infrastructure. Most of us know how hard it is to work effectively with a group. Many staff members at a school site have jobs that allow them to carry out their duties each day in relative isolation of other staff. And despite various frustrations they encounter in doing so, they can see little to be gained in joining up with others. In fact, they often can point to many committees and teams that drained their time and energy to little avail.

Despite all this, the fact remains that no organization can be truly effective when many folks are working in isolation. And it is a simple truth that there is no way for schools to make fundamental improvements if a critical mass of stakeholders do not work together towards a shared vision. There are policies to advocate for, decisions to make, problems to solve, and interventions to plan, implement. and evaluate.

Obviously, true collaboration involves more than meeting and talking. The point is to work together in ways that produce the type of actions that result in effective programs.

The danger in creating new mechanisms is that they can become just another task, another meeting – busy work. Infrastructure must be designed in keeping with the major functions to be carried out, and all functions must be carried out in the service of a vital vision. Leaders must be driven by and help advance an important vision. Leaders and all facilitators of change must be able to instill that vision in others and help them hold on to it even when the initial excitement of "newness" wanes.

At its core, the vision for public education is to enhance equity of opportunity for all students to succeed at school. Achieving this vision requires every school to move quickly to develop an operational infrastructure that reflects a three component approach to school improvement.

14. Enhancing School and Community Collaboration

School can become the heart of the community

Outreach to All Relevant Community Resources

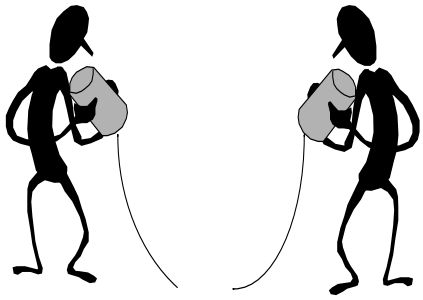
Enhancing Community Involvement and Collaborative Engagement for School Improvement

Toward Developing School-Community Collaboratives

Coda: A note of caution

Can you define collaboration for me?

Sure – It's an unnatural act among nonconsenting adults.



Schools and the community in which they reside deal with multiple, interrelated concerns – poverty, child development, literacy, violence, safety, substance abuse, housing, employment. School and neighborhood improvements are mutually enhanced through effective school-community collaboration.

Interest in connecting school and community resources is growing at an exponential rate. Potent school-community collaboration requires multifaceted connections among a wide range of resources. 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.

Outreach to the Community

Every school outreaches to students' homes with the hope of involving parents in various ways. In addition, some schools recruit volunteers from the community and solicit other forms of resource contributions from a variety of community stakeholders. Some pursue ways to link community social services and physical and mental health services to schools and seek community providers for afterschool programs. And when there is a school-related ballot measure, schools outreach for voter support.

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. 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.

The downside of current outreach is that it reflects a narrow vision about the role and functions of school-community collaboration for school improvement in general and for transforming how schools provide student and learning supports in particular. There are a great many community resources that can significantly help improve schools and that will strengthen the community. By adopting a braod vision, school improvement actions can inrease school-community connections in ways that substantively weave together a wide range of resources.

About Bringing Community Services to Schools

With roots in the 1960's human service integration movement, the last few decades have seen many initiatives for connecting 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. One of the several problems with this trend is that linking with a few service agencies ignores the potential of broad-based school-community collaboration for enhancing equity of opportunity for young people and for strengthening families, schools, and neighborhoods.

Enhancing Community Involvement and Collaborative Engagement for School Improvement

Researchers have mapped the 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.

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 at schools, (3) establishing an effective operational infrastructure for a school-community collaborative and (4) braiding and redeploying school and community resources where feasible to help with system development (see Exhibit 14-1). In practice, all four activities are seldom pursued, especially when the focus is mainly on connecting with parents and a few community resources.

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 a given agency might tie up all the resources the agency can bring to schools). The school district's management/governance component needs to address this matter by working with schools to connect community resources equitably (not equally) across the district.

Based on the available literature, below are examples of school improvement strategies related to pursuing the activities highlighted in Exhibit14-1.

Outreach to the Community:

- a social marketing campaign to inform and invite participation with respect to

  >district and school planning to work with the community to improve schools

  >the variety of opportunities for involvement at schools

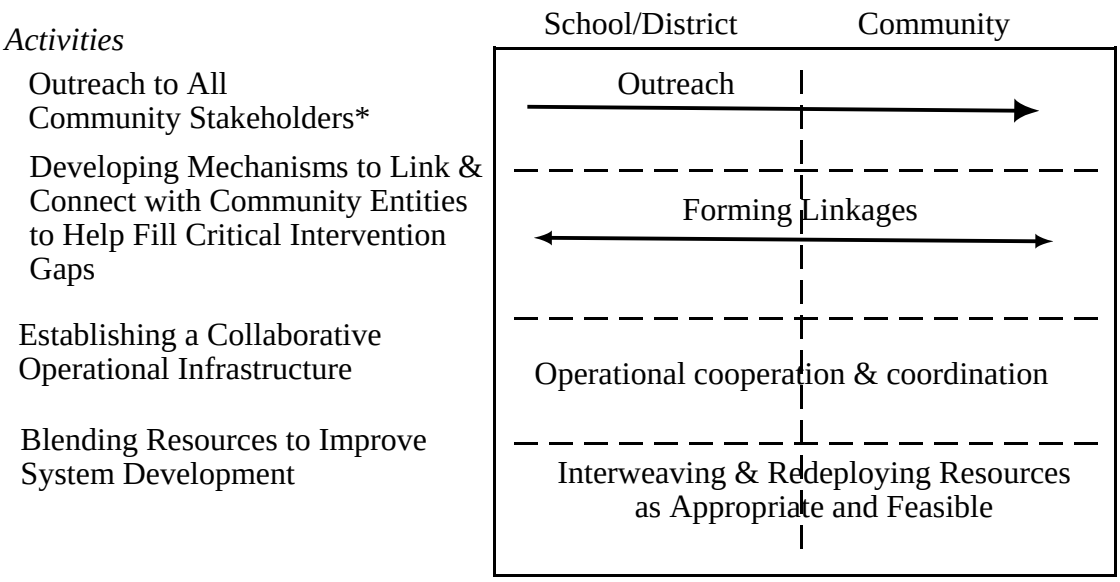
- interventions to increase home involvement and engagement (including re-engaging families who don't interact with the school on a regular basis)
- outreach to specific stakeholder groups to recruit for a steady increase in the number of volunteers available to the schools

Developing Mechanisms to Link and Connect with Community Entities:

- using school improvement planning to include a focus on analyzing and filling critical gaps in school offerings and 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

Exhibit 14-1

Examples of School-Community Collaborative Activity



*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).

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 improve teaching and learning and 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

Toward Developing School-Community Collaboratives

Temporary school-community connections often are established in the wake of a crisis or to address a particular problem. It is relatively simple to make informal linkages. However, major long-term formal working relationships are 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.

Effective pursuit of joint functions requires establishing effective school-community *collaboratives* at school and district levels. To these ends, it is essential to develop a well-conceived operational infrastructure for collaboration. See Exhibit 14-2 for a prototype of 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.

The family of schools leadership councils envisioned in Exhibit 13-3 can readily be incorporated into a school-neighborhood collaborative. And the district's existing connections with community stakeholders and resources can be expanded and formalized as a district-wide school-community collaborative.

Do you think we're making progress?

Sure, we're falling behind at a slower rate!

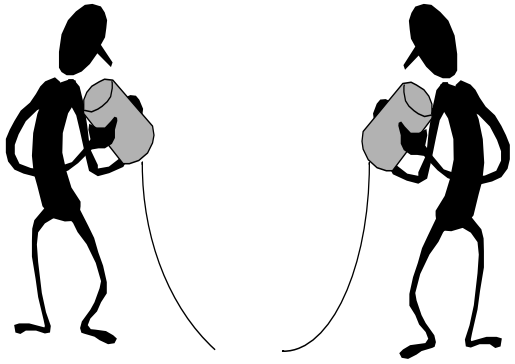
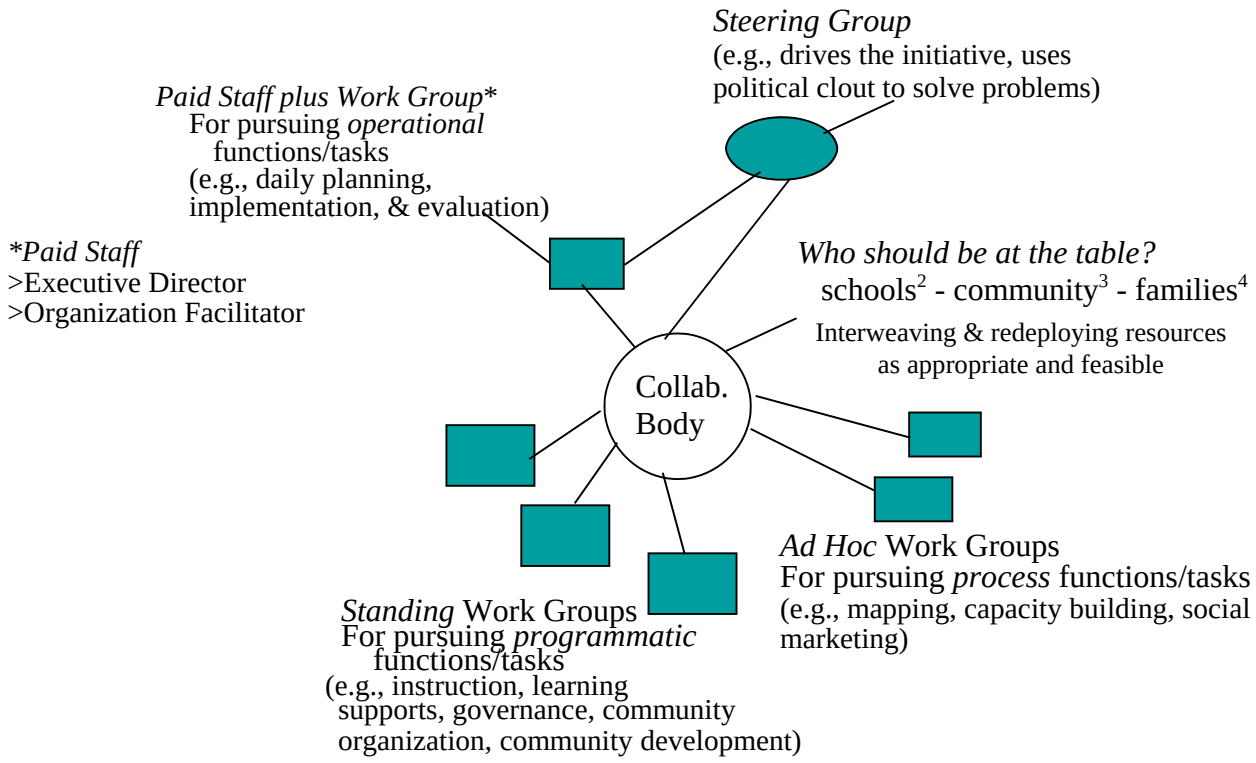


Exhibit 14-2

Prototype of a School-Community Collaborative Operational Infrastructure[1]



[1]Connecting the resources of schools, families, and a wide range of community entities through a formal collaborative facilitates all facets of school improvement. 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.

Coda

A note of caution. In general, the prevailing emphasis of much of the activity referred to as integrated student supports is on connecting *community* services to schools (e.g., health and social services, after-school programs).However, given that such services are scarse, this usually means enhancing linkages and co-locating a few services to a couple of school campuses. This benefits the chosen schools but reduces resources available to other schools in the community, thereby increasing inequity.

While bringing agency supports to schools is a well-intentioned endeavor, the examples most frequently highlighted are built and are operating on an exceptional resource base. As a result, they can't be taken to scale. From the perspective of school improvement, scalability is an essential facet of increasing equity across school districts.

An additional problem related to thinking mainly about connecting with community agency services is that it encourages some policy makers to develop the false impression that community resources are ready and able to meet all the support needs of students and their families. This impression already has contributed to serious cuts related to student supports (e.g., districts laying off student support personnel) in the struggle to balance tight school budgets. Such cuts further reduce the pool of resources available for improving equity of opportunity.

15. Reframing Accountability for Whole Child Development and Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

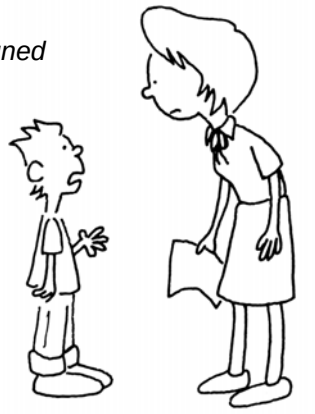
School accountability is a policy tool with extraordinary power to reshape schools – for good and for bad. Systems are driven by accountability measures. This is particularly so when school improvement is underway.

An Expanded Framework for School Accountability

Standards for a Learning Supports Component

Coda: *Can there be too much emphasis on gathering more data?*

The homework you assigned wasn't evidence-based, so I didn't do it.



As everyone involved in school reform knows, the only measure that really counts is achievement test scores. These tests drive school accountability, and what such tests measure has become the be-all and end-all of what is attended to by many decision makers. This produces a growing disconnect between the realities of what it takes to improve academic performance and the direction in which many policy makers and school reformers are leading the public.

The disconnect is especially evident in schools serving what are now being referred to as "low wealth" families. Such families and those who work in schools serving them have a clear appreciation of many barriers to learning that must be addressed so students can benefit from the teacher's efforts to teach. Many stakeholders have raised the concern that, in many schools, major academic improvements are unlikely until comprehensive and multifaceted approaches to address these barriers are developed and pursued effectively.

ESSA Requires an Additional Indicator of School Quality or Student Success

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires not less than one indicator of school quality or student success that a) allows for meaningful differentiation in school performance, b) is valid, reliable, comparable and statewide with the same indicators used for each grade span, and may include student growth. ESSA does not prescribe specific indicators, the law does require that additional indicators meet technical standards and provide meaningful data for analyzing school differences.

The law gives examples – chronic absenteeism, discipline rates, student access to and completion of advanced coursework, measures of postsecondary readiness, student engagement, educator engagement, school climate and safety, and any other indicator that meets the criteria.

State plans indicate many choose to add chronic absenteeism and measures of college/career readiness; some choose school climate, on-track rate at the middle and/or high school levels, social emotional learning, and arts education.

The law also requires that reporting of how all students and each group of students (such as students with disabilities) perform on indicators. For schools where subgroups of students are chronically struggling, for schools where less than two-thirds of students graduate, and for the bottom 5 percent of schools, the emphasis on school turnaround will remain intensive.

The increasing emphasis on countering chronic absenteeism is highlighting some of the barriers to learning and teaching. And schools that are adding attendance as an accountability indicator are taking a step in the right direction. At the same time, it is evident to anyone who looks that there is little other direct accountability for whether barriers are addressed.

The overemphasis on achievement measures reflects an implicit assumption that students are motivationally ready and able each day to benefit from the teacher's instruction. The reality is that in too many schools the *majority* of youngsters do not fit this picture. Students confronted with a host of interfering factors usually are not in a position to benefit even from significant instructional improvements. The results are seen in the persistence of low test scores and the opportunity and achievement gaps.

An Expanded Framework for School Accountability

Logically, well designed, systematic school improvement efforts, including accountability indicators, should be directed at addressing interfering factors. However, current accountability pressures override the logic and marginalize almost every effort not seen as directly and quickly leading to higher achievement scores.

ESSA's emphasis on at least one additional "nonacademic" indicator will not counteract the long-standing marginalization. Indeed, the tokenism of the act underscores the need for an expanded framework for school accountability – a framework that includes not only direct measures of achievement but also data directly related to the component for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Such data and related standards are essential for both formative and summative evaluation of school improvement. We view this as a move toward what has been called *intelligent accountability*.

Exhibit 15-1 highlights a prototype for an expanded school accountability framework. As illustrated, there is no intent to deflect from the laser-like focus on meeting high academic standards. Debate will continue about how best to measure academic outcomes, but clearly schools must demonstrate they effectively teach academics.

At the same time, policy must acknowledge that schools also are expected to pursue high standards in promoting positive social and personal functioning, including enhancing civility, teaching safe and healthy behavior, and some form of "character education." Every school we visit has specific goals related to this facet of student development and learning. And there is a growing movement for mandating a focus on social emotional learning in schools. Yet, it is evident that there is no systematic evaluation or reporting of the work. As would be expected, then, schools direct few resources and too little attention to these unmeasured concerns. Yet, society wants schools to attend to these matters, and there is widespread acknowledgment that personal and social functioning are integrally tied to academic performance. From this perspective, it seems self-defeating not to hold all schools accountable for improving students' social and personal functioning.

For schools where a large proportion of students are not doing well, it is also self-defeating not to attend to benchmark indicators of progress in addressing barriers to learning. Schools cannot teach children who are not in class. Therefore, increasing attendance always is an expectation (and an important budget consideration). In addition to attendance, other basic indicators of school improvement and precursors of enhanced academic performance are reducing tardiness and problem behaviors, lessening suspension and dropout rates, and abating the large number of inappropriate referrals for special education. Given this, the progress of school staff related to such matters should be measured and treated as a significant aspect of school accountability.

School outcomes, of course, are influenced by the well-being of the families and the neighborhoods in which they operate. Therefore, performance of any school should be judged within the context of the current status of indicators of community well-being, such as economic, social, and health measures. If those indicators are not improving or are declining, it is patently unfair to ignore these contextual conditions in judging school performance.

Exhibit 15-1

Expanding the Framework for School Accountability

Indicators of Positive Learning and Development

High Standards for *Academics** (measures of cognitive achievements, e.g., standardized tests of achievement, portfolio and other forms of authentic assessment)

High Standards for Learning/ Development Related to *Social & Personal Functioning** (measures of social learning and behavior, character/ values, civility, healthy and safe behavior)

"Community Report Cards"

>increases in positive indicators

>decreases in negative indicators

Benchmark Indicators of Progress in Addressing Barriers & (Re-)engaging Students in Classroom Learning

High Standards for *Enabling Learning and Development*** (measures of effectiveness in addressing barriers , e.g.,

- >increased attendance
- >reduced tardies
- >reduced misbehavior
- >less bullying and sexual harassment
- >increased family involvement with child and schooling
- >fewer referrals for specialized assistance
- >fewer referrals for special education
- >fewer pregnancies
- >fewer suspensions and dropouts)

*Results of interventions for directly facilitating development and learning.
**Results of interventions for addressing barriers to learning and development.

Results! Why, man, I have gotten a lot of results. I know several thousand things that won't work. – Thomas Edison

What Should We Focus on to Advance School Improvement?

Some tend to measure whatever can be easily measured.
That's okay but quite limited.
Some disregard that which can't be measured or give it an arbitrary quantitative value.
That's artificial and misleading.
Some presume that what can't be measured easily isn't very important.
That's blindness.
Some say what can't be measured really doesn't exist.
That's suicide.

adapted from Yankelovich

Standards for a Learning Supports Component

School improvement discussions across the country are standards-based and accountability driven. A failure of the current standards movement is that curriculum and teaching standards fall far short of providing a focus on how schools can enhance equity of opportunity for *all*. Such standards continue to give short shrift to factors that *interfere* with successful teaching and pay too little attention to the many students manifesting moderate-to-severe learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Establishing standards for a system of student/learning supports is essential to rectifying these short-comings.

None of this argues against the necessity of improving standards for curriculum and instruction. Clearly every teacher must have the ability and resources to bring a sound curriculum to life and apply strategies that make learning meaningful and effective, and to these ends, appropriate curriculum and teaching standards are foundational. But, such standards are insufficient for enhancing equity of opportunity to succeed at school and beyond.

Standards for a system of learning supports are long overdue. A start has been made with the standards various student support professional associations have formulated for their individual constituencies. Now it is time to establish a *unified* set of standards for a component to address barriers to learning and teaching to help drive and guide component development and personnel preparation

Exhibit 15-2 outlines such a set of standards. These standards reflect prototype frameworks for a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports and were developed as part of the national initiative for *New Directions for Student and Learning Supports* and supported by the *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports* (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html).

A cursory reading of the standards underscores how much is not being discussed in the current movement to improve education standards.

Exhibit 15-2

Standards for a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System of Learning Supports

Area: *Framing and Delineating Intervention Functions*

Standard 1. **Establishment of an overall *unifying intervention framework* for a comprehensive, systemic, and equitable component for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, including re-engaging disconnected students.**

A *Learning Supports Component* is a systemic approach that is fully and equitably integrated into the school's strategic improvement plan as a primary and essential component overlapping the instructional and management components. The supports are operationalized into a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive intervention framework. One facet of this framework is a continuum of integrated, overlapping subsystems that embrace both school and community resources (e.g., subsystems to promote positive development, prevent problems, respond early after problem onset, and treat severe-chronic problems) . Note that this intervention continuum is not well operationalized simply as tiers or levels of school intervention. Rather, the standard is that each level is developed as a subsystem that weaves together school and community resources, and each subsystem covers a delineated set of "content" arenas.

A conceptualization that organizes a delineated set of content arenas for addressing barriers to learning and teaching is the other facet of the framework. To illustrate standards for content arenas, the following uses the six arenas designated in the intervention framework prototype being used by pioneering states and districts.

***Standard 1 addendum:* Specific standards for the content arenas of a learning supports component**

While the number and labels for designated content arenas may differ, as Standard 1 indicates: Schools need a conceptualization that organizes a delineated set of content arenas for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. (As one of the quality performance indicators for Standard 1 indicates, rather than a fragmented, "laundry-list" of programs, services, and activities, the learning supports need to be organized into a concise content or "curriculum" framework that categorizes and captures the essence of the multifaceted ways schools need to address barriers to learning.)

>***Standard 1a.* Continuous enhancement of regular *classroom strategies to enable learning*** (e.g., improving instruction for students with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems and re-engaging those who have become disengaged from learning at school)

>***Standard 1b.* Continuous enhancement of a programs and systems for a full range of transition supports** (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes, daily transitions, etc.)

>***Standard 1c.* Continuous enhancement of programs and systems to increase and strengthen *home and school connections***

>***Standard 1d.* Continuous enhancement of programs and systems for responding to, and where feasible, preventing *school and personal crises*** (including creating a caring and safe learning environment)

>***Standard 1e.* Continuous enhancement of programs and systems to increase and strengthen *community involvement and support*** (e.g., outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers)

>***Standard 1f.* Continuous enhancement of programs and systems to facilitate *student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed.***

(cont.)

Area: *Reworking Operational Infrastructure*

***Standard 2*. Establishment of an *integrated operational infrastructure* framework for a comprehensive, systemic, and equitable component for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.**

Developing and institutionalizing a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports requires mechanisms that are integrated with each other and are fully integrated into school improvement efforts. The need at all levels is to rework infrastructure to support efforts to address barriers to learning in a cohesive manner and to integrate the work with efforts to promote healthy development and with instruction and with the management/governance mechanisms. This requires dedicated administrative leadership (with leaders involved in system governance, planning and implementation), a learning supports leadership team and work groups (focused on functions such as mapping, analysis, and priority setting for intervention development and resource allocation; integration, communication and information management; capacity building; quality improvement and accountability).

Area: *Enhancing Resource Use*

***Standard 3.* Appropriate resource use and allocation for developing, maintaining, and evolving the component.**

Appropriate use of resources is based on up-to-date gap and outcome analyses and established priorities for improving the component. Resource allocation involves (re)deployment of available funds to achieve priorities. Cost-efficiencies are achieved through collaborations that, in common purpose, integrate systems and weave together learning support resources within the school, among families of schools, from centralized district assets, and from various community entities.

Area: *Continuous Capacity Building*

***Standard 4.* Capacity building for developing, maintaining, and evolving the component.**

Capacity building involves enhancing ongoing system and stakeholder development and performance. The work requires allocation of resources to provide effective and efficient mechanisms and personnel to carry out a myriad of capacity building functions.

Area: *Continuous Evaluation and Appropriate Accountability*

***Standard 5.* Formative and summative evaluation and accountability are fully integrated into all planning and implementation.**

Formative evaluation provides essential data related to progress in improving processes and achieving benchmarks and outcomes. In the initial phase of component development, formative evaluation focuses heavily on feedback and benchmarks related to specific developmental tasks, functioning of processes, and immediate outcomes. Formative evaluation is an ongoing process with an increasing focus on intermediate and then long-range outcomes. Summative data on intermediate outcomes are gathered as soon as the component is operating as an integrated system. Summative data on long-range outcomes are gathered after the component has operated as an integrated system for two years. Accountability indicators should fit the phase of component development. This means the primary focus is on developmental benchmarks in the early phases. When the accountability focus is on student impact, the primary emphasis is on the direct enabling outcomes for students that each arena of the component is designed to accomplish. As these accountability indicators show solid impact, they can be correlated with academic progress to estimate their contribution to academic achievement.

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*Adapted from: *Standards & Quality Indicators for an Enabling or Learning Supports Component* online at – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/qualityindicators.pdf

Coda

Can there be too much emphasis on gathering more data? We see this as a critical issue for school improvement. Over and over, we hear the line: *In God we trust, from all others demand data!*

We certainly value good data.

And policy makers and practitioners value making data-driven decisions.

BUT ... lately it seems folks are going so overboard that too much bad data and even false data are leading school improvement efforts astray.

Concerns about all this are not new. The problem is that concerns are ignored as efforts are made to meet the overwhelming demands for more data. In our work with schools, we have come to think of the problem as "assessment-itis" (e.g., the push for gathering more and more data in the erroneous belief that this is necessary for solving many problems encountered every day at schools).

Assessment-itis is especially at play in efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching.

The reality is that plenty of data exists about the factors that interfere with so many students not benefitting from good instruction. The need is not for more testing and screening. Indeed, spending more on data gathering often uses up sparse resources that are needed to develop a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports for the many who need special assistance. It is student/learning supports that are essential to enhancing equity of opportunity for success at school and beyond. A continuing *overemphasis* on more testing and screening of students is counterproductive to school improvement efforts aimed at ending the marginalization and fragmentation of student/learning supports.

A Few Online Resources from the Center at UCLA Relevant to Part III

Over the years, the Center has developed resources for use in school improvement efforts, especially professional development. The following are a few examples containing material related to Part III.

>*What are Learning Supports?* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/whatlearnsupports.pdf

>*What Is a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports?*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/whatis.pdf

>30 minute Introductory webinar on *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/powerpoint/briefintroslidesrec.pptx
Accompanying PDf handouts – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/intropphandouts.pdf

>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/barriersbook.pdf

>*Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/towardnextstep.pdf

>*School Improvement? . . . fully addressing barriers to learning and teaching is the next step!* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/schoolimprovement.pdf

>*What Every Leader for School Improvement Needs to Know About Student and Learning Supports* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/whateveryleader.pdf

>*Steps and Tools to Guide Planning and Implementation of a Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/stepsandtoolstoguideplanning.pdf

>*Mapping & Analyzing Learning Supports*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20mapping%20current%20status.pdf

>*A Set of Surveys to Map What a School Has and What It Needs to enable learning*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/surveys/set1.pdf

>*School-Community Partnerships: A Guide –*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/guides/schoolcomm.pdf

For more on details on rethinking the *operational infrastructure*, see
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/infrastructure/anotherinitiative-exec.pdf
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentsupport/toolkit/aidk.pdf

For examples of job descriptions for administrative leader for learning supports, see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkitb4.htm

For team descriptions, see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm

For first step guides for administrators, see Section B of the Center's System Change Toolkit – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaidsB.htm

Part IV

Moving Forward

Some time ago, Seymour Sarason cautioned:

> *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 John Maynard Keynes cogently stressed:

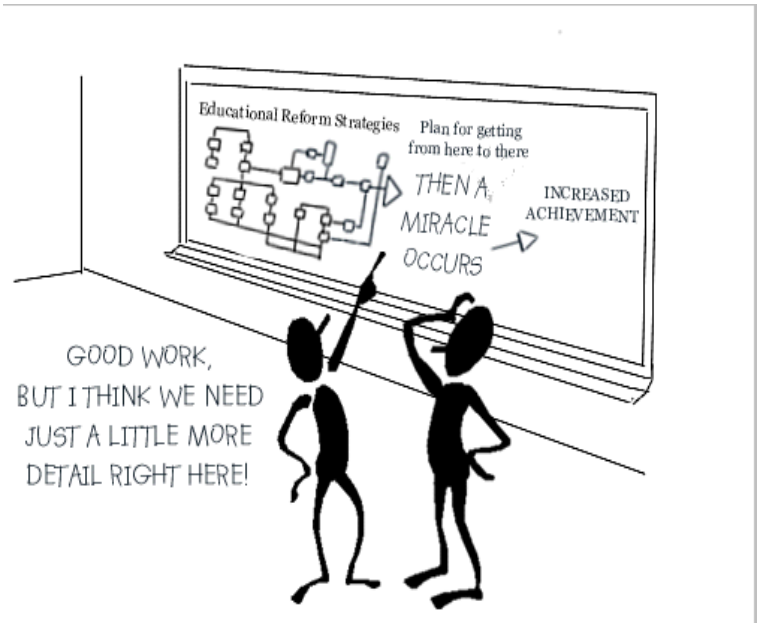
> *The real difficulty in changing the course of any enterprise lies not in developing new ideas but in escaping old ones.*

Besides needing to escape old ideas, transforming what goes on each day in schools in substantive and sustainable ways involves more than focusing on the direct implementation of a set of new ideas. The processes also require strategically facilitating and phasing in implementation. And all efforts to accomplish more than cosmetic changes necessitate enhancing understanding of systemic change and how to deal with the inevitable problems that arise.

In Part IV, we frame systemic and organizational change processes meant to help overcome old ideas and move forward with substantive and sustainable school improvement. We highlight

- major phases and considerations in transforming schools
- ways to rethink operational mechanisms for daily implementation
- processes and lessons learned in facilitating systemic transformation

Finally, given that adaptations to fit local conditions are necessary, we stress that care must be taken not to end up with a few superficial changes rather than fundamental transformation.



16. Moving Toward Substantive and Sustainable Systemic Change

So how do we get there from here?

About Facilitating Transformation: Logical, But Not, Linear

What Are Major Phases and Key Facets of Systemic Change?

Coda: A note about the pressure to simplify

How many change agents does it take to change a light bulb?

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

As we stated in a previous chapter, 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. To this end, leaders for effective systemic change must develop a refined understanding of how to *facilitate* and *sustain* difficult systemic change.

About Facilitating Transformation: Logical, But Not, Linear

Accomplishing substantive and sustainable transformation requires planning for both (1) facilitation of systemic changes and (2) daily implementation. But this infrequently happens. Most of the attention goes to strategic and action planning for *daily implementation*. The logic model for this is illustrated in the bottom half of Exhibit 16.1. What tends to get ignored is the necessity of *facilitating the systemic changes*. Yet, as can be seen in the top half of Exhibit 16-1, the same logic applies.

In both instances, the logic models are helpful for strategic planning. However, complex plans vary in how well they anticipate common problems associated with making systemic changes. Logical plans rarely play out in a linear manner in transforming schools.

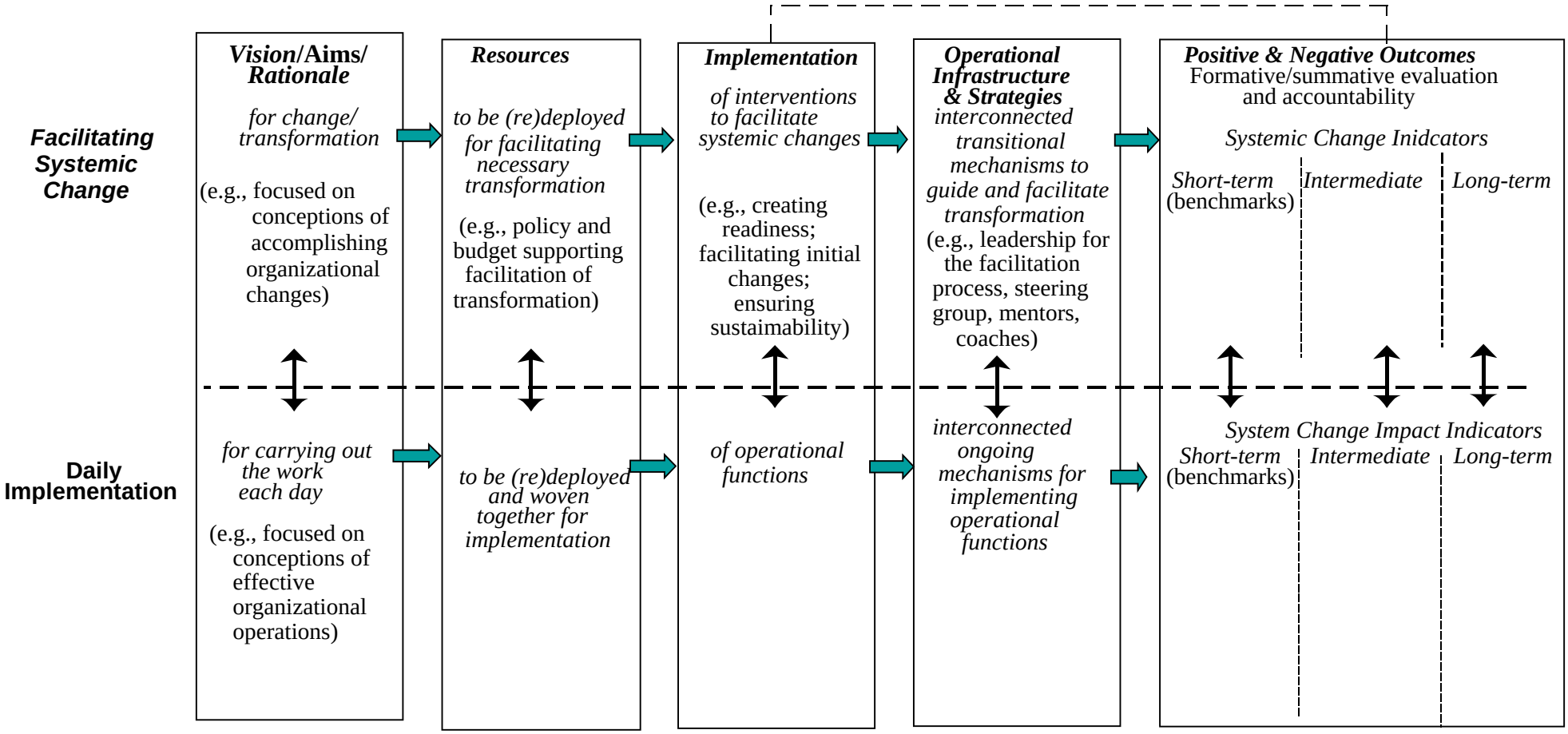
Among the most flagrant problems encountered in facilitating transformative changes are failure to give sufficient strategic attention and time to

- underwriting and establishing an effective systemic change operational infrastructure
- creating readiness among a critical mass of key stakeholders in a setting where changes are to be introduced
- 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 to support development and sustainability of the changes

We discuss each of these matters in Chapter 17. Our focus in this chapter is on framing basic processes.

Exhibit 16-1

Linking Logical Frameworks for Planning Systemic Changes



What Are Major Phases and Key Facets of Systemic Change?

In addition to the logic model, Exhibit 16-2 provides an outline of major phases and key facets. These guide strategic planning for implementing, sustaining, and going-to-scale.

Phases

We formulate four overlapping phases of systemic change:

- *creating readiness, commitment, and engagement* – increasing a climate/culture for change through enhancing the motivation and capability of a critical mass of stakeholders and generating memoranda of agreements, policy decisions, a design document, and strategic and action plans
- *initial implementation* – introducing and phasing in changes using a well-designed facilitative operational infrastructure to provide guidance and support
- *institutionalization* – ensuring that policy guidelines and a daily operational infrastructure for maintaining and enhancing productive changes are fully integrated into long-term strategic plans, guidance documents, and capacity building
- *ongoing renewal and evolution* – providing for continuous quality improvement and ongoing support in ways that enable stakeholders to become a community of learners who creatively pursue renewal

Each phase encompasses a range of tasks and steps related to facilitating implementation at every organizational level. (For a detailed discussion of the four phases and related tasks and steps, see *Scaling-Up Reforms Across a School District* –http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/21 scaling-up reforms across a school.pdf .)

Key Facets

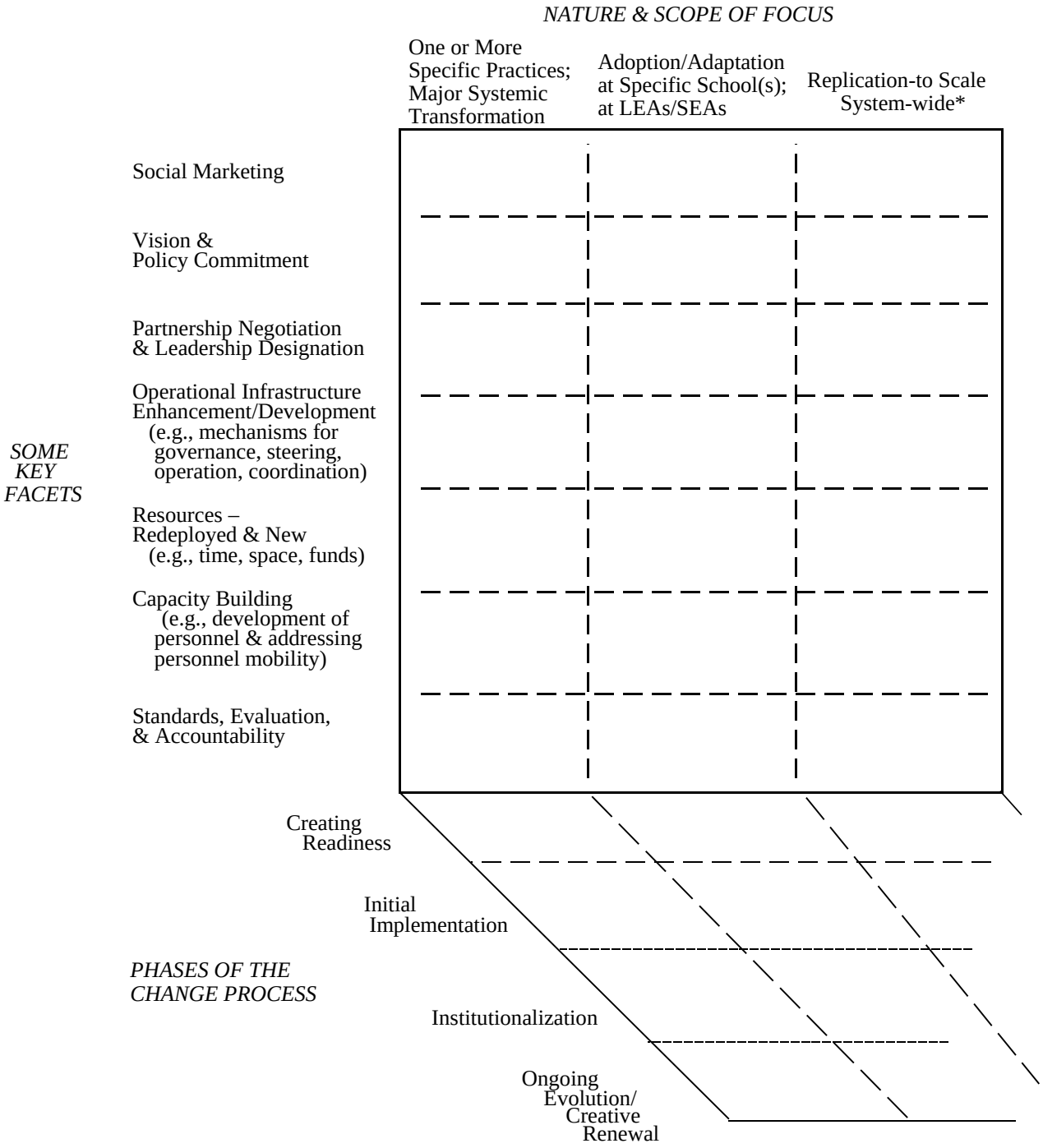
As indicated in Exhibit 16-2, transformation includes continuous social marketing based on articulation of a clear and shared vision for desired changes. It necessitates a major policy commitment and formal partnership agreements. Effectively carrying out essential functions (e.g., governance, priority setting, steering, operations, resource mapping, coordination) requires qualified leadership and an appropriately designed operational infrastructure. Clearly, effectiveness also requires redeploying and generating some new resources.

The type of operational infrastructure for daily implementation discussed in Chapter 13 needs to be augmented with a set of transitional mechanisms that can effectively facilitate systemic transformation. In building capacity, substantial attention must be paid to personnel development, including strategies for addressing the reality that personnel leave and newcomers appear with regularity. Finally, processes for quality improvement (e.g., formative evaluation), impact evaluation, and accountability call for establishing standards and related indicators.

Chapter 17 addresses some of these matters and offers some lessons learned.

Exhibit 16-2

Considerations Related to Direct Implementation and Facilitating Systemic Changes



*Transforming student and learning supports in a district involves replicating major system changes on a large-scale.

Coda

A note about the pressure to simplify. The frameworks in this chapter are meant to deepen appreciation for what is involved in planning transformative changes. The complexity of transformation makes some folks uncomfortable. The temptation is to simplify. When it comes to school improvement, doing so is a common mistake. Simplification generally leads to dressing up old ideas in new language and losing the promise of substantive and sustainable change.

17. Making it Happen

Substantive change begins with a design, a well-developed multi-year strategic plan, and resources to facilitate making it a sustainable reality.

Transitional Infrastructure for Accomplishing Systemic Change

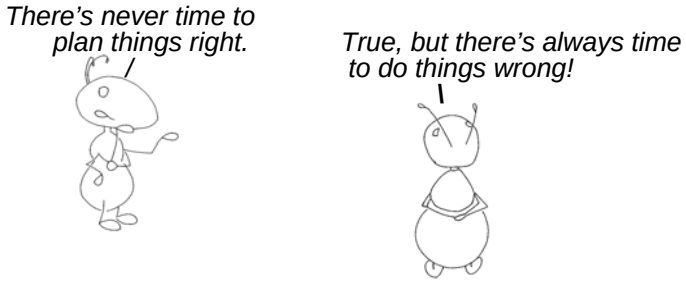
Creating Readiness, Commitment, and Engagement

Design Document

Developing a Multi-year Strategic Plan

Ensuring Policy that Facilitates Transformation

Coda**:** Pooh's Dilemma



As noted in Chapter 16, flagrant deficiencies associated with making systemic changes include failure to give sufficient strategic attention and time to

- establishing an effective systemic change operational infrastructure
- creating readiness among a critical mass of key stakeholders in a setting where changes are to be introduced
- 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 to support development and sustainability of the changes.

This chapter addresses each of these matters and shares some lessons learned.

Transitional Infrastructure for Accomplishing Systemic Change

Transforming systems requires a facilitative operational infrastructure consisting of mechanisms, such as steering groups, planning and implementation teams, and external and internal coaches. Exhibit 17-1 offers a prototype operational infrastructure for facilitating system change. Such an infrastructure is established at district and school levels (sometimes with facilitation from state and regional education agencies).

This is a transitional infrastructure – put in place until the transformation is successfully made. Effectively establishing such an infrastructure requires ensuring enough resources are devoted to developing the mechanisms and building their capacity to carry out a multi-year strategic plan.

The mechanisms and their functions are customized with respect to differences at state, regional, district, and school levels and differences within regions, districts, and schools. The customization is done to ensure that capability for accomplishing major tasks is not undermined (e.g., special attention is given to ensuring these mechanisms are not created as an added and incidental assignment for staff).

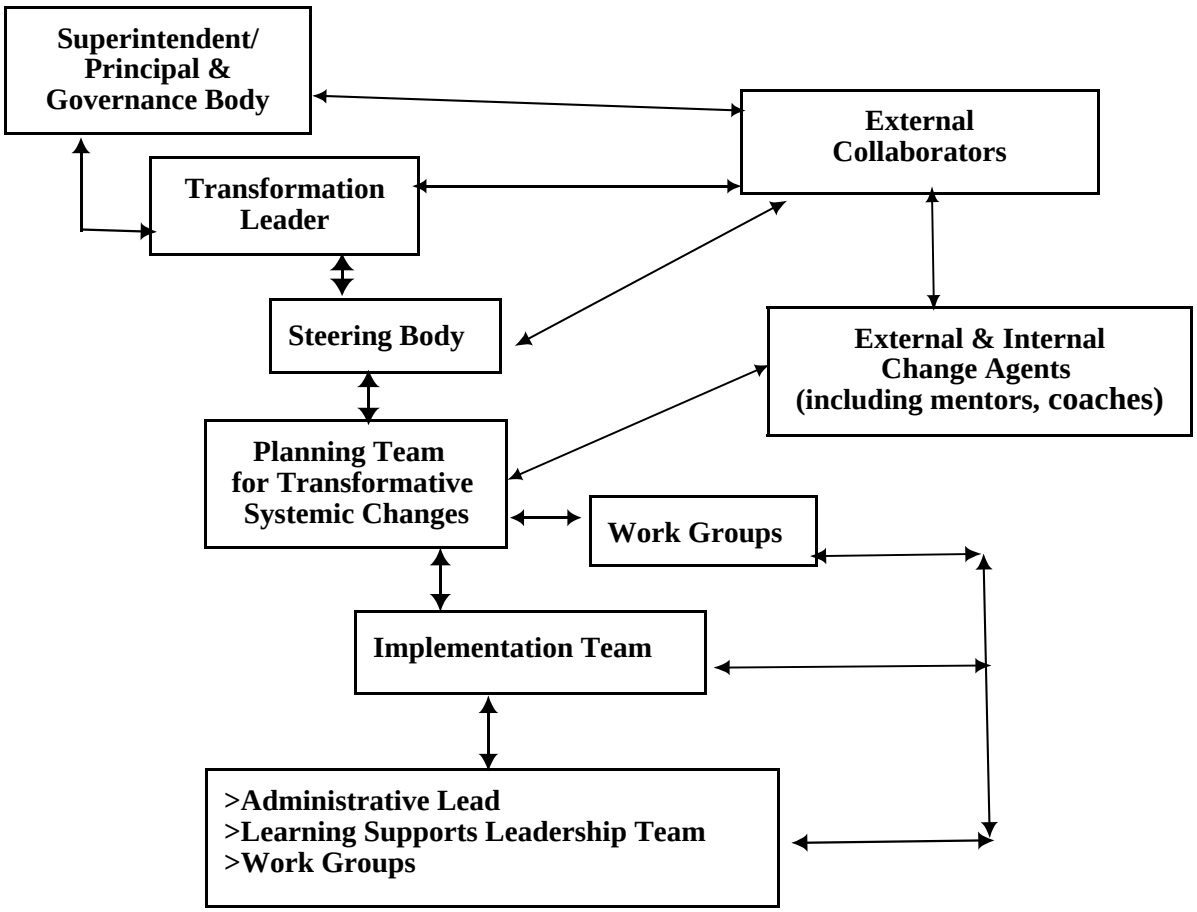
Establishing the transitional infrastructure for systemic change is an essential task for coaches guiding the work. As each mechanism is established, the focus is on

- enlisting a broad enough range of key leaders and staff (e.g., leaders from all three primary and essential components for school improvement; a staff member with data/evaluation expertise; each staff member may be part of several workgroups/teams)
- ensuring group/team members understand each mechanism's functions and interrelationship
- providing the type of capacity building that ensures members understand the essence of what needs to be accomplished and are committed to the importance of the work*
- assisting in development of clear action plans.

*Capacity building involves ensuring sufficient resources for the transformation (e.g., staffing; budget; guidance materials; external mentoring, coaching, development of each systemic change mechanism, professional development, and TA for deepening understanding, commitment, and skills).

Exhibit 17-1

Prototype for a Transitional Infrastructure to Facilitate Transformation



Effectively establishing a transitional infrastructure to facilitate systemic changes requires ensuring initially building staff capacity to accomplish the work. At the same time, capacity building must ensure the daily operational infrastructure is reworked in ways that effectively support phasing in, continued development, and sustainability of the changes.

Some Lessons Learned

Transitional infrastructure for change. We find that establishment of a transformation leader and implementation team is readily comprehended; however, the importance of establishing temporary mechanisms to facilitate system change is less appreciated. In observing efforts to transform schools, we rarely find such an infrastructure in place. 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 related to systemic change 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. Therefore, at the onset, it is essential to build the capacity of those staffing the infrastructure.

Effective and integrated administrative leadership. Dedicated, well prepared and coordinated leadership is key to the success of any systemic change initiative in a complex organization. And everyone needs to be aware of who is leading and is accountable for the development of planned changes. We find it imperative that agency leaders are specifically trained to understand systemic change. And, the administrative leader assigned to implement systemic change must be sitting at key decision making tables when budget and other fundamental decisions are discussed. (In our experience, this often is not the case.)

Administrative leader for systemic changes and workgroup staff. Systemic transformation requires that the work not just be tacked on to someone who is already overly committed. Job descriptions should be modified to reflect new responsibilities and accountabilities and provision must be made for capacity building related to the functions to be accomplished. (For sample job descriptions, see – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm). We also find that leaders for systemic change commonly start strong but given the many challenges of their jobs and the complexities of systemic transformation, a good deal of focused ongoing support is needed to keep them from becoming distracted and/or overwhelmed.

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.

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 the degree feasible, we find it useful to make continuous efforts to reach out and include in work groups those who are resistant to the transformation and who are reluctant to give up protecting their turf.

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 add problems as soon as they arise.

Creating Readiness, Commitment, and Engagement

Any move toward systemic change should begin with activity designed to create readiness by enhancing a climate/culture for change. Enhancing readiness for and sustaining systemic change involves ongoing attention to daily experiences. Stakeholders must perceive the changes in ways that make them feel they are valued members who are contributing to a collective identity, destiny, and vision. From the perspective of intrinsic motivation theory, their work together must be facilitated in ways that enhance feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness with and commitment to each other.

In general, we have extracted the following points from the literature as most relevant to enhancing readiness for change:

- a high level of policy commitment that is translated into appropriate resources, including leadership, space, budget, and time;
- incentives for change, such as intrinsically valued outcomes, expectations for success, recognition, and rewards;
- procedural options from which those expected to implement change can select those they see as workable;
- a willingness to establish mechanisms and processes that facilitate change, such as a governance mechanism that adopts ways to empower* stakeholders, enhance their sense of community, and improve organizational health;
- use of change agents who are perceived as pragmatic – maintaining ideals while embracing practical solutions;
- accomplishing change in stages and with realistic timelines;
- providing progress feedback;
- ~~institutional~~izing mechanisms to maintain and evolve changes and to generate periodic renewal.

*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.

Some Lessons Learned

In our experience, the complexity of dissemination means that it is almost always the case that initial introductory presentations are only partially understood and 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 “grape vine” gossip. Of particular importance is ensuring understanding and commitment to the essential elements that must be implemented and sustained if there is to be substantive rather than cosmetic change. Furthermore, given the inevitability of staff changes, it is essential to plan a process for bringing newcomers up to speed.

Design Document

Development of a design document is key to communicating and guiding the work at state and local levels. A design document articulates

- ***the imperative*** for the proposed transformative changes
- ***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)
- a prototype ***intervention framework*** (e.g., that illustrates the nature and scope of the new practices)
- a prototype of an ***organizational and operational infrastructure*** (e.g., that illustrates how existing mechanisms need to be reworked to support and sustain the transformation)

As examples, see the design documents developed for a comprehensive system of learning supports. Start with the state department examples developed in Alabama, Louisiana, and Iowa (online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/trailblazing.htm.) For an example of work at the district level, see Gainesville (GA) City School District's overview (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/wheresithappening/gainesvillebroch.pdf) and case study (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/casestudy.pdf).* As can be seen in these examples, organizations adopt and adapt prototypes to account for situational opportunities, strengths, and limitations. It should be noted that mentors/coaches played a major role in guiding design preparation and offering feedback and continued to provide support in facilitating systemic changes.

Some Lessons Learned

While mentors and coaches can play an important role in preparing designs and in all other facets of systemic change, we have found that some do not understand certain process complexities, dynamics, and potential pitfalls. For instance, mentors/coaches often state: *It's all about relationship building.* In doing so, they often do not distinguish the difference between just building a few good personal relationships and the importance of developing an extensive network of productive *working relationships* that go beyond specific individuals (some of whom aren't interested in a personal relationship).

Fundamental and sustained system changes require developing 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.

Developing a Multi-year Strategic Plan

Once a good design is documented, the next step is to develop a multi-year strategic plan that is fully integrated into the overall approach to school improvement. Strategic and yearly action planning are key to effective implementation, sustainability, and replication to scale of any major transformation.

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 systemic changes. The planning spells out an answer to: *How do we get from here to there?*

In pursuing such planning related to schools, it is essential not to lose sight of a simple truth: *If innovations do not end up playing effective roles at a school and in the classroom, staff will not view them as worth the time and effort.* Thus, schools and classrooms must be the center and guiding force for all strategic education planning.

In general, sites need to develop a multi-year strategic plan that is fully integrated into the district's strategic planning. Such a plan

(1) provides an *overview* of how the intended transformation will be pursued,

(2) conveys a *detailed plan for facilitating and implementing changes* (with an emphasis on strategies that anticipate sustainability, renewal, summative evaluation and accountability),

(3) delineates strategic approaches to each key facet of facilitating and implementing changes, such as establishing a transitional operational change infrastructure, capacity building, and formative evaluation.

The multi-year plan stresses objectives, steps, and tasks to be accomplished during each phase of systemic change and the general strategies for accomplishing them. The plan must account for implementing the prototype in a given setting and facilitating prototype replication and scale-up. A multi-year plan is essential because implementing and scaling-up a school plan for substabtive systemic changes requires strategic *phasing-in* over several years.*

The strategic plan is the basis for specific action planning.

*As an example, we have developed a *General Guide for Strategic Planning Related to Developing a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/genguide.pdf).

Some Lessons Learned

In all strategic and action planning, it is essential to account for situational opportunities, strengths, and limitations. It is also necessary to address points meant to block change usually raised by those who are reluctant or resistant to making the transformation. Effective responses to such challenges are essential to ensuring that the work is not undermined. Regular reviews of plans and monitoring how they are carried out also is essential, and we find that, as the work proceeds and understanding deepens, initial agreements and procedures often must be revised.

Ensuring Policy that Facilitates Transformation

Efforts to transform schools must be based in policy that is translated into clear guidelines and properly budgeted for effective development and sustainability. This is especially needed for implementing a three component school improvement framework. And because accountability and standards for guiding practice are two fundamental policy drivers, establishing the third component must be accompanied with (1) an expanded accountability framework that includes leading indicators of direct outcomes of a learning support system and (2) standards for a learning supports component (review Chapter 15). 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 transitional infrastructure for accomplishing systemic change and for eventually subsuming the functions of the transitional infrastructure into daily operational infrastructures. The aim is to continue development, enhance sustainability, and engender creative renewal.

Some Lessons Learned

Frequent leadership changes (e.g., superintendents, principals, other key stakeholders) can undermine agreements. This requires early attention to institutionalizing policies and procedures so they can withstand such changes. It also calls for planning strategies to effectively bring new arrivals up to speed.

Focusing demonstrations at one or two sites can work against replication and can contribute to maintaining existing societal inequities. Addressing inequities requires effective replication and sustainability that addresses the scale of need.

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."). 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.

Coda

Pooh's dilemma. Everyone agrees that this is a critical time for improving schools. Unfortunately, everyone seems so busy meeting the demands of each day that too little thought is given to 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 has come to think it is the only way to go down stairs. Still, he sometimes thinks there might be a better way if only he could stop bumping long enough to figure it out.

Some Online Resources from the Center at UCLA Relevant to Part IV

Besides the documents cited in Part IV, see

>*Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System*
https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student-and-learning-supports-9781516512782.html

>The Center's System Change Toolkit
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm

Concluding Comments

Do not follow where the path may lead.
Go, instead, where there is no path and leave a trail. (Anonymous)

Clearly, innovation is essential to school improvement. At the same time, it is essential not to create a new mythology suggesting that every classroom and school are unique. There are fundamentals that permeate all efforts to improve schools and schooling and that should continue to guide policy, practice, research, and training. For example:

- The curriculum in every classroom must include a major emphasis on acquisition of basic knowledge and skills. However, such basics must be understood to involve more than the old "three Rs" and cognitive development (e.g., social and emotional functioning). There are many important areas of human development and functioning, and each contains "basics" that individuals may need help in acquiring. Moreover, some individuals may require special accommodation in any of these areas.
- Every classroom must address student motivation as an antecedent, process, and outcome concern, with an emphasis on intrinsic motivation.
- To enhance the ability of teachers to enable learning, special learning supports must be implemented in the classroom, but only after personalized instruction is in place and found insufficient. Such special assistance must be designed to build on strengths and must not supplant continued emphasis on promoting healthy development.
- Beyond the classroom, schools must have policy, leadership, and mechanisms for developing school-wide enrichment programs and a continuum of student/learning supports that are organized into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.
- Families of schools (e.g., feeder schools) need to work together with respect to shared concerns and to effect economies of scale.
- School-community connections are needed to capitalize on the many ways community resources can enhance instruction, enrichment, and learning supports.

We want to conclude by stressing a simple truth: when state and district plans for school improvement don't play out in all schools and classrooms, they contribute to the opportunity and achievement gaps. School improvement planning should begin with a clear image of what a classroom and school must do to effectively engage and teach all students – with an emphasis on whole child development. 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, district, regional, state, and national policy can be reoriented to the role of developing the best ways to support *school defined* systemic changes and implementation, replicate them to scale, and substantively sustain the changes.

And as Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink remind us:

> 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?

Appendix

About Active, Engaged Learning

Improving schools requires ensuring that students are truly engaged. This is especially important in preventing learning, behavior, and emotional problems, and essential at the first indications of such problems. A key aspect of engaging students is facilitating *active learning.* The following highlights material for personnel development.

What is Active Learning?

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. To this end, activities need to capitalize on student interests and curiosity, involve them in problem solving and guided inquiry, and elicit their thinking through reflective discussions and specific products. And the activities need to be implemented in ways that (a) enhance feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to others and (b) minimize threats to such feelings.

There are many examples of ways to to enhance activity and motivation to learn at all grade levels – interactive instruction, class discussions, authentic, problem-based, discovery, and project-based learning, involvement in "learning centers," enrichment activity, experiences outside the classroom, independent learning experiences in or out of school. Below are brief overviews of some of these ways of improving engaged learning.

Interactive Instruction

One of the most direct ways teachers can engage students is through class discussion and sharing of insights about what is being learned, often bringing in their own experiences and personal reactions. Discussion not only helps students practice and assimilate, it adds opportunities to enhance skills (such as organizing and orally presenting one's ideas) and learn more (e.g., from teacher clarifications and peer models). It also can provide an impetus for further independent learning.

For students just learning to engage in discussions or who have an aversion to such a format, it is important to keep a discussion fairly brief and use a small group format. If a student wants to participate but is having trouble doing so, individual interaction away from the group can help them develop essential readiness skills, such as listening, organizing one's thoughts, and interacting appropriately with another. Whole class discussion is reserved for occasions when the topic affects all the students. These can be invaluable opportunities to enhance a sense of community.

Suggested guidelines for effective discussions include:

- using material and concepts familiar to the students
- exploring a problem or issue of interest
- stressing that opinions must be supported
- providing some sense of closure as the discussion ends, such as a summary of what was said, insights and solutions generated, any sense of consensus, and implications for the students' lives now and in the future.

Authentic Learning

Authentic learning (sometimes called genuine learning) facilitates active learning by connecting content, process, and outcomes to real-life experiences. The concept includes students learning in contexts in and outside the classroom, (e.g., around the school, in the neighborhood, and at home).

The emphasis is on learning activities that have genuine purpose (e.g., community service or action projects and internships). The intent is to enhance student valuing of the curriculum through working on somewhat complex problems and tasks/projects they naturally experience or that they will experience later in their lives.

For example, by focusing on current problems or controversies affecting them, students work on projects and create products they value. Tasks range from simple activities, such as groups writing letters to the local newspaper, to more complex projects, such as cross-subject thematic instruction, science and art fairs, major community service projects, and a variety of on-the-job experiences. Specific examples include developing a classroom newspaper or multimedia newscast on a controversial topic, carrying out an ecological project, developing a school website or specific sections of the school's web site, and creating a display for the school regarding the neighborhood's past, present and future.

The key to properly implementing authentic learning activity is to minimize "busy work" and ensure the major learning objectives are being accomplished. Good authentic tasks involve

>locating, gathering, organizing, synthesizing
>making collaborative decisions and interpreting information and resources
>problem solving >elaborating >explaining >evaluating.

The process also usually involves public exhibition of products and related presentations to others outside the class.

Properly implemented, authentic learning activity helps develop

- inquiry (learning to ask relevant questions and search for answers)
- critical and divergent thinking and deep understanding
- judgment
- general decision making and problem solving capability
- performance and communication skills.

Such an approach also can contribute to enhancing a sense of community.

Problem-Based and Discovery Learning

Problem-based and discovery learning processes overlap with the concept of authentic learning. They are built around a series of active problem-solving investigations. The intent is that, with appropriate guidance and support, students will be motivated by the defined problem and by the process of discovery and use their capabilities to make pertinent observations, comparisons, inferences, and interpretations and arrive at new insights.

In general, the approach begins with the teacher raising a question or series of questions and leading a discussion to identify a problem worth exploring. Students decide ways to investigate the problem, and work individually and/or in small groups conducting “investigations.” For example, they manipulate phenomena, make observations, gather and interpret data, and draw inferences. Then, they draw conclusions and make generalizations (see Exhibit).

Exhibit

Problem-Based Learning

"Problem-based learning (PBL) is a term that some have adopted for one type of authentic learning. It is described as a "total approach to education . . . . PBL is both a curriculum and a process. The curriculum consists of carefully selected and designed problems that demand from the learner acquisition of critical knowledge, problem solving proficiency, self-directed learning strategies, and team participation skills. The process replicates the commonly used systemic approach to resolving problems or meeting challenges that are encountered in life and career . . . .

In problem-based learning, the traditional teacher and student roles change. The students assume increasing responsibility for their learning, giving them more motivation and more feelings of accomplishment, setting the pattern for them to become successful life-long learners. The faculty in turn become resources, tutors, and evaluators, guiding the students in their problem solving efforts."

(From: PBL Overview http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/pbl/info.html)

Project-based learning

This approach also draws on the motivational benefits of having students engage in meaningful investigation of interesting problems and work and learn cooperatively. Because of the scope of such projects, students must first learn how to work in a cooperative learning group, share and communicate learning strategies and background knowledge, and then how to share accomplishments across groups. With respect to implementation of project-based learning, it is widely stressed that students should be involved in choosing a topic, and the topic should be multifaceted enough to maintain student engagement over an extended period of time.

Learning Centers

Learning centers are an especially useful strategy for mobilizing and maintaining student engagement. The format goes well with the concept of authentic learning and processes such as discovery and problem-based learning.

As McCarthy noted decades ago,

> Many problems of motivation can be attributed to the fact that children are bored because the class is moving too slowly or too quickly. Also, some behavior problems arise because children are restless when they are required to sit still for long periods of time. These problems can be reduced by supplementing the regular classroom program with learning-center activities. . . . The learning center tries to deal with the reality that pupils learn at different rates, have different interests and needs, and are motivated when they are permitted to make choices based on these unique needs and interests. Learning centers are not a panacea for all the problems that confront education today, but well-planned centers can enhance the learning environment.

The following are some ways learning centers are used:

- *Total learning environment* – The entire instructional program is personalized. Youngsters engage in small-group and individual activities at various learning stations throughout the room. Teacher-conducted learning activities are kept at a minimum.

- *Remedial work* – Students who have not mastered basic skills go to learning centers focused on those skills. They work with computer and other audio-visual materials and individualized-instruction programs or help one another as peer tutors.
- *Practice* – To reinforce knowledge or skills learned in regular classroom instruction, students go to learning centers equipped with materials for motivated practice to enhance recent learning and challenge them to go beyond what they have learned.
- *Enrichment activities* – At specific times during the day, students choose to engage in activities they enjoy, such as computers, arts and crafts, games, puzzles, science experiments, or cooking. These also provide a change of pace when students get bored.

Learning center activities can be designed to meet the unique needs of a student.. Although learning centers are usually associated with self-directed activities, one or more stations may be teacher directed. Also, paraprofessionals, volunteers, or pupils who have specific talents can direct centers at various times.

Examples of Types of Centers

Single-Subject Centers

- Reading Center
- Math Center
- Science/Health Center
- Writing/Spelling/Handwriting Center
- Social Studies Center
- Foreign Language Center

Remedial Learning Centers

- Any of the subjects listed above

Enrichment Centers

- Library Center
- Computer Center
- Art/Music Center
- Activities and Game Center
- Listening Center

Independent-Study Centers

- Research Center
- Discovery Center
- Invention Center

The Importance of Enrichment Activity

The richer the environment, the more likely students will discover new interests, information, and skills. Enrichment comprises opportunities for exploration, inquiry, and discovery related to topics and activities that are not part of the usual curriculum. Opportunities are offered but need not be taken. No specific learning objectives are specified. Equally as important as what is learned is the experience of feeling value and joy in pursuing knowledge.

Enrichment activities often are more attractive and intriguing than those offered in the developmental curriculum. In part, this is because they are not required, and individuals can seek out those that match their interests and abilities. Enrichment activities also tend to be responsive to students; whatever doesn't keep their attention is replaced.

Because so many people think of enrichment as a frill, it is not surprising that such activities may be overlooked – especially for youngsters who manifest learning and behavior problems. After all, these persons are seen as needing all the time that is available for "catching up." This view is unfortunate. The broader the curriculum,

the better the opportunity for creating a good motivational match and for facilitating learning throughout an important range of developmental tasks and remedial needs.

Example of one school's way of organizing enrichment offerings:

1. Arts: stained glass, raku, ceramics, pottery, painting, junk art, maskmaking, puppetry, jewelry-making, basket weaving, air brushing, silkscreening, photography, drama, street dancing, line dancing, folk dancing, hula, creative movement, video/filmmaking, card making, tile mosaics
2. Science/Math: Dissection, kitchen physics, kitchen chemistry, marine biology, rocketry, robotics, string art, math games and puzzles, science and toys, boatmaking, Hawaiian ethnobotany, and laser/ holography
3. Computer: computer graphics, internet, computer simulations, computer multimedia, and computer Lego
4. Athletics: basketball, baseball, volleyball, football, soccer, juggling, unicycling, golf
5. Others: cooking, magic, clowning around, other countries cultures, board games

Enrichment should be an integral part of daily classroom time. It should be part of school-wide opportunities during the day and after school. After school programs not only enable schools to stay open longer to provide academic support and safe havens, drug and violence prevention, and various services such as counseling, they also provide opportunities for youngsters to participate in supervised recreation, chorus, band, the arts and to use the internet. All this allows youngsters to learn skills that often are not part of the school's curricula, such as athletic and artistic performance skills. In some cases, these experiences lead to lifelong interests or careers. But, perhaps just as importantly, youngsters are able to enhance their sense of competence and affiliation.

A Few Other Examples of Activities That Can Be Used Regularly to Engage Learners and Enrich Learning

>library activities;
>music/art/drama;
>student exhibitions & performances;
>outside speakers & performers;
>field trips;
>clubs;
>mentoring & service learning;
>special interest groups;
>recreation & similar organized activities;
>school-wide activities such as student council and other leadership opportunities;
>athletics;
>school environment projects (e.g. mural painting, gardening, school clean-up and beautification);
>poster/essay contests
>book fairs;
>health fairs;
>student newspapers magazines

Education personnel deserve more credit.

Sure, but they wouldn't need it if we paid them more!

> *The solution to adult problems tomorrow depends in large measure upon how our children grow* up today.
>
> Margaret Mead

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

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