Addressing Barriers to Learning

New ways to think . . .

Better ways to link

Challenges and Opportunities in the Classroom

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

Note: Effectively addressing students' behavior, learning, and emotional problems requires greater attention to transforming what transpires in classrooms. To this end, student support staff and others who can help need to spend more time teaming with teachers *in the classroom*. To support such efforts, the Center has developed resources to enhance classroom practices for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. This edition of our quarterly journal provides excerpts from a few of these resources.

*R*esponse to Intervention initiatives stress the unacceptability of waiting for students to fail. However, as with so many other efforts concerned with students' learning, behavior, and emotional problems, this budding movement may become just another piecemeal approach.

Fragmentary endeavors cannot address the complex realities confronting teachers and student support staff. A fact of life in too many classrooms is that a significant proportion of students lack enthusiasm about engaging in the day's lesson plans. Moreover, a chilling number of students have become disengaged from classroom instruction, are behaving in disruptive ways, and are dropping out. To enable such student to succeed at school, staff must enable them to (1) get around interfering barriers and (2) re-engage in classroom instruction. Properly designed, the response to intervention movement can help, but it represents only one facet of what it takes to transform struggling classrooms into effective learning environments.

Breakthroughs in battling learning, behavior, and emotional problems probably can be achieved only when school improvement policy, planning, implementation, and accountability expand to focus on developing a comprehensive system of student/learning supports. One major facet of such a system involves enhancing a wide range of regular classroom strategies to enable learning. These encompass:

- Opening the classroom door (a) to bring in more help (e.g., volunteers trained to work with students-in-need; resource teachers and student support staff to team up with the teacher in the classroom) and (b) to facilitate personalized professional development

- Ensuring what goes on in the classroom (and school-wide) creates and maintains a stimulating, caring, and supportive climate

- Redesigning classroom approaches to enhance teacher capability to prevent and handle problems and reduce need for out of class referrals (e.g. personalizing instruction; expanding the range of curricular and instructional options and choices; systematic use of pre-referral interventions, response to intervention, and in class special assistance; turning big classes into smaller units; reducing over-reliance on social control)

Opening the Classroom Door

Opening the classroom door allows for many forms of assistance, mentoring, partnership, and other collegial practices. Teachers, especially new teachers, need as much in-classroom support and personalized on-the-job education as can be provided. All teachers need to learn more about

how to enable learning among students, especially those with problems. All school staff need support from each other in enhancing outcomes for such students. Given the shared agenda, it seems evident that staff not only should work closely with each other, but also with parents, volunteers, professionals-in-training, and so forth. And, a large part of the work should take place in the classroom.

Collaboration and teaming are key facets of addressing barriers to learning and teaching and promoting engagement, learning, performance, and healthy development. For instance, an open classroom door allows student support staff to do much more than "consult"with teachers (i.e., go beyond just recommending what teachers should do about student learning, behavior, and emotional problems). But, before support staff can go into classrooms to team with teachers, they must learn much more about classroom life and instruction. And, they must especially learn about what it takes to engage and re-engage students in classroom instruction. What follows is a brief introduction to these matters.

Stimulating, Caring, and Supportive Classrooms

It is evident that how classrooms are arranged and how instruction is organized helps or hinders learning and teaching. The ideal is to have an environment where students and teachers feel positively stimulated, well-supported, and engaged in pursuing the learning objectives of the day. Student engagement is especially important in preventing problems. Thus, minimally, classroom practices must enhance motivation to learn by facilitating *active learning* in ways that promote an atmosphere of mutual caring and respect.

Simply stated, active learning is *learning by doing, listening, looking, and asking;* but it is not just being active that counts. It is the mobilization of the student to seek out and learn. Specific activities are designed to capitalize on student interests and curiosity, involve them in problem solving and guided inquiry, and elicit their thinking through reflective discussions and appropriate products. Moreover, the activities can be designed to do all this in ways that minimize threats to and enhance feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to others.

There are many examples of ways to facilitate active learning at all grade levels. It can take the form of class discussions, problem-based and discovery learning, a project approach, involvement

in "learning centers" at school, experiences outside the classroom, and independent learning in or out of school.

Stimulating, caring, and supportive classrooms do much more than motivate learning of subject matter and academic skills. They provide conditions for social and emotional learning. Students learn to cooperate, share responsibility, develop understanding and skills related to conflict resolution and mediation, and much more. For staff, such classrooms provide a context for collaborating with colleagues and with a variety of volunteers to ensure mutual support and counter staff burn out. The mental health implications of all this are clear.

Personalizing Instruction

The old adage: *Meet learners where they are* captures the commonsense view of good classroom practices. Unfortunately, this adage often is interpreted only as a call for *matching* a student's current *capabilities* (e.g., knowledge and skills). The irony, of course, is that most school staff know that motivational factors (e.g., attitudes) play a key role in poor instructional outcomes. One of the most frequent laments about students is: "They could do it, if only they *wanted* to!"

We all also know that good abilities are more likely to emerge when students are motivated not only to pursue assignments, but also are interested in using what they learn. The point for emphasis is that good classroom practices involve matching *motivation* (especially *intrinsic* motivation), and this often involves overcoming *avoidance* motivation.

With respect to facilitating learning, the desire to meet learners where they are sometimes is referred to as the concept of the "match" or the problem of "fit." Schools strive to design instruction that fits, but the reality is that they can only approximate an optimal fit. And, a close approximation probably requires *personalizing instruction*.

Defining Personalization. For some time, efforts to improve instructional fit in the classroom have revolved around the concepts of individualized or personalized instruction. The two concepts overlap in their emphasis on developmental differences. That is, most *individualized* approaches stress individual differences in developmental capability. *Personalization,* however, is defined as the process of accounting for individual differences in *both capability* and *motivation*.

Personalization needs to be understood as a psychological construct. From a motivational perspective, the *learner's perception* is a critical factor in defining whether the environment is a good fit. Given this, it is important to ensure learning opportunities are *perceived by learners* as good ways to reach their goals. Thus, a basic assessment concern is that of eliciting learners' perceptions of how well what is offered matches both their interests and abilities.

Assumptions and Elements. Outlined in the Exhibit on page 4 are underlying assumptions and major elements of personalized classrooms. Properly designed and carried out, personalizing instruction can be sufficient in facilitating classroom learning for most students, and this reduces the need for specialized assistance.

Personalizing regular classroom programs also can improve the effectiveness of prevention, inclusion, and prereferral interventions. In such classrooms, personalization represents a regular classroom application of the principle of using the least intervention that is needed (which encompasses the concept of "least restrictive environment").

Enhancing Motivation is a Core Concern

Student support staff can contribute greatly by helping ensure that classrooms address motivation as a primary consideration. Instruction should be based on an appreciation of what is likely to affect a student's positive and negative motivation to learn.The emphasis on motivation has fundamental intervention implications. In particular, it calls for offering a broad range of content, outcome, and procedural *options,* including a personalized structure to facilitate learning. With real options comes real opportunities for *involving learners in decision making*. A motivational focus also stresses development of nonthreatening ways to provide information about learning and performance.

Many instructional approaches are effective when a student is motivated to learn what is being taught. For students with learning, behavior, and emotional problems, however, motivation for classroom learning often is a problem. The roots of significant learning problems are planted when instruction is not a good fit. In turn, learning problems generate an emotional overlay and usually behavior problems. Thus, while motivation is a fundamental concern for all students, for those with problems a classroom focus on motivation is essential.

In transforming classrooms, the following points about motivation warrant particular attention:

(1) *Optimal performance and learning require motivational readiness.* Motivation is a key antecedent condition in any learning situation. Readiness is understood in terms of offering stimulating and supportive environments where learning can be perceived as vivid, valued, and attainable. 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, the need for strategies that can produce a high level of motivational readiness (and reduce avoidance motivation and reactance) 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. Programs must be designed to maintain, enhance, and expand intrinsic motivation so that what is learned is not limited to immediate lessons and is applied in the world 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. We all react against structures that seriously limit our range of 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 experiencing problems at school 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 the program as personally valuable and obtainable.

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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 or fit exists between the learner and the learning environment.

- The wider the range of options that can be offered and the more the learner is made aware of the options and has a choice about which to pursue, the greater the likelihood that he or she will perceive the match as a good one.

- Besides improved learning, personalized programs enhance intrinsic valuing of learning and a sense of personal responsibility for learning. Furthermore. such programs increase acceptance and even appreciation of individual differences, as well as independent and cooperative functioning and problem solving.

II. *Program Elements*

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

- turning large classes into small units (many small group and individual learning opportunities)

- in-classroom collaboration and teaming

- 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, processes, needed support and guidance, and desired outcomes;

- active decision making by learners in making choices (with appropriate guidance and support) 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."

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(3) *School staff not only need to try to increase motivation – especially intrinsic motivation – but also to avoid practices that decrease it.* Although students may learn a specific lesson at school (e.g., some basic skills), they may have little or no interest in using the new knowledge and skills outside of the classroom. Increasing such interest requires procedures that can reduce negative and increase positive feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies.

With learning, behavior, and emotional 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, 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.

Personalization First;
Add Special Assistance If Necessary

A sequential and hierarchical framework can guide efforts to provide a good match and determine the most appropriate and least disruptive intervention needed for individuals with learning and behavior problems. The first step focuses on changing regular classrooms if they are not designed to personalize instruction. The changes are meant to create a caring context for learning and introduce personalized instruction to ensure that the program is highly responsive to learner differences in motivation and development.

With this in place, the next step involves providing special assistance as needed. That is, the second step is introduced only if learners continue to have problems. As outlined in the figure on the next page, this second step involves three levels of focus.

Concluding Comments

Working in classrooms is a highly demanding job. It is particularly difficult in school settings where a large proportion of the student body are not performing well.
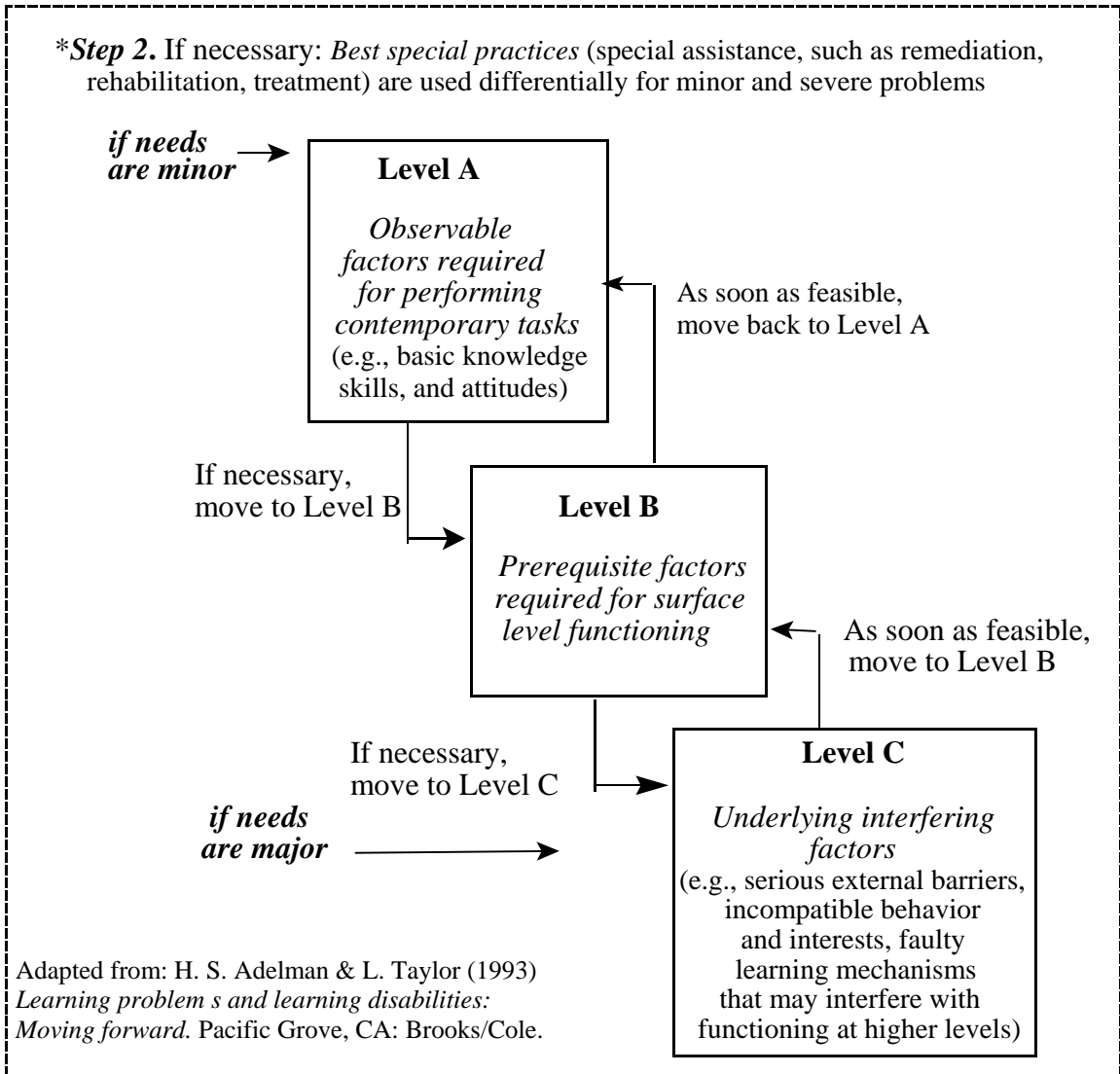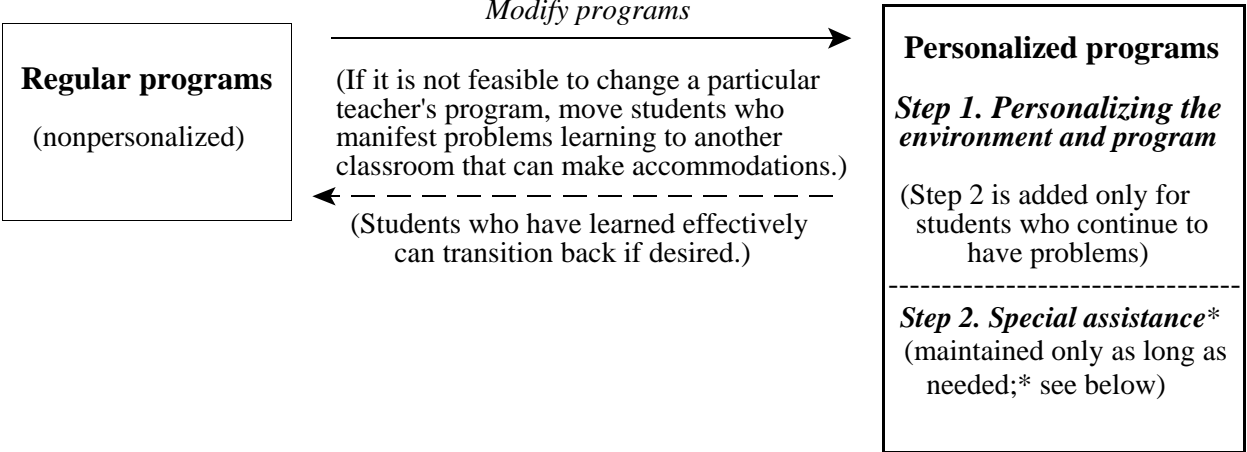
The problem of improving classrooms is exacerbated by the growing teacher shortage. More and more schools must employ novices, including individuals with little or no preservice teacher preparation. And many of these newcomers are placed in schools where a large proportion of students come to class each day not particularly enthusiastic about what they are expected to do and often without the background of knowledge and skills to connect with the day's lesson plans.

The reality is that increasing numbers of teachers have not had the opportunity to learn how to teach students who manifest commonplace learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

Given this state of affairs, it is essential to transform classrooms into settings where many are working with the teacher in the classroom to enable students to get around barriers that interfere with learning and teaching and (re)engage in classroom instruction.

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For more on transforming classroom practices,
see the practice notes on pages 7-10 and
the references cited below.

>*Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom-Focused Enabling*
   http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/cfe.pdf

>*Revisiting Learning & Behavior Problems: Moving Schools Forward*
   http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/revisitinglearning.pdf

>*Leadership Training: Moving in New Directions for Student Support*
   http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/movinginnewdirections.pdf

>Adelman, H.S. & Taylor, L. (2006). *The School Leader's Guide to Student Learning Supports: New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

>Adelman, H.S. & Taylor, L. (2006).*The Implementation Guide to Student Learning Supports: New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

I KNOW YOU LIKE LUNCH-TIME BEST, BUT THERE MUST BE SOMETHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO DO AT SCHOOL!

Learning Sequence and Levels

Modify programs

Regular programs

(nonpersonalized)

(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

if needs are minor

Level A

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

As soon as feasible, move back to Level A

If necessary, move to Level B

Level B

Prerequisite factors required for surface level functioning

As soon as feasible, move to Level B

If necessary, move to Level C

if needs are major

Level C

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

Adapted from: H. S. Adelman & L. Taylor (1993)
Learning problem s and learning disabilities: Moving forward. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Turning Big Classes into Smaller Units

Just as it is evident that we need to turn schools with large enrollments into sets of small schools, we must do the same in the classroom everyday. As a report in 2000 from the American Youth Policy Forum 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."

The Key is Grouping

Aside from times when a learning objective is best accomplished with the whole class, the general trend should be to create small classes out of the whole. This involves grouping students in various ways, as well as providing opportunities for individual activity. At a fundamental level, grouping is an essential strategy in turning classrooms with large enrollments into a set of simultaneously operating small classes.

Clearly, students should never be grouped in ways that harm them (e.g., putting them in low ability tracks, segregating those with problems). But grouping is essential for effective teaching. *Appropriate grouping* facilitates student engagement, learning, and performance. Besides enhancing academic learning, it can increase intrinsic motivation by promoting feelings of personal and interpersonal competence, self-determination, and positive connection with others. Moreover, it can foster autonomous learning skills, personal responsibility for learning, and healthy social-emotional attitudes and skills.

A well-designed classroom enables teachers to spend most of their time rotating among small self-monitored groups (e.g., two to six members) and individual learners. With team teaching and staff collaboration, such grouping can be done across classrooms.

Effective grouping is facilitated by ensuring teachers have adequate resources (including space, materials, and help). The key to effective grouping, however, is to take the time needed for youngsters to learn to work well with each other, with other resource personnel, and at times independently. Students are grouped and regrouped flexibly and regularly based on individual interests, needs, and for the benefits to be derived from diversity. 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 that can be facilitated by peers, aides, and/or volunteers. 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 can contribute on a par with their capabilities.

Three types of groupings that are common 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 to enhance interpersonal functioning and an understanding of working relationships and of factors effecting group functioning. And, in all forms of grouping, approaches such as cooperative learning and computer-assisted instruction are relevant.

<div align="right">(cont.)</div>

Recognize and Accommodate 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 teachers to group students across ethnic lines to bring different perspectives to the learning activity. This allows students not only to learn about other perspectives, it can enhance critical thinking and other higher order conceptual abilities. It also can foster the type of intergroup understanding and relationships essential to establishing a school climate of caring and mutual respect. And, of course, the entire curriculum and all instructional activities must incorporate an appreciation of diversity, and teachers must plan ways to appropriately accommodate individual and group differences.

Collaborative or Team Teaching

As Hargreaves 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."

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 paid tutors, resource and special education teachers, pupil services personnel, and an ever widening range of volunteers (e.g., tutors, peer buddies, parents, mentors, and any others who can bring special abilities into the classroom and offer additional options for learning). And, of course, team teaching offers a potent way to expand the range of options for personalizing instruction. Not only can teaming benefit students, it can be a great boon to teachers. A good collaboration is one where colleagues mesh professionally and personally. It doesn't mean that there is agreement about everything, but there must be agreement about what constitutes good classroom practices.

Collaborations can take various forms. For example, teaming may take the form of:

- *Parallel Work* – team members combine their classes or other work and teach to their strengths. This may involve specific facets of the curriculum (e.g., one person covers math, another reading; they both 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 Work* – one team member takes the lead and another facilitates follow-up activity.
- *Special Assistance* – while one team member provides basic instruction, another focuses on those students who need special assistance.

Usually, the tendency is to think in terms of two or more teachers teaming to share the instructional load. We stress, however, the value of expanding the team to include support staff, aides, volunteers, and designated students to help in creating small groupings. Teachers and support staff can work together to recruit and train others to join in the collaborative effort. And, with access to the Internet and distance learning, the nature and scope of collaboration has the potential to expand in dramatic fashion.

A Note About Students as Collaborative Helpers

Besides the mutual benefits students get from cooperative learning groups and other informal ways they help each other, formal peer programs can be invaluable assets. 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.

See: *Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom-Focused Enabling*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/cfe.pdf

Practice Notes

Volunteers as an Invaluable Resource

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

I. Welcoming and Social Support
  A. In the Front Office
        1. Greeting and welcoming
        2. Providing information to those who come to the front desk
        3. Escorting guests, new students/families to destinations on the campus
        4. Orienting newcomers
  B. Staffing a Welcoming Club
        1. Connecting newly arrived parents with peer buddies
        2. Helping develop orientation and other information resources for newcomers
        3. Helping establish newcomer support groups

II. Working with Designated Students in the Classroom
  A. Helping to orient new students
  B. Engaging disinterested, distracted, and distracting students
  C. Providing personal guidance and support for specific students in class to help them
     stay focused and engaged

III. Providing Additional Opportunities and Support in Class and on the Campus
  A. Recreation
  B. Enrichment
  C. Tutoring
  D. Mentoring

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

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

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 local service clubs. And, increasingly, institutions of higher education are requiring students to participate in learning through service. Schools committed to enhancing home and community involvement in schooling can pursue volunteer programs as a productive element in their efforts to do so.

Few teachers have the time to recruit and train a cadre of volunteers. Teachers can work with student support staff and the school administration to set up a volunteer program for the school. Initially, a small group of volunteers can be recruited and taught how to implement and maintain the volunteer program (e.g., how to recruit a large pool of volunteers, help train them, nurture them, work with them to recruit replacements).

The cost of volunteer programs is relatively small compared to the impact they can have on school climate and the quality of life for students and school staff.

See: *Volunteers to help Teachers and Schools Address Barriers to Learning.* (Technical Aid Packet)
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/volunteer/volunt.pdf

Using Aides and Volunteers in Targeted Ways

Every teacher has had the experience of planning a wonderful lesson and having the class disrupted by one or two unengaged students (who often are more interested in interacting with a classmate than pursuing the lesson). The first tendency usually is to use some simple form of social control to stop the disruptive behavior (e.g., using proximity and/or a mild verbal intervention). Because so many students today are not easily intimidated, teachers often find such strategies don't work. So, the control efforts are escalated. The teacher reprimands, warns, and finally sends the student to "time-out" or to the front office for discipline. In the process, the other students start to titter about what is happening and learning is disrupted.

In contrast to this scenario, teachers can train qualified volunteers to work in ways that help all concerned by minimizing disruptions and re-engaging an errant student. The objective is to train volunteers to watch for and move quickly at the first indication that a student needs special guidance and support. For instance, a volunteer is taught to go and sit next to the student and quietly try to re-engage the youngster in the lesson. If this proves undoable, the volunteer takes the student to a quiet area in the classroom and initiates another type of activity or, if necessary and feasible, goes out for a brief walk. It is true that this means the student won't get the benefit of instruction during that period, but s/he wouldn't anyway.

None of this is a matter of rewarding the student for bad behavior. Rather, it is a strategy for avoiding the tragedy of disrupting the whole class while the teacher reprimands the culprit and in the process increases that student's negative attitudes toward teaching and school. This use of a volunteer allows teaching to continue, and as soon as time permits, it makes it possible for staff to explore with the student ways to make the classroom a mutually satisfying place to be. Moreover, by handling the matter in this way, the teacher is likely to find the student more receptive to discussing things than if the usual "logical consequences" have been administered (e.g., loss of privileges, sending the student to time-out or to the assistant principal).

Using this approach and not having to shift into a discipline mode has multiple benefits. For one, the teacher is able to carry out the day's lesson plan. For another, the other students do not have the experience of seeing the teacher having a control contest with a student. (Even if the teacher wins such contests, it may have a negative effect on how students perceive them; and if the teacher somehow "loses it," that definitely conveys a wrong message. Either outcome can be counterproductive with respect to a caring climate and a sense of community.) Finally, the teacher has not had a negative encounter with the targeted student. Such encounters build up negative attitudes on both sides which can be counterproductive with respect to future teaching, learning, and behavior. Because there has been no negative encounter, the teacher can reach out to the student after the lesson is over and start to think about how to use an aide or volunteers to work with the student to prevent future problems.

Center News

NEW RESOURCES

For the latest information on Center resources and activities, go to **http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu** – click on *What's New*. Highlighted below are a few items.

> New publication

>>"School Improvement: A Systemic View of What's Missing and What to Do About It." By H. Adelman & L. Taylor. *In Systems Thinkers in Action: A Field Guide for Effective Change Leadership in Education* (2007). B. Despres (Ed.) Rowman and Littlefield Pub.

> Updated Resources

On Students and School Programs

>>*After-School programs and Addressing Barriers to Learning*
smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/afterschool/afterschool.pdf

>>*Sexual Minority Students*
smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sexual_minority/lgbt.pdf

On Financing:

>>*Financial strategies to aid in addressing barriers to learning* (Intro Packet)
smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/financial/fund2000.pdf

>>*Financing strategies to address barriers to learning* (Quick Training Aid)
smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/funding_qt/

On Evaluation:

>>*Evaluation and accountability: Getting credit for all you do* (Into Packet)
smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/evaluation/evaluation.pdf

>>*Evaluation and accountability: Related to mental health in schools* (Technical Aid)
smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/evalaccount/evalmh.pdf

> Conference Proceedings

>>*Safe Schools in the Context of School Improvement*. (2007) Nat. Conf. on Safe Schools & Communities. Hamilton Fish Inst.
gwired.gwu.edu/hamfish/annualconference/2007/

> Evaluation of Impact Report – Update for January, 2007-December, 2007

smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/evaluation/evaluationupdate07-08.pdf

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Want resources?
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          Dept. of Psychology, UCLA,
          Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563
Or use our website: **http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Support comes in part from the Office of Adolescent Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Admin., U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.
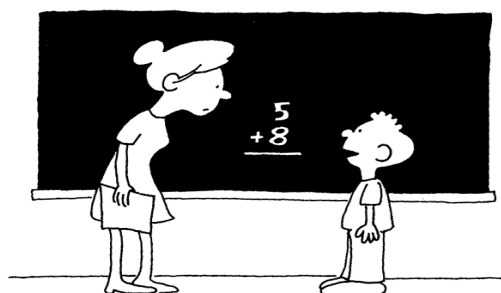
There already are so many problems in the world I really don't think you should be introducing another one.

Partnering with *Scholastic, Inc.* to Expand the Center's Impact

Upgraded materials, leadership institutes, and support for implementation are all part of plans stemming from the new partnership between our Center at UCLA and the charitable Community Affairs & Government Relations Division of *Scholastic Inc*.

In 2006, Scholastic contacted us about a partnership initiative related to our focus on addressing barriers to learning and teaching and advancing mental health in schools. Scholastic conceives the work as *Rebuilding for Learning*™. Their initial impetus was a desire to provide support for Gulf Coast schools in the wake of the catastrophes in 2005. However, as they indicated to us, their research made it "obvious that Gulf Coast districts were not the only ones facing serious 'learning infrastructure' issues that were impeding teaching and learning. [And, so] we felt that districts across the country could benefit from this work."

The combined efforts will allow us to expand our diffusion efforts. Scholastic currently is designing materials in hardcopy and will develop a website based on the Center's frameworks for fully integrating a comprehensive system of student/learning supports into school improvement policy and practice. The materials will provide the content for a series of Leadership Institutes with a focus on education and community leaders first from the Gulf states and then from across the country. Teams from state departments and districts will receive grants from Scholastic to attend with the option of follow up grants for those moving to implementation.

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

I have come to believe that a great teacher is a great artist . . . . [Teaching may] even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit. John Steinbeck

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