

## Personalizing Personnel Development at Schools: A Focus on Student Engagement and Re-engagement

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**E**ngagement and re-engagement of students is a fundamental concern for everyone involved with improving schools (e.g., teachers, student support staff, administrators, playground and office personnel). Because of the limited ways most preservice preparation addresses these matters, considerable attention must be paid to them after school personnel are on-the-job. And, given variability of understanding about any topic even among experienced staff, the emphasis needs to be on personalizing learning opportunities.

A good fit for learning requires that each individual start where they are at – both in terms of their motivation and capability. This, of course, parallels what is required in designing a good match in terms of process and content for students in a classroom. That is, teaching about engagement and re-engagement involves applying what is being taught to the process of personalizing personnel development.

Note: While the content examples here emphasize student engagement and re-engagement, the formulation of stages in the process and the levels of content are generic to facilitating personalized on-the-job learning. And, clearly, a key process consideration arises from the differences in providing on-the-job learning opportunities for beginning as contrasted with experienced personnel.

### **Personalized On-the-job Learning: *Process***

#### *Stages in the Process*

- >Facilitating motivational readiness, including use of “priming” questions to clarify need, use of teachable moments, clarifying how the individual prefers to learn
  - >>Clarifying need – examples of priming questions
    - How many of your students seem disengaged from learning some subjects or some times? Do you have students who seem disengaged from school generally?
    - Would you be interested in learning how to enhance engagement in learning in classrooms for all students, for those who aren't engaged? What programs and processes outside the classroom can promote engagement at school?
  - >>Inquire about learning preferences
    - Ask about readiness to learn more about ideas, tools, strategies related to matters such as student engagement/re-engagement in learning. If yes, note which of the modalities for learning appeal to them (e.g., readings, formal presentations, study group discussions, interactive workshops, coaching/consultations focused on specific students, observations of others with expertise who are addressing the matters, other?).
- >Self-study resources – providing an introduction and for spiral learning and digging deeper (see Exhibit)
- >Modeling and Collegial Learning – with emphasis on choices about what to focus on initially and subsequently and options for networking and interacting with others
- >Practice with coaching and feedback – with an emphasis on validating growing competence
- >Presentation to and sharing with others on the staff about what has been learned (e.g., related to understanding the underlying causes of disengagement and the strategies for enhancing engagement, preventing disengagement, and facilitating re-engagement).

>Follow-ups to facilitate spiral learning (e.g., additional discussions with a coach/consultant, periodic study group discussions, advanced reading, additional observations). Along the way, those working to learn more about a given topic may identify an "expert" they would like to invite in to advance their learning (e.g., someone from local institutes of higher education). This may lead to forming an ongoing relationship that supports long term follow- up.

## **Personalized On-the-job Learning: *Content***

### *Levels of content*

- >Introduction to the topic (to raise awareness and heighten interest)
- >Introduction to fundamental concepts and practices (e.g., intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic as related to intrinsic motivation, re-engagement)
- >Spiral Learning (revisiting and digging deeper)

### **About Engaging and Re-engaging Students in Learning at School**

As the school year progresses, an increasing concern is not only on how to *enhance engagement* in learning, but how to *re-engage those students who have become actively disengaged* in classroom instruction.

Engagement is associated with positive academic outcomes, including achievement and persistence in school; and it is higher in classrooms with supportive teachers and peers, challenging and authentic tasks, opportunities for choice, and sufficient structure. Conversely, for many students, disengagement is associated with behavior problems, and behavior and learning problems may eventually lead to dropout. The degree of concern about student engagement varies depending on school population.

From a psychological perspective, student disengagement is associated with situational threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and/or relatedness to valued others. The demands may be from school staff, peers, instructional content and processes. Psychological disengagement may be internalized (e.g., boredom, emotional distress) and/or externalized (misbehavior, dropping out). Re-engagement depends on use of interventions that help minimize conditions that negatively affect intrinsic motivation and maximize conditions that have a positive intrinsic motivational effect.

*For a sample of resources that can be adapted related to the topic of student engagement and re-engagement, see the following Exhibit.*

## Exhibit

### **Examples of Center Resources That Can Be Adapted Related to the Topic of Student Engagement and Re-engagement**

#### **Introductory Material**

>*About School Engagement and Re-Engagement* (information sheet)

Stresses that 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.

<http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/reengagestudents.pdf>

>*Engaging and Re-engaging Students in Learning at School* (beginning guide)

This guide briefly highlights and provides tools and strategies related to the following fundamental concerns related to student (and staff) disengagement and re-engagement:

- Disengaged students and social control
- Intrinsic motivation
- Two key components of motivation: Valuing and expectations
- Overreliance on extrinsics: a bad match
- Focusing on intrinsic motivation to re-engage students

<http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/engagingandre-engagingstudents.pdf>

>*Working with Disengaged Students* (practice notes)

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/practicenotes/disengagedstudents.pdf>

#### **Spiral Learning**

>*Re-engaging Students in Learning* (quick training aid)

Provides a brief overview and fact sheets on re-engaging students in learning, particularly on motivation. It also includes several tools and handouts for use with presentations

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/quicktraining/reengagingstudents.pdf>

>*Turning Big Classes into Smaller Units* (practice notes)

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/practicenotes/smallclasses.pdf>

>*Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom-Focused Enabling* (continuing education modules)

Module I provides a big picture framework for understanding barriers to learning and how school reforms need to expand in order to effectively address such barriers. Module II focuses on classroom practices to engage and re-engage students in classroom learning. Module III explores the roles teachers need to play in ensuring their school develops a comprehensive approach to addressing barriers to learning.

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/contedu/cfe.pdf>

>*Motivation* (quick find)

The Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds provide links to Center developed resources and other online resources.

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>