

**Communication,  
Affect, &  
Learning in  
the Classroom**

3rd Edition

Virginia Peck Richmond / Jason S. Wrench / Joan Gorhan

# Communication, Affect, & Learning in the Classroom

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1<sup>st</sup> Edition printed by Burgess Publishing, Edina, MN, in 1992 (ISBN: 0-80874-699-5)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Edition printed by Tapestry Press, Acton, MA, in 2001 (ISBN: 1-56888-548-2)

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# Communication, Affect, & Learning In the Classroom (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.)

# Preface

*Communication, Affect, & Learning in the Classroom* was originally published by Virginia Richmond and Joan Gorham in 1992 and then updated a decade later by Virginia Richmond, Jason S. Wrench, and Joan Gorham in 2001. As we enter into the revision of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the text, the basic content has not been drastically altered over the years. However, the research in Instructional Communication has clearly become more prominent and stronger. Probably the single most important development in the past two decades was the publication of the *Handbook of Instructional Communication: Rhetorical and Relational Perspectives* edited by Mottet, Richmond, and McCroskey (2006). The purpose of the handbook was to synthesize the first three decades of research in instructional communication into a single volume that could help both researchers and instructors understand the value of communication in the instructional process.

Within the *Handbook of Instructional Communication*, Mottet, Frymier, and Beebe (2006) proposed the rhetorical/relational goal theory of instructional communication. There are two historic traditions examined within human communication: rhetorical and relational. "These two traditions also reflect two of the primary purposes we have when communicating: (1) to influence and/or achieve goals and (2) to develop and maintain relationships" (Mottet et al., 2006, p. 266). Both teachers and students have rhetorical and relational goals within the classroom setting. Students in the instructional context have both academic needs (ability to make good grades) and relational needs (feel affirmed as a person). While not all students are driven by academic and relational needs the same way, meeting these needs is important for successful instructional outcomes. Teachers, on the other hand, are basically driven by the two primary communicative goals.

First, teachers have specific rhetorical goals, therefore "teachers focus on influencing students to learn and understand the content as presented by the teacher" (Mottet et al., 2006, p. 267). Second, teachers have specific relational goals, or communicative goals associated with establishing specific types of relationships teachers want to have with their students (Mottet & Beebe, 2006). Teachers who emphasize relational goals attempt to create closer relationships with their students; whereas, teachers who deemphasize relational goals will attempt to create more relational distance between themselves and their students.



Historically, the two communicative goals described above (rhetorical & relational) have been described as instructor-centered (focus is on the content) or student-centered (focus is on the receiver); with instructor-centered and student-centered teaching existing on a continuum (Chall, 2000). Mottet et al. (2006) argue that the two teaching goals may not be a dialectic of teaching, but instead are two basic goals that are relatively independent of each other. In fact, teachers who emphasize both rhetorical and relational goals in the classrooms are probably the most likely to satisfy students' academic and relational needs within the classroom, which leads to both an increase in student motivation and positive academic outcomes. Furthermore, Mottet et al. argue that teachers who emphasize both relational and rhetorical goals will more "successfully utilize communication behaviors such as immediacy, relevance, clarity, and compliance-gaining to achieve those goals are most likely to meet students' relational and academic needs" (p. 269). If, however, a teacher emphasizes one goal over the other, then he or she is naturally limiting her or his ability to meet all student relational and academic needs. While rhetorical and relational goals are important at all education levels, Mottet et al. predict that as "students mature and develop, their relational needs lessen, however, some students will always desire affirmation from their teachers and need ego support to maintain motivation for the course" (p. 269). In essence, as students age, the relational needs are probably not as important as their academic needs.

When examining rhetorical and relational goals within the classroom, the necessity of affective learning becomes very obvious. As Mottet and Beebe (2006) noted, "Most students do not come to the classroom inherently valuing what learning is prescribed. They must be taught how to value knowledge" (p. 9). In essence, affective learning is the foundation of any kind of cognitive or psychomotor learning, so it should be the foundation of our rhetorical and relational goals in the classroom as well. Too often teachers believe that they are hired to teach a specific subject not get the students to like the subject. Unfortunately, research has consistently shown us that if students do not like the subject the level of cognitive and psychomotor learning greatly diminishes. Wrench, McCroskey, and Richmond (2008) noted, "If an individual does not have positive affect for the content or teacher in a classroom, it will be very hard for that person to learn [on a cognitive or behavioral level]. For this reason, the authors of this text strongly believe that affective learning is by far the most important domain of learning because it is the foundation of the other two types of learning" (p. 346). In essence, when learners do not have positive affect for either the content or the instructor the learning process is diminished. In fact, without positive affect the goal of life-long learner that many educators ascribe to is impossible. McCroskey,

Richmond, and McCroskey (2006) noted, "Almost all of our long-term goals for education are based on appropriate affective learning. Thus, if we focus all of our attention on short-term cognitive and psychomotor objectives, is it any wonder that our long-term objectives are not met? (p. 54).

### **Who Should Read This Book**

Whether you are a K-12 teacher, a university professor, or a workplace learning and performance professional, this book will contain lots of useful information for your instructional practice. While there are clear differences in instructional design that are necessary when differentiating between traditional students (kindergarten through higher education) and adult learners (learning in the workplace), the basic instructional communication process has been shown to be very consistent (Beebe, Mottet, & Roach, 2004; McCroskey, Richmond, McCroskey, 2006).

For the purposes of the current book, we will be primarily using the words "teacher" and "student" within the text. However, these two words could easily be substituted for a plethora of different terms: teacher (trainer, facilitator, etc.) or student (learner, trainee, etc.). At the same time, this text does not attempt to be an overview of everything someone needs to know to be an effective teacher in either educational or workplace contexts. There are many books out there that are specifically written to be overviews of the instructional process in different educational contexts. Instead, this book is designed to demonstrate how teachers can use communication to build an affective learning environment and thus increase cognitive and psychomotor learning in the classroom.

### **Changes to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition**

For the purposes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition to this text, we have updated the research on instructional communication within the text. Since the publication of the first edition of this book in 1992, the information related to instructional communication has consistently gotten stronger. The new research and references will hopefully serve as both a guide for further reading and as a guide for your own instructional practices. Furthermore, we have updated content throughout the book to clearly represent the current nature of communication, affect, and learning in the classroom. The text now represents over 30 years of research in instructional communication.

Next, we created a stronger balance between the traditional educational and workplace learning implications of the material within this text. According to the Competency Study conducted by the American Society for Training and Development in

2004, one of the foundational characteristics of workplace learning and performance is effective communication (Bernthal, Colteryahn, Davis, Naughton, Rothwell, & Wellins, 2004). In fact, a great deal of the information contained within this book directly relates to two of the major areas of expertise for workplace learning and performance professionals: designing learning and delivering training.

Next, we added clear instructional objectives to the beginning of every chapter to aid you in your reading. Furthermore, we have also included a glossary at the end of the text to help remember and learn key terms discussed throughout the textbook.

Lastly, we have opted to make this text freely available to anyone who wishes to learn more about communication, affect, and learning. In a world where textbooks are becoming increasingly more expensive, the open access movement has become more prominent. Open access refers to the free distribution of material via the Internet in such a way that the material is accessible for all users to read and use. For this reason, we have opted to utilize a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 license. You, as the reader, have free access to use this book in any fashion as long as you cite where the material came from and do not make any money off of the book itself. Feel free to save this book to your hard drive, print off a copy for your own reading, or e-mail it to a friend who could also use this information. If you would prefer to purchase a physical copy of the text, you can purchase a copy at [www.cafepress.com/JasonSWrench](http://www.cafepress.com/JasonSWrench). Physical copies are printed by Café Press and sent to you at the cost of printing and shipping.

## **Conclusion**

We hope that this book helps you foster a more effective and affective learning environment for you and your students. Please feel free to e-mail us and let us know how you have utilized this book or any comments you have for future editions of this book.

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### **Virginia Peck Richmond, Ph.D.**

Dr. Richmond is the chair of the Communication Studies department at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Dr. Richmond is one of the most distinguished researchers and professors in the field of human communication. She has written over fifteen books on topics including public speaking, nonverbal communication, instructional communication, and communication apprehension. Dr. Richmond has also authored or co-authored twenty-five book chapters and published more than twenty-five research articles where she was the senior author.

Dr. Richmond has also won numerous awards for her outstanding teaching and research, including an honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University System of West Virginia Board of Trustees and West Virginia University Institute of Technology. She has received distinguished service awards from the World Communication Association and the Eastern Communication Association and is a past recipient of the Donald H. Ecroyd and Caroline Drummond-Ecroyd Teaching Excellence Award. She was also recognized as one of the top ten publishing scholars in major communication journals from 1981 to 1985 and was still ranked in the top 15 most published scholars in major communication journals from 1996-2001 and has won numerous top paper and book awards.

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Dr. Gorham was the assistant editor of *Adult Education: A Journal of Research and Theory*, a publication of American Association for Adult and Continuing Education. Dr. Gorham was editor of *The Speech Communication Teacher*, a publication of the National Speech Association. Dr. Gorham has also sat on numerous editorial boards and served an outside reviewer for many book projects.

# TEACHING AS A COMMUNICATION PROCESS



## Chapter One Objectives

1. Provide and explain the definition of human communication used in the textbook.
2. Provide and explain the definition of learning used in the textbook.
3. Provide and explain the definition of instructional communication used in the textbook.
4. Identify and define the three domains of learning. Provide an example of a communication message in each of the domains.
5. Draw the Instructional Communication Model (ICM) and Kibler's General Model for Instruction. Label and explain each component of both models. How are the models similar? How are the models different?
6. Be able to explain the ADDIE model of instructional systems design.

Teaching is about establishing effective and affective communication relationships with your students. Effective teachers are effective communicators. They are those who understand communication and learning are interdependent and the knowledge and attitudes students take with them from the classroom are selectively drawn from a complex assortment of verbal and nonverbal messages about the subject, the teacher, and themselves. They are those who are more concerned with what the students have learned than with what they have taught, recognizing those two things are not necessarily synonymous. They are those who consciously and strategically make decisions about both what is communicated and how it is communicated.

Instructional communication is defined as *the process of the teacher establishing an effective and affective communication relationship with the learner so that the learner has the opportunity to achieve the optimum of success in the instructional environment.* Teaching is about relationships with students and about achievements of students. If you ask most teachers why they chose teaching as a career, or why they continue to work in the schools, they will tell you it is because of the children. If you ask them what can most effectively turn a bad day into a good one, they will tell you it is the moment when the "light bulb" goes on, when everything comes together and a student's face lights up with the realization that he or she understands. Establishing an effective communication relationship means focusing on what is communicated, how it is "packaged" so that

students' understanding is maximized, and how teachers and students let each other know how they are doing. Establishing an affective communication relationship means focusing on how teachers and students feel about each other, about the communication process, and about what is being taught and learned. The effectiveness of instructional communication is highly related to the affective implications of the choices teachers make -- and affective outcomes reflect some of the most important objectives of instruction. Consider the following examples:

**Example One:** Grady is learning to play the piano. His teacher is an effective teacher in that she knows how to break the necessary skills into small units. Grady has learned how to read music, play chords, and so forth -- technically, he knows how to play the piano. However, because his teacher keeps running him through the same dexterity exercises over and over again, telling him he shouldn't waste his time playing actual songs yet, Grady is bored with the piano. He doesn't practice unless somebody makes him, and he really hates being yelled at by his teacher for not practicing. Grady doesn't much like either his teacher or his piano lessons. And he's not getting very good at playing. He will quit as soon as his parents will let him.

**Example Two:** Roxanne is also learning to play the piano. She and her teacher have a great time during lessons, picking out fun tunes and playing neat tapes of piano music. Roxanne's teacher tells her regularly that she is a very good student, so for a while she was thinking she might want to be a concert pianist. However, this teacher doesn't have a very good system for teaching how to play; after three years, Roxanne still isn't really sure how to play from sheet music. She likes her lessons, but she's not learning much from them. Last week she did so badly at her recital that she decided she wanted to quit taking lessons.

**Example Three:** Meanwhile, down the block, Spike used to take lessons from a teacher who was boring, mean, and not very good at teaching. His parents got very mad when they found out he was ditching lessons and spending the tuition money playing video games at the arcade. Spike's mom was convinced he should learn the piano. Now he has a new teacher who is a nice guy, very encouraging and enthusiastic. Spike decided the new teacher was OK, but he still had a bad attitude toward the piano until he realized that after every lesson he could play a few more

riffs, and putting them together made really fine music. His friends find this very impressive, and Spike can't wait to learn more.

What have these three piano teachers communicated to their students? Grady's teacher taught him to dislike studying piano, that playing the piano was hard work and no fun. Grady probably also learned that studying music is a pain and should be avoided in the future. He may avoid trying out for the band or chorus in school, and he may have already learned to associate music itself with unpleasantness so that he will not even choose to listen to much music as he grows older. Since it is very unlikely that these were the objectives of Grady's teacher, we must question that teacher's ability to utilize the instructional communication process effectively.

Roxanne's teacher was somewhat more effective. Roxanne learned that music can be fun and enjoyable, but she also learned that she had very little musical ability. Her self-esteem as a musician is low. It is unlikely Roxanne will take any more music lessons, piano or otherwise. She also is unlikely to take the risk of looking bad by joining the band or the chorus in school later. But she is likely to appreciate listening to music. She may even be willing to sign up for music appreciation classes. Certainly, she will collect albums in the future. If Roxanne's teacher's goal was to teach her to play the piano, the teacher wasn't successful. However, if the goal was to get Roxanne to enjoy music, the goal was achieved. Future teachers will not have to deal with a student who dislikes music, but they may have a difficult time getting Roxanne to try performing again.

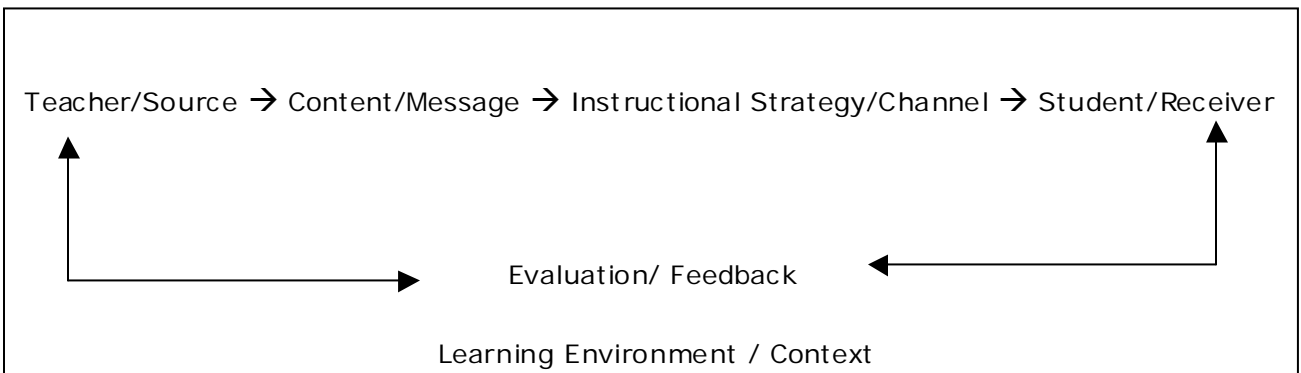
Spike's second teacher certainly was more successful with the instructional communication process than his first one. Spike likes playing the piano and wants to learn more. He is "ready" for that or another teacher to guide him to higher levels of learning. However, Spike may now associate his ability to play the piano with peer respect, so we don't know how he will respond if he plays something for them that is "sophisticated" or "high brow," and they do not like it. Nevertheless, this teacher has demonstrated effective use of the instructional communication process.

Within these examples, there are several variables at work: the teacher, the content of the lessons, the instructional strategy, the student, feedback or evaluation, and the learning environment or context in which instruction occurs. Working together, these elements define the instructional communication process.



## The Instructional Communication Process

Instructional communication is a process in which the teacher selects and arranges what the students are to learn (the content), decides how best to help them learn (the instructional strategy), and determines how success in learning will be determined and how the students' progress will be communicated by and to them (evaluation/feedback).



**Figure 1.1 The Instructional Communication Process**

There is a dynamic interplay among the various elements of the process -- what works for one teacher, with one group of students may not be the most effective choice for another teacher with different students. This process takes place within a given context, or environment. The teacher must also take into account the influence of external factors in making process-related choices.

### The Teacher

The teacher directs the instructional communication process. Her or his affective orientation toward the content, the instructional strategies, the students, and simply being a teacher influences the effectiveness of the process -- and the effectiveness of the process, in turn, affects the teacher's affective orientation. Teachers will probably not be effective if they do not have sufficient knowledge of the subject areas in which they teach or of the appropriate methods for teaching those subjects; however, they also need to like what they are doing. Their ability to communicate effectively contributes to the frequency with which they see those light bulbs come on in students' eyes, which, in turn, contributes to job satisfaction. Teachers -- and the content, strategy, and evaluation/feedback decisions they make -- are a primary influence on students' affect toward a subject.

## The Content

In 1956, Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl published their first volume examining how to assess learning in the college classroom with their book *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain*. In this book, Bloom et al. discussed that there were three domains of learning important for educational researchers to understand: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. In any content area, what the teacher teaches should be selected with attention to both cognitive and affective learning outcomes. Depending on the subject, there may also be psychomotor learning goals.

*Cognitive Learning.* According to Bloom et al. (1956), the cognitive domain “includes those objectives which deal with the recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of intellectual abilities and skills” (p. 7). The researchers noted that most of the research in educational psychology, curriculum development, and workplace learning has centered around this domain of learning. For this reason, the focus of the first handbook published by the Bloom research team focused on the cognitive domain completely. Bloom et al. believed that cognitive learning could be organized into six major categories existing on a continuum from the lowest level of learning (knowledge) to the highest level of learning (evaluation) – see Figure 1.2.

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<b>Highest Level of Learning</b>	
1) Evaluation	Appraise, assess, or judge the value of information based on knowledge and not opinion.
2) Synthesis	Assembling a new whole from parts of existing knowledge.
3) Analysis	Analyzing, comparing, questioning, or disassembling knowledge.
4) Application	Using, demonstrating, or applying what has been previously learned in a new situation.
5) Comprehension	Understanding and explaining a sent message using one’s own words.
6) Knowledge	Remember/recalling/defining terms, facts, etc...
<b>Lowest Level of Learning</b>	

---

**Figure 1.2 Cognitive Learning Levels**

These are listed in order from the most basic to the more difficult. Knowledge and comprehension provide an essential foundation for "knowing" a subject, while the higher

level abilities contribute to owning the subject. In the preceding example, Spike was hooked on learning the piano because he was taught to apply, analyze, and synthesize what he was learning each week.

*Affective Learning.* The second handbook examining the taxonomy of educational objectives was written by Krathwohl, Bloom, and Basia (1964) to examine the affective domain of learning. Krathwohl et al. defined the affective domain of learning as one where “objectives which emphasize a feeling tone, an emotion, or a degree of acceptance or rejection. Affective objectives vary from simple acceptance to selected phenomena to complex but inherently consistent qualities of character and conscience” (p. 7). Overall, affective learning is learning about “interests, attitudes, appreciations, values, emotional sets or biases” (p. 7). Just like cognitive learning, Krathwohl et al. created a taxonomy of educational objectives for the affective domain (See Figure 1.3).

---

<b>Highest Level of Learning</b>	
1) Receiving	Willing to attend to certain phenomena or stimuli.
2) Responding	Willing to actively seek out and gain satisfaction from a certain phenomena or stimuli.
3) Valuing	Belief that a phenomena, stimuli, or behavior has worth.
4) Organization	Placing new values into systems and ranking them in order of importance.
5) Characterization	The individual acts consistently with the values he or she has internalized.
<b>Lowest Level of Learning</b>	

---

**Figure 1.3 Affective Learning Levels**

The affective learning levels vary in terms of degree of internalization; for example, from the point at which a student is aware that poetry exists, to being willing to read poetry, to reading poetry and liking it, to making an effort to seek out poetry, and, finally, to adopting a poetic outlook on life. Spike's piano teacher, knowing of his previous experience with learning to play, strategically linked Spike's practice exercises to the jazz sound he already liked; and thus, addressed affective as well as cognitive learning goals, the achievement of which were interdependent.

*Psychomotor Learning.* The final domain of learning originally discussed by Bloom et al. (1956) was psychomotor learning, or the manipulative or motor-skill aspect of learning. Krathwohl et al. (1964) defined psychomotor learning as learning that emphasizes “some muscular or motor skill, some manipulation of material objects, or some act which requires neuromuscular co-ordination” (p. 7). Specifically, psychomotor or behavioral learning focuses on an individual’s ability to enact the physical parts of specific behaviors. While both Bloom et al. (1956) and Krathwohl et al. (1964) list psychomotor learning as a domain of learning, they do not focus much attention on psychomotor learning because as Bloom et al. (1956) explained “we find so little about it in secondary schools or colleges, that we do not believe the development of a classification of these objectives would be very useful” (p. 7-8). While Bloom et al. (1956) and Krathwohl et al. (1964) did not find much use in the psychomotor domain of learning, individuals in workplace learning have spent a great deal of time investigating the instructional process of skills-based learning. Rothwell and Kazanas (1994) developed a taxonomy of learning objectives in the psychomotor domain of learning (Figure 1.4)

---

<b>Highest Level of Learning</b>	
1) Complex Overt Response	Performance of a physical task automatically and habitually with competence.
2) Mechanism	Performance of a physical task without the assistance of another person or a job aid.
3) Guided Response	Performance of a physical task with some form of assistance (either a person or a job aid).
4) Set	Preparing for the performance of a specific physical task.
5) Perception	Observing the specific behaviors involved with a physical task.
<b>Lowest Level of Learning</b>	

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**Figure 1.4 Psychomotor Learning Levels**

Because of the repetition and rehearsal necessary in learning psychomotor skills, attention to affective goals is important. Grady learned the technique of playing the piano, but his being forced to practice without variation contributed to his dislike of the skill he acquired and diminished his likelihood of using it any more than absolutely necessary.

*Workplace Learning Note.* Workplace learning and performance professionals regularly evaluate and discuss the three domains of learning under different terms. As noted by Biech (2005) and Biech, Piskurich, and Hodell (2006), the three domains as described by Bloom et al. (1956) and Krathwohl et al. (1964) are a little technical and academic sounding. For this reason, workplace learning and performance professionals use the following alternative names for the three domains: cognitive (knowledge), affect (attitude), and psychomotor (skill). Ultimately, the word used to describe the domain of learning isn't important at all. What is important is realizing that the three domains of learning must be addressed when examining the content within one's classroom.

### **The Instructional Strategy**

Instructional strategies are the ways in which teachers design their communication to teach the objectives to students. Some teachers, particularly those at the college level, seem to be totally unaware that there is any instructional strategy other than lecturing, and some do not do that well. Students learn in different ways (this is discussed in Chapter Six), and they are likely to have the greatest affect for things that are taught in the way they learn best. Varying instructional strategies is necessary to accomplish different levels of learning. Most students enjoy learning more when there are regular changes in class routine; younger children find it impossible to pay attention without frequent shifts in what they are doing.

### **The Student**

Students come into learning situations with different affective orientations. Spike's bad experience with his first piano teacher created a specific set of circumstances with which his second teacher had to deal. Some students will lack confidence in dealing with any subject, some in particular subjects, and some not at all. Some students will be better equipped than others to make sense of course concepts. Some will have more fragile egos than others. Teachers teach individual students, not classes of students. Thus, the collective affective atmosphere in a classroom will be determined by each individual student's response.

### **The Feedback/Evaluation**

Feedback is the response of teachers and students to messages from each other. It serves three primary functions: (1) assisting teachers in determining whether the instructional process choices they have made are appropriate; (2) assisting students in

determining whether or not their interpretation of what they think the teacher has communicated is correct; and (3) increasing the likelihood of understanding. Feedback from students to teachers lets teachers know they are accomplishing their goals, and lets them correct problems before affect is diminished. Feedback from teachers to students accomplishes the same goals. When evaluating students' performance (on some sort of graduated scale, such as grades) is necessary, teachers will want to be attentive to whether their students' interpretation of what is meant by an individual grade matches the intended message. Roxanne's piano teacher told her that she was a very good student, meaning that she was prompt, pleasant, and enthusiastic. Roxanne interpreted her teacher's praise as an evaluation of her ability and skill. Thus, she eagerly sought an opportunity to perform in the citywide recital. Affect will be severely compromised if students are placed in a situation where they are evaluated on their ability to perform behaviors we have not effectively taught them, as was the case in Roxanne's recital.

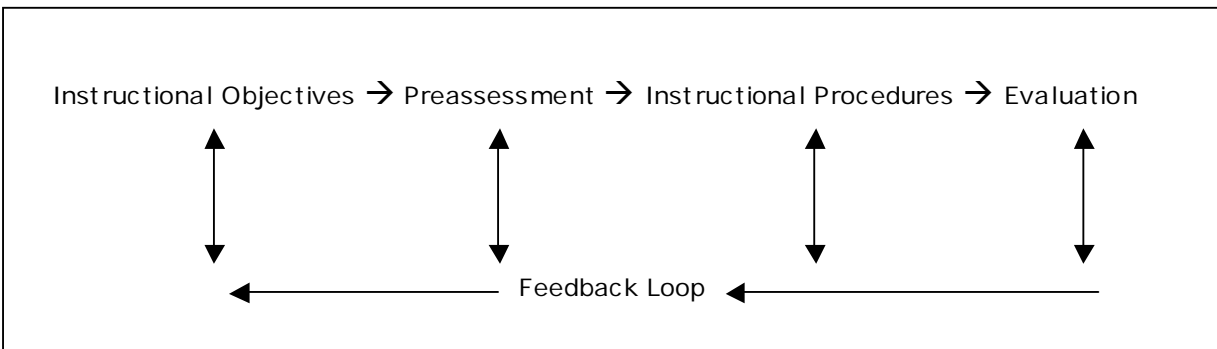
### **The Learning Environment/Instructional Context**

The instructional context refers to the physical and/or psychological circumstances in which learning takes place. There have been numerous studies which have demonstrated the effect of physical surroundings on people's affective responses to what happens within those surroundings. For example, diners eating the same meal, prepared at an independent location, will evaluate the food as tastier when it is served in a fine restaurant than when it is served in a school cafeteria. Similarly, the degree to which students feel comfortable and in control of their destiny contributes to their affective response to instruction.

### **Kibler's Model of Instruction**

Teachers with a communication-oriented view of instruction draw on the principles of learning that have been proposed as a result of studies in behavioral and educational psychology. Learning is seen as behavioral change; as such, it can be fostered by teacher communication which reinforces desired behaviors, punishes undesirable behaviors, models (providing examples for students to emulate), shapes (reinforcing behaviors that approximate the target behavior so that students gradually come closer to the goal), or coaches (actively intervening during a student's performance of a behavior to give suggestions for modification). Communication-oriented instruction is based on teachers' developing a systematic process for assessing students' entry level cognitive, affective, and behavioral base lines, structuring activities that build on that assessment, and evaluating

learning outcomes during and after instruction. If learning is not taking place, communication oriented teachers' look for ways to change the communication process.



**Figure 1.5 Kibler's Model of Instruction**

Robert Kibler, one of the first specialists in instructional communication, and his associates proposed a communication-oriented model of instruction based on four elements: Instructional Objectives, Preassessment, Instructional Procedures, and Evaluation. In following this model, teachers engage in an essentially rhetorical process.

### **Instructional Objectives**

They begin by carefully and clearly specifying their goals as instructional objectives, a task which is discussed elsewhere in this book. In doing so, they consider what students are able to do before the unit, what they should be able to do in subsequent units and at the end of their education, their own capabilities as teachers, and available instructional resources. They examine these objectives to make sure that they are of the level and type actually desired -- for example, by classifying the desired cognitive outcomes as relating to knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation -- and think carefully about the behaviors that will indicate that students have achieved the objective.

### **Preassessment**

Having determined these instructional goals, teachers move on to assessing the students' existing knowledge and behavioral capabilities and determining appropriate instructional activities. At this stage in the process, objectives may be modified to omit instruction in areas in which students are already proficient or to add prerequisite instruction to develop skills students will need to enable them to fully participate in the planned instructional activities.

## **Instructional Procedures**

The instructional procedures are then implemented through selecting available materials, developing new materials, and developing a sequential plan that appears to be the most efficient means of achieving the desired objectives. Feedback is provided to let students know how they are doing throughout the instruction.

## **Evaluation**

At the end of the unit, the students' success in achieving the stated goals is evaluated. If all, or almost all, of the students have not been successful in mastering the objectives possible, reasons are considered: Were the objectives unrealistic? Were additional skills training necessary prior to beginning the unit? Did the unsuccessful students need more motivation to master the material? Would different instructional procedures be more effective? Did the students need more time? Was the measurement of success appropriate? Based on these considerations, appropriate modifications in the objectives, preassessment procedures, instruction, or postinstruction evaluation are made.

## **Feedback Loop**

This model of the instructional process views instruction much as a communication campaign. The goal is set, the audience is analyzed, the strategies are determined, the strategies are implemented, the results are assessed, if strategies need to be revised they are revised, the revised strategies are implemented, and so on. Instruction, then, is seen as applied instance of normal effective communication systems (McCroskey, 1998).

A communication-oriented approach to instruction assumes that teachers are able to logically and dispassionately analyze their instructional goals and that they are willing to take considerable responsibility for the outcomes of instruction. At the heart of this model is the perspective that, when objectives are not accomplished, it is the instruction (the set of communication strategies), rather than the students or the teacher that failed.

At its extreme, this approach can be criticized for being overly mechanistic because it requires that all intended learning outcomes must be reduced to observable behaviors, and for ignoring the personalities at each end of the instructional communication process. It is, however, oriented toward accountability and challenges teachers to examine their responsibility in structuring their communication to maximize learning outcomes.



## **The ADDIE Model**

In 1975, a group of researchers at Florida State University developed the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, & Evaluation) Model of instructional design for the US Armed Services (Branson, Rayner, Cox, Furman, King, & Hannum, 1975). At the time, the term "ADDIE" was not used, but rather "SAT" (Systems Approach to Training), which ultimately became "ISD" (Instructional Systems Design). Watson (1981), another Florida State University professor, later updated the ADDIE model to make it more generalizable across instructional situations. Currently, the ADDIE Model is probably the most widely utilized and discussed model of instructional design and contains many of the same components of the Kibler Model. Probably the biggest difference between the two models is the location and purpose of the preassessment. Where the Kibler Model starts with the development of instructional objectives, the ADDIE Model starts with an assessment of learner's needs and current knowledge related to the topic of interest. The rest of this section is going to break down the five parts of the ADDIE Model.

### **Analysis**

According to Biech, Piskurich, and Hodell (2006), the analysis phase of the ADDIE Model "is the process of gathering data to identify specific needs – the who, what, where, when, and why of the design process" (p. 30). The analysis phase helps teachers and instructional designers determine three basic aspects of learning: knowledge level, learning needs, and appropriateness of instruction.

First, during the analysis phase, the teacher or instructional designer attempts to determine the current level of knowledge target learners have about a specific topic. One of the biggest missteps teachers and instructional designers can make is to under or overestimate the knowledge target learners possess. All teachers have found themselves in instructional situations where the learners were either completely not prepared for the content of the lesson or the lesson was too basic for the learners.

In addition to determine knowledge level, another fundamental aspect of the analysis phase is to ascertain what the learning needs actually are. Often people know that there is a problem, but are not sure where the disconnect is occurring. For this reason, teachers and instructional designers are often called upon to determine what the learning need actually is. For example, one of the authors has a grade school teacher friend who recently found out that a student failed the reading portion of a major standardized test. At first thought, some suspected that the student may not be able to actually read. After analyzing the student in various situations, it was determined that the student could read perfectly and

had no problem with word recognition or recall. The disconnect occurred when the student was asked to analyze what he had read. In essence, the student could read the words but was then unable to do anything with what he had read. Going back to Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning, the student had knowledge of reading but could not comprehend the reading. For this reason, spending a lot of energy focusing on the knowledge aspects of reading with this student would not help the student progress and increase his comprehension.

The last part of the analysis phase of the ADDIE Model is determining whether or not instruction is the appropriate response. Whether it's in a traditional classroom or the corporate learning environment, there are some individuals who will ascribe every problem to a lack of instruction without seeing if there other systematic causes of problems. For example, many organizations will mandate diversity training programs after a discrimination lawsuit is filed against the organization. However, if the organization's culture permits and encourages workplace discrimination, then a simple training session may not effectively fix the problem. Often problems arise for many reasons that have nothing to do with actual instruction. Unfortunately, organizations (both corporate and academic) often like to fix problems with learning thinking that learning will be a quick fix. However, if the problem is caused by a non-learning source, instruction may not fix the problem or even exacerbate the problem further. Solid analysis can often determine if the underlying problem is related to instructional or other issues.

## **Design**

Once a teacher or instructional designer has determined that instruction is the appropriate method for handling a problem, the second step in the ADDIE Model is examined. Whether designing a specific instructional module (a sequence of instruction centered around one content area) or an entire course (a longer sequence of learning containing multiple modules), the design step is very important. The Design step of the ADDIE Model is the part of the instructional process where a teacher or instructional designer determines the objectives of learning, how learning will eventually be evaluated, and establish a learning design plan. In the next chapter, we will discuss the creation of instructional objectives in a lot more detail.

Thinking about evaluation during the design phase is very important because it establishes an end-point or target for the instructional process. Whether you are focusing on cognitive, affective, or psychomotor learning, knowing how you will measure specific learning endpoints is very important. For example, if your instructional objective is to

increase affective learning, evaluating your learners using a multiple-choice test, which really only measures cognitive recall, is not the most appropriate evaluation method.

Lastly, during the design step of the ADDIE model, teachers and instructional designers create a design plan. A design plan is a blueprint for developing the content of the course. A good design plan starts with the basic objectives of the instructional module and any additional materials that may be needed. Some possible materials that may be listed in a design plan are “printed materials; scripts and storyboards for computer-based projects; evaluation materials including tests, quizzes, and other formal evaluations; lesson plans; staff assignments and responsibilities; and a project management plan that includes milestones and deadlines” (Biech et al., 2006, p. 33).

### **Development**

Once teachers and/or instructional designers have completed the design plan, the actual process of building an instructional module begins. Whether the design phase is more theoretical, the development phase is the theory in practice. It’s one thing to know that you need to address a specific content issue (design), and another thing to develop a game that helps learners understand the content issue (development). Whether a teacher and/or instructional designer is designing learning for a physical classroom or an online classroom, everything that learners will come in contact with are developed and tested during this phase of the ADDIE Model. Often during this phase of the ADDIE Model, teachers and/or instructional designers will actually create learning materials and then pilot test the materials by seeing how they work with actual learners. Pilot testing can provide much needed feedback for teachers and instructional designers because they can determine whether or not the instructional materials and strategies are effective before deploying the materials and strategies to a larger audience.

### **Implementation**

The fourth phase of the ADDIE Model involves the implementation of the learning module or course with our actual learners. In an ideal world, we would all be able to pilot test our instructional strategies before implementing them in a classroom during the development phase, but quite often piloting materials, modules, and courses gets skipped because either there is no participant pool for piloting materials or because of time factors. More often than not actual learners become the first guinea pigs for our newly developed instructional materials and strategies.

## **Evaluation**

In the ADDIE model, the final phase of instructional development is the evaluation phase. In the evaluation phase, teachers and instructional designers have two basic goals – measure the effectiveness of the learning materials and determine participant learning. While feedback has been a constant along the instructional design process, the evaluation phase is all about feedback. First, teachers and instructional designers can ascertain whether or not a specific instructional material or strategy doesn't work. We've all had instructional materials and strategies that have just bombed in the classroom. Ultimately, teachers and instructional designers must determine if a specific material or strategy isn't working because it is faulty or the specific audience had problems. For this reason, we always recommend trying something twice with two different groups. If you find a specific instructional material or strategy doesn't work with both groups, chances are you need to rethink the material or strategy or drop them from the learning module altogether.

In addition to determine if our instructional materials and strategies are working, the evaluation phase also is when we determine if cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning have actually occurred. While the evaluation strategies were determined during the design phase, the implementation of those evaluation strategies occurs during the evaluation phase of the ADDIE Model. We'll discuss instructional evaluation in much greater detail in Chapter 8.

## **Conclusion**

The following chapters will elaborate on specific aspects of the instructional communication process. Many of the chapters suggest ways in which teachers can establish and nurture both effective and affective communication relationships that maximize their students' opportunity to achieve the optimum of success in the instructional environment.

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# COMMUNICATING WITH INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

# 2

## Chapter Two Objectives

1. Provide a definition of the message component of the ICM. Give an example of an affective, behavioral, and a cognitive message. Also, explain when and how to use instructional objectives
2. Provide a definition of instructional objectives. Discuss why systems want IOs to be used by teachers.
3. Identify six classroom outcomes that may result from employing instructional objectives.

It is vital that teachers be able to communicate their instructional goals to their students. If you are a member of the American Automobile Association (AAA), you know its agents can be a great help in planning for a trip. All you have to do is tell them where you want to go and they can put together a TripTik for you, assembling a stack of those little strip maps that show various highways and byways across North America. If you are headed from New York to California, they can plot out a northern route, a southern route, or a central route that all will have you end up in the same place. But before anyone can begin to show you a travel route, you have to be able to tell them where it is you want to end up. And if you don't know where you're going, you won't know when you get there. You won't even know if you never get there!

Planning an instructional unit, a course, or an overall curriculum is, in many ways, like planning a trip. There are a lot of different places to go, and a lot of different ways to get to most of them, but before you can begin to plan how to get where you want to go you have to decide where you want to end up. Instructional and goal objectives (IGOS) are a means of clarifying that decision.

Tyler (1949) suggests there are four fundamental questions that must be answered in developing any curriculum or plan of instruction:

1. What outcomes should the school (course, a unit) seek to attain?
2. What experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these outcomes?
3. How can these experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these outcomes are being attained?

The first question concerns objectives, the focus of the present chapter; the next two questions address communication strategies for achieving those objectives, which will be the concern of Chapters 3, 4 and 5; and the final question concerns determining whether our communication strategies were effective, the subject of Chapter 6. The first question must be answered before the others should even be considered.

The idea of writing instructional objectives is certainly not new. Writers in the field of Communication have stressed the importance of determining one's purpose and objective before preparing to speak for more than 2,000 years, since the days of Aristotle and Cicero. For the last 40 years or so, methods of preparing instructional objectives have been taught to a couple generations of teachers during their preservice training; a practice which was abandoned as a meaningful planning mechanism by many of them as soon as they got into their own classrooms. This chapter will discuss why some teachers resent instructional objectives, why they are of critical value, and what they should communicate.

### **Why Some Teachers Resent Objectives**

Some teachers resent instructional objectives because they are mechanistic. Having been taught that a proper objective contains specific components, which must be stated in behavioral terms, they find the task of writing them an exercise in fitting square pegs into round holes and quickly abandon them. "I know what I'm trying to accomplish," they say, "but I can't express it in such simplistic terms. Teaching is an art, not a science." Some teachers resent instructional objectives because they are required in a certain quantity, in a specified form, by a certain day, to be submitted to some administrator or administrative agency for no clearly apparent reason. They are perceived as an assignment -- homework -- and are resented as an indication that someone out there doesn't have confidence that teachers are doing their jobs well without them.

Some teachers dislike instructional objectives because they are used to playing things by ear and the thought of doing long-range planning makes them nervous. Some teachers dislike instructional objectives because they are afraid (sometimes with just cause) they will be held accountable for their students' achievement of those goals and punished for their lack of achievement. Teachers who operate from this perspective are likely to reduce their objectives to the lowest common denominator of their expectations for their students.

One of the authors has a friend who used to work for a company that required its management level employees to write a set of performance objectives for themselves each year. On the occasion of their annual salary review, they turned in their objectives for the

next year. The supervisor then pulled out last year's list and proceeded to award points for each objective that had been accomplished. Since the points translated directly into determining the amount of their raise in salary, the managers quickly learned to develop lists of "objectives" they were already working on or that someone on their staff had already accomplished, and to plan several showy but relatively meaningless "accomplishments" each year so that their list was not confined to the one or two complex, long-term projects that were their real goals. Some of the managers were able to play this game while still maintaining a focus on their long-term goals; others began to adapt their jobs to performing for the sake of generating objectives. Unfortunately, the supervisor was so caught up in his performance appraisal system that he didn't realize what was happening.

Most of the reasons teachers resent objectives are related to their focusing on the product rather than the process of formulating objectives. Rather than beginning by thinking "What is it I am trying to accomplish? What do I want my students to know or be able to do as a result of their time with me? What kinds of values or attitudes, likes and dislikes would I like to reinforce?" Teachers often begin by thinking "How do I write these darn statements?" We are not dismissing the value of the "darn statements" that express objectives in behavioral terms, but we would encourage teachers to start with expressing their goals in a less specified sense. The process of developing instructional objectives can and should include some articulation of broad goals, such as "developing a positive self-esteem" or "teaching skills and knowledge that will be necessary for students to function in a technological society" or "increasing students' appreciation for poetry." Such broad goals provide a framework for developing specific objectives. They are the beginning of a process of clarification.

### **The Value of Objectives**

Objectives have informative and communicative value for teachers, students, administrators, parents, and the community at large. They provide an answer to the question "Why am I (or are you) doing this?" They help students understand the direction a unit or course of study is taking so they can direct their attention to important concepts and skills instead of trying to guess what the teacher wants of them. They help students assess how they are doing throughout the unit rather than being surprised by their final grades. Objectives help the teacher to choose content, activities, and instructional materials with a coherent sense of purpose. They make evaluation easier, directing the kinds of questions that should be on a test, the criteria against which an essay or project assignment should be assessed, and so forth. They provide direct feedback to the teacher regarding how well



he or she is doing; rather than the feeling of being an entertainer or a warden (depending on the particular class and the teacher's point of view!). Teachers are able to clearly see the results of their instructional efforts.

Objectives are an important step in being able to communicate clearly and convincingly to those outside the school who demand accountability for what is happening inside the classroom walls. Not only are they a means of communicating goals, they are likely to enhance the achievement of those goals. They can provide a helpful framework for articulating the efforts of various teachers who teach the same subject or grade level, or for teachers who teach sequential courses in a subject area. Therefore, third grade teachers can have a very clear idea of what the second grade teachers taught in language arts, and what the fourth grade teachers expect of students when they are promoted. While some teachers initially see efforts to articulate objectives with other teachers as constraining, doing so is actually a very liberating activity. If the three teachers who handle eighth grade science agree on a common set of objectives, they do not have to agree to approach those objectives in the same way. Each teacher can incorporate specific strategies and activities with which he or she is the most comfortable without raising a concern that students are learning fundamentally different things in the various sections of the course. They allow teachers the freedom to take their own route to an agreed upon destination.

Just as writing a list of "things to do" often helps to buffer a feeling of being overwhelmed with necessary tasks, and writing a letter to a friend helps the writer tame free-floating anxieties by anchoring them to words, the process of writing out objectives can psychologically anchor the various guilt-provoking "I should be" or "I should have" self-evaluation statements teachers often use on themselves. There is a limit to what any one individual, or institution, can accomplish in molding children's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Having expressed one's priorities in a tangible form, teachers are better able to convince themselves that they are indeed accomplishing what they "should" be accomplishing.

### **What Objectives Should Communicate**

Instructional objectives should, in their most complete form, communicate clearly and concisely what is to be learned and how it will be demonstrated. Although the format of individual objectives may vary, they should address five points:

**1. Who is to perform the desired act?**

The phrase "the student will be able to" emphasizes the fact that effectiveness of instruction will be assessed in terms of what the student can do as a result of the instruction rather than what the teacher does during the course of instruction.

**2. What behavior will serve as evidence that the instructional goal has been achieved?**

This part of the objective is an action verb. Verbs that are open to a variety of interpretations (such as "to know," "to appreciate," or "to understand") are not as helpful as those that specify an observable action (such as "to solve," "to write," "to identify," "to list," "to compare," or "to construct").

**3. What is the object of the action verb?**

In other words, what exactly will the students be asked to do to demonstrate that the objective has been mastered? For example, "The student will be able to identify the counties in Indiana" or "The student will be able to write five paragraphs analyzing the effectiveness of a problem-solving task by using the steps of the problem-solving sequence." Figure 2.1 lists some possible action verbs that could be utilized for each of the three domains of learning

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<b>Learning Domain</b>	<b>Related Action Verbs</b>		
<b>Cognitive</b>	analyze	enumerate	propose
	apply	estimate	question
	appraise	evaluate	quote
	argue	examine	recall
	arrange	experiment	recite
	assess	explain	recognize
	attack	identify	relate
	calculate	illustrate	repeat
	cite	indicate	report
	classify	interpret	reproduce
	compare	inventory	restate
	compose	label	select
	contrast	list	set up
	criticize	locate	solve
	define	manage	sort
	describe	match	support
	detect	memorize	synthesize
	diagram	name	tell
	differentiate	order	translate

	discriminate distinguish discuss duplicate	organize plan practice prepare	test use write
<b>Affective</b>	adjust analyze answer applaud approve assess assume attain avoid be alert to believe carry out choose continue criticize debate	decide discern display evaluate exhibit express follow along identify with internalize judge listen to manage notice obey organize participate	perceive pick practice prefer reply require resolve revise select share show tolerance of support systematize theorize
<b>Psychomotor</b>	assemble balance bend compute construct copy coordinate count demonstrate design develop draw imitate	integrate make manipulate measure move operate play prepare process prove reach record repair	restart show solve speak start stop transcribe turn type use write

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**Figure 2.1 Action Verbs for the Learning Domains**

**4. *Under what conditions -- with what limitations and constraints -- will the behaviors be performed?***

This part of the objective statement provides the teacher and the student with a description of how the evaluation of whether or not the objective has been mastered will be conducted. Examples might be: "Given an outline map with the counties marked but not named, the student will be able to identify the counties in Indiana" or "Following group participation in the 'Who Should Survive?' problem-solving exercise, and subsequent instruction in the steps of the problem-solving sequence, the student will be able to write

five paragraphs analyzing the effectiveness of the group in terms of how the steps of the problem-solving process were or were not applied."

**5. *What standards will be applied to evaluate whether or not the student's performance is an acceptable indication of mastery?***

Completing the examples with which we have been working, the final objectives might be as follows: "Given an outline map with the counties marked but not named, the student will be able to identify the counties in Indiana with at least 80% accuracy" and "Following group participation in the 'Who Should Survive?' problem-solving exercise, and subsequent instruction in the steps of the problem-solving sequence, the student will be able to write five paragraphs analyzing the effectiveness of the group in terms of how the steps of the problem-solving process were or were not applied. Satisfactory papers will address each of the five problem-solving steps explained in the textbook and relate each of the steps to explaining the effectiveness of actual groups' process."

Instructional objectives can -- and should -- include desired cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning outcomes. Psychomotor and lower level cognitive learning objectives (those requiring knowledge or comprehension) are usually the easiest to write because the behaviors and standards for evaluation are the most easily translated to the kinds of assignments, test questions, and skill demonstrations that are typically included in a unit or course to determine students' grades. Teachers often use classroom activities to foster higher level cognitive learning (application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), but they may be less accustomed to defining means of evaluating the attainment of those objectives. Tests and assignments that can be evaluated on a percent correct basis are frequently not the most appropriate means of assessing whether these objectives have been accomplished and, because they are not, teachers assume that having such objectives is incompatible with the recommendation that instructional objectives should communicate conditions and standards of evaluation as well as behaviors.

The central question in clarifying such objectives should be, "How will I tell if this activity has been successful in fostering/demonstrating what was intended?" Thus, following a unit on the parts of a story, after students have demonstrated that they can define the terms protagonist, antagonist, climax, irony, and moral, and that they can identify these elements in stories they read, they might be assigned a synthesis task for which the objective is "Working in groups of five or six for one hour, students will be able to create and perform a skit in which the protagonist, antagonist, climax, irony and moral are recognizable to the teacher and to their peers." The evaluation standards specified here

may or may not be part of assigning students a grade; the important aspect of the evaluation component of the objective is its clarifying what will provide evidence of students' attaining the objective of synthesis.

Clarifying the behavioral demonstration and assessment aspects of affective objectives can be similarly challenging; however, doing so is a worthwhile process in that it reinforces the salience of such objectives as legitimate instructional goals. Some examples of means of observing and evaluating evidence of affective outcomes might be:

Having been given the opportunity to submit essays to the local newspaper's annual contest, 70% of students will voluntarily choose to do so.

In examining records of the reading material students select for their weekly free reading period, there will be evidence that students more frequently choose works by authors whose stories were read in class after being introduced to the author than before that time.

Given the opportunity to list ways that knowledge of mathematics can be used in everyday life, the student will list more practical applications at the end of the course than they did at the beginning.

Given precourse and postcourse administrations of self-perceived communication competence scales, 85% of students will score higher on the second administration than they did on the first.

A teacher's statements of affective objectives might not be shared with the students and will probably not suggest measures that figure into a grading scheme. Indeed, telling students explicitly that they should be reading books by the authors to whom they have been introduced in class and awarding points for doing so will probably compromise this observation's intent as a measure of an affective outcome, since students may then be selecting books for points rather than because they have been moved to want to read those books. Clarifying such objectives, however, takes the teacher through a process of determining ways in which the attainment of such reasonable and valid goals as increasing student confidence in a skill or enhancing appreciation of an area of study can be assessed. The ability to do so provides valuable information to the teacher as he or she considers variations in instructional communication process, and also allows these accomplishments to be communicated to parents and administrators in concrete terms.

Cognitive and psychomotor learning objectives may, likewise, not always be communicated in their complete form to students. When the teacher has decided that the attainment of certain objectives will be measured via the students' ability to correctly answer a set of test questions, the list of "objectives" provided to students might include

only the information with which they should be familiar and an indication of what they will be expected to do to demonstrate their knowledge on the test. Thus, objectives provided to the students might read:

Following participation in class and completion of the assigned readings, the student will be able to:

1. Identify the three domains of learning.
2. Write an instructional objective that contains all five of the recommended components.
3. Discuss the value of instructional objectives.

In this case, the teacher has already communicated to the students that mastery of these particular objectives will be evaluated via a test or quiz and has separately discussed with them the conditions under which the quiz will be administered and the standards for evaluation. These are not all of the teacher's objectives for the unit and they are not written with all of their components. Rather, they are a simplified version of the particular objectives that will be assessed by the students' completion of a single task, and they help the students direct their review and rehearsal time toward working with central concepts.

Sometimes teachers are criticized by their colleagues for providing students with specific objectives, arguing that students then study only what they know they will be held accountable for. This criticism may be more valid when students are given simplified study objectives at the start of a unit of instruction, since some of them then might selectively attend only to information they know will be on the test. If, however, objectives are distributed after a unit has been completed, but prior to the administration of a test, research evidence suggests that students are likely to attend to and retain a great deal of incidental information during the course of instruction. It is their final review that will be concentrated on the most relevant information, and more of them will be successful in moving that information into memory. Because the objectives reflect the teacher's careful thought and prior definition of what students who have mastered an area of study should know, feel, or be able to do, it makes perfect sense to focus their attention on achieving those goals as they review for a test.

To return to the travel analogy with which we began this chapter, there are almost always many ways to plan a trip to a given destination. Some people prefer a direct and efficient route. Some prefer a longer scenic route; some people need to stop frequently to rest while others have greater endurance. Someone who knows a territory can direct newcomers to the most interesting, meaningful sights and experiences, help them get

tickets to events they might otherwise miss, and keep them from getting lost. Before any of this planning can begin, we have to decide on a goal -- where we are going, where we want to finish.

It is vital that teachers be able to communicate their instructional goals -- to themselves and to others, including their students. Clearly stated, instructional objectives allow us to do so. They provide a method for answering accountability questions. They clarify what is to be taught and what we will look for to determine whether learning has occurred. They help us pinpoint where changes in the instructional communication process are needed. While some teachers perceive objectives as confining, they are actually quite liberating, allowing us to experiment more freely with communication strategies without losing sight of agreed-upon end points. They are an invaluable planning tool.

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## Chapter Three Objectives

9. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the lecture as an instructional tool.
10. Distinguish between open and closed questions. Review each type of questioning.
11. Review at least six other instructional strategies.
12. List six guidelines that should be used in choosing instructional strategies for a particular unit of instruction.

Employing a variety of instructional strategies appeals to various learning styles and tends to keep teachers and students from becoming mediocre. If we watch children play school, we are likely to see them model -- often with amazing and embarrassing accuracy -- a traditional, subject-centered model of instruction. The "teacher" talks, writes on the board, hands out things, disciplines her or his "students" for talking, and talks some more. If, however, we watch a child teach another child how to do something outside of the playing school context we are quite likely to see a very different set of dynamics at work. The "teacher" demonstrates, asks and answers numerous questions, and enters into a highly interactive relationship with the learner. If we watch a child try to learn how something works or how to do something on her or his own, we are much more likely to see a hands-on, investigative approach than one in which the child goes first to the directions to find out exactly how he or she is "supposed to" proceed. We also see children totally caught up in the stories of an expressive storyteller, and mesmerized by television's auditory and visual stimulation. Left to their own devices, children seem intuitively aware that there are lots of ways to learn, most of which they willingly and regularly seek out.

Most teachers are quite aware there are numerous strategies available for consideration when deciding how to design a unit of instruction. Most teachers are also aware of the advantages of various strategies; if, in practice, they show a heavy preference for one particular approach, that preference might be the result of a belief in its superiority or of their lack of experience in using other approaches. For example, subject-centered teachers often tend to lean toward lectures because they believe that they are the most efficient means of moving through information in quantity, and because that is how they were taught. Learner-centered teachers tend to favor group discussion, while process-centered teachers believe in using a blend of strategies that package information in

redundant modules. Sometimes teachers avoid a particular strategy because they personally do not learn well with that approach.

This chapter will address ways to maximize the advantages (and minimize the disadvantages) of five instructional strategies: The lecture, class discussion, skill lessons, small group activities, and resource-based instruction. Each of these strategies involves a different context for communication, hence is likely to be more effective for some kinds of objectives than others. We will approach these strategies in terms of defining the teacher's role in each situation and examining its appropriateness in achieving a given lesson's objectives, including those related to affective responses.

### **The Teacher as a Speaker**

When we think of lecturing as a method of instruction, we often think first of our college classes in which we may have experienced lectures as "a device for getting notes from the notebook of the professor to the notebook of the student without going through the head of either" (Walker and Scott, 1962, p. 113). Teachers at the secondary and elementary levels seldom use extended discourse as exclusively as do some college teachers, but any time a teacher assumes the role of information-giver, speaking with a structured agenda, he or she becomes a lecturer. In this situation, the speaker holds the floor. It is her or his responsibility to also hold the attention of the listeners.

Lectures are a very efficient use of instructional time. They can communicate a large amount of information to a maximum number of students without requiring much (if any) equipment. They allow teachers to present material not available in textbooks or other easily accessible resources and, presented well, can motivate and excite students. Research has indicated that students taught by lecture do as well as or better than those taught by discussion methods on tests of factual recall. Some students, such as those with a high level of communication apprehension, prefer the relative anonymity of a lecture format, in which the fear of being called upon to speak does not interfere with their ability to concentrate on the material being presented (McCroskey, 1998).

On the downside, lectures are not as effective as other methods in fostering higher levels of learning (application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation), or in developing psychomotor skills. Students tend to be passive and, according to various studies, their attention frequently wanes in 15 to 25 minutes and their retention within about eight weeks. Lectures are a "whole-group" method of instruction, a form of mass communication, and must be structured with an assumption that all the students are at about the same level

of initial understanding and have approximately the same ability to learn. Feedback is very limited. Students who do not learn well by listening are at a disadvantage.

Lectures demand that teachers practice the skills of effective public speaking. Students expect:

- (1) that the instructor will be knowledgeable enough to explain the topic in understandable terms;
- (2) that the lecture will be organized;
- (3) that the instructor will capture and hold attention;
- (4) that the lecture material will be selected with attention to its interest value;
- (5) that the teacher will be competent and enthusiastic; and
- (6) that the lecturer will demonstrate a sense of humor (Weaver, 1982).

Violating these expectations will diminish affect, for the speaker, the course, and the subject area.

One of the ways to maximize a lecture's effectiveness is to abide by the general rule (one supported by research) that a speaker should plan to "cover" material for only half of the allotted time, and use the rest of the time to buttress and repeat information with pointed examples and illustrations that relate the concepts to the students' own experiences. Take the time to introduce humor, either as a clarifying device or simply to break up the serious presentation and reawaken attentiveness -- students like teachers who have a sense of humor, and that liking rubs off on the material. Where possible, develop visual aids for multi-sensory appeal.

Students learn better if they know what they are about to learn; thus, an effective lecturer will provide advance organizers throughout the presentation to help students chunk the information into meaningful units. Collingwood and Hughes report the results of an experiment which indicated that students performed better on tests when given some form of notes to refer to during the lecture. When the teacher provides a detailed set of notes so that little note taking is required, or provides an outline of key points with diagrams, tables, and a place for students to record explanatory notes during the lecture, students will learn more than when they are left to their own devices in taking notes. This technique also has affective payoffs in that it gives the students a sense of not only where the teacher is going but how far he or she has to go before reaching closure. Anyone who has ever been caught in a traffic jam and experienced the anxiety associated with not knowing how long they will be stuck will understand the benefits of being able to predict likely progress.

An alternative strategy for helping students organize their notes has been supported by Kelly and Holmes (1979), and others who have implemented the "guided lecture procedure." Students are encouraged to simply listen and refrain from taking notes during the teacher's lecture, which is planned for approximately the first half of the period. They are then asked to write down what they recall from the lecture. The instructor takes five minutes or so to review main points and answer questions, after which the students move into small groups to cooperatively prepare a set of notes that are shared among group members. This procedure has the benefit of students' getting the "big picture" before trying to decide which of its components need to be recorded for future reference, and it is a means of personalizing the class atmosphere by encouraging supportive interaction within the small groups. The downside is that only half as much material may be covered in a lecture.

Finally, effective lecturers must be careful not to allow the potentially impersonal strategy of lecturing to interfere with their attempts to establish an immediate teacher-student relationship. Using student names, incorporating personal anecdotes and other means of self-disclosure, asking questions and encouraging students to talk, referring to class as "our" class and what "we" are doing, and using humor contribute to immediacy, as do maintaining eye contact with the students, smiling, having a relaxed body position and animated gestures, moving about the classroom during the lecture, and -- this one is very important to remember -- using a dynamic, vocally expressive style of delivery. These strategies have been shown to have both cognitive and affective learning payoffs. They help to personalize the instruction, to highlight important points, and to maintain interest by presenting continually shifting visual as well as oral cues (immediacy will be discussed further in chapter fourteen).

For the most part, elementary and secondary level teachers will find it advantageous to spread lecture material out over several class periods so that it can be interspersed with other instructional strategies. However, no matter how long (or short) individual lecture interludes might be, their preparation should include attention to both content and presentation. "Winging it" is not acceptable! The lecture can be a very effective communication system. It is not likely to be so without careful preparation.

### **The Teacher as a Moderator**

Several studies of instructional strategies and classroom interaction have concluded that students develop a greater affect for subjects taught via class discussion than by those taught strictly by lecture. Discussion allows students to formulate principles and applications

in their own words, giving a sense of ownership to course concepts. Discussion also provides teachers with prompt feedback on how students are processing information. A Stanford University study of technical skills necessary for effective teaching identified nine primary instructional skills, seven of which were related to classroom interaction: fluency in asking questions, reinforcing student participation, using probing questions, using questions that address higher level cognitive objectives, facility with divergent questions, appropriate use of a teacher nonverbal communication cues to reduce reliance on teacher talk, and using interaction techniques to reduce boredom and inattention.

As common as claims of desiring and encouraging class discussion are, many teachers find that getting students to talk is a difficult and frustrating task. Dreams of entering a classroom of bright and inquisitive students who bring with them thoughtful, probing questions related to assigned readings or previous class lectures are often dashed early in a semester -- or a career. "I'm always asking my students if they have any questions or comments," said one teacher, "but they just look at me. Nobody ever wants to talk." Why does this happen?

One of the problems teachers have in generating class discussion is their assuming that the students should be the initiators. Most students, however, do not come to class with questions or observations, at least those they wish to share. One of the keys to successful whole-class discussion is the teacher's ability to ask questions, not just to ask for them. Furthermore, the kind of question the teacher asks is central to her or his success in the role of moderator.

Closed questions, which have only one or a limited number of correct responses, are a good way of keeping students on their toes but rarely foster discussion. "What year did the Civil War begin?", "Can anyone explain how a rainbow is made?", or "How would knowledge of immediacy cues be useful in a sales position?" address knowledge, comprehension, and application learning objectives and invite students to become active participants in class but are looking for specific, correct answers.

Teachers need to be careful not to make answering such questions a threatening experience. Children with a high level of communication apprehension will often answer "I don't know" just to avoid being called on again, and any student will suffer some degree of embarrassment if put on the spot with a question he or she can't answer. For that reason, teachers should avoid calling on individual students who do not signal their willingness to participate. While calling only on those students who volunteer may limit interaction to the more extroverted students, the teacher should question her or his motives for insisting students answer questions when they do not want to. Is this important to the instructional

objectives for that unit, or is just another instance of the "Gotcha" game played by so many teachers?

Systems of questioning around a circle or down the rows are viewed with increasing terror by many students as their time "to look bad" approaches. All such systems are certain to accomplish is to reduce the cognitive learning of some students while, at the same time, generating negative affective learning. In any case, the teacher's response to wrong answers and her or his sensitive use of appropriate, helpful prompts (rather than just "I'm waiting" or "Go on") will go a long way toward establishing a nonthreatening environment in using closed questions.

With closed questions, the teacher remains the primary focus of the teacher-student interaction. It is the use of open questions that is most effective at shifting that focus to a genuine discussion atmosphere where the teacher steps back into a moderator's role. Open questions are particularly appropriate for getting at analysis, synthesis, and application objectives. They do not have right answers; although students may be challenged to defend their positions, they can never be wrong. At their best, they motivate discussions among students in which the teacher steps in only to draw closure or redirect the discussion's focus. Consider your response to the following questions:

Suppose you discover that your wonderful one-year-old child, because of a mix-up at the hospital, is not yours. Would you want to exchange the child to correct the mistake?

Would you rather be extremely successful professionally and have a tolerable but boring private life, or have an extremely exciting private life and only a tolerable and uninspiring professional life?

Would you accept twenty years of extraordinary happiness and fulfillment if it meant you would die at the end of the period?

For \$100,000 would you go for three months without washing, brushing your teeth, or using deodorant? Assume you could not explain your reasons to anyone. (Stock, 1987)

While these might not be questions you would pose in your classroom, they illustrate the power of open questions in stimulating thought. A classroom adaptation might be: "What if

Romeo and Juliet had not been successful in killing themselves; they attempted suicide, but pulled through. What do you think would have happened to them?" Posing this question to a class of high school freshmen not only asks them to draw on what they know about Romeo and Juliet, their families, and other insights from the play they have read; it also invites them to draw on their own experiences with and attitudes about parent-child relationships, love, early marriage, suicide, and so forth.

Participation in classroom discussion can often be maximized by the use of "buzz groups," small groups of students who put their heads together to briefly discuss a question among themselves and then report their response to the class as a whole. With open questions, this technique allows an opportunity for more students to express their ideas in a finite amount of time. With closed questions, it takes the spotlight off individual students and encourages peer teaching. Most students are less apprehensive about communicating in a buzz group than they are in front of the class as a whole, and most groups are more confident about voicing a response that has been "test-driven" for peer response.

A final recommendation regarding the teacher's role as a moderator concerns wait time. It is extremely common to observe teachers answering their own questions, usually because a student response is not immediately forthcoming. Students quickly learn this pattern and absolve themselves of any responsibility for participation. Questions are not perceived as "real questions." How many of us have not at one time or other heard a teacher monologue that goes something like this:

"OK, who read the chapter? Anyone? What was it about? The Civil War! Anyway what was that war about? It was about slavery, wasn't it? What do you think about slavery? Was it worth fighting a war over? I think it was. Does anyone disagree with me? Nobody does? Well then, what was the first battle in the Civil War? . . . ."

Many times students enter our classes having had a great deal of experience with nonparticipatory classroom norms, and with teachers whose questions are primarily rhetorical. We have to spend some time changing their expectancies, and we have to give them time to think. It is estimated that as many as 70 % of students at the college level never participate in class discussion. Is it because they were taught not to by teachers who did not wait long enough for responses . . . ?

## **The Teacher as a Trainer**

Teaching psychomotor skills requires that students have an opportunity to practice skills until they master them. Sometimes, as in learning to drive a car, students are highly motivated to repeat the same task over and over until they learn how to do it. Sometimes students are not as highly motivated to continue practicing and become bored with repetition. When faced with such a situation, the effectiveness of skill lessons is enhanced by the teacher's offering ways to vary the performance of the skill. For example, children who are learning to write their alphabet letters may lose interest in writing letters over and over on lined paper, but remain excited about painting an alphabet mural, drawing letters in pudding with their fingers, creating alphabet people, being given the opportunity to write on the chalkboard, and so forth.

For teachers to effectively coach students through to mastery of a skill, it is essential that they be able to break the performance of the skill into separate components so they can offer corrective instruction. One of the authors clearly remembers years of elementary school physical education classes in which the teacher rewarded students for being able to do things, and punished them for not being able to do them, but never offered coaching. Having moved on to high school, she was amazed that one didn't have to be a good volleyball player but could become a better one by following some corrective instruction in how to serve the ball. Some students got better and better at volleyball just by getting more playing experience, but some (the author included) simply repeated ineffective moves until being pulled out of the game and concentrating only on one aspect of play.

Teacher/trainers of highly skilled students are characteristically masters of isolating and working on specific components of performance in their training programs: the competitive golfer's trainer will work with eliminating a small twist of the wrist that compromises control; the violin prodigy's teacher will note that additional finger dexterity might enable the young musician to reach new heights and assign dexterity exercises. Teachers who can help students figure out why they are not mastering a skill have themselves mastered a primary coaching skill.

## **The Teacher as a Manager**

Small group projects typically involve two to six students working together on a common task. They provide an opportunity to maximize students' active involvement in class, to develop their interpersonal communication and cooperation skills, and to reinforce their knowledge through peer teaching. Research provides evidence that students retain information longer when they have an opportunity to verbalize it, especially to their peers.



Working in small groups tends to increase students' motivation, partly because they enjoy the opportunity to interact with their peers and partly because they care about being regarded positively by their peers and don't want to let their classmates down by failing to do their part.

Some teachers are uncomfortable with small group activities because they cannot monitor what is going on with all students at all times and feel out of control of what is going on in the classroom. Some have observed that students spend too much of the time off-task, that one or two group members tend to "carry" the others, and that grading individual contributions to group projects is difficult. Some teachers are not exactly sure what they are supposed to do while students are working in groups and feel like they are abdicating their responsibility to be teaching. The concern of these teachers is well-founded, for if the teacher is not a good manager, group activities may be worse than useless.

The teacher's role in small group instruction is that of a manager -- of resources and of personnel. As a manager, the teacher should clearly define the task at hand, and provide guidance as to time-lines and the organization of various steps needed to complete the assignment. Some group tasks are designed to be completed within a single class period while others may continue for all or a portion of several weeks or even months. In the latter case, it is particularly helpful to guide the groups in determining short-term goals within the longer-term objectives. Giving students a list of resources and telling them "Do a report on Guatemala, see you in six weeks" is an ineffective management practice! Two of the primary reasons that groups flounder and spend time off-task are that they (1) don't know what they are supposed to be doing, or (2) don't know how to go about doing it.

As personnel managers, teachers will consider the composition of task groups and make strategic decisions on how they will be formed. There are valid reasons to form "work groups" that remain together throughout various projects (students get to know one another and their individual strengths and limitations; they tend to work more efficiently as time goes on, becoming a sort of interdependent minicorporation) and equally valid reasons to create a new mix each time groups are assigned (students develop broader sociological ties; cliques are less likely to develop). There are valid reasons to mix motivated with less motivated students (someone takes direction) and equally valid reasons to let the motivated students work together and let the unmotivated ones work things out on their own (at best, new leaders are discovered; at worst, at least the usual leaders don't feel put-upon). Deciding on a grouping strategy will often relate to the teacher's affective objectives for a particular class. Once the groups are formed, the teacher-as-manager should monitor working relationships and intervene if conflict is undermining the group's ability to function.

As resource managers, teachers should be able to provide groups access to the information and materials they require to accomplish their tasks. They will monitor the groups' progress and suggest means of following up on ideas, checking information, and presenting their product. In more extensive group projects (those that take more than a single class period), it is often wise not to over-manage up front. If students are given all the resources they are to use and a very specific model of what they are to come up with, much of the incidental learning from the group's process will be lost. The group is then the teacher's staff, working on the teacher's project rather than their own.

### **The Teacher as a Coordinator and Innovator**

The use of resources to supplement instruction can serve many purposes. Computer-aided instruction and other programmed instruction packages can be created or purchased to be used as either a primary instructional strategy or a supplemental tool. Films, videotapes, audiotapes, instructional television, books, magazines, newspapers, demonstrations, guest speakers, simulations and so forth can be used to complement other instructional strategies or as the cornerstone of instruction. The Arizona teacher who has created a space lab simulation in his science classroom, and who guides students through an elaborate scheme of science projects within the parameters of the simulation -- in which student crews ultimately spend several real-time days and nights "on board" -- uses the simulation as the cornerstone of his instructional strategy, incorporating lectures, discussions, group tasks, audiovisual aids, and other strategies as enhancements. Teachers who are a part of the Time Educational Services program use the magazine as the cornerstone of their instructional strategy, while others organize a class around a series of guest speakers.

Most of the time, resource-based instruction is supplementary. Resources are used within a traditional teacher-directed classroom to stimulate various senses, present information in alternative formats, and enhance text and lecture material. Sometimes they are used as a break for the teacher or as a reward for the students. Usually students like them.

Many teachers are unaware of the range of available instructional resources. Consequently, they either do not use them, or draw from a limited selection of often outdated films or filmstrips that are available through the school or community library. Searching out resources -- getting on mailing lists, talking to instructional media specialists, becoming familiar with resource indexes, searching out available guest speakers, learning how to use or even writing computer programs, designing simulations -- is time consuming.

It is not necessary that every teacher choose to do so; however, all teachers should remember that it is better to use no resources than to use bad (dated, poorly produced, age-level inappropriate) resources.

The key to using resource-based instruction effectively is to know exactly how the resource will be used to enhance instructional objectives. Whatever the type of resource, the teacher should experience it in its entirety before using it in the classroom, and coordinate the logistics for its effective use -- for example: making sure the room can be darkened enough for quality film projection; figuring out the best seating arrangement for viewing a videotape on a standard-size television monitor; thinking about who will get to use the three computers when, and what the other students will be doing at that time; deciding how to schedule a guest speaker so that several classes can benefit; scheduling carefully and compulsively checking that the rented film or the speaker will be there as scheduled, that the VCR is not out for service, and that the handouts will be ready as promised. Failing to take these steps almost assures a diminished affective payoff from incorporating the resource.

Few instructional resources are so powerful that they work alone without some sort of set up and/or follow-up activities. Resource-based instruction is the most effective when teachers use resources rather than defer to them. Maximizing their effectiveness requires considerable logistical coordination on the teacher's part. It is usually worth the effort.

Employing a variety of instructional strategies appeals to various learning styles and tends to keep both teachers and students from getting into a rut. The teacher's preferences and individual strengths will influence strategic decisions, although the instructional objectives at hand should always be central to selecting the most appropriate teacher's role at a given point in a course of study. We would encourage teachers to experiment, working with one lesson or unit at a time, to increase their own repertoire of skills and classroom-tested alternatives. In this chapter, we have suggested that a teacher might wear many hats: speaker, moderator, trainer, manager, and coordinator. Most teachers look good in all of them, and most students get tired of looking at the same one every day.

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## COMMUNICATION, AFFECT, AND STUDENT NEEDS

# 4

### Chapter Four Objectives

1. List and discuss the communication roles/functions of the student/receiver in the instructional communication process.
2. Review some academic needs of students. Review several needs that "goes beyond the academic."
3. Be able to explain and give examples of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and CIA.
4. Discuss the results of meeting student needs upon learning and classroom behavior.

To improve communication, we must fulfill student needs. To fulfill student needs, we must employ effective and affective communication. When students' needs are not met, problems arise. Glasser (1990) suggests, "when disruption occurs in schools, it is usually with students who have had great difficulty satisfying their needs in school" (p. 135).

Students communicate with their instructors to satisfy certain academic, personal, and interpersonal needs. Most teachers attempt to satisfy the academic needs of the students. They feel an educational commitment or obligation to fulfill these needs, but other student needs often are neglected. However, some teachers try to communicate with their students to assist them to satisfy their personal and interpersonal needs, for they recognize that if a student's personal and interpersonal needs are not met, the academic needs may never be met either.

Recently, calls have increased for teaching to become more humane. Many argue that educational systems must meet more than just academic needs for students to succeed. In some educational systems today, there are special programs designed to help meet the personal and interpersonal needs of the student, in conjunction with meeting the academic need.

In this chapter, we will briefly discuss the basic academic needs of students. Then we will discuss two traditional interpersonal need models, which are often found in the literature. Within each model a discussion of the many personal and interpersonal needs of our students will be reviewed. Lastly, we will discuss some affective and communication outcomes as a result of meeting student needs.

## Measuring Student Affect

A number of different measures have been developed by researchers to examine affect in the classroom. For the purposes of this textbook, the measure designed by McCroskey (1994) will be used. This instrument measures students' attitudes toward (1) instructor of the course (teacher evaluation), (2) content of the course (affective learning), along with measures of higher order levels of student affect, (3) taking additional classes in the subject matter, and (4) taking additional classes with the teacher. Dimensions two and three are in congruence with Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia's (1956) conceptualization of the affective domain in learning. Dimensions one and four represent teacher evaluation. Figure 4.1 is the affective learning measure.

### Affective Learning Measure

Please circle the number that best represents your feelings. The closer a number is to the item/adjective the more you feel that way.

Overall, the instructor I have in the class is:

1	Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
2	Valuable	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Worthless
3	Unfair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fair
4	Positive	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Negative

I feel the class' content is:

5	Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
6	Valuable	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Worthless
7	Unfair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fair
8	Positive	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Negative

My likelihood of taking future courses in this content area is:

9	Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Likely
10	Possible	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Impossible
11	Improbable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Probable
12	Would	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Would not

My likelihood of taking future courses with this specific teacher is:

13	Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Likely
14	Possible	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Impossible
15	Improbable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Probable
16	Would	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Would not

Scoring:

- Teacher Evaluation: Add (1, 2, 3, & 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- Affective Learning: Add (5, 6, 7, & 8) \_\_\_\_\_
- Future Content: Add (9, 10, 11, & 12) \_\_\_\_\_
- Future Teacher: Add (13, 14, 15, & 16) \_\_\_\_\_

Scores should be between 4 & 28. Higher scores indicate higher affective levels.



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### **Scoring for Affective Learning and Instructor Evaluation:**

Affective Learning = Affect toward content + Affect toward classes in this context.

Instructor Evaluation = Affect toward instructor + Affect toward taking classes with this instructor.

Source:

McCroskey, J. C. (1994). Assessment of affect toward communication and affect toward instruction in communication. In S. Morreale & M. Brooks (Eds.), 1994 SCA summer conference proceedings and prepared remarks: Assessing college student competence in speech communication. Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.

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### **Figure 4.1 Affective Learning Measure**

Overall, this measure is useful to determine how students affectively feel in your classroom. This measure can be used in a number of different ways. You could use the teacher evaluation factor to see how students affectively feel about you as their teacher at various points during a school year. Another idea is to use the content sections (future classes and affective learning) to determine initial content affect and previous affective learning at the beginning of the school year. Sadly, if a student enters into your class with low affective learning initially, it is going to be a constant struggle if the affective component is not treated.

### **Basic Academic Needs of Students**

If we were to take a poll of the basic academic needs of students in a typical classroom in any school in this country, many of the needs listed would still have an interpersonal or personal edge to them. This is significant in that students will always commingle their own interpersonal needs with academic needs. In this section, we will review six basic academic needs of students.

***One: Each student in our classroom needs to have an understanding of our instructional goals and objectives.***

If we do not communicate our instructional goals clearly and concisely, we will have students who are confused or misguided. We will have students who have no direction, meaning, or understanding of what they should be doing. All of us have sat in classrooms where we had no idea what the instructional manager wanted us to do, so we did whatever it was we thought they wanted us to do. Most of the time it was wrong. After awhile, we

may have stopped performing. In short, we behaved normally and did not succeed, at least as the instructor would have defined success.

***Two: Each of us needs to have a goal for each lesson we teach.***

We need to constantly inform, remind, and communicate to our students as we accomplish our goal. Goal setting will reduce the likelihood of having inattentive, confused, direction- less students. In fact Wlodkowski (1978) suggested that:

...with the goal-setting model, the student knows that she or he is in command and can calculate what to do to avoid wasting time or experiencing self-defeat. Thus, before even beginning the learning task, the student knows that her/his effort will be worthwhile and has an actual sense that there is a good probability for success. (p. 54)

***Three: Our instruction should match the students' cognitive development/potential and learning style.***

We are well aware of the fact that students are grouped according to ability, grades, and achievement. Regardless we need to occasionally take note of each of our students' cognitive development and maturity. We cannot assume because students are in the same grade they have the same cognitive abilities, development, or potential. If we make this assumption, many of our students will cease to learn and their cognitive development will drop sharply. We should attempt to match the content to the student's cognitive ability.

In addition, we should attempt to match the content to the student's learning style. No two students learn exactly the same way. Now this doesn't mean that we have to determine each and every student's learning style. It does mean that we need to be more cognizant of the various learning styles or preferences and learning paces of our students and have a variety of instructional approaches to each lesson. Dembo (1977) suggests that:

A teacher who uses the best textbooks available and develops the most interesting and stimulating lesson plans can still fail to reach a majority of students in his (her) classes who do not have the necessary structures (operations) to enable them to "understand" the presented material. This means that the classroom teacher must be able to (1) assess a child's level of cognitive development, and (2) determine the type of ability the child needs to understand the subject matter (p. 273).

In conclusion, we should be aware of our student's current cognitive capabilities, learning styles, learning preferences, and learning pace. We should attempt to accommodate and assure students' learning by using materials and lesson plans that will enable them to learn and understand.

***Four: Our students have a need or desire to be active participants in the learning process.***

Leonard (1968) noted, "no environment can strongly affect a person unless it is strongly interactive" (p. 39). We believe that when students are more actively involved in the learning process, more learning is likely to occur than when they are passive observers. For example, more learning is likely in classrooms where there are many student-to-teacher interactions, student-to-student interactions, and question and answer sessions; where teachers provide feedback and students are encouraged to communicate about the content. Students often learn more by participating in the learning process than by sitting by and watching or listening. V. Jones and L. Jones (1981) noted, "children tend to learn what they do rather than what they see or hear" (p. 42). At various points in the instructional process we should stop and have the students participate actively in some manner:

Good pedagogy must involve presenting the child with situations in which he himself (or she, herself) experiments, in the broadest sense of that term--trying things out to see what happens, manipulating things, manipulating symbols, posing questions and seeking his (or her) own answers, reconciling what he (or she) finds one time with what he (or she) finds at another, comparing his (or her) findings with those of other children. (Duckworth, 1964, p. 2).

In summary, when students do, students learn. When students don't do, they may or may not learn. Often very passive, unmotivated students will not learn in a passive, unmotivated environment. Hence, we have to make learning fun and exciting.

***Five: Regardless of the age of the student, they have a need to see how the content relates to their lives and pursue some interests of their own.***

Students are more willing to listen, to communicate, to inquire, and to learn if the subject matter has some relevance in their lives and if they are allowed to pursue some of

their own interests. Many of us have had the experience of having to attend or being forced to attend meetings or workshops which hold no interest to us or our immediate lives. Yet we went, we fussed about it, we sat politely, and we learned only that we would never attend another meeting unless forced to do so. We don't want our students feeling this way about our classes. We want our students to see that what we are teaching is relevant to them, their lives, and their futures. We can often encourage this view by allowing our students to pursue some of their interests and relate them back to the classroom content. If students are allowed to pursue some of their own interests, their enthusiasm might build for our class and content. Students more than ever are asking, "how does this relate to me, or what I do?" Glasser (1969) examined the reasons for students failing and found that:

...with increasing frequency from grade one through the end of graduate school, much of what is required is either totally or partially irrelevant to the world around them as they see it. Thus both excess memorization and increasing irrelevance cause them to withdraw into failure and strike out in delinquent acts. (p. 30)

Finally, we need to adapt our lessons to the lives of our students, allow them to integrate some of their own interests into our lessons, and be able to answer the question, "So teacher, how do I use this?"

***Six: Perhaps more important than the other academic needs of students is the need to experience success in the classroom.***

The reports are out weekly: experiencing success, not failure, in the classroom environment will lead to better students, more motivated students, better teachers, and better classrooms. Absolutely nobody enjoys being in an environment where they fail over and over. Why should we think that it is any different for our students? When students have long-term failure experiences, they tend to become negative, communicate about school in a negative fashion, and mentally or physically drop out of the system. From the day they enter school until the day they complete school, our students should be able to count more successes than failures. If all they experience is failure then our system is failing them.

### **Traditional Interpersonal Need Models**

Before we continue, we should have an established definition for the way we are using the word "needs." A need is a goal, state, activity, object, or a thing whose attainment will facilitate or promote a person acquiring a better psychological, emotional,

behavioral, affective, or cognitive condition. There are three primary characteristics of needs. Needs are usually viewed as acquired, developed, or learned. Often our students come into school with a set of learned needs which they expect us to fulfill. They have usually learned or become aware of these needs from parents, guardians, other adults, siblings, and peer groups.

Needs are of an internal or external nature. Needs that have an internal nature are often fulfilled by the individual, however, needs that have an external nature are often dependent upon another individual assisting in the fulfillment of the need. For example, many of our students have not acquired a highly sophisticated method of giving themselves internal rewards, hence, they expect us to fulfill their external needs in order for them to feel good internally about themselves. This places us in a very precarious and risky situation. We want our students to be able to reward themselves internally, however, many do not seem to be able to do this without first having us reward them externally. Most of us have learned that in order to stimulate a student's internal reward system, often we have to first reward their external reward system through communication and affect. Student fulfillment of needs is linked with how successfully the teacher is able to fulfill those needs through communication and affect building strategies.

Lastly, needs can change or vary as situations, demands, and variables change. For example, often when we get one need satisfied, then we have another need arise that requires attention. Or, some low level need is satisfied, then we begin focusing on higher level needs that require attention. Or, sometimes we have to prioritize our needs. In some cases, we might abandon one need in favor of a higher level need or more immediate need. For example, when our supervisors tell us to have the attendance forms completed by 9:05 A. M., we may abandon the need to go to the restroom in order to meet the more immediate need (attendance forms by 9:05 a. m.). Often the same is true of our students. For example, a student has to complete a project before the class period is over, but he or she needs to go to the restroom. Finally, the restroom need outweighs the project fulfillment need and the student asks to leave the room. The student fulfills the most immediate need (e. g., restroom), but he or she may not be able to fulfill the other need (e. g., completion of the project).

While needs are usually learned, have an external and internal component, and can change, all persons have an agenda of needs that must be satisfied for effective interpersonal relationships and communication. Students have these agendas too. We will discuss two traditional need models that impact the way we feel and communicate and the way our students feel and communicate.

## **Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation**

Schutz (1958; 1966) developed a measure called the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation - Behavior (FIRO-B) scale. This measure was designed to determine a person's need to express and a person's need to receive three of the most important interpersonal needs: control, inclusion, and affection. Schutz felt people desired a balance between expression of control, inclusion, and affection, and the need to receive a certain amount of control, inclusion, and affection.

The interpersonal need for control is associated with the need to demonstrate influence, dominance, power, compliance, responsibility, and guidance. This is often viewed as the need for communicating behavior control. There are two dimensions to the need for control. The first dimension is concerned with the personal need to express some control over one's own surroundings and environmental circumstances. Students, of all ages, need to feel they can exert some control over certain facets of their school environment. They need to feel they are occasionally "in control." We will encounter this behavior quite frequently, even in little children. Often our students like to exert control, be in charge, in command, influence others, direct others, and so on. They like to demonstrate to others that they can make decisions, follow rules, do things on their own, and show us they are responsible, competent human beings. The second dimension is concerned with the personal need to receive some control, direction, or guidance from another. Students, of all ages, need to feel that they are receiving direction, guidance, and control in certain facets of their educational career. For example, it is legitimate for the teacher to assist in guiding a student through a project -- to show her or him the right way of doing something. It is also appropriate for a teacher to control a student's behavior when the student is misbehaving.

The interpersonal need for inclusion is associated with the need for being included, being a part of a group, being able to fit in, or being a member of a group. This is often viewed as the need for social inclusion. Social inclusion is often seen as the need to communicate, associate, and interact with others. There are two dimensions to the need for inclusion. The first dimension is concerned with the personal need to express inclusion to others. Students, of all ages, need to feel they can assist others in becoming a part of a group. Students truly fulfill their inclusion need when they are able to recognize and assist other students with affiliation. The second dimension is concerned with the personal need to receive recognition, affiliation, or association with a group or club. Students often rely on teachers to assist them in becoming a member of a group. We often recognize those students who need a little extra help in "fitting in."

The interpersonal need for affection or affinity is associated with the need for being liked, accepted, loved, and cared for. The affinity-seeking need is often viewed as the need to communicate in such a way we can get others to like and accept us. There are two dimensions to the need for affection. The first dimension is concerned with the personal need to express affection to others. Students, of all ages, need to feel they can express warmth, friendliness, and caring to others in the school environment. Students often fulfill their affection need by telling us how much they like us. The second dimension is concerned with the personal need to receive affection, liking, warmth, friendliness, and caring. Students often rely on teachers to give them affection. We often recognize those students who need a little extra affection or care and try to give it to them.

In conclusion, Schutz (1966) gives the following ideas about distinctions among the three primary needs:

A difference between affection behavior, inclusion behavior, and control behavior is illustrated by the different feelings a man has in being turned down by a fraternity, failed in a course by a professor, and rejected by his girl. The fraternity excludes him and tells him, in effect, that they as a group don't have sufficient interest in him. The professor fails him and says, in effect, that he finds him incompetent in his field. His girl rejects him, and tells him, in effect, that she doesn't find him lovable. (p. 24).

We agree with Schutz, that the need for control, inclusion, and affection are as relevant to a person as the needs for food and water. We go one step further and suggest if students' needs for behavior control, social inclusion, and affection or affinity are not fulfilled, we may have problem students in our classrooms and schools.

### **Interpersonal/Instructional Needs Approach**

Hurt, Scott, and McCroskey (1978) suggested a number of interpersonal problems could arise because student needs are not met. They suggested when the control, social, and affection needs of students are not met their intellectual, academic, and interpersonal communication skills might suffer. We have attempted to expand their ideas concerning the need for behavior control, social inclusion, and affection. Below is a discussion of potential outcomes from not meeting the personal and interpersonal needs of students.

When students fail to meet their need for some control over some of their educational circumstances two distinct behavior patterns might emerge. They might become

*very submissive or very rebellious*. The extremely submissive student believes others in the school regard them as incompetent, incapable, irresponsible, subordinate to others, resigned to being a follower, not a leader, uncomfortable with making decisions, unassertive, unable to defend their rights, and easy to push around. In fact, they often behave and communicate in the manner which others have ascribed for them. They do not ask questions when they should, don't seek extra help, don't join in exercises and groups, wait for others to tell them what to do, and often don't seek out more information about assignments and the subject matter. They often miss out on acquiring and learning new academic knowledge.

On the other hand, the extremely rebellious student believes others in the school regard them as aggressive, rude, pushy, disagreeable, unmanageable, uncontrollable, resistant to teacher or principal control efforts, disobedient, and quarrelsome. In fact, they often behave and communicate in the manner which others have ascribed for them. They ask more questions than needed, refuse to do certain assignments, always quarrel over assignments, grades, and so on, attempt to exert large amounts of control over others, push other students around, attempt to become a leader by fear and intimidation, and communicate in an offensive manner. These students are most often the class problems or disruptive students, and little learning is taking place (for more information on student misbehaviors, see chapter 11). Most of their communication efforts are spent on maintaining control or staying in charge of things.

When students fail to meet their need to be included socially, two distinct behavioral patterns might emerge. They might become *very undersocial or very oversocial*. The undersocial student believes others in the school regard them as aloof, completely independent, unsociable, cynical, solitary, cold, unpleasant, and even impolite. These are the students who are seen as "uppity," "too good for the rest," or "snobbish." In fact, they often behave and communicate in the manner that others have ascribed for them. They might reduce their communication with others as a means of protection, cut themselves off from possible friendships, not work with others in a cooperative manner, be cool to others who approach them to help them, and exhibit an "I don't need you attitude." This type of student is very difficult for a teacher to work with because the student is not friendly or pleasant. We often have to work very hard at integrating this person into our classroom experiences.

On the other hand, the oversocial student believes others in the school regard them as jolly, outgoing, and attention seeking. In fact, they often behave or communicate in the manner which others have ascribed for them. They might become the "class clown," use



inappropriate communication and attention getting behaviors, dominate communication situations, violate an accepted social norm, prevent others from learning by being overly outgoing, and do silly things at inappropriate times. This type of student, too, is very difficult for a teacher to work with because the student is overly concerned about belonging, fitting in, and wants to communicate with her or his peer group, not the teacher.

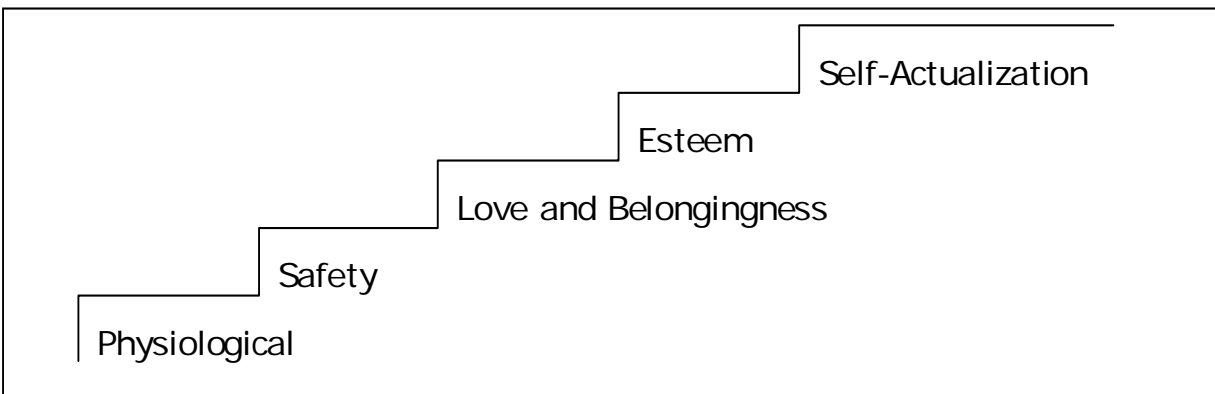
When students fail to meet their need for affection or affinity, two distinct behavioral patterns might emerge. They might become *very impersonal or very overpersonal*. The impersonal student believes others in the school regard them as cold, unfeeling, uncaring, detached, unemotional, and unconcerned. In fact, they often behave and communicate in the manner that others have ascribed for them. They become cautious or tentative about developing a relationship with anyone, stay on guard when with others, rarely reveal personal things about themselves, communicate in a cold, impersonal fashion, and reveal only surface information about themselves. The impersonal student is difficult for a teacher to assist. They remain aloof and distant from the teacher. They will not seek help when they need it and rarely approach us.

On the other hand, the overpersonal student believes others in the school regard them as too personal, too revealing, and too open. In fact, they often behave and communicate in the manner that others have ascribed for them. They become overly communicative, they want to reveal information about themselves and their family they shouldn't, they want to talk about other teachers and students, they discuss topics in class and in other open areas which are inappropriate, they reveal too much private information about themselves, and tend to rush into relationships. Frankly, they make us very uncomfortable because they self-disclose very private information about themselves and others close to them to us. In addition, they want to be our best friends or best buddies and we are not comfortable with this either.

As you can surmise, the failure to satisfy the student needs for control, social inclusion, and affinity can influence teacher/student relationships, communication, affect, and student academic achievement. When students are rebellious, overly social, and overly personal not only do their academics suffer but so do their communication relationships with us, their peers, and others in the school environment. Likewise when students are submissive, undersocial, and impersonal their academics and communication relationships with school affiliates suffer.

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1970) designed a hierarchy of human needs. He felt that lower level needs must be met first before higher level needs could be considered. His theory is like building blocks. Any good building block structure must have a solid, firm, good foundation before it can support more blocks. As blocks are added, the building grows. The hierarchy of human needs is like an infant learning to climb stairs. It is one step at a time, some steps take longer to master than others, but eventually the infant will reach the top step. For example, a person has to eat in order to survive to fulfill other needs. Our students often have to fulfill their lower level, basic needs before they move onto high level needs. Let's use the food example again. Many schools have breakfast and lunch programs provided free for students so they know the student's need for food has been satisfied and now he or she is ready to tackle higher level needs. Below are descriptions of the needs that are in the hierarchy from lowest level needs to higher level needs. Figure 4.1 demonstrates Maslow's hierarchy of needs.



**Figure 4.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

The *physiological needs* are "the most prepotent of all needs" (Maslow, 1970, p. 36). These needs must be satisfied if the body is to continue functioning. Physiological needs are needs such as food, water, air, sleep, rest, and need for activity or stimulation. This need must be satisfied so that people can function well. If these needs are not satisfied, a person does not function well and they cannot move to a higher need without fulfilling this need. For example, many of our students are tired or need rest. Until they get the proper amount of rest, they are thinking of little else.

The *safety needs* include the need for safety or protection from threats of harm or actual physical harm. In addition, there is a need for security, freedom from fear, structure

and order, and stability. From observing both children and adults, Maslow concludes that we both want "a safe, orderly, predictable, lawful, organized world" (p. 40). If our students feel threatened or scared they will not be able to function and think about higher level needs. This is why our classrooms must be "safe shelters" or "safe places" for them to be. If we make our classrooms "scary places" then our children won't be able to focus on learning, they will only be able to focus on protection and safety needs. The next three steps in the hierarchy focus more on interpersonal communication relationship needs. The first two steps focused more on physical and biological needs.

The *belongingness or affection needs* encompass a hunger for affection, caring, belongingness, and perhaps love. These needs include good, strong, affectionate family relationships, peer relationships, and academic relationships. This is where the students who are not included in academic affairs or school related events often miss out. This is also where students who don't feel needed, loved, or interpersonally close to others tend to lose out. When this need is not satisfied, then the students are constantly focusing on this need and are never able to get past this level in the hierarchy. Sometimes this need might be more important to them than even the need for food, water, or rest.

The *esteem needs* are affiliated with the desire to have status, dignity, respect, recognition, attention, and to be appreciated by others. In addition, people have the need to have a high, stable opinion of one's own self. We not only want to be respected but we want self-respect. We must remember that a person who does not respect her or himself will not garner respect from another. This is where we develop our self-esteem. Often our students strive to please us so they can achieve our appreciation, respect, recognition, and support.

Lastly, the *self-actualization need* is the desire to do or be what one is uniquely suited for. "A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself" (Maslow, 1970, p. 46). This is the need to use our abilities, potentials, skills, and talents to achieve and be all that we can be. For example, a good teacher makes good students, and then good students make us better teachers. There is some controversy as to whether a person can truly ever be self-actualized. Self-actualization can also vary dramatically from person to person in its expression. A person may be self-actualized if they feel that they have used all their skills, talents, and ability to better her or himself.

In summary, if we don't meet some of the interpersonal needs of our students we will never have the opportunity to meet the academic needs of our students. Most all of our students have interpersonal needs that demand constant attention. The interpersonal needs of love, belongingness, inclusion, and esteem must be met either separately or in

conjunction with their academic needs. The next section reviews various verbal and nonverbal communication strategies for meeting the social and interpersonal needs of our students.

### **Outcomes of Meeting Student Needs**

While it may seem simple, the general conclusion that can be drawn from the above is that when student needs are met, teacher/student communication will be improved and teacher/student affect will increase. When teachers communicate in such a way that student needs are satisfied, then student affect will increase for the teacher. When teachers have higher affect with their students then effective communication will increase between teacher and student. Hurt, Scott, and McCroskey (1978) summarize by stating:

In closing, we would like to reemphasize that the fact that students' needs go beyond the acquisition of academic skills. Long after forgetting what happened on a particular date in history, or how to conjugate a French verb, or how to solve an algebraic equation, students will continue to experience the needs we have talked about. Thus, we accomplish a number of things when we try to reduce the distance between ourselves and our students and thereby assist them in satisfying these needs. At the very minimum, we may thwart the possibility of interpersonal needs interfering with the satisfaction of academic needs, improve communication, and promote interpersonal solidarity. At the same time, we also may be assisting our students in satisfying interpersonal needs when classrooms, for them, have long been a thing of the past. (pp. 188-189)

This is an overall result of meeting student needs. Below is a systematic breakdown of the various outcomes of meeting student needs.

First, whenever basic student needs are satisfied, the student is able to focus more clearly on the purposes of schooling, education, and learning. Our students are more competent at being receivers of educational information and processing the information and responding appropriately to the information.

Second, when basic student needs are satisfied, the student is more likely to behave in a socially responsible manner and not become the classroom discipline problem. Often when student needs are unfulfilled, the student exhibits socially unacceptable behaviors and becomes the educational system's discipline nightmare.

Third, when basic student needs are fulfilled, the classroom manager has more positive feelings toward her or his students. Teachers who cannot fulfill student needs or don't recognize student needs are often less positive about their students than teachers who recognize and fulfill student needs. A classroom full of satisfied students leads to a satisfied instructor.

Fourth, when basic student needs are met, students are more likely to internalize the information they have received. Students are more willing to listen, learn, and internalize educational ideas when their minds and bodies have been satisfied in needed ways. Students who internalize information use the information more often than students who don't internalize. Hence, if meeting student needs aids in internalization of information, then we should attempt to meet more student needs.

Fifth, a teacher who meets student needs is likely to have students who are more willing to listen, learn, and have increased attention spans. Students who are not worrying about some of their needs being fulfilled can listen longer and pay more attention in class.

Sixth, when basic student needs are fulfilled, the interaction between student and teacher and student to student will increase. In addition, the communication is more likely to be constructive and effective, because the student is not focused on some basic need that requires attention. To improve communication, we must fulfill needs; to fulfill needs, we must employ effective communication. Fulfilling needs and effective communication are often interdependent.

Seventh, the teacher who fulfills basic student needs has students who are more willing to work with one another cooperatively and collaboratively on instructional projects. When students are not focused on some basic need, they can work with others without dissension and grievances.

In summary, students that view their teachers as able to satisfy some of their basic needs are more satisfied with their teacher, the instructional model, and school. They also have more effective communication relationships with their instructors, their peers, and school administrators. In addition, the parents of students who have their needs fulfilled generally feel more positive about the teachers, the school, and the administrators. The fulfillment of needs leads to increased positive affect for teachers, school, and the system.

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## Chapter Five Objectives

1. Describe the explanations concerning how learning occurs.
2. Distinguish between learning style and learning preference.
3. List and discuss the various learning styles. Give examples of each learning style.
4. Review instructional strategies to be employed with different learning styles.

Not all students learn in the same way. Learning styles have been defined as the "cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to learning environments" (Keefe, 1982, p. 43). Within teaching-learning interactions, an effort to assess learning style reflects a receiver orientation and recognizes that students differ in their preference for and ability to process various kinds of instructional messages. Style elements may be conditions under which an individual is most comfortable and prefers to learn, or they may be factors which must be recognized to understand how information is processed and stored (Gorham, 1986). These conditions can be assessed through both observation of and discussion with the student.

Discussions of learning style appeared in the literature as early as 1892, but early findings were plagued with methodological problems and with a preoccupation with determining the one stylistic insight that would most improve student learning. Current efforts to explain how students learn best tend to follow one of two paths: one group is primarily concerned with attempts to explain differences in cognitive processing, or how one's brain makes sense of information; the other group focuses on applied models of learning and teaching and multidimensional analyses of styles. In this chapter, we will further discuss the definition of learning style, review five dimensions of style assessment and some of the approaches used to "get at" each of them, and discuss the implications of understanding students' learning styles in terms of matching, bridging, and style-flexing techniques.

## What is Learning Style?

Most learning style elements are conceptualized as bipolar continua, on which an individual student may fall at either extreme or anywhere in between. Most of the time, one



end is not considered any "better" than the other; although students with some learning styles tend to perform better in traditional classrooms than do others, this is considered a problem with instructional technique more than a problem with the student. For some students, learning style reflects a preference; for others, it is a factor which must be taken into account for learning to occur. This difference can be illustrated through the following exercise:

**Part one:** Fold your hands. (Come on; put the book down and participate!) Notice which of your thumbs is on top. Now fold your hands again so the other thumb is on top.

**Part two:** With both your eyes open, focus on a small, distant object. Raise your index finger and line it up with the object. Close your right eye. Open it and close your left eye. Notice which eye is closed when your finger appears to "jump" so it is no longer in front of the object with which you aligned it. Now try to line up your finger so it "jumps" when the other eye is closed.

In the first part of this exercise, you probably had no particular difficulty refolding your hands with the other thumb on top, but it felt quite awkward to do so. In fact, you probably realized that you never fold your hands that way! Now suppose we offered to reward you for being a left-thumb-on-top hand-folder -- every time we caught you in class with your hands folded with the left thumb on top you would receive ten dollars. Those who are already left-thumb-on-top people wouldn't have to give hand-folding another thought; however, those who are right-thumb-on-top people would have to divert some of the attention they would normally pay to the information being discussed in class to monitoring their thumb positions. Also, attempt to clasp your hands repeatedly alternating which thumb is on top very quickly. This becomes fairly tricky for most people. This is similar to the effect of a learning style preference. Students who prefer to learn in the morning, or by hands-on activities, or without background noise can usually adapt to learning in the afternoon, or by listening, or with background noise, but some of the energy they would be able to direct toward learning is deflected toward coping with the learning situation.

In the second part of the exercise, you probably found it impossible to change your dominant eye (the best people can do is usually to make themselves see a double image and try to decide which one to focus on!). This would be similar to the effect of a learning style factor. Students for whom time of day or perceptual modality or environmental noise

is a style factor, find it extremely difficult if not impossible to learn when the particular condition is not met. For example, studies with students who have been identified as learning disabled have indicated that many of them are those for whom time of day is a factor in their learning, and that the subject in which they are having the greatest difficulty each year changes depending on which is being taught at the worst time of day for the individual child.

Learning style may be assessed in terms of cognitive processing, perceptual modality (visual, auditory, or tactile/kinesthetic learners), affective or motivational orientations, and/or structural/environmental dimensions. While cognitive processing tends to be the most stable and the most likely to be a factor in learning, teachers will encounter individual cases in which any one of the style elements might be a factor for a particular student. We will be discussing approaches to accommodating such differences in learning style later in this chapter; however, first we will describe some of the ways in which style can be assessed.

### **Dimensions of Learning Style and Their Assessment**

There is an extensive and highly diverse body of literature on learning style, much of which consists of papers which have enjoyed limited circulation and which report on individual teachers' applications of style-based assessment in their own classrooms -- sometimes using tested instruments and sometimes using their own intuitive approaches. The assessment approaches we have chosen to discuss here were selected as representative of those that have been the most extensively tested and as indicative of five general approaches to conceptualizing various dimensions of learning style.

#### **Perceptual Modality**

Perceptual modality refers to the three basic ways in which people perceive reality: the visual (reading and viewing), the aural (hearing and speaking), and the psychomotor or tactile/kinesthetic (touching and doing). Some people have a single modality strength. Some are equally comfortable in two, and some in all three. The most frequent modality strengths are visual and mixed (each accounts for about 30 % of the population). About 25% are auditory and about 15 % kinesthetic. Primary grade children are more auditory than visual, with kinesthesia (surprisingly) the least well developed modality. Between kindergarten and sixth grade a shift to visual and kinesthetic strengths occurs, and somewhere between junior high school and adulthood there is another shift in which audition becomes more important than kinesthesia, with vision remaining the dominant

modality. At any age, however, any given individual will have her or his own modality strengths.

Visually-oriented students will often stop reading to look into space and imagine a scene, recognize spelling words by sight, be distracted by visual disorder or movement, become impatient when extensive listening is required, be neat and meticulous, and like order. Auditorial-oriented students often move their lips when they read, use a phonics approach to spelling, are easily distracted by sounds, like hearing themselves and others talk, can explain their choice of clothes but are not very concerned with matching their items of apparel, and blow up verbally (but calm down quickly) when they are angry. Kinaesthetically-oriented students are frequently not avid readers or good spellers; they are partial to stories where action occurs early, likely to gesture extensively when speaking, often those who begin the day neat but become wrinkled because of physical activity, better at writing if not confined to a small space, and likely to express emotion in a physically exuberant way.

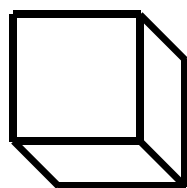
One research who has spent a lot of time investigating perceptual modality is New Zeelander Neil Fleming. Fleming has created the VARK (Visual-Aural-Reading-Kinetic) model of perceptual modality (Fleming & Mills, 1992). Fleming's (2001) addition to the field of perceptual modality was differentiating between visual learning and reading. Fleming purports that visual involves preferences for the depiction of information in maps, diagrams, charts, graphs, flow charts, labeled diagrams, and other visual devices instructors use to represent what could have been presented in words. Conversely, the reading component of the VARK model involves a learner's preference for written text. To learn what type of learner you are, you can fill out the VARK questionnaire by visiting Neil Fleming's website at [www.vark-learn.com](http://www.vark-learn.com). According to Fleming and Baume (2006), the VARK website receives over 10,000 hits per week because teachers and learners alike are interested in how perceptual modality influences learning in the classroom.

### **Information Processing**

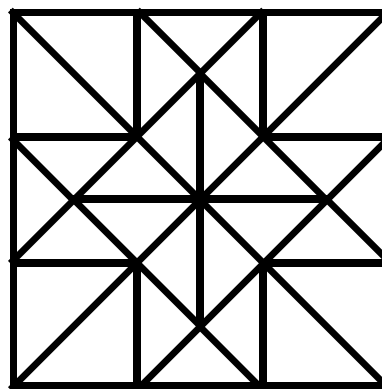
Information processing, or cognitive style, refers to how learners make sense out of information. Some grasp abstract concepts easily; whereas, some people need to see concrete applications. Some learn well step-by-step, while others need to see the "big picture" before they can make sense out of its separate parts. Some are analytical and like discovery-oriented learning; some like lectures that simply lay out information.

The Embedded Figures Test, Preschool Embedded Figures Test, Children's Embedded Figures Test, and Group Embedded Figures Test were developed based on Witkin's

conceptualization of field dependence (FD) and field independence (FI) (Witkin, Dyke, Oltman, Raskin, & Karp, 1971). Applications and analyses of the FD - FI continuum have been investigated in thousands of studies over the past thirty years, making this without question the most comprehensively tested of the various approaches to defining learning (or cognitive) style. These "tests" assess students' relative FD-FI through their ability to find designated simple figures within complex plates or drawings. Figure 6.1 illustrates the kind of problem posed by these tests (although it is not an actual item from them).



**Simple Form A**



**Find Simple Form A**

(In the administration of the Embedded Figures Tests, subjects are first shown the simple form, then the complex form. They do not see them side by side.)

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**Figure 6.1 Representative Embedded Figures Task**

**Field Dependent (FD)** people are "lumpers," who find it difficult to split parts out of the whole. They are often good at creative tasks, are better able to learn socially relevant material, favor interactive teaching methods, and have lower performance expectations. They find it difficult to make sense of individual lessons if they have not first been given an overview of the big picture, so they know in advance how the separate facts and ideas fit together. FDs more frequently assume a passive or spectator learning role, and are more affected by both negative and positive reinforcement, by authority, and by the opinions of others. They are particularly attentive to nonverbal cues and affective relationships. They enjoy interpersonal interaction and are often attracted to interpersonally-oriented occupations. Educationally disadvantaged students, such as those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, tend to be more field dependent than the norm.

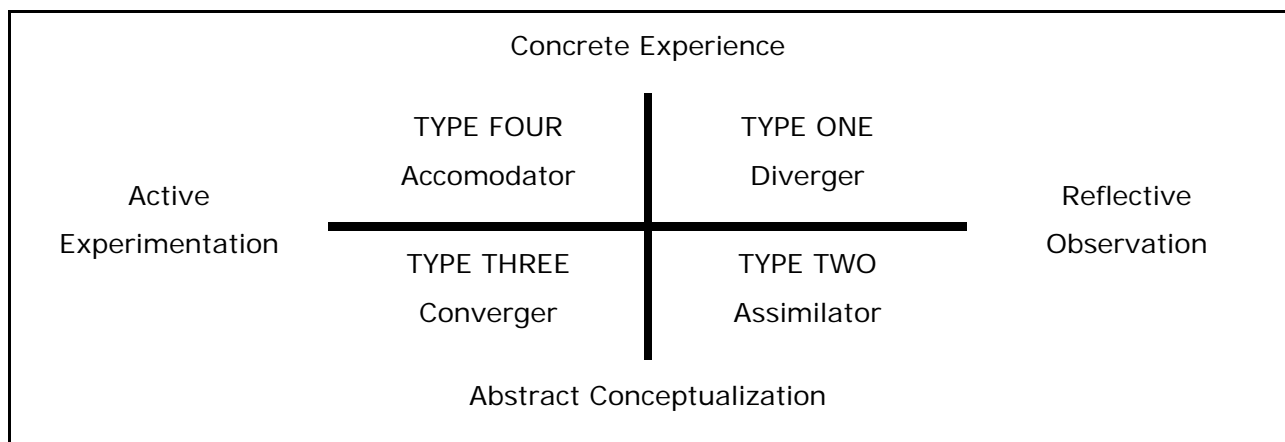
**Field Independent (FI)** people are "splitters," who tend to analytically examine the big picture in terms of its parts. They have less need for externally provided structure or

regular performance feedback, and prefer expository teaching methods such as lectures. They pay more attention to nonsalient attributes in concept learning tasks than do FDs, and will go off on their own tangents without worrying whether the pursuit of one is relevant to the particular task at hand. They often assume a more active or participant learning role, and are attracted to analytical professions such as engineering. FIs tend to do better in traditional classrooms.

Torrance, Reynolds, Riegel, and Ball's (1977) measure of learning style assesses an individual's tendency to emphasize left-brain, right-brain, or integrated-brain functioning. Left brain dominance has been linked to the same general traits as field independence, and right brain dominance to those of field dependence.

### Kolb's Learning Styles Inventory

Kolb (1976) developed a Learning Styles Inventory in which respondents rank order nine sets of four words (e.g., intense, reserved, rational, responsible) which distinguish learners along two continua: concrete experience - abstract conceptualization and active experimentation - reflective observation. As a result, an individual can be categorized as one of four learning types: Diverger, Assimilator, Converger, and Accommodator. McCarthy (1981) modified and combined the Kolb (1976) instruments to create a Learning Style Inventory that indicates both the learner's type (Type 1, Type 2, Type 3, and Type 4) and, within the type, her or his brain dominance (see Figure 6.2).



**FIGURE 6.2 Kolb and McCarthy's Learning Styles**

**Type One learners** perceive information concretely and process it reflectively. They are innovative, imaginative, and concerned with personal relevance. They need to clarify the

ways in which a new area of study links with previous experience before they are receptive to learning it. They learn best through methods that encourage brainstorming and empathy. For Type One learners, teachers would create an experience (right brain mode) and then help them analyze it (Left brain mode).

**Type Two learners** perceive information abstractly and process it reflectively. Schools are traditionally designed for these learners, who value sequential thinking, details, and expert opinion, They are data collectors, who learn best from teachers who are information-givers. For type Two learners, teachers would give them facts (left mode) and help them integrate those facts with experience (right mode).

**Type Three learners** perceive information abstractly and process it actively. They like to "mess around" with ideas and enjoy solving problems that test theories against common sense. They learn best with teachers who facilitate hands-on learning. For Type Three learners, teachers would give them worksheets and activities (left mode) and let them create them on their own (right mode).

**Type Four learners** perceive information concretely and process it abstractly. They learn well by trial and error, with teachers who serve as evaluators and remediators but who encourage self-discovery. They have a very practical orientation. For Type Four learners, teachers would encourage them to create applied projects and share them with others (right mode) and then help them analyze what they have done against theories and concepts (left mode).

McCarthy's study of 17- and 18-year-old high school students categorized 35 percent as Type One (of that group, 51 percent were right brain dominant, 21% left brain dominant, and 29% integrated), 22% as Type Two (34% right, 41% left, 25% integrated), 18% as Type Three (45% right, 24% left, 31% integrated), and 25% as Type Four (51% right, 32% left, 17% integrated). Thus, only about 9% of all students were Type Two and left brain dominant, the type of learner for whom most schools are structured. She subsequently devised a means of integrating all information processing styles into curricular planning, a method that will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

### **Conceptual Tempo**

A conceptual tempo refers to the time students need to get to work and complete a learning task. Reflective learners tend to work slowly and with precision, where impulsive learners tend to work more quickly and with less abandon. Schools often reward impulsivity by encouraging speed of response and of task completion. Learners are being taught quickness, but -- for those that are reflective -- that quickness may enhance the likelihood

of failure. Teachers can ask themselves the following questions to diagnose a conceptual tempo: Does the student work deliberately and accurately, or quickly and inaccurately? Does he or she work at the same pace at all tasks or vary the rate depending on the level of challenge? Does he or she aim to do good work or just finish an assignment?

### **Affective Orientations**

Affective orientation refers to attention, emotion, and valuing, all of which are related to motivation.

### **Conceptual Level**

Conceptual level is a motivational trait developed by Hunt and assessed through the Paragraph Completion Method. Students are given six incomplete statements related to how they handle conflict and asked to write at least three sentences about each (e.g., What I think about rules...) Because the method requires some degree of writing skill, it is rarely used below the sixth grade level. The completed samples are scored on a scale of 0-3 in terms of their conceptual complexity and personal maturity (not their content). Training and practices are required to administer and score this assessment process.

Conceptual level describes students in terms of their requirements for structure in an educational environment. Students who need much structure are characterized as having a short attention span, wanting to be physically active, having difficulty functioning in groups or discussions, and prone to guessing rather than working problems through. They need definite and consistent rules, specific guidelines, short-term goals, and immediate feedback on their work. Those who need a moderate amount of structure tend to be "good students" who want to please the teacher, who have difficulty adjusting to a new teacher, are upset with alterations to the school schedule, and are confused by choices. They can benefit from being given choices and being gently pushed into working in pairs, then in small groups. Some teachers have found that they can work relatively independently if the teacher initials their work each day so they have reassurance that they are on track and can see their progress. Students who need less structure like to discuss and argue, don't require teacher rewards, are eager to go off and do things on their own, and cannot tolerate going step-by-step. They may be initially self-centered and less concerned about others, but are also imaginative and not afraid of making mistakes. They like to be allowed to select their own seats, to choose from among several topics for an assignment, and to set their own timetables on projects that take several class periods. They benefit from being trained and reinforced in listening carefully to instructions, and to listen in general, since they have a

tendency to go off on their own. Hunt has found that over half of sixth grade students need much structure (54%), while 31% need some structure and 15% little structure. In contrast, in the sample of students he studied, 18% of ninth graders needed much structure, 28% some, and 54% less structure.

### **Personality Type Indicators**

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Murphy-Meisgeier Type Indicator for Children, and The Teacher Temperament Measure (discussed in Chapter 15) can be useful to use with students. All of these scales assess both cognitive and affective style in terms of sensing-intuiting, thinking-feeling, and extroversion-introversion, separating each on a judgment-perception continuum. Of the four affective types identified, thinking-dominant types are energized by logically organized material, and resent poor organization. If they cannot find logical order in what is presented in class, they will place their energies elsewhere. Feeling-dominant types begin a school year with two overriding questions: Does the teacher care about me? And is this subject something I can give my heart to? A caring relationship is very important to these students, and can carry them through many tasks in which they lack interest. Sensing types may appreciate logical order and harmonious relationships, but their motivation lies in the practical and functional. They ask: Can this teacher show me something useful? They dislike gaps, abstractions, and facts and skills that are supposedly good only for some future use. The final group, intuitive-dominants hate routine, wants inspiration, and will daydream or move to off-task work in short order if they are bored. When inspired, they are the most innovative of all groups.

Teachers who do not choose to use assessment instruments to diagnose affective style can ask the following questions: Does the student have a positive orientation toward learning? Is he or she persistent? Does he or she manifest a need for academic recognition from the teacher and/or peers? Does the student fear failure and try to avoid it to a reasonable degree? Is he or she curious? Conforming? Confident? Does he or she have positive feelings of academic self-concept? As students understand their own learning proclivities, and plan with teachers based on these tendencies, they will almost certainly be more motivated to learn.

### **Physiological Dimensions**

Physiological learning style elements relate to the student's response to the environmental conditions in which learning occurs. The Learning Style Inventory (LSI) has been one of the more popular broad-gauged assessment approaches. The LSI is designed to



assess how individuals in grades three through 12 prefer to learn. It includes 24 areas derived from content and factor analysis: immediate environment (sound, temperature, light, design), sociological needs (self-, peer-, authority-oriented and/or varied), emotionality (motivation, persistence, responsibilities, need for structure), and physical needs (perceptual modality preferences, time of day, food intake needs, and mobility). There is also a Productivity Environmental Preference Survey (PEPS), which is a similar instrument for adult learners.

Perrin created the Learning Style Inventory: Primary (LSI:P) in which kindergarten through second grade children respond to pictures and questions that determine learning style in terms of the environment, emotional tendencies, sociological needs, and physical requirements. The LSI:P consists of 12 charts, each concerned with a specific style element, a set of student profile forms, and directions for administration and scoring. The child is shown one of the charts and told "The little boy in this picture likes to have his teacher show him exactly what to do and when to do it. The little boy in the other picture likes to decide for himself what to do and when to do it. I am going to ask you a few questions about how you like to do your schoolwork." The child then responds to some questions related to the picture chart (e.g., Do you like to have your teacher check each page of your work as you are working, or do you like her or him to check all of your work at the end of the day?), and is asked to point to the picture that is most like her/himself. The LSI:P takes approximately 20 minutes to administer and is hand scored on a grid system.

Physical and environmental conditions have much more of an influence on students' learning than many teachers and administrators like to admit. While we often consider these to be reflections of learning preferences rather than factors, they can be either -- and it is worth remembering that even the successful adaptation to a nonpreferred way of learning takes some of the energy that might otherwise be devoted to the learning task. While there are few formal assessment "tests" of students' physiological learning styles, they often lend themselves to ready observation. Teachers should ask themselves: Is this student performing up to the level of her/his capabilities? Is her/his health reasonably good? Is he or she a morning or afternoon person? Can he or she function adequately during her/his "down time?" Can the student sit still or does he or she fidget and want to wander around? Does he or she seem to break pencil points more than average and have to get up to sharpen the pencil? Does noise seem to bother him or her? What kind of lighting is preferred, given a choice? Teachers sensitive to the physiological influences on learning can provide a learning environment with options that allow students to choose where they will work, particularly during independent reading and study time.

## **Matching, Bridging, and Style-Flexing**

Once learning style has been assessed, what do we do with this knowledge? There are three general approaches to accommodating differences in how individual students learn most comfortably and efficiently. In this section, we will explain the philosophies behind matching, bridging, and style-flexing.

### **Matching**

In a matching approach, students are taught in their own preferred styles. They may be "tracked," for example, into visual, auditory, and kinesthetic groups, and assigned to classrooms that emphasize the respective styles in their instructional designs.

A matching approach can be logistically complex, and has been criticized for failing to teach students how to accommodate their processing information in less-preferred styles. Thus, it might be the most practical in training or special education settings, where the emphasis is on either achieving the maximum skill in a minimal time, or when dealing with high-risk students who have experienced a great deal of failure.

Matching has been shown to an effective means of improving academic success. For example, Bruno and Jessie (1982) have written a book based on their successes in developing hands-on activities for tactile/kinesthetic learners, while K. Dunn (1981) reports on the success of matching learning and instructional styles through a contract-based program at an alternative junior high school on New York's Lower East Side. Madison Prep students were those who had displayed high levels of academic underachievement and/or nonachievement, low reading and math scores, negative attitudes toward school, and a rejection of the traditional classroom environment. Approximately 85 % of the students substantially improved their reading and math levels, attendance averaged 80 % (among students who had often been truant for weeks at a time at their previous schools), and antisocial behavior was reduced. K. Dunn believes that these outcomes can be directly attributed to style matchings reversing the students' failure syndromes and thus increasing their motivation.

### **Bridging**

When learning style information is used as a bridging technique, students are assigned to classes without an attempt to match their learning styles, and teachers generally teach in the ways in which they are most comfortable; however, style-based materials are used when students have difficulty in grasping the material. For example,

Community Consolidated School District 47 in Crystal Lake, Illinois has used the Swassing-Barbe Modality Index to identify the perceptual strengths of elementary level students throughout the district. Classes are not grouped according to style, but all system-wide instructional materials have been classified by modality, level, and subject/topic so that they can be used for "point of intervention" tutoring. This information has been entered into learning center microcomputers, along with data on each student's modality strengths. Thus, when a student is having difficulty with a concept -- let's say with multiplying fractions -- the teacher, or the student, can go to the learning center and access materials (purchased and teacher-developed) that will match the student's perceptual style. In this way, the teacher (or students) might find supplementary worksheets, games, film strips or videos, instructional computer programs or other resources related to multiplying fractions that match that student's learning style.

The Fox Valley Technical Institute in Appleton, Wisconsin has also used a bridging approach to enhance student learning and affect. All incoming students participate in learning style assessment, with the results sent to both the students and their counselors. Students are invited to discuss the results with a counselor on the Learning Evaluation staff, and about 60 % of them do. By anticipating problems and providing students with suggestions for adapting to various teaching techniques, dropout rates have decreased more than 10 %. Fox Valley first experimented with offering each course in a classroom, computer-assisted, and AV-tutorial formats, but subsequently adopted a "burst" approach in which material is presented to class groups in an instructor's usual style, followed by an opportunity for students to "burst" into style-matched subgroups in which problematic concepts are clarified.

### **Style-Flexing**

Style flexing is a process of teaching students to learn how to learn. Lessons are structured so individual students' learning styles are both accommodated and challenged, with a goal of increasing their confidence with learning in a variety of ways. McCarthy is one of the primary proponents of this approach. The 4Mat system (McCarthy, 1981) advocates lesson planning so that each learner's style is matched at one point and "stretched" at others. Lessons begin with creating a desire to learn through brainstorming, listening, speaking, and interacting, skills at which Type 1 innovative learners excel. They then move from reflective observation to abstract conceptualization through observing, analyzing, classifying, and drawing conclusions -- skills at which Type 2 analytic learners excel. Students are next invited to "mess around" with concepts, using the experiential, hands-on

approach that Type 3 common sense learners prefer. The final phase of the lesson involves application, sharing projects or teaching concepts to other students, skills at which Type 4 dynamic learners excel.

In practice, a unit on speech introductions might begin with students reading or listening to speeches with and without effective introductions and discussing their reactions. The class might then break into discussion groups to analyze their impressions of the purpose of a speech introduction (Type 1). The instructor would then teach the concept, explaining the objectives of and techniques for gaining attention and previewing the direction of a speech as they are detailed in any public speaking text (Type 2). Students could then, on their own or in groups, formulate three or four different introductions for the same speech, decide which they like best, and explain why (Type 3). They might later be asked to prepare an outline for a speech they will give and write two or three possible introductions on a separate page. Dyads could then exchange outlines, clarify the speech content if needed, and write two or three introductions for the partner's topic. Students would then discuss the similarities and differences between speaker-generated and partner-generated introductions and pick the one they like best (Type 4).

Or, a high school mathematics unit could begin with setting up a lottery, similar to the draft lottery, in which students are assigned a rank according to the number picked at the same time as their birth date is drawn. The teacher can decide a relevant context in which to set the simulation, whether it is the assignment of desirable concert seats, who gets priority in scheduling classes, an actual draft lottery, or something else. The class would then discuss whether this is "fair" or not, and the teacher would explain how the lottery is an example of random function (Type 1). Students would then be taught concepts such as domain, range, Cartesian product and graphing, relation, rules of correspondence, notation, and so forth (Type 2). They could then complete graphing exercises and/or solve problems related to the lottery simulation, as well as make up their own rules of correspondence from which they must generate five ordered pairs (Type 3). Finally, students would be given the option of choosing among various applied projects, such as analyzing statistics of accidents to see if there is any relationship between accidents and the ages of the people who have them, or completing and analyzing the results of a survey of possible relationships between grades and the number of hours students work outside of school, sleep and watch TV (Type 4).

Instructional planning of this type is likely to appeal to visual, auditory, and manipulative learners at various points, as well as accommodating the various combinations of concrete vs. abstract and active vs. reflective orientations. The redundancy is

instructionally sound; the instructor may "cover" fewer topics, but a greater percentage of students will understand those that are presented. They will, in the process, learn how to learn in ways other than their preferred style.

Whether schools, or individual teachers, choose matching, bridging, or style-flexing approaches depends on whether they perceive the primary objective as changing the educational delivery system to adapt to the individual learner or whether they wish to also change the learner to be able to better adapt to the existing educational delivery system.

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# 6

## CLASSROOM ANXIETIES AND FEARS

### Chapter Six Objectives

1. Define communication apprehension, receiver apprehension, writing apprehension, teacher apprehension, evaluation apprehension, and classroom anxiety and be able to give classroom examples of each.
2. List and discuss potential causes of student anxiety.
3. Provide communication strategies for reducing classroom anxiety.

As teachers, many of us have had to work with students who have suffered from anxiety in the classroom. During Jason's first semester teaching, he had a student who ended up in the hospital because of her anxiety. The student was preparing for her first speech in a public speaking class. As she was preparing the speech, she grew more and more anxious and finally had a panic attack and stopped breathing. If her husband had not been with her and rushed her to the hospital, it is very likely that she may have died. The doctors eventually had to medicate her, so that she could give her speeches in the class. While this is an extreme example of anxiety in the classroom, it does demonstrate the devastating impact that anxiety can actually have on students.

All of us suffer from anxiety at some point in our life. Most anxiety is caused by negative self-thoughts. According to Lucinda Bassett of the Midwest Center for Stress and Anxiety, an average person has around 300 negative self-thoughts a day – that's one every 4.5 minutes. These negative thoughts can create an anxious state. A negative self-thought is any thought that prevents us or cripples us from achieving our best. If a student who is studying for a test starts to think that he or she can't do well on the test, that thought can become so overwhelming that it leads to an anxious episode or panic attack.

Many students don't learn when they are fearful, anxious, apprehensive, or scared. Students don't communicate effectively with us when they are fearful, anxious, apprehensive, or scared to communicate with us. Students don't complete tests well when they are fearful, anxious, apprehensive, or scared of testing situations. Simply put, students don't do well in the classroom environment when they are fearful, anxious, apprehensive, or scared.

Some pressure to do well, of course, can be good for students. When we were students, we used to "psyche ourselves up" to a certain degree for an exam or a presentation in class so we could perform at our highest level. But many students psyche



themselves up so far they cannot perform at all, or only at a totally inadequate level. For decades researchers have attempted to determine the "right amount of pressure" to apply to students so they can learn the maximum amount. No one has found the answer to the amount of pressure to apply to students for peak performance. However, we do know that too much pressure on students to perform, to do well, to succeed, can backfire. The students stop performing and exhibit learned helplessness.

This chapter is concerned with the anxieties and fears that students often confront in their classrooms. We will review each anxiety or fear and its impact on student performance, learning, and communication. Lastly, we will discuss communication strategies for reducing general classroom anxiety.

### **Communication Apprehension**

Communication apprehension (CA) is the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998). By far, the largest group of quiet students are those who are communication apprehensive. Students who are high communication apprehensives may desire to communicate with their peers and teachers, but are impeded by their fear or anxiety about communication.

It has been estimated that 20% of the student population in a school may suffer from communication apprehension. Communication apprehensive students tend to be low verbalizers and often only speak when forced to do so. If a student fears something, it is natural to avoid it or withdraw from it, and this is precisely what the communication apprehensive student does. Communication apprehension is a cognitive state that is centered around the fear of communicating with others.

The student who is highly communicatively apprehensive (scared to talk, quiet) tends to suffer from general anxiety, has a low tolerance for ambiguity, lacks self-control, is not adventurous, lacks emotional maturity, is introverted, has low self-esteem, is not innovative, has a low tolerance for disagreement, and is unassertive. On the other hand, the student who has a low level of communication apprehension (likes to talk, usually outgoing) tends to have low general anxiety, tolerates ambiguous situations, has a high degree of self-control, is adventurous, is emotionally mature, is extroverted, has high self-esteem, is innovative, is able to tolerate relatively high levels of disagreement, and is assertive.

In the classroom environment, communication apprehension can cause a student who is quiet to be perceived in a less positive way than the student who is outgoing. The students who are quiet in the classroom are perceived to be less competent, less intelligent,

less likely to get into trouble, less likely to do well in school, less likely to be called upon to respond. They tend to have less opportunities to correct learning mistakes, receive less attention from the teacher, receive less reinforcement when they do something well, ask for assistance less frequently, volunteer to participate less, and receive lower grades on class participation reports. In a very real sense, this group of students is discriminated against in the school environment. Consequently, by the time they complete high school, their learning, as measured by standardized achievement tests, is impacted negatively. In addition, the high communication apprehensive's peer groups often see her or him as less approachable, less friendly, less talkative, less outgoing, less pleasant, and less intelligent than the low communication apprehensive student.

In summary, the school environment requires effective communication on the part of the teachers and students. Quiet students tend to fare less well in the school environment than talkative students. More extensive treatments of communication apprehension are available in other books in this series (McCroskey, 1998; Richmond, McCroskey, 1998) so we will not elaborate more here. Suffice it to say, communication apprehension is a very serious problem in the classroom.

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**Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24)**

DIRECTIONS: This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning feelings about communicating with other people. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

Work quickly; record your first impression.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I dislike participating in group discussions.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
- 
-

- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am giving a speech.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

### Computing Score for PRCA-24

SCORING: To compute context subscores begin with a score of 18 for each context and follow the instructions below.

1. Group discussion--add scores for items 2, 4, & 6. Subtract scores for items 1, 3, & 5. Scores can range from 6 to 30.
2. Meetings--add scores for items 8, 9, & 12. Subtract scores for items 7, 10, & 11. Scores can range from 6 to 30.
3. Interpersonal--add scores for items 14, 16, & 17. Subtract scores for items 13, 15, & 18. Scores can range from 6 to 30.
4. Public speaking--add scores for items 19, 21, & 23. Subtract scores for items 20, 22, & 24. Scores can range from 6 to 30.

To compute the total score for the PRCA-24, add the four subscores. Total scores can range from 24 to 120. Scores above 80 = high CA; below 50 = low CA.

Source:

McCroskey, J. C. (1982). *An introduction to rhetorical communication* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

### Figure 7.1 Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24)

#### Norms for the PRCA-24

	Mean	Standard Deviation
For Total Score	65.6	15.3
Group	15.4	4.8
Meeting	16.4	4.8
Dyad (Interpersonal)	14.5	4.2
Public	19.3	5.1

## **Receiver Apprehension**

Wheeless (1975) developed the original measure of receiver apprehension. Scott and Wheelless (1977) defined receiver apprehension as "the degree to which individuals are fearful about misinterpreting, inadequately processing, and/or being unable to adjust psychologically to messages" (p. 248). Receiver apprehension refers to how people feel about receiving communication or information from others. It seems some people are generally apprehensive about receiving information and communication from others. However, people are usually not as apprehensive about receiving information (being receivers) as they are about being a communication source.

Wheeless and Scott found that students who were highly apprehensive about receiving information performed less well than students who were not apprehensive about receiving information. They found that students who were highly apprehensive about receiving information did poorly on objective measures of achievement and on outside class projects. They concluded that "receiver apprehension and student achievement . . . appear to be meaningfully related" (Scott & Wheelless, 1977, p. 249).

## **Writing apprehension**

Writing apprehension is the fear or anxiety associated with writing situations (Daly & Miller, 1975). Students with extremely high writing apprehension are troubled with many kinds or types of writing and are likely to avoid it in most situations, even the classroom. Students who are fearful or afraid of writing situations do less well academically in school, achieve less, and avoid fields and careers that require a lot of writing. In addition, these students may be viewed by teachers and peers as the slow or uninterested students and their communication with others in the school environment may be affected in a negative manner. If the student is communication apprehensive and writing apprehensive, he or she will have difficulty both in oral and written communication classroom situations.

## **Teacher Apprehension**

As suggested previously, there are many fears or anxieties students face in the classroom which can keep them from learning. It is not surprising, therefore, to note some students tend to have problems receiving communication from their teachers and/or talking with their teachers. Students who are fearful or anxious about receiving communication from their teacher and/or talking with their teacher may have "teacher apprehension (TA)." See Figures 7.2 and 7.3 for the two Teacher Apprehension Tests (TAT) which can be administered to your students.

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## Teacher Apprehension Test

Directions: This form is composed of statements students have used to describe how they feel about receiving communication from their teacher after each statement, indicate the number that best describes how you generally feel about receiving communication from your teacher. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly and circle your first impression. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I feel uncomfortable receiving communication from my teacher.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I feel disturbed when my teacher communicates with me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I have no fear when my teacher communicates with me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I am comfortable when my teacher communicates with me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I feel uneasy when my teacher talks to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I feel relaxed when listening to my teacher.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I feel fearful when my teacher talks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I feel ruffled when my teacher talks to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I am jumpy when my teacher talks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I feel composed when listening to my teacher.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I am bothered when my teacher talks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I feel satisfied when my teacher is talking and teaching.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I feel safe when my teacher communicates.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I feel nervous when listening to my teacher.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I am cheerful when my teacher is talking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I feel happy when my teacher is communicating ideas to the class.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I feel dejected or hurt when my teacher is communicating.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I feel pleasure when my teacher talks to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I feel good when my instructor is teaching a lesson to us.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I feel happy when he or she is talking to us.

SCORING: To compute your scores, add your scores for each item as indicated below:

Step One: Add scores for items 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 17, & 20

Step Two: Add scores for items 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, & 19

Step Three: Add 60 points to Step.

Step Four: Subtract the score for Step two from the score for Step Three.

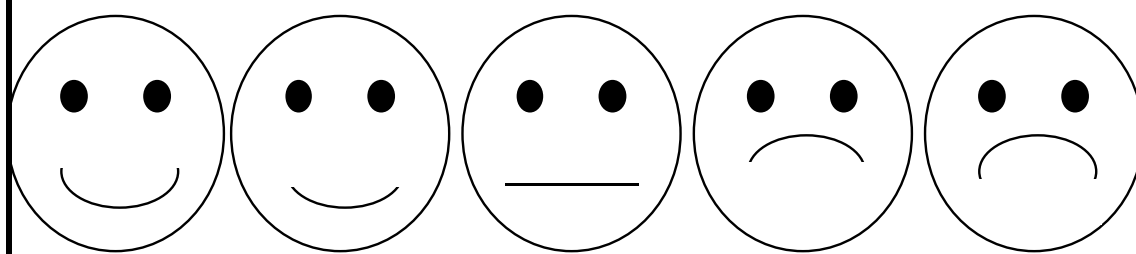
After you have recoded the previous questions, add all of the numbers together to get your composite Teacher Apprehension score.

Score should be between 20 and 100. Scores of 80 and above indicate high teacher apprehension; Scores of 25 and below indicate low teacher apprehension; Scores between 26 and 79 indicate moderate teacher apprehension.

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**Figure 7.2 Teacher Apprehension Test (Tat) (For Grades 6+)**

*Directions:* This form is designed for use with students in grades 5 and under. It is intended to measure how your students feel about receiving communication from you or communicating with you. Have each student circle one face as an indicant of how they feel when you are communicating with, or talking with, them.



The figure shows five circular faces arranged horizontally. Each face has two solid black dots for eyes. The first face has a wide, upward-curving smile. The second face has a slight, neutral smile. The third face has a straight horizontal line for a mouth. The fourth face has a downward-curving mouth. The fifth face has a deep, downward-curving mouth.

<b>Like A Lot</b>	<b>Like Some</b>	<b>No Feeling</b>	<b>Some Fear</b>	<b>A Lot of Fear</b>
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**Figure 7.3 Teacher Apprehension Test (Tat) (For Grades 5 and Under)**

Students who have teacher apprehension are generally apprehensive about relating to teachers in the school environment. These are the students who will show visible distress or signs of apprehension when being approached by or communicated with by any teacher.

Occasionally, a student may have a fear of communicating with just one teacher (e. g. situational apprehension about communicating with the toughest teacher in school). This is a perfectly normal reaction. Almost everyone can recount a time when they were afraid of one teacher, but that was not the same for being afraid of all teachers.

However, the students who have a general anxiety or fear about receiving communication from teachers or talking with teachers are clearly at a disadvantage in the educational system. The one person who can help them succeed is the one person they fear the most.

No one is quite sure why some students develop teacher apprehension and others don't. What we do know is that teacher apprehension can have far reaching impacts on student academic performance and communication. For example, students with teacher apprehension are often perceived by their instructors as unapproachable, unfriendly, unpleasant, and uninterested. While the student may or may not feel this way, the perception the teacher has is how the teacher sees the student. As you might have guessed, the student who is perceived in a negative light is less likely to receive communication, assistance, and guidance from the teacher. If a student does receive such attention,

however, they still are less likely to do well on assignments and projects than those students who are not afraid of the teacher.

In summary, students who have teacher apprehension are less likely to seek instructor assistance, are less likely to be willing to listen to the teacher, are less likely to approach the teacher, are more likely to avoid the teacher, are less likely to initiate communication with the teacher, are more likely to avoid communication with the teacher, and are more likely to be dissatisfied with the classroom environment. This does not mean that high teacher apprehensives will fail in all they attempt in the educational environment, but it suggests they will not be as successful in school as their low apprehensive counterparts.

### **Evaluation Apprehension**

Evaluation apprehension (EA) is the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated evaluative situations in the classroom. In this section we will focus primarily on evaluation apprehension during test or exam times. Most students indicate this evaluation component is when they feel the most fear or anxiety. About 20 % of our students have an abnormal fear or anxiety about test or exam situations in the classroom. These students have high evaluation apprehension. While some students can get their apprehension about taking tests under control, students with evaluation apprehension have anxiety that increases dramatically before, during, and after a test or exam. See Figures 7.3 and 7.4 for the two Evaluation Apprehension Measures (EAM), which can be administered to your students. Below is a discussion of the effects and outcomes of being afraid or fearful before, during, and after exams.

#### **Evaluation Apprehension Measure**

Directions: This form is composed of statements students have used to describe how they feel in evaluation/examination/test-like situations in their class. After each statement, indicate the number that best describes how you generally feel about taking a test or exam or being in an evaluative situation. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly and circle your first impression. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

- 1. I feel apprehensive while preparing for a test.
- 2. I feel tense when I am studying for a test or exam.
- 3. I am calm when I am studying for a test.
- 4. I feel peaceful when I am studying for a test.
- 5. I feel fear and uneasiness when taking an exam or being evaluated.
- 6. I feel self-assured when taking an exam.
- 7. I feel fearful when preparing for a test.

- 
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I feel ruffled when the test is handed to me.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I am jumpy and nervous while taking a test.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I feel composed and in control while taking an exam.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I am bothered and tense when I am being evaluated.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I feel satisfied when my exam is completed.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I feel safe during evaluative situations.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I feel flustered and confused when I start a test.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I am cheerful after I turn in my test.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I feel happy about how I did in evaluation situations.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I feel dejected and humiliated an hour before an exam.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I feel pleased and comfortable while taking a test.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I feel confident while taking a test.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I feel unhappy throughout an exam period.

SCORING: To compute your scores, add your scores for each item as indicated below:

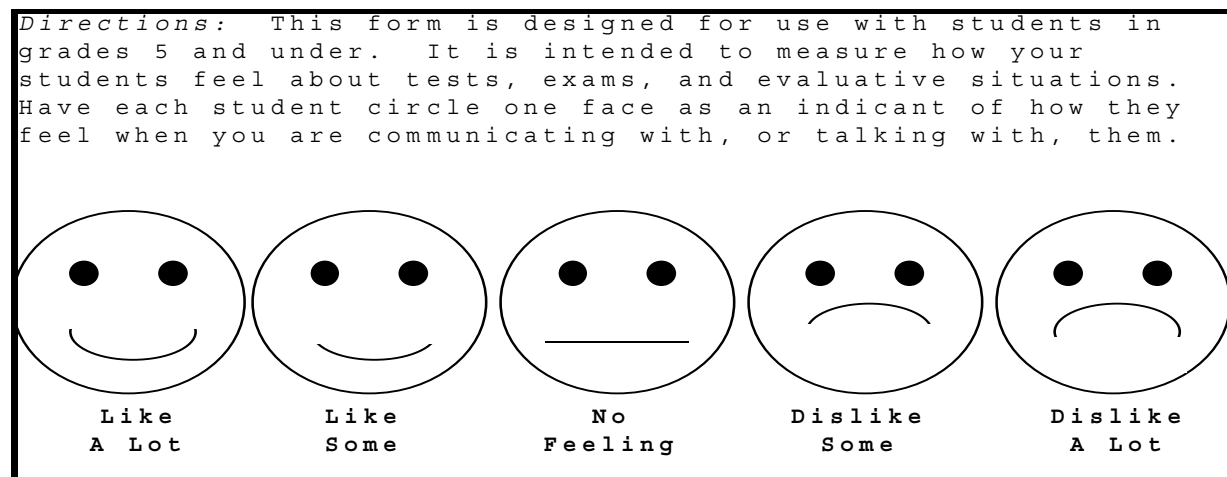
- Step One: Add scores for items 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 17, & 20
- Step Two: Add scores for items 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, & 19
- Step Three: Add 60 points to Step.
- Step Four: Subtract the score for Step two from the score for Step Three.

After you have recoded the previous questions, add all of the numbers together to get your composite EAM score. Your score should be between 20 and 100. Scores of 80 and above indicate high test or evaluation apprehension; Scores of 25 and below indicate low test or evaluation apprehension; Scores between 26 and 79 indicate moderate test or evaluation apprehension.

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**Figure 7.4 Evaluation Apprehension Measure (EAM) (For Grades 6+)**

Students with apprehension about taking tests or exams often do poorly in formal test situations. Their anxiety gets so high it overrides the ability to process and recall information that is needed to do well on a test. Students with high EA often block on information they knew well before the test time.





**Figure 7.5 Evaluation Apprehension Measure (For Grades 5 and Under)**

In addition, if exams and tests are the only evaluation tools a teacher has available to her or him in order to judge a student, they often receive the lower, less acceptable grades or scores. Before, during, and after a test, their systems are over activated and their anxiety is so high they simply do not function well. They may become physically ill before, during, or after an exam. They may not be able to talk with you about their feelings before, during, or after an exam.

In conclusion, students with high evaluation apprehension will have high anxiety before, during, and after exams. In extreme cases, the students with evaluation apprehension may miss class the day an exam is scheduled. They simply cannot face another formal testing situation. They may also be perceived by their teachers as unintelligent, slow, uninterested, and uneducated, when in fact, they know as much as the other students, they simply cannot recall it at test time.

**Classroom Anxiety**

While many of the fears or anxieties discussed above are debilitating to student performance, classroom anxiety can totally deter a student from succeeding in the classroom. Classroom anxiety is the anxiety associated with the classroom environment. It is often referred to as "school phobia." Students with classroom anxiety are fearful, uneasy, insecure, and unhappy about the classroom situation. They are not at ease, calm, peaceful, and don't feel safe in the classroom. Their fear is so overwhelming and stifling that they are barely functional while they are in a classroom setting. See Figures 7.6 and 7.7 for the two measures of classroom anxiety that you can administer to your class at different times.

<b>Classroom Anxiety Measure</b>						
<p>Directions: This form is composed of statements students have used to describe how they feel in their classroom. After each statement, indicate the number that best describes how you generally feel while attending class. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly and circle your first impression. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you:</p>						
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>		
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> <p>_____ 1. I feel apprehensive.</p> <p>_____ 2. I feel disturbed.</p> <p>_____ 3. I am peaceful.</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> <p>_____ 11. I am insecure.</p> <p>_____ 12. I feel satisfied.</p> <p>_____ 13. I feel safe.</p> </td> </tr> </table>					<p>_____ 1. I feel apprehensive.</p> <p>_____ 2. I feel disturbed.</p> <p>_____ 3. I am peaceful.</p>	<p>_____ 11. I am insecure.</p> <p>_____ 12. I feel satisfied.</p> <p>_____ 13. I feel safe.</p>
<p>_____ 1. I feel apprehensive.</p> <p>_____ 2. I feel disturbed.</p> <p>_____ 3. I am peaceful.</p>	<p>_____ 11. I am insecure.</p> <p>_____ 12. I feel satisfied.</p> <p>_____ 13. I feel safe.</p>					

_____ 4. I feel relaxed.	_____ 14. I feel flustered.
_____ 5. I feel uneasy.	_____ 15. I am cheerful.
_____ 6. I feel self-assured.	_____ 16. I feel happy.
_____ 7. I feel fearful.	_____ 17. I feel dejected.
_____ 8. I feel ruffled.	_____ 18. I feel pleased.
_____ 9. I am jumpy.	_____ 19. I feel good.
_____ 10. I feel composed.	_____ 20. I feel unhappy.

SCORING: To compute your scores, add your scores for each item as indicated below:

Step One: Add scores for items 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 17, & 20  
Step Two: Add scores for items 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, & 19  
Step Three: Add 60 points to Step.  
Step Four: Subtract the score for Step two from the score for Step Three.

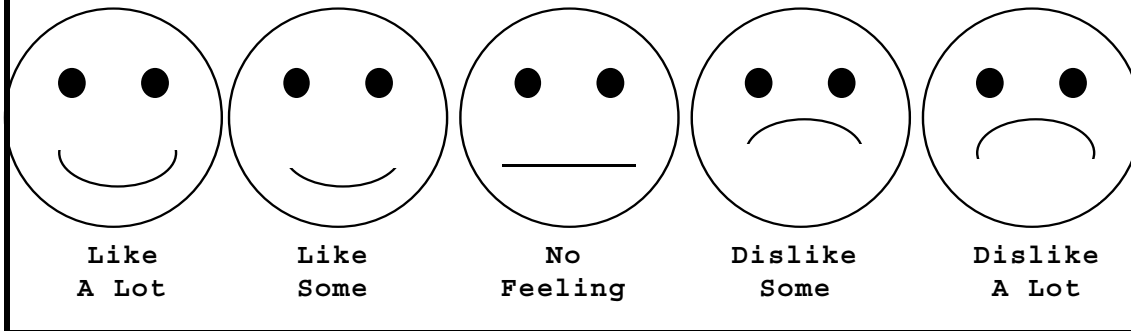
After you have recoded the previous questions, add all of the numbers together to get your composite Classroom Anxiety score.

Score should be between 20 and 100. Scores of 80 and above indicate high classroom anxiety; Scores of 25 and below indicate low classroom anxiety; Scores between 26 and 79 indicate moderate classroom anxiety.

**Figure 7.6 Classroom Anxiety Measure (CAM) (For Grades 6+)**

Children with classroom anxiety are often "basket cases." They do not voluntarily communicate with us, they do not ask for assistance, they do not answer questions, they do not participate in class discussions, they do not understand or hear questions, they do not perform well on tests, and they do not make friends easily. Their anxiety about school and their classroom is so high that it interferes with everything. Since classroom anxiety permeates all requirements we have of our students, below we have discussed probable causes of student/classroom anxiety and communication strategies for reducing classroom anxiety.

*Directions:* This form is designed for use with students in grades 5 and under. It is intended to measure how your students feel while attending class. Have each student circle one face as an indicant of how they feel when you are communicating with, or talking with, them.



**Figure 7.7 Classroom Anxiety Measure (For Grades 5 And Under)**

### **Probable Causes of Classroom Anxiety**

Students can develop classroom anxiety only if a number of the variables discussed below are present. Usually, a student does not become anxious because of one bad situation; however, if the situation is traumatic enough they may become anxious about school.

Students might suffer some degree of classroom anxiety if our objectives, goals, and intentions are too ambiguous, unclear, or disorganized. All students need clear objectives, goals, and intentions in order to perform; otherwise, they feel insecure about assignments and projects.

Students might suffer some degree of classroom anxiety if they have only failed in school, never succeeded. The past history of the student, past reinforcements, and past failures can all contribute to a student feeling apprehension about the classroom situation. For example, if a student failed English three times by the time they take it a fourth time, they are anxious, insecure, and apprehensive.

Students might suffer some degree of classroom anxiety if they are apprehensive about other things in the classroom such as testing, evaluation, communication, the teacher, or writing. If a student is generally anxious about a number of the classroom related activities, then he or she may become more anxious about the general classroom situation.

Students might suffer some degree of classroom anxiety if they experience unusual parental pressure to succeed. Many parents make classroom and school success the primary

concern of their child. They impress upon the child that if they don't do well in school, they cannot succeed in other endeavors. Since so much is riding upon classroom success, the child becomes anxious about classroom success.

Students might suffer some degree of classroom anxiety if the classroom expectations and standards are set too high. Often we will establish expectations and standards that seem reasonable to us but are unreasonable for the students. We don't intentionally establish expectations and standards that are too high for our students to meet, it just happens because they seem easier to us than they do to the students.

Students will suffer from classroom anxiety if the teacher uses extreme criticism or negative communication. Students don't succeed or achieve much when most of the teacher's communication is extreme criticism, negative, or humiliating in nature. Students will often withdraw from or avoid the classroom where the teacher's feedback and communication are of a negative type. When students avoid or withdraw from a classroom, they are not learning the content either. Hence, we need to avoid the use of extreme criticism, negative, or humiliating communication as an instructional practice.

Any or all of the above factors lead to reduced teacher/student affect, reduced teacher/student communication, and heightened classroom anxiety. The learning of content is also negatively impacted by students' anxieties and fears.

### **Communication Strategies For Reducing Classroom Anxiety**

There are a number of very effective communication strategies which can reduce classroom anxiety. Many of these strategies will also assist the students in acquiring the content. When our students' classroom anxiety level is low they are more capable and able to concentrate, process information, and recall information.

FUN, FUN, FUN. We should facilitate enjoyment in our classrooms. Learning must be made to be an enjoyable process. We attempt to lessen classroom anxiety by attempting to get our students to enjoy learning by exchanging fun ideas, telling interesting stories that relate to content, telling appropriate, funny jokes, saying funny things, and generally attempting to make the classroom an environment where learning is fun.

POSITIVE, POSITIVE, POSITIVE. Our communication with our students should be as positive and as reinforcing as possible. We should avoid the use of negative criticism and apply the use of reinforcing statements, praise, and reward. However, let's keep in mind, there is nothing harmful about informing students that they are wrong, incorrect, out of line, or need guidance. In fact, it is our duty to give directions and academic guidance without harming a student. Students of all ages and levels perform better and learn more

when the classroom environment is one in which they are praised, not admonished for their efforts.

SIMILARITY, SIMILARITY, SIMILARITY. We can reduce classroom anxiety by communicating about our similarities and likenesses to our students. This does not mean we become one of our students. However, if we can build some similarity, then communication will be more effective, and as communication becomes more effective, our similarities will increase. We should avoid being perceived as too different or too dissimilar from our students. High levels of dissimilarity will make students apprehensive because they don't know what or how to communicate with us.

INPUT, INPUT, INPUT. On some assignments, projects, or issues, we could negotiate and compromise with our students instead of always assuming control. Often in our own classrooms we can discuss some procedures or issues with our students and come to some common agreement about the range of acceptable or unacceptable solutions. Allowing students to have input on some classroom issues may reduce the likelihood of classroom anxiety emerging.

SOLIDARITY, SOLIDARITY, SOLIDARITY. We should build affinity and solidarity between ourselves and our students. As affinity and solidarity increase so does effective teacher/student communication. As affinity and solidarity increase, classroom apprehension will decrease. When affinity and solidarity are present, the students know they can communicate honestly with us without fear of reprisals, reproaches or reprimands.

FEEDBACK, FEEDBACK, FEEDBACK. We should acknowledge and use student ideas and suggestions in our teaching and delivery of content. According to Flanders (1970) when we use students' ideas, we are showing that we accept our students. Flanders suggests this type of feedback can be divided into the following for effective use:

Acknowledging the pupil's idea by repeating the nouns and logical contentions he or she has expressed; Modifying, rephrasing, or conceptualizing it in the teacher's own words; Applying the idea by using it to reach an inference or to take the next step in a logical analysis of a problem; Comparing the ideas by drawing a relationship between the pupil's idea and one expressed earlier by either a pupil or a teacher. Summarizing what was said by a pupil or a group of pupils. (p. 48).

CLARITY, CLARITY, CLARITY. As the content becomes more complex, confusing, or ambiguous, we need to become more clear and concise. Brophy and Evertson (1976)

suggest that communication clarity and student achievement are related. They stated that, "in general, it seems reasonable to suppose that teacher clarity becomes increasingly important as the curriculum becomes more complex" (p. 82). If we increase our clarity as a curriculum or lesson becomes more difficult for our students to understand, then classroom anxiety should be reduced. Communicating optimal testing conditions can consistently and considerably improve and positively impact the performance of the highly anxious student.

CLIMATE, CLIMATE, CLIMATE. A supportive classroom communication climate will reduce the likelihood that classroom anxiety will emerge. Hurt, Scott, and McCroskey (1978) lend support to this idea by stating:

It is crucial, then, that teachers communicate with their students as supportively as possible -- regardless of whether their students are performing at a standard that is less than ideal. By the same token, it is crucial that teachers attempt to create an environment where students also engage in these behaviors, supporting their classmates or communicating their criticisms in a supportive manner. (p. 186)

## **Conclusion**

By employing many of the above communication strategies we can reduce the likelihood our students will suffer from classroom anxiety. If we can communicate effectively with our students, we have already taken a step in reducing or preventing classroom fears and anxieties.

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# COMMUNICATION AND STUDENT SELF-CONCEPT



## Chapter Seven Objectives

1. Define self-concept.
2. Review the characteristics of self. Identify why these make it difficult to change self-concept.
3. Discuss the three dimensions of self-concept. Give examples of each dimension.
4. List and discuss the ways in which self-concept develops.
5. Discuss the six conditions necessary for positive self-concept. How can teachers help instill these in students?
6. Describe the influence of student self-concept upon academic achievement.
7. Distinguish between children with negative self-concepts and children with positive self-concepts. Be able to generate and explain the 2x2 Model of Self-concept/IQ and Ability.
8. Delineate the "Poker Chip" theory of self-concept. Relate it to the classroom environment.
9. List and discuss communication strategies for enhancing students' self-concept.

Many of our children spend seven or eight hours a day for 180 to 200 days a year in the school environment. By the time our children graduate from high school they will have spent more than 24,000 hours in school. Most of that time is spent in the classroom environment. There is no other communication environment that accommodates our children for such long periods of time in their formative years. There is no other communication environment that has greater potential for shaping, molding, sculpting, and building our children's view of themselves during their formative years. The communication children have in the classroom is perhaps the most significant predictor of whether or not the children will believe in themselves as students and excel to the best of their abilities.

Many teachers would like to suggest that their content area is the most significant predictor of students' achievement and excellence. However, the majority of teachers know their individual affective and effective communication with their students about the content, themselves as students, their progress, and their future potential determine student achievement and excellence. While a primary focus of education must be on content-area communication, more and more school systems are focusing on effective and affective



communication between teacher and student as a means of promoting student achievement and excellence.

In order to promote student achievement and excellence, we must communicate in a healthy, positive manner with our students so they can develop and maintain healthy, realistic self-concepts. Students with healthy self-concepts will learn more content, perform better on tests, have fewer personal needs, require less teacher direction, pursue more content on their own, have better communication relationships with teachers, peers, and administrators, and feel more positive about the educational system than students with unhealthy self-concepts. For decades educational administrators, pedagogical managers, researchers, and scholars have studied the impacts of student self-concept on academic achievement and excellence and yet very little effort is still being exerted on the part of many educational systems to improve healthy, realistic student self-concept. In this chapter, we will review student self-concept, characteristics of the self, development of self-concept, dimensions of self-concept, self-concept and academic achievement, and communication methods for changing or improving student self-concept.

### **Student Self-Concept: Some Definitions**

In this chapter, we will refer to the terms self-concept, self-esteem, self-worth, and self-image as having the same meaning. Some texts distinguish among some of these terms (McCroskey, 1998), however, for ease of reading and understandability of material the above terms will be taken here to be synonymous.

Student self-concept is a student's complete and total view of her or his cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and psychological capabilities and abilities as a student. Student self-concept is the student's view of themselves in terms of overall self-worth in the classroom. Student self-concept is a student's assessment, evaluation, and valuation of her/himself in the classroom environment. Student self-concept is a student's overall self-image of themselves in the classroom. Student self-concept is the student's perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and values about themselves and how others perceive them in the school environment.

We are not suggesting self-concept is analogous to conceit, narcissism, egocentric behavior, being an egotist, vain, or having a high or exaggerated opinion of oneself. Self-concept is simply a student's realistic view or perception of her/himself in the classroom environment. The perception a student has of her or himself as a student is generally stable, consistent over time, and difficult to change. Self-concept is difficult to change because it is a part of the person. Next we will discuss the characteristics of the self.

## **Characteristics of the Self**

In a classic book on self-concept, Purkey (1970) set forth the following composite definition of self. He stated the self is "a complex and dynamic system of beliefs which an individual holds true about himself (or herself), each belief with a corresponding value" (p. 7). The definition of self has two primary characteristics: the self is organized and the self is dynamic. These characteristics will be discussed below.

### **Self is Organized**

Purkey (1970) suggested the "self has a generally stable quality which is characterized by harmony and orderliness" (p. 7). For example, our students have perceptions or beliefs about themselves that have some order to them and are relatively stable across time. In addition, many of these closely held beliefs are difficult to change.

Each belief or concept has "its own generally negative or positive value" (p. 9). For example, most students make some evaluation of themselves as a student. Their evaluations are usually negative or positive. Often they will evaluate themselves in various subject areas as good or bad.

Another quality of the organized self is that "success and failure are generalized throughout the system" (p. 9). When one ability is important and highly valued and we fail at this ability, then our failure will lower our self-evaluation of other, maybe unrelated, abilities. On the other hand, when one ability is important and highly valued and we achieve at this ability, then our achievement might raise our self-evaluation of other, maybe unrelated, abilities. In essence, if a student succeeds in one area of school, then they might think they can succeed in other areas of school. For example, if a student thinks they are good at English and English is highly valued to her or him, repeated failure in English will lower the student's self-concept in other (perhaps unrelated) subject matter areas.

### **Self is Unique**

Like fingerprints, no two people ever hold identical sets of beliefs about themselves. This uniqueness of the self, which makes for an infinite variety of personalities, helps to explain problems of communication" (p. 9-10). Because of this uniqueness, differences occur in how students see themselves, the classroom, and us. For instance, a Euro-American teacher in Oklahoma might view the classroom differently from a Hispanic student in Southern California.

## **Self is dynamic**

Purkey (1970) states that "each one of us is constantly striving to maintain, protect, and enhance the self of which he (or she) is aware" (p. 10). The self is dynamic in the sense that each person is constantly attempting to maintain balance between her/his beliefs and her/his behavior. The self is the vantage point from which students view the world. Purkey goes on to state:

Things are significant or insignificant, important or unimportant, attractive or unattractive, valuable or worthless, in terms of their relationship to oneself. We evaluate the world and its meaning in terms of how we see ourselves. Many students do poorly in school simply because what the school is doing seem irrelevant to himself (or herself) and his (or her) world. (p. 10)

With the self as the vantage point, it is often difficult to change a student's perception of her or himself. If the student sees her or himself as a poor student, it may take a large number of successes in school before you can convince them otherwise. Changing a student's view of her or himself does not happen overnight. However, even our best students can begin to doubt their abilities if a teacher gives them many unsuccessful or failure experiences. When a poor student experiences failure, he or she simply accepts it because they expected to do poorly anyway, no matter how hard they worked.

In general, the self resists change and attempts to strive for consistency. People feel uncomfortable with themselves when they are forced to change. This is why it is so difficult to change self-image. Occasionally people will shift their self-image. Situations like the first day of school, graduation, marriage, a new job, new friends, or retirement might cause a shift, but overall our self is resistant to permanent change.

Purkey states:

However, the self will change if conditions are favorable. If the child sees the educative process as meaningful and self-enhancing, and if the degree of threat provided by the school experience is not overpowering, then he (or she) is likely to grow in self-esteem and in academic achievement. Very few students want to be failures at learning, just as very few teachers want to be failures at teaching. (p. 12)

In conclusion, within the self is some personal, internal motivation to engage in some activity. This can be advantageous for us. Our students come to school with some personal, internal motivation. It may or may not be to engage in school related activities. We have to be able to engage them in experiences that will get them motivated in the direction desired by the school system. If we can tap into a student's internal motivation system, then we can turn her or him into a "a truly dedicated student with some self-assurance" so they can succeed in the school process.

The characteristics of self are highly related to student self-concept formation. It is these very characteristics which make it difficult to alter or change a student's self-image. When we talk about changing self-concept, we are talking about changing the way a person views her or himself. This is no easy task. It is not easy because these perceptions of self are formed early and often solidified early in life. Before we begin to discuss methods for altering self-concept and building a more realistic view, we must review the development of self-concept.

### **Development of Student Self-Concept**

The verbal and nonverbal communication the student receives from teachers, school officials, peers, parents, and other significant persons may have a greater, more far reaching impact on realistic student self-concept than other variables. While many of our students enter our classrooms with some degree of a healthy or unhealthy self-concept, it is we (teachers) who probably have the greatest impact on student self-concept. It is teacher communication with the student that tells the student how he or she is performing in the classroom. While our students listen to their peer group and parents, we still have a major impact on their self-concept because we spend more time with them than any other group throughout their educational careers. Our verbal and our nonverbal communication with our students are some of the primary determinants of whether or not a student has a healthy self-image or an unhealthy self-image of her or himself in the classroom. All other explanations are peripheral to the development of student self-concept. In relation to self-concept development and teacher impact, Haim Ginott stated the following:

I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom...As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous... In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.

With the understanding that communication is the key component in self-concept formation, we will move to discuss other factors that impact student self-concept development. Keep in mind that the other factors are all related to the communication in the classroom.

Many students enter our academic halls with a fairly healthy, positive view of themselves and then in a few short years they leave our academic halls with a less than healthy, perhaps negative view of themselves. How does this transformation happen? Again, it goes back to the communication the student encounters. He or she comes in bright, alert, expectant, energetic, and willing to learn. Then they begin encountering persons who tell them in verbal or nonverbal ways that they aren't very good at what they are doing. Some persons tell them they aren't very good persons. After several days, months, or years of this, the student has developed a feeling about her or himself as a student. It is this accumulation of data about oneself and one's performance from many teachers, school personnel, and others that confirms a student's self-concept.

Parents and other significant others have a major impact on a student's self-concept development. The communication given by significant others often influences a student's self-regard confirmation. Parents, grandparents, and teachers often feel they have no impact on a student after the first few grades are completed. This is completely untrue. Many times students still look to their parents, grandparents, and teachers for assurance and encouragement. If these significant others don't give guidance, assurance, or encouragement, the student may begin to feel unsure of him or herself. Students feel that if the people who are supposed to love and care about their needs, successes, and achievements think they are doing poorly, then perhaps they are. After extensive periods of less than positive communication from significant others, a student's self-esteem will be lowered. Even grown adults still place value upon what their parents think of them and what they do. So why shouldn't our students do the same?

As a student's positive or negative experiences multiply so does the perception of self develop. School is filled with many positive and many negative opportunities. Not all students can succeed in all academic challenges. However, given proper instruction, proper teacher/student communication, and a good classroom environment, all students should be able to succeed in most academic challenges. Public school was never designed for an elite few to do well. It was designed so all students could have an equal opportunity to learn, process information, perform, and achieve. However, many, many students never have a number of positive experiences, they have negative experiences that continue to multiply.

(See Figure 8.1 for an illustration of this idea.) When failures outnumber successes, a student's healthy self-concept may be in jeopardy. Often as failures mount, healthy self-concept decreases.

Stereotyping of a student can significantly heighten the likelihood that a healthy or unhealthy self-concept will follow. Often students become negatively stereotyped in their early years in school and this stereotype follows them throughout their academic careers. There have even been reported incidents of an entire group or family of children who were all perceived in a negative light by teachers and administrators. What chance does a child have to succeed if some negative reputation or stereotype precedes her or him?

Communicating	Keyboarding	Band
English	Music	Cheerleading
Behavior	Asking Questions	Math
Helping Teacher	Home Economics	Chorus
Social Science	Speech	Geology
Foreign Language	Physical Education	Psychology
Multicultural Studies	History	Geography
Relating to Others	Science	Writing
Playing with Others	Lab Work	Finance
Working with Others	Being Liked	Health
Selected Fan Clubs	Biology	Literature
Computer Science	Astronomy	Listening
Extracurricular Activities	Answering Questions	Talking

**The above are several areas where a student can succeed or fail. When the failures outweigh the successes, the student will have a lowered student self-image.**

**Figure 8.1 Potential Areas Where Students Can Succeed or Fail**

Above are several areas where a student can succeed or fail. When the failures outweigh the successes, the student will have a lowered student self-image.

All too often in classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, and school offices we hear killer statements made to or about our students. Killer statements are usually verbal message put-downs or negative statements made to a student or made about a student. They are usually generated by teachers and other school personnel. Often these statements may even be a part of a teacher's communication repertoire in the classroom. Many times these statements occur from frustration, tension, or stress in the classroom environment. Killer

statements are hurtful comments that usually hit at the core of a student's self-esteem. Some examples we have heard used by teachers are: "You're so dumb, a door knob looks bright." "You have a brain the size of a pea." "Where did you get such a stupid idea?" "Your parents must have had one good child, but it sure isn't you." "You're just like your older brother, a failure." I think we can see from these examples that killer statements do not belong in our school setting. These types of statements can hurt any student of any age and damage their student self-concept.

Lastly, students will acquire some of the self-concept about whom and what they are by listening, watching, and modeling the behaviors and attitudes of the adults in their surroundings. For example, students often watch and model the nonverbal behaviors and spoken attitudes of their teachers. Students consider their teachers to be role models, so they model them. If we are not positive about ourselves, our profession, our school, our state, and the general state of education, the students may develop some of the same behaviors we display. Even the more mature students will begin to model us and speak like us. If we have a low self-concept, we are likely to have an entire room of nonconfident, insecure, timid students. If we have a healthy self-concept then we are likely to have an entire room of confident, secure, self-assured students.

In conclusion, all of the factors which contribute to the development of student self-concept may or may not be present in each student's environment. No one is sure exactly what variables or combinations of variables impact every student. But we do know each student is unique and different and their self-concept is influenced in unique and different ways. We also know that if a student receives much negative communication over long periods of time, her or his likelihood of having a lowered self-concept has been increased. To summarize, we don't know all the reasons why some students have higher or lower (realistic or unrealistic) self-concepts than others, but we do know that communication employed by significant others has a major impact on a student's perceptions of her or himself.

## **Dimensions of Student Self-Concept**

Student self-concept is a multidimensional construct; there are different dimensions or ways in which students view themselves. There are three primary dimensions. These dimensions are behavioral self, identity self, and judging self.

### **Behavioral Self**

This dimension of student self-concept refers to the behavior of the student. It is often viewed as how some student acts or what they do. The behavioral self is usually

concerned with some action, movement, behavior, or student conduct. The following are examples of the behavioral self: Students play, act, sit still, stand up, walk around, learn, move, motion, gesture, toss a ball, walk, wave arms, listen, recite, change posture, react to another's movements, write, scribble, draw, perform, balance self, answer, talk, request, demonstrate, organize, present, and run. This is by no means an exhaustive list of all the behaviors by which students are judged or make judgments about themselves.

### **Identity Self**

This dimension of student self-concept refers to the identity of the student. It is often viewed as how some student views or sees what or who they are in the school system. The identity self is usually concerned with being closely associated with some identity role. The following are examples of the identity self: Students see themselves as friends, helpers, sports persons, the class clown, the perfect student, the dumb student, the new student, the transfer student, the minority, the disabled person, the slow student, the most popular student, the least popular student, the best liked, least liked, most likely to succeed, least likely to succeed, most beautiful, least beautiful, richest, poorest, high class, low class, best dressed, worst dressed, student body president, biggest jerk in the school, trouble maker, quiet student, noisy student or the nobody. This is by no means an exhaustive list of all the identities by which students are judged or make judgments about themselves.

### **Judging Self**

This dimension of student self-concept refers to the evaluations, judgments, or opinions students make about themselves. It is often viewed as how a student judges or evaluates what they do and who they are. The following are examples of judgmental statements students might make about themselves: I am a good student. I am a lousy student. I am an exceptional basketball player. I am a poor basketball player. I am a good student body president. I am a poor student body president. I am the biggest failure in school. I am the most intelligent student in school. I am the dumbest student in school. I am the fattest student in school. The judging self always has some evaluative term or adjective attached to the student's description of what they do or who they are. These statements will tell us how the student truly sees her or himself.

If we listen to our students talking to others and talking to us, they will often give us hints through their communication about how they feel about themselves. We can use this information to help us adjust our communication so we confirm the positive feelings they have and not reinforce the negative feelings they have about themselves. If students



generate too many negative statements about themselves, eventually they will be what they say they are.

## **Self-Concept and Academic Achievement**

There are several schools of thought on the relationship between self-concept and student achievement. We have elected to support the school of thought which suggests when self-concept is poor (not healthy, strong, or realistic) then student achievement may be adversely affected. The reasoning for this is that self-concept is a strong mediating, motivating variable for overall achievement in all levels of school. A student's self-concept, self-confidence, and self-image are so integral to the student's evaluation system of her or himself that this self-concept variable will impact a student's potential for academic success. The student who does poorly in some academic area may or may not have her or his self-esteem impacted. If that student has a strong, healthy self-concept, they will be able to overcome an academic disappointment and work to improve that area. However, the student with low self-concept is less likely to be able to overcome an academic disappointment and probably will not be able to improve that area.

Children enter our classes with a negative or positive predisposition toward school, academics, achievement, and success. In our schools their predisposition is often reinforced and the children live up to our expectations. In our schools their predisposition is often discouraged and the children change their attitudes about school, academics, achievement, and success. No one seems to be able to pinpoint where a student's predispositions change in school but we do know that a teacher (one good or one bad teacher) can have a significant impact on the self-image of a child. We also know that self-image has a significant impact on academic achievement. Let's look at a profound description of children and their self-image as they enter school as provided by Purkey (1970):

It is evident that children come to school with all sorts of ideas about themselves and their abilities. They have formed pictures of their value as human beings and of their ability to cope successfully with their environment...the child's self-image is with him (or her) wherever he (or she) goes, influencing whatever he (or she) does. Negative self-esteem, however, is often overlooked because we fail to take the time and effort it requires to be sensitive to how children see themselves and their abilities. (p. 37)

Unfortunately, many of our children enter our classrooms with the feeling that they are "useless," "worthless," or "have no value." It takes time, effort, caring, and effective teacher communication to get these children to perceive themselves differently. Perhaps what is more puzzling is that many children come to school with the feeling that they are "useful," "valuable," or "have value," and somewhere in the process of education they begin to perceive themselves differently and their positive self-image moves to a negative self-image. Whether children come with a negative self-concept or develop a negative self-concept in school, it is clear that self-concept can impact academic achievement and even lead to antisocial student behaviors.

### **Effects of Self-Concept on Achievement**

Through effective communication with our students we may be able to provide an environment where even the student with the lowest self-esteem can learn and thrive. This must be our goal. Otherwise we will have numbers of students who are failing in many aspects offered by our educational systems.

Every year there are more and more reports linking low student self-concept with poor academic performance, increased absenteeism from school, increased frustration with school, increased antisocial behaviors in the school environment, and more failures. It seems more of our students are having self-concept, self-identification problems than previously reported. Of course if students don't see themselves in a positive light it is difficult to view other things in a positive light, such as school. Since school is such a significant portion of their life, if they don't get their self-concepts built up in school, then they may never have another opportunity to have their self-concepts built up.

Clearly children's self-concepts impact the way they view themselves, us, and the school system. Children with poor self-concepts are not as likely to learn to read, write, spell, speak, relate, and manage mathematics, science and so on as well as students who have high self-concepts. Children with poor self-concepts are not as likely to be able to discern appropriate positive student behaviors in the classroom to assist in the achievement process as well as students who have high self-concepts. Children with poor self-concepts are not as likely to willingly engage in the interactive instructional process as students who have high self-concepts. Children with poor self-concepts are not as likely to understand and grasp new curriculums and instructional strategies as well as students who have high self-concepts. Children with poor self-concepts are not as likely to acquire new concepts and material on their own as students who have high self-concepts. Children with poor self-concepts are more likely to be misbehavior problems and present antisocial behaviors

than students with high self-concepts. It is not surprising then that students with low self-concepts fare less well in school than students with high self-concepts. In addition, teachers often like to interact with, work with, and encourage the higher self-concept students more than the low self-concept students. It is more rewarding to work with a high self-concept, self-assured student than it is to work with a low self-concept student.

In conclusion, Purkey (1970) sums up the relationship between self-concept and student academic achievement by stating:

Overall, the research evidence clearly shows a persistent and significant relationship between the self-concept and academic achievement. Judging by the preponderance of available research, it seems reasonable to assume that unsuccessful students, whether underachievers, nonachievers, or poor readers, are likely to hold attitudes about themselves and their abilities which are pervasively negative. They tend to see themselves as less able, less adequate, and less self-reliant than their more successful peers.  
(pp. 15 & 22)

It is clear that students' negative self-perceptions will impact their academic achievement, their learning, their socialization in school, their communication with others, and their behavior.

Figure 8.2 illustrates the impact that student self-concept and student abilities have on academic achievement. As we can see from Figure 8.2, there are four resultant levels of academic achievement based on self-concept and ability.

		<b>Student Self-Concept</b>	
		<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
<b>Student Ability</b>	<u>High</u>	High Achievers or Over Achievers	Underachievers
	<u>Low</u>	Moderate to Good Achievers	Nonachievers

**Figure 8.2 Model Of Student Self-Concept Ability Level And Achievement**

Box 1 suggests the student with a high or healthy self-concept and high ability will be a high achiever or overachiever. The reason for this is that the student in Box 1 has high self-confidence because of the healthy self-concept and, combined with high ability, they can master almost any subject matter or content area. This combination of confidence and ability allows this student to be able to approach most academic and social arenas in school with self-assurance, confidence, skill, and competence. Other descriptive terms for this student might include the following: a go-getter; self-starter; an initiator; or a leader. These students will experience high achievement in the school system and many academic and personal rewards. They accomplish, succeed, and perform in many arenas. They rarely fail or fall down in any area of school. Of course these students are only a very small proportion of the student population. They are generally well-liked, respected, and receive much positive communication from their teachers.

Box 2 shows a student with a healthy or high self-concept and a low ability level. This student is still likely to have moderate to good achievement because of their high self-concept which gives them self-assurance and self-confidence. They are confident but have less ability than the students in Box 1, but they know that if they strive, work hard, and study, they can master many subjects and succeed in school. These students might also be called: I think I cans; the try, try agains 'till I get it right; the pluggers who plug away until they get it right; the stick to it students; the plodders who plod along until they get it right; or hard workers. These students will also experience good levels of achievement in the school system and many academic and personal rewards. They have high aspirations. They work hard, try hard, attempt to do things well, talk to teachers about how to improve, have high need to work and succeed and usually do succeed because of their dedication, determination, and confidence. While their ability is not as high as Box 1 (and they are well aware of their limited abilities), they succeed because they are driven to succeed by a strong, healthy self-concept. These students usually comprise a larger proportion of the student population than Box 1. They, too, are generally well-liked, respected for their tenacity, and receive much positive communication from their teachers.

Box 3 shows a student with an unhealthy or low self-concept and a high ability level. This student is not likely to achieve up to their ability level because they lack confidence and self-assurance. They are less confident in themselves than Boxes 1 or 2 because of their low self-concept or low perceptions of themselves. Their self-concept holds them back from achieving up to their ability level. These students are often seen as underachievers. These students might also be called: the low achievers; I can't students; or the frustrated ones. These students have the ability but their low self-concept is holding them back from

academic achievement. Often teachers will say to this group of students "you should be doing better than you are, what's the matter?" This group has been defeated by their self-image and is easily discouraged in the classroom. Even when they do perform well in the classroom and get reinforced for it, they think it was luck, chance, or the instructor had pity on them. It takes a lot of teacher reinforcement to show them that they have the ability to do well. They give up easily, don't attempt new projects, and often become frustrated with school, which might lead to misbehavior problems. These students usually comprise the same proportion of the student population as Box 2.

Box 4 shows a student with an unhealthy or low self-concept and a low ability level. This student is not likely to achieve much in school. In fact they may become the mental and/or physical dropouts. They are not confident in themselves, have a very low opinion of themselves, and have low ability. These students are often viewed as nonachievers. These students might also be referred to as: the dropouts; the deadbeats; the lost ones; the lost souls; or I don't care group. These students are held back because they have low self-concepts and low ability. They are truly less in tune with school, less likely to attend school, and are often the mental dropouts. Many times these students will stay in school for social or legal reasons. They are often absent from school and have to be forced to attend school. They will often join antisocial groups and be susceptible to influence from the antisocial groups. School is not relevant so they find some group that is. These students do not enjoy the rewards that the school has to offer. In fact, teachers usually wonder why these students are in their classes. These students usually comprise the same proportion of the student population as Box 1.

In conclusion, it is clear student self-concept has an impact on student achievement, success, and learning. The students with the lower self-concepts are more likely to achieve less, learn less, and be frustrated more with school than students with the higher self-concepts. So then what do we do? First, we must nurture and make sure the students with the higher self-concepts in Boxes 1 and 2 continue to flourish in our systems. We don't want to assume that because they are self-motivated they can be ignored. At the same time we cannot spend all our time nurturing them while neglecting others. Second, we need to build or increase the self-esteem of students in Boxes 3 and 4. We must do this without neglecting the others in our classes. As suggested earlier, our jobs are not easy, but then again no one promised us teaching was easy. Before we move to communication strategies for enhancing students, self-concepts, we will review one of the primary explanations of learning and self-concept.

## **Poker Chip Theory of Learning**

The "poker chip theory of learning" was advanced to explain the relationship between self-concept and student achievement and learning. Canfield and Wells (1976) advanced the idea that "we see all learning as the result of a risk-taking situation somewhat akin to a poker game (or any other gambling situation, for that matter)" (p. 7). They continue by suggesting that in any potential learning situation in the classroom students are asked to take risks, such as: giving a speech; reciting a poem; answering a question orally in class; writing her or his name; asking the teacher a question; doing a math problem at the board, writing a paper on Shakespeare; doing a computer program; or doing some artwork. In each situation the student is risking approval, failure, success, disapproval, rejection, humiliation, judgment, and perhaps even punishment. They state that at a "deeper level the student is risking his or her self-concept" (p. 7).

To make the analogy more understandable, we must assign the following representations: the school or educational organization is the house; the teacher is the dealer; the student is the player; and the student's self-concept is her or his stack of poker chips. Some students start the education game with more chips than other students. The students who come into our classes with the higher number of chips have a great advantage over the students who don't have as many chips. For example, the student who comes into our class with one hundred chips can lose many chips, take many risks before they can no longer play the game. However, the student who comes into our class with twenty chips can't play the education game as long or be as risky before their chips are all gone. Students with high self-concepts have a lot of chips and can play the game of education a long, long time before their chips are depleted. Students with low self-concepts have few chips and can't play the game of education as long before their chips are depleted.

The school (the house) sets the rules of the game. The teacher (the dealer) deals a good hand or a bad hand to the students. The students play the game and many students gain higher self-concepts, while many have their self-concepts lowered. Often this happens because either the school or the teacher deals a "bad" or "dirty" hand. He or she builds the chips for the students who seem most worthy, most promising, and most productive. He or she lowers the number of chips for the students who seem least worthy, least promising, and least productive. In most cases those students with high self-concepts can play the game longer and take more risks than those students with low self-concepts. Hence, the winners in the game are usually the students who enter our classes with more chips. The losers are usually the students who enter our classes with fewer chips. The students who played well in the past and earned many chips will be able to play more in the future. The

students who did not play well in the past and did not earn as many chips will not be able to play more in the future. This is why we have children in Boxes 3 and 4 of Figure 8.2.

Earlier we suggested the teacher has control of the deck and he or she can deal a good or a bad hand. We are not suggesting teachers intentionally deal a bad hand to some students (although we know some who do). We are suggesting that a teacher through her or his communication and reactions to students often deal an unintentionally "crooked" hand to many students with low self-concepts. We unintentionally reinforce students with high self-concepts more thus building up their stack of chips, while not building or even lowering the chips of the low self-concept students. How does this happen? It happens primarily by teachers unintentionally being more responsive and communicative with the higher self-concept students and being less responsive and communicative with the lower self-concept students. Teachers often call on the brighter students (or those with higher self-concepts) more often; give prompts to the brighter students more often; give harder questions to the brighter students; help brighter students formulate answers; like, respect, talk with brighter students more often; give emotional and social support to the brighter students; spend more time with the brighter students; integrate the brighter students into school activities more often; are more accepting of brighter students' ideas; spend more time with the brighter students; and generally are more nonverbally and verbally responsive to the brighter students. The less than bright students (or those with lower self-concepts) are often left to themselves in the classroom and school environment. As the brighter students' self-concepts increase, the less than bright students' self-concepts decrease. What can we do to nurture those students whose self-concepts need nurturing while building the self-concepts of those students who have lower self-images? The next section hopefully should answer the above question.

## **Communication Strategies For Nurturing and Building Realistic Student Self-Concept**

There are many, many strategies for nurturing and building realistic student self-concept. We will review some of the primary strategies. However, we must keep in mind none of these strategies will be useful if we don't believe they can work. They will not be useful if we aren't willing to acknowledge that we are the primary force in changing, molding, nurturing a child's self-image in the school system.

We must establish a positive, affective, cooperative classroom environments in which children feel they can contribute ideas which will be integrated into the content or classroom, ask and answer questions, and give examples relating to the content without

fear of punishment or negative evaluations. In this same vein, we must show a willingness to listen, listen, listen to our students. Often we use our vocal communication tool (the mouth) too much when in fact we should be using our receiving communication tools (our ears) more.

Our pedagogical approach must be student oriented. Our students must take priority each and every day. Each student must receive equal amounts of attention, communication, instruction, and time from us. No one student should receive more of the above than the other students.

We establish the tone for the classroom. We have to eliminate all killer statements from our speech and not allow students to use killer statements on one another. Killer statements can keep lower self-concept students from interacting, exchanging ideas, or participating in class projects. Even our more secure students might be hesitant to interact or exchange communication if they are likely to receive a killer statement for their efforts. We need to always ask ourselves before we toss an unkind, hurtful word or statement at a student, "would we want our own children treated like this?" We need to stop killing students with our verbal communication. Instead we need to nurture students through our communication.

Through our verbal and nonverbal communication behavior patterns we must communicate praise, reinforcement, and encouragement to each and every student for her or his efforts. This could be accomplished in a variety of ways. For example, we could use "happy" or "positive" stickers on projects or papers to show support. We could smile at each student once a day. We could give a nod to each student as they enter or leave our classrooms. We need to acknowledge their contributions and give encouragement and guidance for future contributions.

We need to assist students in cognitively restructuring their views of themselves and their ideas. We should not let our students "put themselves down" and we should never reinforce them when they do so. When students constantly say they are "dumb" or "stupid" we need to have them restructure their thoughts so they stop thinking and saying they are dumb or stupid. If they say it long enough and often enough, they may begin to believe it.

We must focus on their accomplishments more often, and focus less on their failures. We should communicate with them about their accomplishments, achievements, and recognitions. We should avoid "over focusing" or "overemphasizing" their failures and weaknesses. Most of our students are very aware of their shortcomings and will focus on them even when we don't. We must communicate their achievements to them so they want



to continue to achieve in some area of school. If we fail to communicate any achievements to them, they may quit attempting to achieve at school.

We must communicate a sense of belongingness and connectedness to each and every student. This can be accomplished by making sure each and every student has the opportunity to join some prosocial club or group in our school. Many schools are already eliminating the "cut policy." We should attempt to incorporate more groups where there are "no cut policies" and all who want to belong or be connected to the group can be. It is better to have our students belonging to prosocial school groups than looking for antisocial street groups for a sense of belongingness.

We need to build affinity with our students. As affinity between teacher and student increases, so does effective communication. As effective communication increases, the likelihood of conflict, disagreement, and classroom problems decrease. As affinity and effective communication increase, so does the likelihood that students will believe us when we say they are "good" students. Even the students who have never heard the word "good" before their name will believe it and they will start acting and communicating like good students.

In summary, many students come to our schools feeling worthy, valuable, good, and strong. Many students leave our schools feeling unworthy, bad, and weak. This should not happen. Low student self-esteem is becoming a chronic problem, if not an epidemic, within our educational system. Teachers can increase student self-esteem through effective and affective communication. We must communicate respect, liking, affinity, helpfulness, and caring in order for our students to survive this debilitating disease.

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# INSTRUCTIONAL ASSESSMENT: FEEDBACK, GRADING, AND AFFECT



## Chapter Eight Objectives

1. Review the importance/functions of feedback in the classroom.
2. Distinguish between formative and summative feedback and give examples of each.
3. Provide two guidelines for giving and two guidelines for receiving feedback.

Instructional assessment is a process that includes a variety of activities and decisions. It includes both descriptive and judgmental feedback from teachers to students, as well as from students to teachers. It can occur at various times in the learning process, from preassessment determinations of where students are at the beginning of a course of study, through various kinds of communication related to how they are doing (and how the instructor is doing!) during the course of study, to an evaluation of how everyone did at the end of the course of study.

## Defining the Assessment Process

### Assessment

Assessment is an umbrella term that refers to the entire process of collecting information and making judgments about instructional outcomes. It helps teachers decide what is working and what is not. Preassessment provides insight into what students already know, and don't know, before beginning instruction. Preassessment might be formal, such as a pretest of course-related knowledge and/or skills, informal, such as observation of attitudes and anxieties about the area of study that students express, or a combination of the two. It is intended to allow teachers to better tailor instructional objectives and strategies to individual students or to a particular group of students. Formative assessment occurs during the process of instruction, providing periodic information on what students have learned and what remains to be learned. Formative assessment can also tap students' affective responses to the instructional process -- what makes them happy or excited or comfortable and what does not. Given this kind of information, which can also be solicited in either formal or informal ways, teachers can make procedural adjustments that maximize the likelihood of achieving cognitive, psychomotor, and affective objectives before the unit, course, or the year is over. Summative assessment occurs at the end of a course of study. In mastery learning, it is the certification that an objective or objectives have been

mastered. In traditional systems, it includes the determination of grades. In instructional planning terms, it is a look back over the whole process and asking "how did I do?"

## **Measurement**

Measurement refers to decisions about how the achievement of objectives will be operationalized or quantified. In writing complete instructional objectives, a process which has been discussed in a previous chapter, it is the part of the statement that specifies the evidence that will be used to determine whether or not the goal has been accomplished. Testing is one kind of measurement, and usually refers to students' opportunity to respond to an identical set of questions under controlled conditions. Effective assessment measures should be both valid and reliable.

A valid measure is one that reflects what it claims to reflect. For a test to be a valid measure of students' mastery of a set of objectives, it should include representative questions for all the objectives, not be concentrated on one or two of them. A valid measure of whether or not students have been successful at learning how to play the piano would by necessity include their demonstration of performance skills, since even correctly answering 100 percent of a set of questions about how to play the piano will not be a valid indicator that a student can actually do it. Determining the validity of measures of affective outcomes is sometimes less clear-cut than measuring objectives in the other learning domains; however, if one of a teacher's goals is to increase students' joy of reading, it is important to think about whether their checking out more books from the library is a valid reflection of their enjoying reading books or if it in fact reflects their getting points toward their grade for each book read.

A reliable measure is one which is accurate and consistent. Three typical ways of assessing the reliability of paper-and-pencil tests are the test-retest method, the equivalent forms method, and the split-half method. In the first instance, if giving the same test to the same group of students within a short period of time results in similar scores, the test is judged to be reliable. In the second instance, if two equivalent forms of a test are developed, covering the same material, reliability can be determined by comparing the scores on the two forms. In the third instance, the scores for even-numbered and odd-numbered items on longer tests can be compared to one another to indicate whether they provide a consistent profile of student mastery. Assessing the rating reliability on essay tests, project reports, and performances is more challenging. Teachers might occasionally want to put aside a set of graded papers and reread them at a later time (without referring to the previously recorded grade) to see whether their judgments are consistent. They

might also consider comparing their assessments with those of other raters, including students, to see whether there is inter-rater agreement as to whether or not the assignment met its objectives.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation is a judgment of merit or worth, often communicated via grading. Assessment is not necessarily evaluative, nor does it necessarily have to lead to an ultimate grade. Even when a test or assignment is evaluated as to its relative worth (that is, students are given a report of how well they did), the evaluative information should be accompanied by descriptive information which tells students what they did, or are doing, well and not so well, and how they can do better. In addition, it is often appropriate to provide descriptive feedback without tacking on an evaluative assessment. The next two sections of this chapter will deal with these two kinds of information provided by assessment-based feedback.

## **Evaluative Feedback**

### **Bases for Evaluation**

There are two general bases for evaluating student learning: norm-referenced evaluation and criterion-referenced evaluation. Norm-referenced evaluation is very familiar as the "bell-shaped curve." It is designed to rate a student's performance in relation to the performance of the other students. Students are rank ordered, and grade cutoffs are based on how well the normative group did as a whole. Often the normative group to which a student is compared is his or her own class, although it may be an aggregate of several groups of students who have completed the same task. The individual student is judged in terms of a relative standard; her or his grade reflects that he or she did better than 80 % of the students in the normative group but does not indicate if that means that 40 %, 60 %, or 80 % -- or any other percent -- of the test questions were answered correctly. Norm-referenced evaluation tends to be criticized for unduly punishing moderate and high-ability students in high-ability classes and unduly rewarding moderate and low-ability students in low-ability classes. It is the most defensible when the normative group is very large and varied so that the probability of a representative distribution of students is likely. Criterion-referenced evaluation is based on absolute, objective performance standards or criteria. Its intent is to indicate whether or not a student has mastered a behavior specified in a formal instructional objective. All students have the opportunity of doing well--or of

failing to do well. The key to effective criterion-referenced evaluation is to be sure the measurement of achievement is both reliable and valid. When teachers are required to translate criterion-referenced evaluation systems into a graduated scale of grades, they must specify criteria for different levels of mastery.

Although the distinction between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced evaluation seems to be straightforward, it is common for teachers to assign grades without a clear picture of what they communicate. While they may not subscribe to the idea of grading on a norm-referenced curve, they may also feel uncomfortable when there are "too many" high grades, or "too many" low grades, assuming that tests must be too easy (or hard) or subjective grading standards too lenient (or stringent) when that occurs. In addition, they feel they have a sense of which students need to be challenged to work harder and which need to be reinforced for working hard and use grades as a means of doing so. Thus, judgments of "effort" or "improvement" are considered in modifying the norm or criterion-referenced evaluations before they are communicated to students as grades.

Such hybridizing, of course, serves to muddy the ability of anyone -- students, parents, potential employers, teachers at the next level, and so forth -- to interpret what a particular grade means. If Tika "tried hard" but did not master any of the course objectives will the next teacher know that's what his "C" means? If Dalia mastered every objective but skipped class a lot, how will anyone know that her "C" means something entirely different? Similarly, if Fernando did worse than 97 % of her classmates but showed improvement should her grade be raised at least to a "D" to encourage her? Meanwhile, should Brad, who ranked dead-center in the class but could have tried harder, have his grade lowered to a "D" to tell him his work is below par for his potential? If so, how are we going to communicate what messages these grades really carry?

### **A Brief History of Grades**

Milton, Pollio and Eison (1986) present an interesting chronicle of the history of grades. While the emphasis of their book is on college grades, the trends they illustrate have been characteristic across educational levels and provide some insight into the quandaries associated with evaluative feedback as a part of instructional assessment.

The first grades were recorded in this country in 1783 at Yale, where four descriptive adjectives were used: Optime, Second Optime, Inferiores, and Pejores. These terms translate roughly into the designations of an earlier English system which evaluated students as Honor Men, Pass Men, Charity Passes, and Unmentionables. The standard by

which students were classified into these ranks is not clear, but it appears that they were intended as designations of academic mastery. In the early 1800s, however, the College of William and Mary reflected a different perspective on evaluation criteria in sending all parents of students a report in which their student's name appeared in one of four lists related primarily to their perceived industriousness (this was obviously before the days of academic privacy laws!):

1. The first in their respective classes, orderly and attentive and have made the most flattering improvement.
2. Orderly, correct and attentive and their improvement has been respectable.
3. They have made very little improvement and as we apprehend from want of diligence.
4. They have learnt little or nothing and we believe on account of escapade and idleness. (Milton, Pollio & Eison, 1986, p. 4)

By the 1830s numerical scales became popular. Some schools used a 4-point scale, some a 9-point scale, some a 20-point scale, and some a 100-point scale. In 1850 the University of Michigan adopted a pass/fail system; however, by 1860 a "conditioned" level had been added and in 1864 a 100-point scale was incorporated, with a minimum of 50 required for a pass. Meanwhile, other schools which were using three-level evaluations (Passed, Passed With Distinction, and Failed) added plus and minus signs so that students who "Passed With Distinction" could be distinguished from those who merely "Passed With Distinction --." There appeared to be an ongoing inclination toward making finer and finer distinctions among students' relative degrees of success.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the 100-point scale had become quite popular, with the numerical scores translated into letter symbols to separate students into five achievement groups. Shortly after the turn of the century, the curve came into being at the University of Missouri, as a response to an uproar over a professor who had failed an entire class. The top 3 % of students in a class were thenceforth to be labeled excellent (A), the next 22 % judged superior (B), the middle 50 % to be assessed as medium (C), the next 22 % rated inferior (D), and the bottom 3 % to fail (F). By the end of World War I the curve had caught on, coupled with an era of "objectivity" in testing -- true/false and multiple-choice tests were the hot trends in a new climate of "scientific" evaluation.

Norm-referenced curves, using a 5-point A - F scale, remained the predominant grading philosophy until the 1960s, when a wave of educational humanism led to adoptions

of pass/fail and self-referenced evaluations. This, in turn, led to criticisms of grade inflation and -- once again -- a reactionary trend toward 13-point scales incorporating a full range of plus and minus designations on top of the traditional A - F scale. School faculties spent a great deal of time discussing whether and how plus and minus grades should be calculated into grade point averages, and whether honors or advanced placement classes should count differently than other classes. For example, in one of the authors' first year of teaching high school, the big decision of the year -- made after excruciating deliberation -- was to award an extra honor point for each grade earned in an honors-level class. Thus, an "A" would be calculated as five points rather than four, a "B" as four points rather than three, and so forth. The theory was that this would allow honors teachers to separate the most-honorable students from the merely-honorable and barely-honorable students, and to try to motivate honors students with grades without the danger that some special education student would end up as valedictorian (we swear this was the precise rationale for the system!).

In the end, it becomes apparent that interpreting the messages communicated by grades is a complex process. Milton and his colleagues report the findings of one of their own studies in which experienced faculty members were asked: "Imagine that an intelligent well-informed adult (not connected to higher education) asks you: 'Student X received a B in your course. What does that B mean?'" More than 70 % of the respondents gave straightforward responses to the question without equivocating. Later in the questionnaire the same faculty were asked: "Imagine that your son or daughter is in college. A final grade of C is received in a very important course. How do you interpret this grade to yourself? that is, what does it tell you about your child?" Only 14 % of the respondents said, in this case, that the grade meant "average." The rest were uncertain and wanted to know more specific details about the grade. The moral, we think, is that teachers may well have a clear idea of what their grading systems communicate but that does not mean that shared meaning is inevitable.

### **Descriptive Feedback**

***Feedback To Students.*** As we have seen, evaluative feedback -- which is communicated in the form of some sort of grading system -- is likely to require a descriptive explanation so that its intended meaning can be interpreted. Without descriptive feedback, a student will not know why a paper earned a "C" rather than an "A" and will be left guessing as to how to improve on the next paper. Without descriptive feedback, a parent will not know whether her child is being evaluated on a norm-referenced or criterion-referenced basis, or what kind of hybridization entered into the final grade. In



addition, there are many instances throughout a course of study when formative feedback is appropriate, in which case a clear description of what the student has mastered and what remains to be mastered is essential, along with some helpful direction in correcting problems.

Many teachers, the authors included, have expressed frustration at having spent hours writing descriptive comments on student papers only to have many students check the grade and toss the paper in the waste basket by the door. Often this is because students see the assignment of a grade as a summative exercise, and do not perceive the comments on one paper as formative feedback for the next paper. For this reason, it is advisable to provide opportunities for students to obtain descriptive feedback during the process of completing a particular assignment, without being accompanied by an evaluation. Comments on draft copies of assignments or during the developmental stages of projects are more likely to be perceived as having immediately applicable relevance.

Providing descriptive feedback can be time consuming, although teachers should remember that it does not always mean taking home twice as many stacks of papers so that each can be read twice. Sometimes problems that many students are having can be assessed by simply moving around the classroom as students work, or by looking at a sample of eight or ten students' in progress work. These problems can then be brought to the attention of the class as a whole, as the subject of corrective instruction lessons. Often students can give one another descriptive feedback by working in dyads or small groups, or teachers can pair students who are having problems with those who have mastered a task.

Some teachers program a number of precoded comments into a computer so that they can generate personalized feedback for each student by drawing from the coded menu. This allows them to return fully developed explanations of what the student might do to improve her or his performance without having to write the same comments over and over on various papers. Some very individualized notes might still be helpful, but any of us who have written comments in student lab notebooks, on critique forms for class presentations, on essays, or in letters to parents which accompany report cards know that progress toward common objectives usually elicits a relatively predictable need for advice.

Many times it is helpful to separate the descriptive and evaluative components of feedback on graded work. For example, scheduling student conferences a day or so after a set of papers or tests has been returned will usually result in a calmer, more objective discussion than will "buttonhole" conferences on the way out of class -- initiated by the teacher or the student -- while emotions over a disappointing grade are running high. It is logistically difficult in most classes to talk individually with all students after every

assessment opportunity. In elementary and secondary classes, the ability to schedule conferences outside of class time is usually limited; however, opportunities for individual discussions can often be found when the class as a whole is involved in an activity that demands minimal teacher supervision. The students' attitude toward such discussions will be far more positive if they are not reserved only for bad news!

***Feedback from Students.*** Descriptive feedback can also be directed from the student to the teacher. This kind of feedback allows teachers to make changes in classroom atmosphere, instructional strategies, and so forth based on student input. Research has shown that students are very appropriate sources to solicit information regarding student-instructor relationships; their views on the workload and assignments; what they are learning in the course; the perceived fairness of grading; and the instructor's ability to communicate clearly. Sometimes there is truly nothing the teacher can do to accommodate a student's wishes, but responding to the concern with an expression of empathy and an explanation of why an idea cannot be incorporated in the classroom shows that the feedback is being considered seriously and is likely to result in affective payoffs. Many times student feedback does suggest things a teacher can do (or do more of) to better accommodate the needs and preferences of the particular class. When that is the case, the instructional process is likely to be enhanced.

Feedback from students can be solicited formally or informally. Feedback forms can be devised for periodic use, or students can simply be requested to "write down what you liked most about this unit and what you would have liked to be done differently." One way to do this is a Start-Stop-Continue sheet. Have students fold a piece of paper into thirds and write the words "stop," "start," and "continue" one per each section on the page. Then have your students write down (anonymously) things that they would like you to stop doing, things they would like you to start doing, and things they would like you to continue doing. Other teachers place a feedback item at the end of each test so students can "grade" the test. Some develop a routine in which students can drop off a note in a designated place at the end of any day or class period to request content or process clarification that can be made at the start of the next day/class, to comment on anything they liked or didn't like that day, or just to tell the teacher something they want to share in private. This technique usually takes some prompting to get it started; making a point of responding to the feedback and reinforcing students for providing it helps.

The information from formative evaluations of student progress toward mastering objectives also serves as feedback to the teacher. A formative "test," that is not graded, will provide information on where corrective instruction is needed, as well as telling students

how they are doing. Similarly, the process of reviewing any student work while it is in progress will result not only in an opportunity to give students descriptive feedback but also give the teacher an indication of how things are going. Students can be asked to describe how they think they are doing rather than the teacher's initiating descriptive feedback. Their perceptions can be an enlightening means of assessing how they have decoded the teacher's directions or advice.

If you have your students write an evaluation of the class, or in the Stop-Start-Continue exercise, you must debrief your students once you have examined what they have written. Students want to know that their teachers are taking their opinions and ideas seriously. If your students want you to stop giving homework, this is an unrealistic expectation that requires an explanation for why the homework is so important. If you cannot stop or start something that your students would like you to, explain to them why you cannot do so. Just be careful to avoid the infamous "Because I'm the teacher and you're the student!"

### **Assessment and Affect**

Being evaluated makes people feel vulnerable. Any adult who was in the position of having to take a test to renew a driver's license or to obtain a license after having moved to a different state knows how much anxiety accompanies the possibility of failure. No matter how much one rationally tells oneself that marginally literate sixteen-year-olds pass the test every day, the prospect of taking a test -- or placing the right to drive a car on the line -- is uncomfortable. Similarly, many teachers are wary of asking their students for feedback because they cannot get past the negative comments, even if there are 50 compliments for each criticism.

Being in the position of having to make evaluative judgments can also be uncomfortable. Many teachers find themselves regularly agonizing over grades. Some develop a defensively callous attitude and spend a good deal of time in the teachers' lounge looking for reinforcement for their observations that students just don't care and are becoming more and more unteachable. Others try to avoid getting to know students any more than absolutely necessary so that they can assign grades to names rather than people.

We have previously stated that evaluation should, in fact, be relatively dispassionate; that norm-referenced or criterion-referenced grading systems should not be muddied with judgments of effort or improvement. We also believe that it is essential that teachers recognize the influence of success and failure on self-esteem, motivation, and

attitudes toward learning. At first glance these may seem to be contradictory observations; however, they actually reflect two interdependent decisions that teachers make: deciding how students will be judged, and deciding how to communicate those judgments.

### **Making Judgments**

In making the first decision, deciding how students will be judged, teachers should be compulsively explicit about what will constitute varying degrees of success and what will constitute failure. Clearly specified instructional objectives are a means of doing so, particularly in a mastery learning system where evaluation is limited to an assessment of whether or not an objective has been mastered or needs further work. In schools in which graduated grading scales are used, the kind of schools in which most of us work, the basis on which various grades will be assigned should be clear to everyone involved -- students, parents, administrators, and the teachers themselves. The measures used in assessment should themselves be assessed in terms of both their validity (in which case clearly defined instructional objectives again come into play) and their reliability. Having done these things, teachers can direct all sorts of passionate, creative energy into devising ways to help students excel in meeting the goals of the course of study -- but when it comes to evaluating how students have done, the process should be a dispassionate one of matching performance to performance criteria.

While some students may be unhappy about an outcome, they will be more resentful of inconsistency. If they are told what they will have to be able to do and are assessed in terms of something else their affect for the teacher -- and probably the subject -- will be diminished. If some students are assessed by different criteria than other students, affect among students will be compromised. Teachers may be unhappy that some students did not do as well as they would have wished, and continue to consider ways to modify the instructional process, but they will be absolved from "giving" grades.

### **Communicating Judgments**

The second decision teachers must make is how to communicate their judgments to students. We must provide more information to students about their performance than just their grades. Descriptive feedback can be reinforcing and encouraging. Even work that is honestly and fairly evaluated as below standard can be returned with positive as well as corrective comments. Regular formative feedback will help many students do better than they would have done without it, and will give them an indication of how they are doing and how they can do better before they are formally evaluated. Judgments about the student as

a person should be kept separate from judgments about the student's progress toward achieving learning objectives.

### Learning Orientation and Grade Orientation

Teachers should keep in mind that students differ in terms of their individual learning and grade orientations, and thus they will respond differently to both evaluative and descriptive feedback. An individual student might be high in both learning and grade orientation, low in both, or high in one and not the other. Discouraging experiences with a particular type, or types, of students can sometimes cause teachers to make evaluation decisions that stray from objective-based assessment.

Learning-oriented (LO) students are those who see school as a place to encounter new information, to test out ideas, and to learn personally relevant things. Grade-oriented (GO) students see school as a place in which they must do well to get the rewards associated with a good report card or transcript.

		Learning Orientation	
		High	Low
Grade Orientation	High	High LO High GO	Low LO High GO
	Low	High LO Low GO	Low LO Log Go

**Figure 8.1 Classification of Students by Learning Orientation and Grade Orientation**

Students who are high in both learning orientation and grade orientation would seem to be a teacher's ideal, to want to make learning personally relevant but also to perform well. They are, in reality, often the students with the highest test anxiety and a strong need to validate their intrinsic interest in learning with extrinsic indicators that tell them they are doing OK. High LO/High GO students are likely to be very responsive to all the feedback

they can get. Diminishing their counterproductive level of concern over evaluation through clear objectives, information on assessment, and opportunities to obtain formative feedback should help to keep their anxiety over grades from getting in the way of exploiting their desire to learn.

Students who are low in both learning orientation and grade orientation often frustrate teachers, who were seldom Low LO/Low GOs themselves. Neither grades nor learning seems to motivate these students and they do not appear to be responsive to any kind of feedback. They are the students for whom the lower end of a normative grading scale seems to have been invented. We do not have a great deal of difficulty with the dispassionate assignment of low grades to this group.

Students who are learning oriented but not a grade oriented are likely to be involved students who are a joy to teach but sometimes a challenge to evaluate. High LO/Low GO students may be very selective about the descriptive feedback to which they attend. They may be willing to talk about Guatemala for an hour, but not willing to write the four-page paper through which knowledge of Guatemala is to be assessed. They may be disinterested in working back through the objectives they missed on a formative evaluation if they think they've already learned what they want to learn about a topic. These students challenge us to look carefully at our instructional objectives and measurements. If we believe that they are bypassing objectives that are truly important to their learning, we need to communicate clearly why mastering those objectives is of value to them. If we find it difficult to do so, we should reevaluate our assessment priorities. High LO/Low GO students can be a good reality check regarding the relative emphasis placed on lower level versus higher level cognitive learning objectives.

Students who are grade oriented but not learning oriented view all aspects of the classroom in terms of their effects on grades. They will also be selective in their attention to descriptive feedback, ignoring any suggestions not related to evaluation. They are more likely to cheat. Low LO/High GO students are the ones we want to "curve down" to punish them. If our instructional objectives and measurements are solid, they will learn in spite of themselves and our desire to change their attitude should not become a part of our assessing their achievement.

In summary, feedback is an essential component of the instructional communication process. It tells teachers how students are interpreting their messages and responding to their instructional procedures. It also tells students how they are doing, and how they can do better. The evaluation component of instructional assessment should be regarded as a communicative event in which teachers strive to maximize shared interpretations of the

meaning of each grade option; however, opportunities for feedback should not be limited to summative assessments. Rather, the process of assessment should be an ongoing one in which teachers work toward developing an interactive flow of communication that regularly provides and solicits formative, descriptive information about progress toward the achievement of instructional goals.

## **Competition and Cooperation in Learning Environments**

"If you succeed, then we succeed" should be the catchphrase of schools. This is the foundation of a cooperative learning model. However, within the American culture, competition is regarded as a means of bringing out the best in people, of making them strive to put forth that extra effort that will distinguish them from the pack. Our society values competition, and reveres winners. Competition is said to build character and self-esteem. These outcomes of competition, however, are primarily reserved for those who come out on top. What about those students who don't ever come out on top in our schools?

### **How Competition Works**

Kohn (1986a, 1986b, 1987) suggests there are two types of competition: structural competition and intentional competition. The first refers to a situation, or an environment, the second to an attitude. When our classrooms are structurally competitive, they are characterized by what Kohn calls "mutually exclusive goal attainment" (MEGA). This means students are compared to one another in such a way that only one of them can be the best; earning the best grade or getting one of some scarce allotments of A or B grades means that another student has been shut out from achieving that goal. Sometimes structural competitions do not require any interaction between the competitors; winning is the result of someone's subjective judgment. This would be the case when students compete for admission to a college or when bowlers compete in a tournament. At other times, structural competitions require that one contestant make the other one fail. For example, in playing tennis a major part of one's strategy is to intentionally lob shots that the other player will miss.

Intentional competition is an individual's internal competitiveness. Individuals who are intentionally competitive may compete even in situations that are structurally noncompetitive. Kohn uses the example of the person who arrives at a party intent on proving that he or she is the wittiest, most charming person there even though no one is

offering prizes for wit and charm, and even though none of the other party goers has given much thought to the matter. Psychologists label these people as neurotic.

When intentionally competitive people are placed in structurally competitive situations, even those which do not inherently require interaction between competitors, they may expend considerable effort on not only doing their best but on trying to assure others do not do better. In tennis, this is playing dirty. In bowling, it might lead to greasing the shoes of the opponent or stealing her or his ball before the tournament finals. In school, it might mean tearing the pages out of an encyclopedia so other students cannot find information they need, or sabotaging other students' chemistry experiments to win top honors and get admitted to medical school.

When individuals who are not intentionally competitive are placed in structurally competitive situations, they are sometimes surprised to find that they have been ranked and rewarded -- or, more likely, punished -- when they didn't realize they were supposed to be trying to win. Sometimes they choose to drop out from the situation, literally or psychologically, because they cannot comfortably engage in the competition. Sometimes they find themselves unable not to compete, but find doing so unpleasant and stressful. Even if they win in the end, their affective response to the entire situation is negative and the reward is devalued.

Intentional competitiveness is learned behavior, particularly that which is situation-specific. Human beings may by nature have an inborn inclination to strive for goals, some individuals more so than others, but the choice of whether to channel that drive into cooperation with or competition against others is a learned response. Forcing children to compete in structurally competitive environments has often been defended as a means of helping them learn to compete effectively in later life, of giving them a competitive orientation or "competitive edge." There is evidence, however, that reinforcing intentional competitiveness may be more detrimental than helpful to their future success.

Since the early 1980's, researchers at the University of Texas have been studying the relationship between achievement and such personality traits as orientation toward work, preference for challenging tasks (mastery), and competitiveness. In one study, achievement was measured by the number of times scientists' work was cited by their colleagues. Another used the same measure but focused on psychologists. A third study was of business people, with their achievement measured by salary. A fourth analyzed 1,300 undergraduate students (male and female), using grade point average to measure achievement. Three other studies measured achievement in terms of fifth and sixth-graders' achievement test scores, and the performance of airline pilots and airline reservation



agents. In all cases -- seven different studies with very different subjects and achievement measures -- an inverse relationship was found between competitiveness and achievement. In other words, the more intentionally competitive individuals had lower achievement levels.

Kohn (1986a) notes that the simplest way to understand why competition does not promote excellence is because trying to do well and trying to beat others are two different things. He offers the example of the child sitting in class, waving her arm wildly to attract the teacher's attention, crying "Ooooh! Ooooh! Pick me! Pick me!" When called upon she seems confused and asks "What was the question again?" Her attention was on being recognized over her peers, not on the subject matter. In addition to misdirecting efforts from task-oriented mastery toward comparative mastery, competition depends on extrinsic motivators. When the extrinsic rewards of winning are not present, are removed, or are unattainable there is little incentive to achieve.

### **How Cooperation Works**

Structural cooperation means that we have to coordinate our efforts because I can succeed only if you succeed. Reward is based on collective performance. A cooperative classroom means more than students sitting together or talking together or even sharing materials. It means that personal success depends on others' success and therefore that each student has an incentive for the other(s) to succeed (Kohn, 1986b). Johnson and Johnson (1987) call this "positive interdependence." Each student depends on and is accountable to the others.

The Johnsons suggest several ways of encouraging positive interdependence. A single product may be required from a group, and a single grade awarded the group. While those of us schooled in competitive atmospheres are quick to ask whether students will accept this practice, the Johnsons note that several studies have confirmed the fact that students who are accustomed to structural cooperation believe that a single group grade is the only logical way to evaluate their efforts. Giving a group grade makes everyone responsible for each other. More able students help those that are less able.

To make sure no one in the group sits back and lets the others do the work, the Johnsons suggest reinforcing "individual accountability" by periodically picking one student at random in each group to explain an answer or take a test for the group. This, of course, is a potentially highly destructive strategy, which could cause terror in the heart of any highly communication apprehensive or test anxious student. Thus, if "individual accountability" is important, some other way of accomplishing that objective is needed, such as peer evaluation.

The best size for a learning group will vary, but in most situations the recommended number is two or three. More complex tasks, with students who are used to working cooperatively, may be suitable for groups up to six -- but it takes experience to make the larger groups work smoothly. Sometimes, when the members of a group have mastered an assignment, they might look for another group to help until everyone understands the lesson. The Johnsons have concluded from their research that intergroup competition is not particularly beneficial in enhancing an individual group's cohesion or achievement, and that it is best to encourage cooperation between groups as well as within them.

Working collaboratively with other students is particularly helpful for low-and medium-ability students, but high-ability students can also benefit. The Johnsons note that considerable research has shown that high achievers working in cooperative groups do at least as well, and often better, than their counterparts working competitively or independently. Their explanation: "The behavior that correlates most highly with achievement in groups is giving explanations, not getting them" (Kohn, 1987, p. 55).

Many studies have shown that extrinsic motivators simply do not make us perform as well as we do when we find an activity intrinsically rewarding. In addition, several studies have indicated that people with high achievement motivation do not perform well unless extrinsic motivation has been minimized. Cooperative learning is based on the principle that the motivation to accomplish a task is enhanced when we are reasonably sure that we will ultimately be successful at it, and that the sum of a group is greater than its parts. Structurally cooperative classrooms are intended to maximize the achievement of more students and to encourage them to work for results rather than the satisfaction of feeling they are better than someone else.

### **Cooperative vs. Competitive Outcomes**

More than 20 of the Johnsons' studies, and hundreds conducted by others over the years, have matched cooperative learning against competitive and individualized learning models (C. Ames & R. Ames, 1990; Covington & Omelich, 1984c). In studies of student achievement, the overwhelming conclusion has been that the cooperative approach is at least as effective as -- and very often superior to -- other models, regardless of age group, ability, subject matter, or task. In addition, in 35 of their own 37 studies on interpersonal attraction, the Johnsons found convincing evidence that students liked one another more when they worked cooperatively in the classroom -- findings, they say, that cut across their meta-analysis of 98 similar studies. These findings were particularly striking in terms of students' acceptance of disabled peers, and those from different racial and ethnic

backgrounds. Students who work together have a higher regard for school, for the subject matter (including the way girls feel about science), and for their teachers. Their self-confidence is enhanced.

Evidence from outside the classroom supports these conclusions. A study compared two groups of interviewers in an employment agency. One group was made up of intensely competitive interviewers who were extremely concerned about personal productivity and personal achievement. As a result, they were intently suspicious and hostile toward one another and often hoarded job notices instead of posting them so that others could not steal the leads. The other group worked cooperatively; they were apparently less concerned with individual success and advancement and routinely shared information and lead. Members of the second group ended up filling significantly more jobs. They also enjoyed their social cohesiveness and, thus, their jobs more.

While intentional competitiveness was the destructive factor in that study, structural competitiveness has been shown to yield similar results. In one study, young girls were asked to make "silly" collages, some competing for prizes and some not. All the collages were judged independently by seven artists, who rated those made by the competing girls as significantly less creative than those by the noncompeting girls. Competitive situations have been shown to be a distinct cause of anxiety. Anticipation of failure, especially when it is combined with memories of previous failures, can create a disabling level of arousal -- one that directs attention toward the fear rather than the task. Competitive stress tends to make many people want to avoid failure more than it makes them want to maximize success; thus, a "safe road" is perceived as preferable to attempting anything too adventurous or creative. A student who, structurally or intentionally, is driven by preserving a superior grade point average will avoid exploring courses in which he or she may not succeed. An Olympic skater who has the lead going into the final competition will downgrade triple axles to doubles to avoid losing points with a fall.

A different kind of anxiety that has been associated with competitiveness relates to a fear of winning rather than a fear of losing. In this situation, individuals might choose not to compete, or intentionally do worse at an activity than they might do in a noncompetitive situation, because they feel guilty for doing better than others, or have a particular fear that those they beat will become hostile toward them. It is common for teachers to see evidence of this in the classroom, when able students slack off because they want to lose their "nerd" identity to fit in with their peers.

Other research has found that competition can cause people to feel they are not the source of, or in control of, what happens to them. They thus move toward an external locus

of control and are more likely to attribute what happens in their lives to fate than to its being related to their own behaviors. A 1981 study of 800 high school students found a strong correlation between positive attitude toward competitive situations and dependence on evaluation and performance-based assessments of personal worth. Far from having higher self-esteem, the way the competitive students viewed themselves was inordinately dependent on how well they did at certain tasks and on what others thought of them.

Studies of the interpersonal/relational effects of competition have shown that children in competitive situations experience more feelings of envy than those in cooperative environments. A study of first graders found that students rated high in competitiveness by their teachers expressed less empathy for same-aged children who were pictured as happy, sad, angry, or fearful. Competitiveness also contributes to distrust among students. It has been suggested that this distrust and its coincidental hostility are factors in increasing the incidence of aggressive acts between students. On the other hand, studies of the interpersonal/relational effects of cooperative learning have concluded that students perceive they are receiving encouragement and support from their peers in cooperative groups, that they show more sensitivity to the needs of others and are more pleasant to one another, and that communication among students are not only more frequent but rated as more effective (students say they have less trouble communicating with and understanding one another). In one study, fifth and sixth-graders who participated in cooperative groups were much less upset by interpersonal conflict and arguing than those who had not. In general, low, medium, and high-ability students perform better on comprehension tests when they have learned cooperatively; they also express greater feelings of peer acceptance and support and a greater willingness to value opposing points of view.

Kohn (1987) observes that the idea that children ought to compete in school so they get used to losing is based on a highly flawed assumption that depriving children is the best way to prepare them for the rude shocks of life. This hypothesis cannot be empirically confirmed or refuted, but its converse is far more humane: it is our unconditional acceptance in our early years, and a sense of security, that helps us manage problems we face later. Even if we grant some usefulness to learning to experience failure, it is not necessary that it involve losing in competition. One can fall short of one's own expectations and develop the virtues of discipline and tenacity without the necessity of getting the messages of inferiority that come from being judged primarily in terms of not how well we do but how well other people do.

What then can we do? We can help children recognize and build their competencies and strengths. We can help children learn individual accountability and group accountability. We can help children learn that competition doesn't have to mean hurting or beating up another child. We can help children learn that diversely but equally matched teammates are good partners for learning. We can show children that through cooperative learning there is increased student motivation and learning. We can show children that communicating and interacting with classmates can be a positive, not a negative experience. Lastly, we can communicate to children that assistance, cooperation, and caring, either formally or informally, can assist in learning and effective communication in the classroom environment for all involved.

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# TRADITIONAL AND MASTERY LEARNING SYSTEMS

# 9

## Chapter Nine Objectives

1. Identify the components that comprise the learning environment.
2. Briefly compare the merits of the mastery and traditional learning systems.
3. Give the advantages and problems of working with the modified mastery system.

If learning is not taking place in their classrooms, good teachers look for ways and methods to change the instructional communication process. During the course of her or his career, a teacher makes thousands of curricular planning decisions: How should I approach this unit? How will I evaluate the students' achievement? What can I do about underachievers? Is it time to switch gears and try a different instructional strategy? Should I stay with this unit for another week or is it time to move on? At the heart of these decisions are the teacher's basic assumptions about the central goals of teaching.

While we do not wish to transform this chapter into a dissertation on the philosophy of education, we do need to recognize there are two very different positions on the function of teachers that have strong adherents in today's society. One view is that teachers teach content and the other is that teachers teach students. The first view sees teachers, first and foremost, as subject-matter experts. The second sees teachers, first and foremost, as information and communication managers.

The content view holds that the primary function of teaching is to make it possible for students to access the content knowledge available in the given field. This is a sender-oriented view. The teacher selects what the student should know and sees to it that it is presented to the student in one or more forms (textbook, film, videotape, lectures, class discussion, etc.). It is assumed that all students should have the opportunity to learn the information, but some will have intellectual limitations and others motivational limitations which will prevent them from learning all that is available. The fault for failure in this system rests with the receiver, the student. The information is available, but if the student is not bright enough to learn it, or is too lazy to do so, then the student has failed.

The student view holds that the primary function of teaching is to make it possible for all students to achieve objectives set for student learning. The teacher is still presumed to select what the student should know, but he or she is also expected to develop communication systems that will insure that student will learn the material. It is assumed

that all students can achieve all learning objectives if the teacher monitors and modifies the learning process appropriately. The fault for failure in this system rests with the sender, the teacher. The student can learn the information unless the teacher is not bright enough to develop an appropriate method of communicating with the student, or the teacher is too lazy to do so. Students don't fail. Teachers do.

Adherents of the first view see the supporters of the second as the leftover hippies and humanists from the 1960s and early 1970s who brought us the open-curriculum, self-disclosive rap-session, everything-is-acceptable, fuzzies-instead - of-content brand of teaching. Since these so-called "student-oriented teachers" are afraid of being branded as failures; they make sure the students can't fail by never letting anyone know in advance what it is expected the students will learn. Adherents of the second view see the supporters of the first as Nazi-like, uncaring, anti-innovation, back-to-basics traditionalists who have opposed all educational change since 1800. Since these so-called "content experts" are afraid of being branded as unqualified, they make sure they are only held responsible for presenting content, so if they have presented it they have done their job.

As you might suspect, we are not advocates of either extreme orientation. Both approaches to instruction have positive aspects, and both have drawbacks. And there is ground between the extremes.

## **Traditional Education Systems**

Traditional educational systems often tend to be subject-centered. Course planning is oriented toward the material to be covered and achievement is primarily the individual student's responsibility.

If the teacher is following a communication-oriented instructional model within a traditional system, he or she will set the learning objectives at the outset. Having set objectives or goals primarily for what the teacher should be doing -- covering a prescribed body of information -- and preassessing students' general ability levels, a given instructional strategy that is likely to be the most effective and efficient for most students is selected. The teacher's role is largely that of an information-dispenser. Periodic assessments (usually tests or quizzes) are given to determine how students are doing in absorbing information, but the teacher, and the student, almost always moves onto the next topic regardless of performance on the assessment. Grades are usually determined by some averaging procedure, with the student's performance often evaluated by comparing it with that of other students. In many cases it is assumed, or even mandated, that grade distributions should approximate the bell-shaped curve of a statistically "normal" distribution so that



superior students can be distinguished from very good students, average students, not-so-good students, and those who will be required to repeat the course or the school year.

Students leaving a course of instruction in the traditional educational model will have a wide range of competencies. Some will have done very well and will feel good about the school, the subject, the teacher, and themselves. Some will have done very poorly and will feel unhappy about everything associated with the subject(s) they have studied, including themselves. Teachers will agonize over whether a student has performed well enough to pass or whether he or she would benefit by being recycled through another run of the same information and experiences.

When educators become distraught over the undesirable affective outcomes of traditional subject-centered teaching, they have historically reacted with a shift toward learner-centered curricula, experimenting with open-classroom and open-learning models in which spontaneity and student interests replace attention to subject matter and traditional, comparative standards for evaluation. Invariably, when performance scores on standardized achievement tests fall and someone points out that the United States is falling behind in the race for space, or in its place in the world economy, the educational pendulum has swung back to the traditional system. It is a system we understand. It is compatible with the broadly held assumption that wide variability in student achievement is natural and inevitable. It communicates achievement to parents, employers, higher education admission officials, and students in terms they have come to expect. It plays off of the subject-centered emphasis in teacher training, particularly at the secondary and higher education levels. It allows us to efficiently manage the logistics of putting a large number of students in a small number of classes and bringing those classes to closure on a prescribed schedule. It is a system in which the majority of those who teach can teach as they were taught.

### **Mastery Learning**

Mastery learning more fully reflects a communication oriented approach to instruction in which instruction focuses on the individual student. In its purist form course planning is oriented toward the achievement of desired objectives that are operationalized in behavioral terms. In other words, teachers decide exactly what they want their students to know, what they want them to be able to do, and/or how they want them to feel as a result of a period of instruction, and also specify how they will assess whether or not those goals have been achieved. They assume that students have varied competencies at the

beginning of a course or school year and individually assess each student's starting point. Instructional strategies are then selected and designed for each student's individual competencies and learning style. The teacher's role is primarily that of a "learning manager" who uses periodic formative assessments to check how each student is progressing toward the stated goals. If problems are detected, the student can recycle through a component of the unit or course at any time, often with the information presented via an alternative instructional strategy. "Grades" are restricted to an indication that the student has indeed mastered the objective at hand; her or his performance is evaluated by comparing it with the specified standard of achievement rather than to what other students do. Some students may move faster than others but no one is classified as better than anyone else since, in the end, everyone masters one unit before moving onto the next.

Bloom, one of the primary proponents of mastery learning, has found that the average tutored student learns more than do 98 % of students taught in regular classes, and that 90 % of tutored students attain performance levels reached by only the top 20 % of students in regular classes. Thus, he has concluded that what one student can learn, nearly all students can learn; the wide differences in student achievement in traditional education systems are, from Bloom's perspective, not so much a result of innate differences in learning ability as they are a result of instruction that is ineffective for some students. A tutoring relationship is one in which the process of tutor-student communication is inherently personalized, in which the goal of achievement is met by ongoing assessment of what is working, what is not being understood, and what needs to be re-taught in a different way. It is student-centered in that affective outcomes are important, but it is instructor-driven in that the student is enabled to meet goals rather than able to determine them.

Bloom acknowledges that schools cannot afford to offer tutoring as a primary mode of instruction; however, he believes that mastery learning can approximate the results of tutoring. In an interview with Chance (1987), Bloom explained a classroom mastery learning model as follows: The teacher instructs the class in more or less the usual way, although more active student involvement and reinforcement of their contributions are recommended. At the end of an instructional unit, or about every two weeks, the teacher gives a "formative test" to assess the need for "corrective instruction." The test is not graded, but provides the teacher with information that identifies points that many of the students have not yet mastered. This material is then re-taught to the class as a whole, ideally using different techniques to get the idea across.

The students then break into groups of two or three for 20 to 30 minutes, so that they can help one another on points they missed on the formative test. This process provides reinforcement for students who understand concepts and allows them to explain what they have learned to other students, often using an approach the teacher has not used or even considered. If the group gets stuck, they can call on the teacher, though Bloom notes they usually are able to work problems out on their own. Some students who need help beyond the group work are assigned supplementary activities that presents information in yet another form (workbook exercises, text readings, video tapes, etc...). According to Bloom, it usually takes these students no more than an hour or two to complete the work necessary to catch up.

The class is then ready for an evaluative test, which is similar to but not identical to the formative test. In a pure mastery learning system, students who have not yet mastered the unit are recycled through the system until they do master it, with unlimited opportunities for working through the material until they can complete the evaluative test at a preset level of accuracy. In a modified mastery system, which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, trials may be limited. In either case students either pass or do not pass the unit; their relative performance is not evaluated in comparison with other students' performance on the evaluative test.

Not every student does master every unit, but studies have consistently shown that mastery students learn more than about 85 % of those taught in the traditional way. About 70 % of mastery students attain levels reached by only the top 20 % of students in traditional classrooms. Studies have also indicated that students who learn in mastery systems are better able to transfer material to other contexts, that mastery learning helps students learn how to learn through its presentation of material in a variety of formats, and that mastery approaches have substantial affective learning payoffs with students reporting greater interest in and more positive attitudes toward subjects taught through mastery.

Bloom and his graduate students have also studied the use of the mastery approach in the preassessment phase of the instructional process. Students in second-year algebra and French classes who were given a preassessment test at the beginning of the year to determine what they recalled from the first-year course, and then re-taught the specific skills they lacked using the mastery learning corrective method, did far better on the first unit of the new course than did those in comparable classes that were offered only a general review of first-year concepts prior to beginning the first unit of the second-year class. When the prerequisite training was combined with a continuation of the mastery approach in the

second class, the average student scored higher than did 95 % of those in a regular class after three months of studying the same material.

Mastery learning is a communication-oriented approach to instruction, but it takes time. Teachers will "cover" less but more students will be successful in mastering the chosen material. Such has been found to be the case with all effective communication systems. It seems we always have the option of sending more, but having receivers who receive less; or sending less and having receivers who receive more of it. If a smattering of knowledge is all that is needed by the student, as in so-called "core curriculum courses" in many colleges, the traditional system certainly can accomplish that objective more efficiently than the mastery system. But, if one is concerned about teaching a pilot to land a plane without crashing, most passengers pray that he or she was taught by the mastery system!

### **Modified Mastery Learning**

One of the cruel lessons in life is that communication cost money, and the more effective that communication, the more it costs. Politicians are forced out of campaigns for office by lack of money for TV and personal appearances. Companies are forced out of business by high costs of marketing. And while advocates of the mastery learning system would like to see it replace the traditional educational system, given the pressing economic realities in most school systems, most teachers must teach their entire careers within the parameters of a traditional school system. Students must be ready to pass on to the next level of the system on schedule, and teachers are expected to assign evaluative grades.

Pure mastery learning allows students unlimited time to achieve learning objectives and evaluates them only to the extent of whether they have achieved an objective or whether they need more time to master it. However, many of the advantages of mastery learning can be retained within a modified mastery learning model of instruction, which has the advantage of its ability to be practically implemented within the currently established traditional system.

Two modifications characterize modified mastery: a limitation on the amount of time given to students to demonstrate mastery of instructional objectives and in the number of opportunities students have to demonstrate mastery. Students might be given a limited time to master a given unit of instruction, or be allowed to recycle at their own paces throughout a semester (or quarter or year), with the expectation that they will complete all the units of study for that term by its completion. Students might also be given a limited

number of chances to improve performance on a given unit, so that after the second or third cycle of teaching all students move onto the next unit of instruction.

While these modifications mean that some students will need to move on without mastering some objectives, the likelihood is high that most students will achieve more than they would in a traditional classroom. The sequencing of units becomes particularly important in a modified mastery model. Teachers might cluster basic and more advanced units within each completion time block, so that students who need more time to master objectives are being introduced to -- and given time to master -- all of the basic concepts they will be expected to have when they pass on into the next grade or the next level course, while students who master the basic concepts more quickly can move onto working with more complex enrichment objectives.

The issue of grading is a tough one for teachers who have embraced the concept of mastery learning. When a dichotomous grading system, such as pass-fail or satisfactory-unsatisfactory, is allowed there are fewer problems than when a graduated index, such as A, B, C, D, F, is mandated. One way to translate mastery learning performance into grades is to set levels in which the number of objectives that are mastered is translated into a grade scale. This process assumes that all objectives are of equal complexity and/or importance, or that students are not able to move onto enrichment objectives until they have mastered those considered most basic to the unit or course -- otherwise, a student could theoretically earn a superior grade for having failed to master only a few objectives, even though those missed objectives are the ones the teacher believes are the most important to grasping the essence of the unit.

Another way is to classify the objectives in a unit cluster into basic and advanced levels, with a standard that students must master all or most of the basic objectives to obtain an average grade and that students must master all or most of the basic objectives and a preset percentage of the more advanced objectives to obtain above average grades. In either case, it is helpful to communicate to students, their parents, and others who will interpret the grades exactly what each letter designation means. It is also mandatory to remember that students must be evaluated against objective standards rather than in comparison to one another.

The logistics of implementing a modified mastery learning model can be challenging but highly rewarding. Following the first formative evaluation, Bloom's suggestions for whole-class involvement can be followed to re-teach concepts or skills with which many students had trouble. Teachers might develop independent study materials or direct students who are quick to master basic objectives to resources with which they can work

while other students work more directly with the teacher on recycling through problematic objectives. Or, projects and assignments that address sequentially higher-level objectives might be developed and offered to students, as they are ready for them (not all objectives are best demonstrated through the use of tests and quizzes). Since the pure mastery model is already being modified to accommodate the constraints of a traditional education system, teachers should not feel bound by emulating someone else's version of modified mastery. The most important aspect of the system is its process-centered orientation, its provisions for examining how students are doing, and its emphasis on working out ways to help them do better during the course of instruction rather than waiting to the end to see how they did and promptly moving on.

Because we believe that teaching and learning is a communicative process, we find much merit in the communication-oriented approach to instruction. This view focuses on the interaction between teachers and students and on analyzing the success of the instruction in accommodating its goals to a maximum number of students. As a communication-oriented approach, mastery learning, or modified mastery learning, encompasses a humane instructional view while acknowledging the teacher's role in setting the instructional agenda, and in helping students master a particular subject area curriculum. Thus, both learning and affect are treated as relevant outcomes of instruction, and both are likely to be enhanced.

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# STUDENT MISBEHAVIOR AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

# 10

## Chapter Ten Objectives

1. Define misbehavior in the classroom from a communication perspective.
2. Discuss five reasons why student misbehavior.
3. List the four categories of behavior and provide an example behavior for each category.
4. What are the causes of bullying? What do bullies achieve through their bullying?
5. Who is most likely to be a victim?
6. What should teachers and adults do to prevent and/or squelch bullying?
7. Discuss how to increase appropriate student behavior and how to decrease inappropriate student behavior.
8. Discuss the how, when, and outcomes of using punishment in the classroom.
9. Provide five guidelines for classroom management.

A well-managed classroom is one where productive interaction is encouraged, students grant power to the teacher, immediacy and affect are high, and discipline is rarely needed. For years, experienced teachers have targeted student misbehavior as the number one communication and affective problem in the instructional environment. In fact, experienced classroom managers think student misbehavior and student apathies may be the most significant problems faced by instructors today. Apathy is considered by most teachers to be a discipline problem. Books, articles, and papers have been written attempting to find "the solution" to student misbehavior in the classroom. This chapter does not attempt to suggest there is "one best method" of managing or controlling disruptive students. It does, however, purport to provide several strategies which instructors might use when managing disruptive students.

By "student misbehavior" we mean student behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, which interfere with her or his learning or another student's learning. By "disruptive," we mean the student who is behaviorally and communicatively disruptive, either in a verbal or nonverbal manner, and disrupts the classroom so learning and on-task times are inhibited or restricted. In other words, the disruptive student is the student who misbehaves and prevents her or himself and other students from learning and spending time on the task.



We, in no way, include violent, out-of-control students with criminal tendencies or intentions in the definition of the "disruptive student." We are referring to the "normal, pain in the neck, disruptive student" who can make a teacher's life very uncomfortable and cause other students to feel uncomfortable in the classroom setting. The extremely violent, criminal students need very different behavior control techniques which will not be covered in this chapter.

We know that whenever students spend less time on-task, their learning is impacted in a negative way. We know that when learning is disrupted, then retention is impacted in a negative way. Therefore, we need to keep in mind that "communication and learning are truly interdependent" (Hurt, Scott & McCroskey, 1978, p. 28). Students are taught by their instructors to communicate appropriate or desired classroom behaviors or classroom manners. Most students learn not to communicate the inappropriate or undesirable classroom behaviors. Often students elect not to communicate the desired behaviors which their instructors have taught them. The students who do not communicate the desired verbal and nonverbal behaviors are viewed as disruptive students or discipline problems. Even students who seem to resist learning the appropriate communication classroom behaviors and seem apathetic are viewed as potential classroom problems. Teachers then decide what communication strategies should be employed to change, modify, or alter a student's disruptive verbal or nonverbal communication behavior.

Lastly, communication, learning, and affect are highly correlated. The more a student communicates in a positive way or behaves in a positive way, the more learning will take place, and the higher the affect between student and teacher. The less a student communicates in a positive way or behaves in a positive way, the less learning will take place, and the lower the affect between student and teacher. What, then, causes students to be disruptive or misbehave.

## **Why Students Misbehave**

Many student misbehaviors are communication directed. The students want to be noticed, recognized, or attended to by the teacher. Hence, many of our students engage in disruptive misbehaviors of the highest magnitude to gain our attention. Much of their misbehavior is of a verbal or nonverbal form.

### **Attention**

One of the major reasons our students misbehave is they "want our attention," even if the attention is not very positive. Even the youngest, brightest, or sweetest will

misbehave to gain our attention. Often students are very well aware of the appropriate behaviors an individual instructor expects from them, yet they knowingly and intentionally violate that standard. Instructor attention, even though it may not be positive, is often more desired than instructor inattention.

### **Rebellion**

Another goal of student misbehavior is to demonstrate that the student does not and will not follow established, conventional school or classroom policies or norms. Some students rebel in order to illustrate they are independent, assertive, free, autonomous, self-reliant, self-sufficient, and are not dependent. It is not unusual for students around the sixth or seventh grade to start rebelling against the rules and policies applied in each individual instructional system. While we do not like it, it is as predictable as our students becoming interested in the opposite gender before we think they should.

### **Psychological or Physiological Release**

Many times students misbehave as a means of releasing mental, emotional, or physical energy. Often we give considerable attention to students' academic needs but we neglect their need for psychological or physical energy release. When our students become mentally, emotionally, or physically aroused, they often need to release that energy in an appropriate manner. If they are not allowed to release the energy in an appropriate manner, they release it in our classrooms, often in the form of a student misbehavior. For example, they toss a spit wad at another student, or whistle at another student, or poke another student in the arm.

### **Apathy**

While it seems counterintuitive, one of the goals of student misbehavior is to resist teacher instruction or control by being apathetic. Students often exhibit apathetic communication responses such as listlessness, indifference, little emotion, or unconcern as a form of passive, destructive behavior. While some would argue that communicating apathy is not a goal of student misbehavior, students know apathy is a goal of their misbehavior. Students realize that apathetic tendencies or the "who cares response" often irritate their teacher. In essence, then, apathetic communication is a goal of student misbehavior.

### **Challenge the Teacher's Power or Control**

Occasionally, students will openly, flagrantly, glaringly, and obnoxiously disregard, ignore, or refuse to comply with an instructor's request or appeal. This kind of destructive, open, defensive misbehavior is usually motivated by the student wanting to demonstrate to her or his peers that they can challenge the teacher's power or control. Unfortunately, this type of flagrant student misbehavior often places the teacher in an untenable, precarious situation. He or she must "do something" about the student's open misbehavior without hurting the student or the class. Very few instructors are likely to disregard or ignore an open challenge of their power or control.

### **Classroom Fatigue**

Classroom fatigue syndrome can lead to misbehavior problems. When our students become fatigued, bored, frustrated, exhausted, or weary they will often exhibit verbal or nonverbal misbehaviors. Students demand that we keep them entertained. In fact, besides being a helper, manager, controller, and provider, we are often expected to be entertainers. Let's face it, we often use teaching methods of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century on children of the 21<sup>st</sup>. When the classroom is boring, students of all ages develop "classroom fatigue syndrome," and begin to misbehave in a verbal or nonverbal manner. They often misbehave in order to "liven up" an otherwise slow, boring class session or lesson.

### **Revenge**

Revenge is commonly known as the "get even response." Sometimes our students will misbehave in order to get revenge, get even with, or make our lives very uncomfortable for something we did or didn't do. Often we may never know what we did or didn't do to cause a student to seek revenge. Regardless, when a student decides to seek revenge or retribution for past offenses, they can make our lives very uncomfortable. Revenge can take any misbehavior form. It can be active, passive, destructive, direct, or indirect, but it can interrupt our classrooms and our instructional communicator style.

### **Depressed Teacher Affect**

The instructional communication literature is very clear in this area. When students have low or depressed affect or liking for their teacher, they learn less, engage in recommended behaviors less often, are less responsive in the classroom, are less likely to comply with a teacher's request, and if not forced to attend class will attend class less frequently than students who have higher affect for the teacher. This is known as a "student

hates teacher condition." Throughout this text we directly and indirectly discuss methods we can use to increase teacher/student affect. We should attempt to use the affective methods which work for us so our students will not have depressed teacher affect. This condition impacts student performance and our performance. Students who don't like their teachers exhibit more misbehaviors and misbehave more frequently than students who like their teachers.

### **Unhealthy Attitude about School**

Often students who perceive the school environment to be hostile, unreceptive to their needs, impersonal, cold, and position-oriented will have discipline or behavior problems in their classrooms. At the heart of the issue is whether the student's perception is incorrect or whether the school is actually cold and impersonal. A student's perception is the way he or she will view things. Hence, if we can change a student's perception about the general school environment, her or his behavior might improve. However, if our school is actually cold and impersonal, then we need to change the school's image. Either way, we can improve student behavior and decrease student misbehaviors.

### **Disorganized Teachers**

While this is not very complimentary to our profession, we know of many "scatter-brained" teachers. We often wonder how they can be so disorganized and still call themselves professionals. Disorganized, disorderly teachers usually communicate disorganization, chaos, and unconcern to their students. Students who have teachers with low organizational skills often misbehave. When students perceive teachers don't care, the students don't care to behave appropriately either.

### **Expectancy Orientation**

Often some students will misbehave because this is what is "expected" of them. They have been classified as "behavior problems," "misfits," or "disciplinary problems" from the time they entered school. Hence, they have learned to communicate and behave in the way which is expected of them by school personnel. Year after year these students will work at fulfilling the prophecy by continuing to misbehave or be disruptive.

### **External Variables Impact**

Occasionally, we have to look beyond the obvious reasons for student misbehavior and look for other external causes. External variables that could impact student behavior in

school are hyperactivity, malnutrition, lack of sleep, abuse and/or neglect, excessive television viewing, family violence or disputes, divorce, new birth in family, family member's death, and so on. If there is no known immediate cause of a student's misbehavior, perhaps we should inquire (through appropriate channels) about their home life. Often variables beyond our control can impact how our students behave or misbehave.

In conclusion, a major challenge facing all teachers is how to determine why or what causes students to be disruptive or misbehave. The next major challenge is managing, handling, or controlling classroom misbehavior problems. We know that when misbehavior gets out of control, learning, affect, and communication is negatively impacted. Before we continue, we need to make clear what are misbehaviors and what are simply common classrooms behaviors.

### **Categories of Student Behaviors**

This unit will attempt to classify or categorize student behaviors into four major categories. Much work in this area has been done by: Bellon, Doek, Handler, (1979); Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper (1971); Kearney, Plax, Sorensen, & Smith (1988); McCroskey, Richmond, Plax, & Kearney (1985); Piaget (1970); and Richmond (1990). The four categories are as follows: Active/constructive behaviors; Active/destructive behaviors; Passive/constructive behaviors; and Passive/destructive behaviors (See Figure 11.1). Occasionally, we may use examples that you would not see as fitting into a certain category; if we do, select your own classroom example for each category.

#### **Active/Constructive Behaviors**

This category includes behaviors which are lively, active and lead to learning. This category might also be called the active/positive category. In other words, the student behaviors which are active and produce positive student outcomes that are active and constructive. Some of the common student behaviors which are viewed as active and constructive are: students talking to other students about the subject matter; students talking to the teacher about the subject matter or school related activities; students answering questions in class; students asking questions; students waving their hands to answer questions; students reading aloud to class; students discussing homework assignments with each other; students discussing upcoming assignments; students taking notes; or students modeling teachers' behavior.

	<b>Active</b>	<b>Passive</b>
<b>Constructive or Positive</b>	Overt Student Behaviors Learning Enhanced	Covert Student Behaviors Learning Enhanced
<b>Destructive of Negative</b>	Overt Student Behaviors Learning Hindered	Covert Student Behaviors Learning Hindered

**Figure 10.1 Categories of Student Behaviors**

### **Active/Destructive Behaviors**

This category encompasses behaviors that are lively, active, and hinder learning. This category might also be called the active/negative category. In other words, the student behaviors which are active and produce negative student outcomes are active and destructive. Some of the common student behaviors which are viewed as active and destructive are: throwing things; hitting; spitting; biting; smacking; vandalism; speaking out with foul language; calling others names; fighting; lying; cheating; stealing; active resistance of a teacher's wishes; coming to school unprepared; blaming others for poor performance; asking counterproductive questions; disrupting class by making ugly, obscene gestures or by making unusual noises; directly challenging a teacher's authority by refusing to do something; or communicating in an unfriendly, aggressive, or intimidating fashion.

### **Passive/Constructive Behaviors**

This category is of behaviors which are inactive but lead to learning. This category might also be called the passive/positive category. In other words, the student behaviors which are passive and produce positive student outcomes are passive and constructive. Some of the common student behaviors which are viewed as passive and constructive are: reading quietly or silently; studying notes; listening to lecture; watching a film; watching a demonstration; cognitive processing (thinking); or showing passive affective cues (such as smiling).

### **Passive/Destructive Behaviors**

This category is of behaviors that are inactive and hinder learning. This category might also be called the passive/negative category. In other words, the student behaviors

that are passive and produce negative student outcomes are passive and destructive. Some of the common student behaviors which are viewed as passive and destructive are: sleeping; daydreaming, not listening to lecture; listening to music on a headset without teachers' permission; reading magazines as opposed to text without teachers' permission; doodling; not being prepared; being late for class; ignoring or not turning in assignments; or simply not attending class or school.

While the active/positive, passive/positive student behaviors will lead to improved learning outcomes, the active/negative, passive/negative will lead to poorer learning outcomes. The active/positive and active/negative student behaviors are overt, obvious, and apparent to all participating in the classroom setting. The passive/positive and passive/negative student behaviors are covert, often hidden, not obvious, and not apparent to all participating in the classroom setting. This may be why many teachers are more likely to reprimand, discipline, or punish students for the active/positive or active/negative behaviors. Yes, we said active/positive behaviors too.

In the classroom environment, we know that talking is often the number one punished student behavior. We think it happens because we cannot determine the difference between active/constructive and active/destructive talking behaviors. Therefore, as teachers we must be very careful about punishing active/constructive talking behaviors. If we punish active constructive talking behaviors, we may cause a student to exhibit more active destructive talking behaviors. For example, there are many "gray areas" of active/positive versus active/negative talking behaviors. We will name a few: a student disagreeing with a teacher over a statement the teacher made in class; students talking about math in English class; students discussing after school events in class; students discussing other teachers in our class; students talking about the news in our class; students talking about a film shown in another class; or students discussing what they will be having for lunch. Who is to say which is destructive and which is not? The individual teacher. We must keep in mind if we punish many active/positive talking behaviors, then all we might have left are active/negative talking behaviors. Each of us needs to have a clear understanding of what is acceptable or unacceptable student talking behavior in our classrooms.

In addition to talk being punished, often many nonverbal behaviors fall into the "gray area" of what is active/positive versus active/negative nonverbal behaviors. We will name a few: students rustling papers, books, and notebooks while listening or taking notes; students looking around room while we are lecturing; students slouching in chairs; students looking down while we talking; students reading the text while we talk; students stretching;

students moving around in desks; students leaning toward us; and students looking at their watches. Who is to say which is destructive and which is not? The individual teacher. We must keep in mind if we punish many active/positive nonverbal behaviors, then all we might have left are active/negative nonverbal behaviors. Each of us needs to have a clear understanding of what is acceptable or unacceptable student nonverbal behavior in our classrooms.

In conclusion, some of the more positive categories of student behavior could be perceived as negative by some teachers. Each teacher should have a wide array of student behaviors which fit into each category and these should be explained to students so they know what is appropriate classroom behavior and what is not. Second, some teachers can tolerate more active/positive behaviors than other teachers. Third, many of the positive/active student behaviors may help the individual student to learn while interfering with other students learning. Each of us needs to notice when this is occurring and change it. Lastly, let's not punish the positive behaviors. Let's reinforce them so our students have plenty of opportunity to be caught at "being good" not caught at "being bad."

### **Students' Effects on Affect in the Classroom**

When schools make the national headlines, it's rarely a positive happening in this day and age. More often than not, the plague of school violence has rocked our nation and left most of us wondering what's going wrong with our students. When one examines the backgrounds of the most infamous school violence episodes (Paducah, KY, Jonesboro, AK, and Littleton, CO), a systematic bullying of the perpetrators has been the cause of school violence. This section is going to examine what bullying is, who the bullies and victims are, and how teachers can curb bullying and help to build affect in the classroom

#### **What is Bullying?**

The first problem that most people have when nailing down bullying is determining what the term actually means. Though many definitions have been proposed for the term "bully" the definition used in this section comes from Connolly, Pepler, Craig, and Tardash (2000) who defined bullying as "the abuse of power by one child over another through repeated aggressive behaviors" (p. 300). While many scholars may define bullying as any aggressive behavior against another individual, Connolly et al. realize that bullying and aggression are not synonymous. An individual can clearly be aggressive in one situation at one time and not really be a bully. Instead, a bully is someone who uses physical and/or verbal aggression against another person on a repeated basis. Owleus (1995) noted three



myths about bullying that people often do not understand. The first myth about bullying is that bullying has to do with the size of the class. Bullies can be found in small classes and in large classes. In the past, one popular method for handling bullies was switching them to a different class either a smaller or larger one. However, this method has not been shown to be an effective way to prevent bullying.

**Who are the bullies?**

A second myth that Owleus' (1995) discusses is that bullying is related to competition for grades. This historic depiction of the School Yard Bully has been captured in the popular television show, *The Simpson's*. In this television series, the school yard bully is depicted as an illiterate baboon who uses aggression to mask his own lack of academic potential, but this is not a real portrayal of who bullies are. In fact, many bullies are not dumb and at the bottom of the class, but may instead be your star pupils. Instead, a number of specific characteristics have been noticed in research examining bullying. Menesini, Melana, and Pignatti (2000) found three primary characteristics related to an individual's tendency to bully her or his classmates: (1) an aggressive personality, with a tendency to react aggressively in any situation; (2) little control over one's emotional state and the behaviors associated with those emotions; and (3) a positive attitude towards violence and competition. While any of these alone can have negative effects, the combination of the three leads to many behavioral problems in school. Figure 10.2 is a scale developed by Jason Wrench (one of the authors) to examine an individual's likelihood to react in a physically aggressive manner. This scale was developed as a means to assess an individual's tendency to use physical aggression as a means of anti-social communication. While past researchers in the field of communication have focused on verbal communication, understanding physical communication and how it relates to bullying can be very beneficial in our present discussion. Overall, bullying is generally both verbal and physical in its most drastic forms.

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**Physical Aggression Scale**

Read the following questions and select the answer that corresponds with what you would do in most situations. Do not be concerned if some of the items appear similar. Please use the scale below to rate the degree to which each statement applies to you.

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

\_\_\_\_\_1. I am extremely careful to avoid physically attacking another individual.

- \_\_\_\_\_2. When I get upset, I have a tendency to throw objects.
- \_\_\_\_\_3. When I get angry, I tend to hit inanimate objects.
- \_\_\_\_\_4. I would never use physical violence to solve a problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_5. When I get mad, I tend to hit things.
- \_\_\_\_\_6. I have physically confronted someone.
- \_\_\_\_\_7. I use physical violence as a way to control others.
- \_\_\_\_\_8. I avoid physical violence at all costs.
- \_\_\_\_\_9. I get respect by physically intimidating others.
- \_\_\_\_\_10. I would never be involved in a physical confrontation.
- \_\_\_\_\_11. I have broken inanimate objects during a fit of rage.
- \_\_\_\_\_12. I tend to flee from physical confrontations.
- \_\_\_\_\_13. When losing an argument, I always resort to physical violence.
- \_\_\_\_\_14. I hit walls as a means of dealing with my anger.
- \_\_\_\_\_15. Physically hurting others helps me accomplish my goals.

SCORING: To compute your scores follow the instructions below:

1. **Object Violence Factor**

Step One: Add scores for items 2, 3, 5, 11, & 14.

2. **Physical Confrontation Factor**

Step One: Add scores for items 6 & 12

Step Two: Add scores for items 4, 8, & 10

Step Three: Add 18 to Step 1.

Step Four: Subtract the score for Step two from the score for Step Three.

3. **Control/Task Factor**

Step One: Add scores for items 7, 9, 13, & 15

Step Two: Add scores for items 1

Step Three: Add 6 to Step 1.

Step Four: Subtract the score for Step two from the score for Step Three.

Source:

Wrench, J. S. (2002). The impact of sexual orientation and temperament on physical and verbal aggression. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research, 31*, 85-106.

**Figure 10.2 Physical Aggression Scale (PAS)**

The three basic factors that comprise the Physical Aggression Scale (PAS) are object violence, physical confrontation, and control/task aggression. Object violence is when an individual reacts aggressively towards inanimate objects. Often aggressive people will avoid hurting other people, but instead take out their aggression on an object. Even if an individual does not hurt another person physically, this form of aggression can still be construed as bullying. Object violence aggression can often be misconstrued as a form of

threat, and can be very intimidating to those around the aggressor. The Physical Confrontation factor of the PAS is what most people associate with bullying. This factor examines the use of physical violence as a part of normalized life. Most bullies do not shy away from physical confrontation, and often actually go out of their way to find these confrontations. These are the people who are often said to be “looking for a fight.” The final factor examines the use of physical aggression as a means for gaining control over others or accomplishing a task. This is another factor commonly associated with bullying. Bullies will often use physical aggression as a means to get their victims to comply with some task (giving their lunch money), which ultimately places the bully in a control position.

Pakaslahti and Keltikangas-Jarvinen (2000) discussed the second form of aggression that a bully commonly uses, which is verbal aggression. Verbal aggression has been commonly defined as message behavior that attacks a person's self-concept in order to deliver psychological pain (Infante & Wigley, 1986). Statements that purposefully are used to hurt another person are considered verbally aggressive.

Ultimately, for bullying to work, the bully generally needs a following of supporters who encourage her or him to continue the bullying. For this reason, the image of the outcast as the bully is not always true. In fact, while Olweus (1995) noticed that bullies do not perform academically as well as their non-bullying counterparts, they are not the misfits that some think they are. In fact, William Pollack (2000) author of *Real Boy's Voices* believes that aggression, homophobia, and violent behavior are actually looked up to in adolescent peer groups – especially among boys. So the instigator of these acts, may not be an outcast, but rather one of the popular kids. This reconceptualization of who the bullies are is a new perspective on this issue. In the past, individuals like Eric Harris and Dillan Klebold (the perpetrators of the school shooting in Littleton, CO) would have been seen as the school bullies because of their violent behaviors. In fact, both of these individuals were repeated victims of bullying from other students in the “in-crowd” that was often overlooked by both faculty and staff.

### **Who are the Victims?**

The third myth that Olweus (1995) noted was that students who are overweight, red haired, use glasses, or speak with a different dialect are more likely to become victims of bullies. While I'm sure a number of overweight, red-headed, glasses-wearing, New York natives living in the South have had their fair share of bullying, these aren't really predictors of who will and who will not be a victim of bullying. A plethora of actual victim characteristics have been seen in a number of research studies. While the categories of

victims can include both passive and proactive victims, typically in a bullying situation the victim is passive. Passive victims have been described as submissive, nonassertive, nonaggressive, socially isolated, physically weak, nondefensive, and having low self-esteem (Connolly et al., 2000, Menesini et al., 2000). In fact, Hoover, Oliver, and Hazler (1992) noted that nearly 75% of adolescents reported some form of victimization from a bully during their school years. Of these victims, 90% believed that being bullied caused significant problems, including loss of friendships, feelings of isolation, hopelessness, lowered self-esteem, and academic problems. In a report released by the National Association of School Psychologists, it is estimated that 160,000 children each day miss school for fear of being picked on by one of their classmates (Orecklin & Winters, 2000).

When a victim is repeatedly exposed to both physical and/or verbal aggression from a bully for an extended period of time, the lasting effects can be quite detrimental. Typically, victims of bullying who are exposed to the bullying for a long period of time will react in one of two ways: internally or externally. When a victim reacts internally, he or she has a lower self-esteem and often will have serious bouts with depression that could lead to violent outbursts against her or himself. These violent outbursts could include scarring (taking a knife to one's own flesh as a way to purge the reasons that make them a victim), pulling out of hair, eating disorders, and possibly suicide. One of the authors of this text had an interesting bullying experience:

I remember once while I was in junior high, this guy behind me kept pocking me in the sides saying, "pudge!" He would think it was soooo funny. One day during Algebra I had just sharpened my pencil and He "pudged" me. Without thinking, I jabbed my newly sharpened pencil into his right knee. That pencil dug pretty deep enough into his skin to leave a nice little tattoo. He went to the nurse's office and I was sent to the Vice Principal's office. At this time I had been staying after school and filing the Vice Principal's disciplinary forms every afternoon, so he had gotten to know me pretty well. I told him the story and I didn't get in trouble at all, but the guy who kept "pudging" me did get in trouble for bullying me. As a whole, I'm a fairly non-violent person, but when I got pushed to my limit, I reacted in a violent fashion towards the person I felt was causing me harm.

The opposite of this is externally reacting, which is becoming all too commonplace in our society today. Each of the adolescents that has been involved in a school shooting has been a victim of bullying. All of them were said to be quiet, nice kids who other children had picked-on during school. Many of these kids had first started reacting violently towards family pets or random stray animals. In a way, these violent episodes are an attempt to

regain some kind of control that has been lost because of the bully. How can a student expect to learn or even enjoy school if he or she is fearful for her or his own safety? Sadly, in cases of severe bullying teachers and administrators have often blamed the victim for the bullying that occurs. In one rather severe case where a teenager was dragged into a school bathroom and a derogatory slur was carved into his chest with a knife, the school responded by having him sent to another school. The perpetrators (all popular athletes in the school) only received a three-day suspension (Owens, 1998).

### **What Can Teachers Do?**

The lasting effects of bullying are pretty severe both to the bully and the victim. Owleus (1995) found that victims of bullies have lower self-esteems and are more depressed than their non-bullied counterparts by the age of 23. At the same time, 65% of boys identified as bullies in the second grade were convicted of a felony by age 24. The lasting effects of bullying are detrimental for both parties. Because bullying affects both the academic and nonacademic parts of our students' lives, understanding what we can do as teachers to help both bullies and victims is very important.

**Acknowledging Bullying.** In a research study conducted by Pakaslahti and Keltikangas-Jarvinen (2000), it was found that teachers and adolescents had very different ideas of who bullies are. Teachers are generally outside observers; whereas, the students are inside the bullying interactions when they occur. For this reason, teachers need to be make it known that they want to hear from their students if someone is being bullied.

**Create a Bully-Free Environment.** Owleus (1995) had four suggestions for how schools should react to provide a bully free environment: (1) Create a school (and, ideally, also a home) environment characterized by warmth, positive interest, and involvement from adults, on one hand, and firm limits to unacceptable behavior, on the other; (2) When rules are violated, reprimand with non-hostile, nonphysical sanctions that are applied consistently; (3) Adults need to monitor and survey students' activities in and out of the school; and (4) Adults both at home and at school should act as authorities in some respects. While, admittedly, these ideas are very Utopianistic in nature, they are still very profound ideals to work towards.

**Set Limits.** Bullies need to know their limits and what is right and what is wrong to do to another human. Victims need to know that they can trust an adult figure that will protect them from bullies.

**Teach Victims to be Assertive.** Teaching victims how to become more assertive can be very beneficial. While a victim may never become an aggressor, he or she can learn

techniques that will allow her or him to stand up for her or himself and get help. Too often, victims feel helpless and do not seek help for fear that the help will only cause more problems. Victims need to know that the bullying and the bullies will not be tolerated. In his autobiographical account of bullying, *The Wounded Spirit* (Peretti, 2000) discussed what it feels like to be an outsider. He also realized that all of us could be targets for victimization:

If you have discovered some “defect” in yourself, welcome to the human race. Regardless of your failures, foibles, or defeats, you’re just as human (and just as precious as anybody else. You’re a member. . . .One of the most common mistakes made by victims of abuse is to think that for some reason the abuse was justified, that they actually deserved it. Nothing could be farther from the truth! [emphasis in original] (p. 125).

***Seek Interventions for the Perpetrators.*** The bullies themselves need to be helped as well. Often the victims are helped and the bullies are just punished, but never taught a better way to act. First, and foremost, bullies need to be given specific guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behaviors.

Valencic, Beatty, Rudd, Dobos, and Heisel (1998) noticed that verbal and physical aggressiveness are temperamentally driven and to a great extent biologically innate. This means that aggressive people are probably just naturally aggressive people. Does this excuse inappropriate behavior as just naturally occurring or biologically driven? By no means. At the same time, if an aggressive person is not given opportunities for pro-social outlets for aggression, they may turn to more negative outlets. A physically aggressive person could become the captain of the football team or could become the school bully depending on which outlets they are given. A verbally aggressive person could become a champion debater (with training), or become verbally abusive to one of her or his peers. In the Musical *Grease* the male lead character, Danny, a fairly physically aggressive male tries to find a sport to play to impress his female interest (Sandra Dee). While some of the coaches thought it was obvious to place him into football and wrestling because of his aggressive nature, he lacked the necessary training and discipline and resorted to his more normal physically aggressive self while attempting to perform. This is an example of the necessity of proper training for aggressive individuals. If teachers and parents do not help aggressive students find pro-social outlets and teach them these outlets, then when they become bullies in school, it should not be surprising to any of us.

## **Communication, Affect, and Classroom Management**

We know that an effectively managed classroom can produce students who have exceptionally high levels of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning. We know that an effectively managed classroom can produce students who can learn on their own and will continue to use the material they learned in our classrooms. We know that an effectively managed classroom can produce students who have high affect for the teacher which leads to a high teacher affect for students. Lastly, we also know that an effectively managed classroom can produce students who have good interpersonal communication skills and abilities. We are not suggesting that a well-managed classroom is where discipline, reprimands, and punishment reign supreme. A well-managed classroom is one in which productive interaction is encouraged, students grant power to the teacher, immediacy and affect are high, and discipline is rarely needed. Teachers who use frequent, harsh discipline interventions are often the very ones who have the more difficult, problematic, hard-to-manage classes. The remainder of this unit will review classroom management approaches, how to increase appropriate student behaviors and decrease inappropriate student behaviors, guidelines for the use of punishment, and some general guidelines for classroom management. Figure 10.3 is provided to assist you in visualizing the process of increasing or decreasing student behaviors.

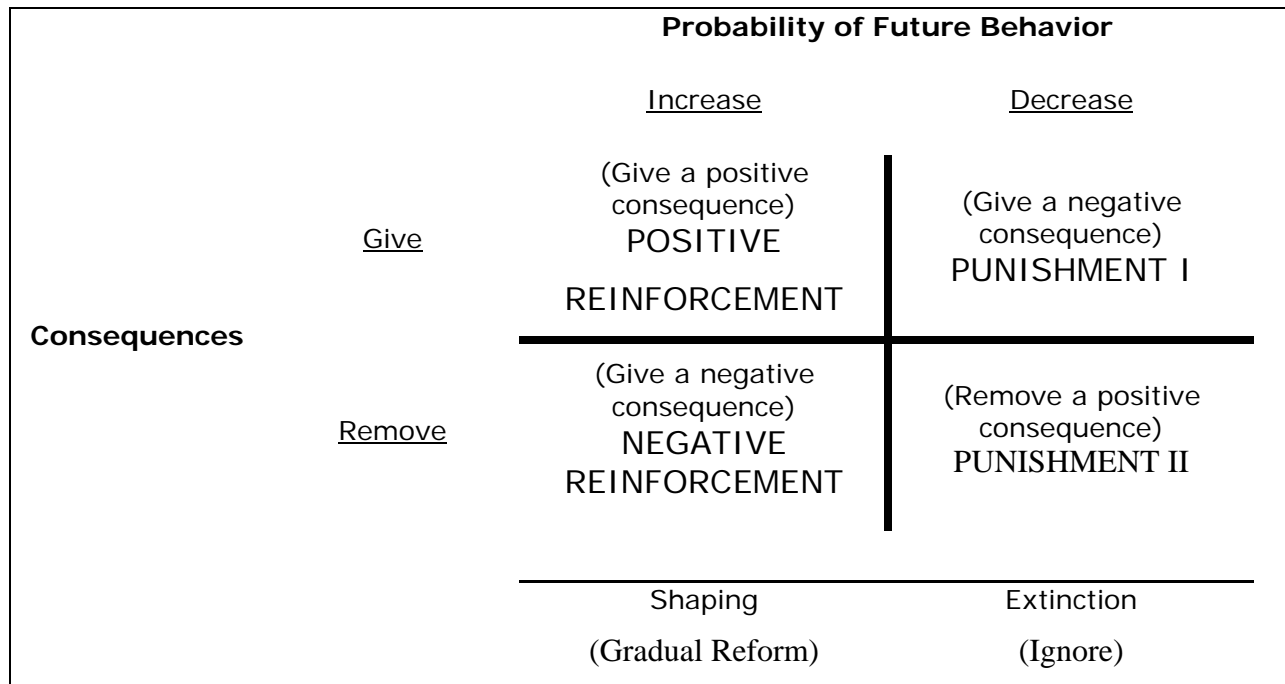
### **Common Classroom Management Approaches**

Before we review communication strategies for increasing appropriate student behaviors and decreasing inappropriate student behaviors we should review the common classroom management approaches. Below is a discussion of the six most common classroom management approaches.

There are three primary educational behavior modification approaches that increase appropriate student behaviors. As noted in Figure 10.3 they are positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and shaping.

**Positive reinforcement** is when we give a reward or positive consequence immediately following the desired student behavior. Rewards or positive consequences can come in the form of nonverbal or verbal communication behaviors which positively reinforce the student for appropriate behavior. The basic idea is that student behaviors which are positively reinforced are learned. For example, if we reinforce our students with a positive consequence, such as a happy face sticker, every time each student turns in homework that

is neat, clean, readable, and on time, we have increased the likelihood the behavior will occur again.



**FIGURE 10.3 MODEL OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

**Negative reinforcement** is when we remove a negative consequence or remove a negative reinforcer. Student behavior is strengthened or increased when the occurrence of the desired behavior results in removal of a negative consequence or negative reinforcer. The basic idea is that through the use of appropriate behaviors or behaving in a desirable way the student has avoided some threatening consequence or a negative consequence. For example, if doing discussion questions over each unit of material is a negative for Susan, because she never does very well on them, we release Susan from having to do all the discussion questions. We tell her to select the ones she can do well and forget the other ones. Essentially Susan has learned that doing discussion questions is okay because it had the effect of removing a negative reinforcer.

**Shaping** is when we reinforce closer and closer student approximations to the final desired behavior. We gradually, through reinforcement of small bits of approximations of the desired behavior, "shape" a student's behavior in the direction deemed desirable. For example, Joe is unable to go all period without disrupting the class. We reinforce Joe for the first five minutes he goes without disrupting the class, then for the next five, the next five,



the next five, and finally for the entire class. We have gradually shaped Joe's behavior from a few minutes to an entire class period.

There are three primary educational behavior modification approaches which decrease inappropriate student behaviors. As noted in Figure 11.2 they are punishment I, punishment II, and extinction.

***Punishment I*** is when we give a punishment or negative consequence immediately following the undesirable student behavior. Punishments or negative consequences can come in the form of nonverbal or verbal communication behaviors which punish the student for inappropriate behavior. The basic idea is that student behaviors which result in a negative consequence are lessened or decreased. For example, Margaret spit on her best friend for stealing her boyfriend. Margaret was told to write a letter of apology to her best friend. Spitting led to writing a letter of apology, a negative consequence.

***Punishment II*** is when the undesirable student behavior is weakened when the occurrence of the behavior causes us to remove a positive consequence or reinforcer. The basic idea is that through the removal of a positive consequence or removal of a reward the student has learned to decrease inappropriate behaviors. For example, John is able to earn ten points for every study guide he turns in ahead of time on each chapter assigned in history. However, the study guides must be neat, clean, readable, and complete. If they are not, John loses four points for each study guide that is sloppy or incomplete even though it is turned in on time. Hence, John's failure to turn in neat, clean, readable, and complete study guides results in the removal of a specified amount of points (e.g., removal of a positive consequence).

***Extinction*** is when we weaken, decrease or eliminate inappropriate student behavior by ignoring, disregarding, or not paying attention to the student's behavior. The basic idea is that if we ignore a mild misbehavior, it will often go away and not reappear. If we reward it by acknowledging it, it might continue. For example, while we are teaching, a student in the back of the room makes a funny noise with her or his armpit, we ignore it and continue. A few students chuckle, but most ignore it because we ignored it. We have ignored the inappropriate behavior and hopefully it will decrease or not occur again. By attending to the funny noise, we might have strengthened the likelihood that it would occur again.

In conclusion, none of the above approaches guarantees appropriate student behaviors will increase and inappropriate student behaviors will decrease. Each is simply a classroom approach to modifying student behavior. Below are common communication

techniques or strategies for increasing appropriate student behaviors or decreasing inappropriate student behaviors.

## **Communication Techniques For Increasing or Decreasing Student Behavior**

### **Increasing Appropriate Student Behaviors**

Often increasing appropriate student behaviors can be accomplished by simple reward and positive reinforcement. However, each teacher needs to understand and learn that what reinforces one student may not always reinforce another. For example, telling a student who had the best report that they get to present it orally in front of the class may be more of a punisher or disincentive than a reward or incentive. Hence, we need to learn what makes our students "tick." What makes one tick or be happy may make another unhappy.

Assuming that we know what makes our students happy, we should: 1) Communicate many, simple, positive comments or statements to them when they do something that is appropriate or acceptable to us. (2) Give something like "happy face stickers" or "stars" to reinforce them for appropriate performance. (3) Reinforce through positive nonverbal behaviors, such as a smile for good behavior or a pat on the back for a job well done. (4) Watch our potential behavior problems and when they do something well or good, reinforce them for "being good." Watch for a positive change in the disruptive student and reinforce the change. (5) Set a positive example by exhibiting the kinds of appropriate behaviors we want our students to model and perform in our classroom. (6) Maintain our self-control and our sanity at all times. When we are in control and seem calm, the students are more likely to exhibit the appropriate, desirable behaviors. When we are out of control or seem unstable, even the best students might think of misbehaving. (7) Attempt to remove any or all negative elements from our communication style, our classroom, or the school. This seems difficult if not impossible, but if we can remove some negative consequences, then students might have better behavior. (8) Treat each student fairly, equally, and not have favorites. If we show favoritism, we will increase the likelihood of inappropriate behavior, whereas, not having favorites will increase the likelihood of appropriate student behaviors.

## **Decreasing Inappropriate Student Behavior**

Often decreasing inappropriate student behavior is as simple as giving a small negative consequence or taking away a small, positive consequence. However, when decreasing inappropriate student behavior we must remember that what works for one student may not work for the next student. We must determine what will work for each individual student when attempting to decrease inappropriate behaviors. We don't want to inadvertently reward inappropriate behavior.

Given the above, there are several things we can do to guarantee that inappropriate student behaviors decrease: (1) Never reward or be positive about inappropriate student behavior. If necessary be neutral, but never positive. Often if you seem neutral, students might assume you are not in favor of that particular behavior. (2) As immediately as is possible, following an inappropriate behavior or action, correct it, and show the student the appropriate behavior. (3) Never embarrass or make the student the focus of excessive attention for her or his inappropriate behavior. This might not decrease it. It might increase it. (4) Clearly state at the beginning of class or on a syllabus, the consequences of inappropriate behavior. (5) Clearly state what is "inappropriate behavior" in your class. (6) Learn to ignore minor misbehaviors and perhaps they will decrease. (7) Move around your classroom, be dynamic, keep students alive and interested in the subject, They will have less time to misbehave or think of things to do to irritate you and others. (8) Do not overlook or ignore clear-cut infractions of the rules. Apply simple, direct, immediate reprimands and let it go. Never dwell on what a student did that was negative. We should try to dwell more on the positive things our students do.

## **Guidelines for the Use of Punishment**

Let's keep in mind, punishment is negative. Hence, we should try every possible communication strategy or alternative we can think of before we resort to punishment.

Punishment is only effective if administered firmly and immediately following the undesirable behavior. In addition, punishment should always be communicated in a calm, matter-of-fact voice and manner. One should never lose control, scream, yell, rant, and rave when punishing a student.

Next, never belittle or call the student names when punishing. Select one behavior and punish the behavior, not the child. In addition, you should determine whether the misbehavior was intentional or unintentional. This might determine the amount and length of punishment. The student should know why they are being punished.

The student should know how to earn back any positive reinforcers that have been removed (e. g., no listening to their headset for one class period). "Punishment should also match the crime." Don't make outlandish threats that you can't or never intend to carry out.

Keep in mind once we have punished a student, the relationship will never be the same. They may avoid us, distrust us, or even dislike us. Avoid blatant, harsh discipline for things or acts that are not that serious (e. g., chattering during class occasionally).

Lastly, we must remember punishment does not teach the correct behavior, it only punishes the incorrect behavior. Hence, we need to teach our students correct behaviors, lessening the likelihood punishment will be needed. When all is said and done, most school systems are abandoning the "punishment model" or the "spare the rod, spoil the child syndrome." In fact, most school systems would prefer to work with their students on a positive, incentive basis than on a negative, disincentive basis.

### **General Guidelines for Classroom Management**

We will make this simple, direct, and understandable. (1) Each of us should clearly state or provide in writing to our students on the first day of class, the rules and procedures we expect them to follow. In addition, there should never be more than five simple rules or procedures. Whether we give them in oral or written format, we should ask for examples so our students know what we mean. (2) We should create a pedagogical environment in which students feel free to ask questions, communicate concerns, and be willing to make needed changes. In this type of person-oriented classroom environment, students are less likely to engage in undesirable behaviors or communication. (3) We should keep students interested in subject matter and time-on task exercises. This suggests we have to develop a more friendly, assertive, sociable, dynamic, and outgoing teacher communication style. If we can be more dynamic and interesting, the students will attend more, and behavior problems will decrease. (4) Through nonverbal and verbal immediacy and affinity building we can increase positive student affect. As student affect for us, the material, and the class increases, misbehavior decreases. (5) Lastly, we should avoid the use of antisocial or negative compliance techniques, when attempting to modify or control a student's misbehavior. Coercion has never taught the correct behavior in the past, why should we think it would work now? Often the more coercive power is used, the more it will be needed. The research strongly suggests the use of such techniques will lead to student resentment, dislike, and lowered affect.

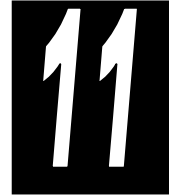
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# TEACHER MISBEHAVIORS AND COMMUNICATION



## Chapter Eleven Objectives

1. Discuss the role/function of the teacher/source in the instructional process.
2. Discuss why teachers might misbehave.
3. Review the most common teacher Misbehaviors. Give an example of each that you have observed in a fellow teacher.
4. Give some outcomes of teacher misbehavior on the educational system.

There he or she is, sitting at their desk, drinking coffee and reading a newspaper, while the students are attempting to determine what the assignment is. Day after day, week after week, the students go into Mr. or Ms. Thompson's room for instruction and encouragement, but come out with little instruction and no encouragement. Mr. or Ms. Thompson thinks the best model of teaching is to assign vague projects, plenty of busy work which doesn't even get graded, lots of board work so he or she can openly criticize the students' work; to give unannounced quizzes, no guidelines for grading or achievement, and little teacher feedback. He or she often leaves the room to talk with other school personnel and is rarely in her or his room when the class is supposed to begin.

Unfortunately, most of us have experienced teachers like Mr. or Ms. Thompson. There is no question that a teacher's behavior, communication, control, and concern all have an impact on student communication, perception, performance, and behavior. As Richmond and Roach (1992) point out, "The tasks of a teacher are many-fold. An instructor is responsible for presenting subject content, explaining difficult concepts, modeling and stimulating problem-solving skills, promoting both cognitive and affective learning in students, motivating students toward academic achievement, and providing an environment conducive to learning" (p. 58). Most instructional managers are able to handle these tasks.

A troublesome but valid area of concern has been explored recently in the communication education literature. This new arena of study has been called "teacher misbehaviors." While much of the literature has examined, investigated, and discussed why, how, and when students instigate problems in the classroom, very few people have examined the impact of teacher misbehaviors in the classroom. Perhaps this oversight is because we don't like to think of ourselves as misbehavior problems or as the instigator of misbehavior problems in our own classrooms.



Often, we as teachers, forget how powerful our presence can be in the classroom. The things that we say and do will be remembered by our students longer than most of us sometimes would like. One of the authors of this text had the following experience:

Once while teaching a class, I had asked my students to do a task that they had been doing all semester long. They were taking longer than usual and I was already a little agitated that day, so the combination was not a positive teaching experience. I finally got frustrated and looked at the class and muttered, "Come on people, this isn't brain surgery!" A few kids chuckled and the class went on its way without any more problems. A few days later, I was talking with one of my students about a problem he was having on one of his assignments, he finally looked at me and with a sly smile uttered, "I know, it's not brain surgery!" I couldn't believe that he had remembered my off-hand remark like that. I was hoping he was the only one, but to my dismay, most of the class remembered that little remark. For the rest of the semester, any time something wasn't going just right one of the students would pipe in with, "Come on people, this isn't brain surgery!" I even had a couple of "brain surgery" comments on my evaluations. This little experience forced me to realize how powerful the words we use in the classroom really are.

As teachers, we must all be careful of the words we use because we never know if we are edifying our students or destroying them.

Kearney, Plax, Hays, and Ivey (1991) note that the education literature often "overlooks teachers themselves as a potential source of problems in the classroom" (p. 309-310). Kearney et al., (1991) departed from tradition and made two assumptions about teachers and misbehaviors. The first assumption is that "teachers themselves may misbehave" and second "these misbehaviors can become potential sources of student dissatisfaction and resistance" (p. 310). They define teacher misbehaviors as "those teacher behaviors that interfere with instruction and thus, learning" (p. 310). Most of their work has been with college students' perceptions of teachers' misbehaviors. However, Kearney et al., suggests that teacher misbehaviors can occur at any level of education and misbehaving teachers can be found in all grades. In this chapter we have adapted some of their misbehavior problems to match teacher misbehaviors found in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Again, there seems to be little doubt that teacher behaviors and communication influence a student's behaviors, time spent on task, study habits, motivation, goal orientation, learning, application of subject matter, classroom order, classroom communication, in-class work habits, and a plethora of other variables.

There seem to be several reasons why teachers misbehave. Kearney et al., (1991) suggest that teachers misbehave because they are "unable to relate to students, uncaring, preoccupied with other work, uninformed about course content, fearful about initiating personal relationships with students, outdated, selfish and self-centered, and not committed to the teaching profession" (p. 318).

## **Why Teachers Misbehave**

Let's keep in mind the majority of us probably do not misbehave in our classrooms, and if we do we don't misbehave to the point of interfering with our students' learning. However, there are many teachers who do misbehave either intentionally or unintentionally, or out of habit. No one is sure why teachers misbehave. No one has been able to get teachers who are perceived by others as misbehavior problems to answer why teachers misbehave. However, we can delineate some possible reasons why they do.

### **Boredom**

Just like our students, we become bored with the everyday process of teaching and learning. We start to rely on "old notes" and "old lectures" and never allow ourselves to grow, develop, and expand educationally. Just because we have been teaching for several years doesn't mean we can't still be interested and interesting.

### **Dislike Teaching**

Whether we like it or not, we know there are some instructors in our school system who simply don't like teaching. Their affect for the basic job is low and they will do nothing to improve. In fact, these are the very teachers who are most proud of saying, "I do this because I have nothing else to do," or "I do this to earn a little extra money," or "I would have done something better with my life, but what they heck, the pay is okay and the hours are great." Instructors who do not have a positive regard for this profession do not have a positive regard for us or the students.

### **Out-of-Date**

Instructional leaders have to continue to learn, grow, and gain knowledge in their subject content area or else they will become out-of-date. When a teacher becomes out-of-date or is uneducated in her or his primary content area, they will fail to have a positive instructional impact on their students. We need to stay up-to-date in our primary

field and continue to educate ourselves or we may become the next misbehavior problem in the system.

### **Establish Too High Expectations**

Often we will establish expectations for ourselves and our students that are too high or unreachable. In our efforts to be better we become compulsive and pushy and forget one of our primary goals is to establish a humane learning environment where all students can learn and perform up to their levels. When we establish expectations that no student can meet and expectations for ourselves that we cannot meet, then we may become a problem to ourselves and our students.

### **Poor Interaction with Students**

Instructors who have poor communication skills or ineffective communication with their students are more likely to misbehave or have behaviors which are indicative of teacher misbehavior. It is clear that effective communication between teacher and student is a prerequisite for teacher success and student learning. Teachers who are ineffective communicators usually receive very little positive feedback from their students, have difficulty responding to feedback, cannot establish credibility with students, have less control over their students, have lowered affinity with students, and have more defensive, hostile communication with their students than teachers who are effective communicators. According to Hurt, Scott, McCroskey (1978) "teaching is communicating. And the better teachers are at communicating, the better they are at teaching" (p. 38).

### **Poor Teaching Performance**

Teachers who cannot teach, cannot present material in an interesting, stimulating, and exciting manner, or systematically refuse to learn the necessary communication skills which contribute to good teaching, are more likely to become behavior problems for their students. They become problems because they are insecure, self-conscious, and defensive about their teaching performance. Perhaps they even realize their performance is not acceptable, but they don't know how to improve. So instead of seeking help or assistance, they become misbehavior problems.

### **Low Affect for Immediate Supervisor**

We all know this teacher. He or she doesn't like and is not able to get along well with her or his immediate supervisor. The immediate supervisor may be a principal, assistant

principal, curriculum director or another teacher. Often when affect is low between supervisor and subordinate, then the relationship and communication are negatively impacted. Teachers who do not like their immediate supervisors pose very big misbehavior problems for their own students. This teacher becomes angry with her or his immediate supervisor, but instead of talking to her or his immediate supervisor, they may go into class and misbehave. In other words, they take their anger and frustrations out on their students.

### **Stress and Overload**

More and more good teachers are suffering from intense stress and overload. There are not enough good teachers in the systems to do all the work, so many good teachers are becoming overburdened and overloaded while many poor teachers are doing as little as possible. Stress and overload for long periods of time might cause a very good teacher to develop some misbehavior problems. If we see this happening to us, we definitely need to reduce our workload.

In conclusion, there are many reasons why teachers might misbehave. Some of these causes of misbehavior can be managed or controlled by us. However, there are still some teachers present in our educational systems who nonverbally and verbally abuse students and will never admit it. Let's review what students perceive as common teacher misbehaviors with an eye toward spotting our own misbehaviors and correcting them.

## **Common Teacher Misbehaviors**

There are a wide variety of teacher misbehaviors that can occur in any classroom setting. While the landmark study by Kearney et al., only identifies misbehaviors that occur at the college level, we will attempt to generalize their findings to other grade levels. In this attempt we will only discuss the common misbehaviors which teachers are likely to commit from kindergarten through high school. Kearney et al., was able to categorize teacher misbehaviors into three primary categories.

### **Teacher Incompetence**

The first category was labeled teacher incompetence. The following are descriptions of the nine primary misbehaviors that make up teacher incompetence.

1. An incompetent teacher often exhibits misbehaviors such as giving confusing or unclear lectures, presentations, or notes. Here the teacher often is vague, jumps randomly from one point to another and has lectures or notes that are often inconsistent with the assigned readings.

2. An incompetent teacher is often apathetic to students. He or she doesn't seem to care about the class or the students, doesn't learn student names, rejects students' opinions and questions, and rarely allows for class discussions.
3. An incompetent teacher uses unfair testing techniques or strategies. He or she will ask trick questions, have exams or tests that do not relate to notes or lectures, give tests that are too difficult, ask ambiguous questions, and provide no review for tests.
4. An incompetent teacher will give boring lectures and presentations. They are boring, unenthusiastic, speak in monotone voice, ramble, repeat too much, drone on, and provide no variety.
5. An incompetent teacher will often have students who have information or communication overloads. For example, they talk too fast, rush the content, talk over students' heads, use obscure terminology, ignore students' queries, ignore students' confusion and keep giving information, and assign excessive busy work.
6. An incompetent teacher does not know her or his subject matter or primary content teaching area. For example, they don't understand the subject, cannot answer questions, give incorrect information, cannot extend the subject matter, and often aren't current or up-to-date.
7. An incompetent teacher may have a foreign or regional accent or dialect different from the students which interferes with the students' processing of information. For example, they are hard to understand, enunciate poorly, don't attempt to adapt their speech to the students, or their accent or speech is so strong or different from the region that it interferes with information processing and effective communication.
8. An incompetent teacher uses inappropriate volume. They do not speak loudly enough (speak too softly) to be heard or they speak too loudly.
9. Lastly, an incompetent teacher uses poor grammar and has poor spelling. They often use poor grammar, misspell words, and generally use poor English.

### **Teacher Offensiveness**

The second category of teacher misbehaviors was labeled teacher offensiveness. Below is a discussion of the six primary misbehaviors that make up an offensive teacher.

1. Teachers who behave offensively use sarcasm, putdowns, and hurtful or harmful comments. They are sarcastic, rude, make fun of students, humiliate students, insult, pick on or embarrass students in front of others.
2. Teachers who behave offensively use verbal abuse. They are verbally abusive. They use profanity, are often angry, mean, hostile, yell, scream, rant, rave, and will often intimidate students. Sometimes they will interrupt students and verbally harass them in the classroom.
3. Teachers who behave offensively use unreasonable and arbitrary rules. They refuse to accept late work, give no breaks in long classes, punish an entire class for the misbehavior of one student, and are often rigid, inflexible, authoritarian, and hostile.
4. Teachers who behave offensively use sexual harassment techniques. They will make offensive, sexual remarks to or about students. They will make inappropriate comments about their clothing and dress. They will flirt, make sexual innuendoes and be chauvinistic.
5. Teachers who behave offensively have a negative personality. They are impersonal, impatient, cold, self-centered, complaining, and whiny. They act superior, unpredictable, and moody.
6. Lastly, teachers who behave offensively show favoritism, partiality, bias, or prejudice. They play favorites, act prejudiced against others, are narrow-minded or close-minded.

### **Teacher Indolence**

The third category of teacher misbehaviors was labeled teacher indolence. Below is a discussion of the six primary factors/misbehaviors that make up teacher indolence.

1. An indolent or lazy teacher is often absent from class. They simply do not show up for class, use substitutes a lot, and have flimsy, vague excuses for why they were absent.
2. An indolent teacher is often tardy for class. They rarely show up on time and rarely have good excuses for being late.
3. An indolent teacher is often unprepared, disorganized or sloppy in their preparation. They are not prepared, lose notes, forget test dates, forget where they are in their content coverage, make assignments and do not collect them, and generally seem sloppy, uncoordinated, or unorganized.
4. An indolent teacher is one who will deviate substantially from the syllabus or

course outline. For example, they change dates and assignments without any warning or reason, are often behind schedule, do not follow guidelines stated on a syllabus, and assign books, materials, and readings but never refer to them.

5. An indolent teacher is often late in returning work to students. He or she is late in returning papers, projects, assignments, tests, exams, and exercises. They often forget to bring in graded papers and projects.
6. Lastly, an indolent teacher is often guilty of information underload. They are too easy, do not give enough content to satisfy student needs, seem to skim the content surface, give light and easy assignments.

In conclusion, *the three primary misbehavior categories are incompetence, offensiveness, and indolence*. A teacher must have a high number of these characteristics to be considered a real misbehavior problem in the system. There could also be other misbehaviors that teachers display that impact student learning such as keeping students overtime, early dismissal, unresponsiveness to students' needs, inaccessibility to students outside of class, not giving students extra help, not answering students' questions outside of class, and giving exams which do not relate to the content or reading. Before we label anyone a "misbehavior problem" let's be sure they have a number of the above misbehaviors. Usually good teachers will realize when they are becoming misbehavior problems and correct the situation, and poor teachers often don't realize they are misbehavior problems.

### **Implications for the Educational System**

Again, misbehaving teachers are not usually the norms. Even some very fine teachers have found themselves occasionally using some of the misbehaviors discussed earlier. While the categories range from being absent to the use of poor grammar, the "most frequently cited misbehavior types are (1) sarcasm and putdowns, (2) being absent, (3) strays from subject, (4) unfair testing and, (5) boring lectures" (Kearney, et al., 1991, p. 321). While it usually takes a number of the above misbehaviors in order to label a teacher a misbehavior problem, occasionally one teacher could engage in one type of misbehavior to an extreme. For example, if a teacher was constantly sarcastic, critical, and hurtful to a student, we would consider this abusive and a form of teacher misbehavior.

Students will fail to learn as much from a teacher who displays incompetence than from a teacher who is competent. Teachers' misbehaviors which represent incompetence

also represent basic teaching skills. If a teacher does not have or use the basic teaching skills, the students will probably learn less. Indicative of incompetence are unclear or confusing lectures, apathy toward students, unfair testing, boring lectures, information overloads, failure to know subject matter, poor accent, poor volume, and poor grammatical skills. All of these are related to teaching skills and teaching effectiveness. If an instructor is low or below competence level in the area of basic teaching skills, then he or she will produce students who have learned less than other students.

The offensive teacher may use sarcasm, putdowns, profanity, and even hurtful statements with her or his students. This type of teacher misbehavior teaches students a very poor lesson. Often students will think they can behave like the teacher. Sometimes students will model themselves on the offensive teacher. The offensive teacher has very poor communication skills and unfortunately the students are the recipients of their poor communication skills. Offensive teachers need to be told to "manage their mouths."

The indolent teacher will be perceived by the students as lazy, apathetic, uncaring, unconcerned, and unenthusiastic. Indirectly students learn from these teachers. They learn they don't have to do a job well in order to get paid or have a vacation. Many students will model indolent teachers.

A teacher who exhibits many characteristics of the incompetent, offensive, or an indolent instructor will probably have classroom problems. For example, they will have higher incidents of discipline problems, higher student failure, lower student affect, and lower student learning.

An instructor who misbehaves on a regular basis will become known throughout the school system and the community. Often parents will come to see an administrator and request their daughter or son be removed from that teacher's class and placed in a "good" teacher's class.

The consequences are far reaching for the educational system that maintains and supports an incompetent, offensive, indolent teacher. The old saying goes, "One bad apple spoils the barrel." Often the only thing students, parents, and the community remember is the "one bad teacher who spoiled the school." Incompetent, offensive, indolent instructors reflect poorly on all of us. Many good educators are often stereotyped in a negative way because of the misbehaviors of the few. Educational systems are often stereotyped in a negative way because of the misbehaviors committed by a few instructors. In summary, each of us and our systems have to work much harder to override the perceptions both students and parents have of us because of one teacher who used many of the common teacher misbehaviors.



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# TEACHER SELF-CONCEPT AND COMMUNICATION



## Chapter Twelve Objectives

1. Define teacher self-concept and identify the three dimensions of teacher self-concept. Give an example of each type of teacher self-concept.
2. Discuss how a teacher's self-concept develops and who has control over a teacher's self-concept.
3. Discuss the relationship between teacher self-concept and classroom outcomes.
4. Discuss five instructional communication methods for enhancing a teacher's self-concept.

Have you hugged yourself lately? Teacher self-concept is paramount to effective teaching and teacher satisfaction. Since a teacher's self-concept is with her or him in all that the teacher does, it can obviously have an impact on the teacher's communication with others. A teacher's communication is very reflective of her or his self-concept.

As in the chapter on student self-concept, we use the terms self-concept, self-esteem, self-worth, and self-image interchangeably. A teacher's self-concept is the teacher's total view of her or his cognitive, behavioral, and psychological capabilities as a teacher. It is the teacher's view of her or himself in terms of overall self-worth in the classroom. It is the teacher's assessment, evaluation, and valuation of her or himself in the classroom environment. It is the teacher's perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and values about her or himself as a teacher and how others perceive her or him in the school environment.

Day in and day out a teacher's self-concept takes a beating. Students often don't like or appreciate what a teacher is attempting to do for them. Administrators don't always feel teachers are doing their jobs well. Parents are constantly suggesting teachers are not worth what they are paid. And some teachers are constantly "beating up" on themselves about their performance, classroom outcomes, and self-worth. It is not surprising that many educators report lower self-concepts than people in most other professions. It is no wonder many teachers are leaving education and seeking other more productive, less stressful, positions. It is no wonder many teachers feel they are not performing as well as they did a few years ago. In the last ten years, teachers' views of themselves have declined significantly.

As we review the dimensions of teacher self-concept and development of teacher self-concept, we should keep in mind that if our self-concept becomes too low we may not

be able to perform our jobs adequately, even if we are high achievers. Some low self-concept teachers can perform well for a while because they have a high achievement orientation, but eventually the lowered self-opinion may result in the achievement motivation factor being lowered and then the teacher is doomed. Since much of what we do is connected with our self-concept as a teacher, lowered teacher self-concept can impact other portions of our life.

## **Dimensions of Teacher Self-Concept**

Teacher self-concept is a multidimensional construct. There are three primary dimensions. These dimensions are behavioral self, identity self, and judging self.

### **Behavioral Self**

This dimension of teacher self-concept refers to the behavior of the teacher, or what he or she does. The behavioral self is usually concerned with some action, movement, or conduct. The following are examples of the behavioral self: Teachers teach, direct, grade, lecture, instruct, motivate, control, help, manage, tell, talk, move, gaze, run, spell, walk, joke, react to others' talk, write, draw, motion, watch, evaluate, design curricula, create objectives, gives speeches, demonstrates, and present. This is by no means an exhaustive list of all the behaviors by which teachers are judged or make judgments about themselves.

### **Identity Self**

This dimension of teacher self-concept refers to the identity of the teacher, a teacher views or sees what or who he or she is in the school system. The identity self is usually concerned with being identified with some category of people. The following are examples of the identity self: Teachers see themselves as friends, helpers, prison guards, wardens, managers, clowns, overpaid baby sitters, lowest persons in the system, good sports, grunts, high achievers, motivators, mentally slow for being in this profession, caretakers, caring persons, mom, dad, disciplinarian, grandmother, grandfather, instructional managers, pedagogical managers, and professional educators. This is by no means an exhaustive list of all the identities by which teachers are viewed or view themselves.

### **Judging Self**

This dimension of teacher self-concept refers to the evaluations, judgments, or opinion's teacher's make about themselves. It is how a teacher judges or evaluates what they do and who they are. The following are examples of judgmental statements students

might make about themselves: I am a good teacher; I am a poor teacher; I am a bright teacher; I am a dumb teacher; I am a quick teacher; I am a slow teacher; I am the worst teacher in the school; I will never be as good as the other teachers; I am better than all the other teachers; I am a poor manager; I am a good manager; I feel that I never do a good job in the classroom, even though I try hard; I don't think I will ever make a truly good teacher; or I am a very prepared, caring teacher. The judging self always has some evaluative term or adjective attached to the teacher's description of what they do or who they are. These statements will tell us how a teacher truly feels about her or himself.

If we listen to ourselves and our colleagues talking to others and talking to us, they will often give us hints through their communication about how they view themselves. We can use this information to help us adjust our communication so we confirm the positive feelings our colleagues have and not reinforce the negative feelings they have about themselves. If we generate (and our colleagues generate) too many negative statements about ourselves (themselves), eventually we (they) will be what they say they are.

### **Development of Teacher Self-Concept**

The development of teacher self-concept is a function of our own communication about ourselves and the communication of others about us. We listen to others, we listen to ourselves, and we begin to develop a concept as to who and what we are as teachers. We must remember that if we are not good to ourselves, we are not going to be good to our students. Our communication and others' communication directly impacts how we feel about ourselves. Adler and Towne (1990) suggest "The self-concept is extremely subjective, being almost totally a product of interaction with others" (p. 44). Below are a number of factors which influence a teacher's self-concept development.

#### **Reflected Appraisal**

A reflected appraisal is also referred to as the looking-glass self which was postulated by Cooley (1956). The looking-glass self is founded upon the idea that each of us looks in a mirror and sees us as others see us. In other words, reflected appraisal or the looking-glass self means a teacher develops a teacher self-concept that correlates with the way they think others see them. For example, if society sees teachers as useful, valuable, worthwhile, and important then, teachers are likely to feel useful, valuable, worthwhile, and important. Whereas, if society views teachers as useless, less valuable, less worthwhile, and less important than other professions, then educators might feel the way society views them. This is a very valid factor which impacts teacher self-concept. Teachers' self-concepts are

often a product of the positive and negative verbal and nonverbal statements they have received throughout their teaching career.

Beginning teachers usually are only exposed to positive verbal and nonverbal communication about the teaching profession. These messages are usually intentional so that new or novice teachers can enter the classroom with a self-confident feeling and a positive regard for their chosen career. However, as the new teacher remains in the system, they begin to hear more negative comments and fewer positives about their chosen career and they begin to question their chosen profession. Everyday teachers are bombarded with many verbal and nonverbal messages which tell them what others think of their profession. We are assaulted with messages from every communication domain, human and media. For example, we read about the "poor state of education in our nation." We hear about how educational administrators and teachers are being paid more but students' achievement scores are lower than ever. We are told by people in our environment that teaching is a dead end job with no rewards. Appraisals like these are the "mirrors" by which teachers begin to know and develop a teacher self-concept.

It is extremely devastating to us and our self-concepts when a "significant other," such as a spouse, friend, another teacher, supervisor, parent, mentor, or child, whose opinions we respect and value, communicates evaluations to us that are less than positive about our profession. For example, a spouse communicates that her or his job is more important or more critical than the teacher's job, because they bring home more money. We have often seen cases of teachers pounding on the self-esteem of other teachers by suggesting "teachers who teach in the higher grades (6th on up) have more difficult jobs than teachers who teach in the lower grades (5th on down). In fact, one Kindergarten teacher was moved from her teaching assignment to the first grade, and another teacher in the same school remarked "it's about time you got promoted to a real grade." In another case, a high school teacher was telling a first grade teacher about his difficult teaching job and suggested her job was easier than his. She replied, "You don't know how difficult first grade is until you hold a little child in your lap who was hurt on the playground and they 'pee' (the colorful expression she used indicated her level of irritation!) all over you." The high school teacher was rather stunned and admitted maybe he didn't know everything that went into being a first grade teacher. As teachers, we cannot allow the opinions of significant others to impact our jobs and our self-esteem. If we do, we will not be good to ourselves, in turn we will not be good to our students.

## **Social Comparison**

We have reviewed how others' messages and opinions mold and shape teacher self-concept. Teacher self-concept is also formed by social comparison. Social comparison is when we evaluate and judge how we and our profession compare with others. We typically decide whether we are "inferior or superior" to others by comparing ourselves to others.

In socially comparing whether we are inferior or superior to others, we often ask some of the following questions: Is our profession as good as others? Is our profession as well-respected as some other professions? Is our profession as highly valued as other professions? Are we perceived as intelligent or stupid? Are we perceived as educators or babysitters? Are we perceived as respected persons or overpaid wardens? Are we viewed in a positive or negative light by others?

Many of the above comparisons are unfair comparisons. We compare, and others compare us to inappropriate reference groups. For example, we will probably never be paid as well as some business executives. We will never be as respected as the Pope. We will never be perceived as positively as some more socially desirable groups. We cannot constantly compare ourselves to others or we won't be good in our classrooms. Comparing ourselves to inappropriate referent groups or persons is like attempting to compare ourselves to Hulk Hogan or Christie Brinkley. It's like attempting to compare us to Mel Gibson or Elizabeth Taylor. Often in school systems we compare ourselves with other schools in the same systems. We compare ourselves to the "best" and then assume we are "inferior" because we are not the best. Simply because we are not the "best" doesn't mean we are worthless. However, we are guilty as are many other professions of constantly comparing ourselves with inappropriate referent groups and arriving at the conclusion "we are no good." When we judge ourselves against unreasonable standards, we are going to judge ourselves as inferior. Often new teachers compare themselves with the better skilled, veteran teachers and conclude they can never be "as good" as the veteran teachers.

We will also compare ourselves to others in terms of being "like others" or "different from" others. This is another unfair comparison. We simply cannot assume because we are different and not like others that we are not as good. For example, many veteran teachers will "pound" or "beat up" on themselves by comparing themselves to younger teachers. They make statements like, "when I was a younger teacher, I could be more energetic." This is an unfair comparison. A veteran teacher may be different from a younger teacher, they may be older but this doesn't mean because they are different they are poor teachers. Again, we cannot compare ourselves against referent groups where there is no comparison needed. We may be like some groups in our school and we may be different from some groups in our school but this doesn't mean we are better or worse. We may be like some

professional groups and we may be different from some professional groups but this doesn't mean we are better or worse.

### **Past Experiences**

So far we have said that teacher self-concept develops as a function of reflected appraisal and social comparison. Germane to the development of teacher self-concept is our past experience with others. Swensen (1973) stated that "our perceptions are a function of our past experiences with other people; they affect the way we react to them" (p. 154).

As teachers our perception of ourselves and our communication about ourselves is in large part because of our past experiences with other persons. For example, when we are talking about some incident at school or discussing a school happening, our spouse nods her or his head as we talk, we might interpret this as a polite gesture they always use when we are talking "school" and that they don't really care about what we are saying. Or when we are talking with our supervisor about a concern we have and he or she keeps saying "uh huh" we know from past experiences they are only half-listening. In the past, we have seen them use the "uh huh" phrase to give polite attention to many other people with concerns. If many of our past experiences with others about our profession have been apathetic, uncaring, unconcerned, or harsh experiences, we may begin to form a low opinion of our profession and ourselves. If we have not received some rewards in the past for being in the profession of educating students and being professional educators, then we may develop a low teacher self-concept.

### **Environmental Factors**

Teacher self-concept can develop as function of reflected appraisal, social comparison, and past experiences. Environmental factors may also lend a hand in producing a negative or positive teacher self-image. Environmental factors are often the roles and status that we hold in our surroundings. For example, we are teachers, and often this word carries the meaning of "low status" with it. But often it carries the meaning of "high status" with it. For example, one teacher told us that he left teaching and moved to another career for eight years. During his eight years, several of the employees were in "awe" that he was a teacher. In fact, he overheard one employee telling another, "there goes the teacher, in a few months, he will be our next supervisor." Environmental factors are like the wind. They are constantly shifting and changing. One year teachers can have high status and respected roles, the next year teachers can have low status and be unrespected. We have to be able to maintain a healthy self-concept in surroundings that are constantly changing.

The next factor which impacts teacher self-concept is a relatively significant construct which is under the total control of the teacher. This factor is known as the "vulture variable."

### ***Vultures and Vulture Statements***

According to Simon (1977), a vulture is a noun, pronounced (v'ul-cher). Vultures are "large birds of prey that . . . subsist chiefly or entirely on dead flesh." Simon allegorically suggests each person (each of us, each teacher) has a flock of "psychological vultures" which we allow to make circles over our heads daily and pluck, pick, or tear away at our self-concepts. These vultures are constantly perched overhead, waiting to swoop down and tear away at our already dying self-concepts. These vultures are waiting to feast on our self-concepts. All they have to do is to circle patiently and we will give them something to prey on. We are constantly making vulture statements or negative self-statements to ourselves about ourselves, our actions, and our profession.

While we may be a healthy looking, productive pedagogical manager, many of us are carrying big vultures around on our shoulders. In fact, some of us have vultures large enough to consume an entire school! Our self-concepts, the opinions we have of ourselves, our private self-rating systems, are constantly being put down by the negative self-statements we make about ourselves either to others or to ourselves. We are constantly communicating put-downs, downers, or beating up on ourselves. Let's look at one teacher enter the vicious vulture cycle.

Sandy is a healthy looking, very pleasant teacher at a school in your area. To look at Sandy all you would see is a confident, in control, caring teacher. She is always neat, clean, poised, pleasant, and ready to go into her classroom. She is liked and respected by her students, peers, and administrators. However, above Sandy are several large, well-fed vultures waiting to swoop down on her self-concept. These vultures sense and smell some weaknesses or sense of insecurity in Sandy that drives them to rip, tear, shred, slash, lacerate, or pull apart her teacher self-concept. The following are characteristic statements that vultures wait to hear so they can attack:

- Oh boy, do I look awful today, I look like I've been up all night.
- Oh, this is going to be an awful day.
- I've already messed up. I left my students' graded exams at home.
- Boy, I should never have gotten out of bed this morning.
- Gee whiz. I did an awful job of teaching that unit.
- Why can't I do certain things as well as Mr. Smith next door?



- Why am I always so dumb?
- I can't believe I'm a teacher, why I have the mentality of a worm.
- I don't know why I ever thought I could teach.
- I can't get anything right.
- Good grief, what am I doing here? Why didn't I select any easy job?
- I am going nowhere, doing nothing, I am a failure at teaching.
- In fact, I am a failure in most things I attempt.

Teachers who use many of the put-downs listed above, or similar put-downs, are going to have big, fat, healthy vultures perched on their shoulders. In fact their vultures will be so fat, they can barely move through the school hallways. Most teachers have used vulture statements on occasions. Take a few minutes and list some of the vulture statements you have said to yourself or another teacher about yourself.

Many teachers and other persons ask, where do vultures come from? Simon responds with "They come from only one place. They grow out of other people's criticisms, from the negative responses to what we do and say, and the way we act" (p. 48-49). It is a shame but people tend to selectively remember the negative messages others give them, rather than the positive ones. As they add up the negative, they find there is more bad in themselves than good. The more we beat up or tear down ourselves as teachers, the more likely we are to destroy our teacher self-concept. We will eventually have a negative, rather than a positive, teacher self-concept. Of course if we are feeding vultures in other facets of our lives, we may very well be driving ourselves into a never ending, never winning cycle of battling vultures at every step in our lives. If we are beating up on ourselves for being poor parents, poor children, poor role models, poor shoppers, poor money managers, poor homemakers, poor drivers, poor house cleaners, and poor human beings then we might never have a reasonably good picture of ourselves.

It is no wonder that many teachers are afflicted with the vicious vulture syndrome. They are constantly being put-down, hearing negative criticism, and then putting themselves down. Too much of the above, too often will eventually lead to self-destruction. There are several things teachers can do to ward vultures off or eliminate vultures. First, we need to feel better about ourselves. If we occasionally stop and think about or write down a few good things about ourselves, we are plucking the vulture's feathers. Second, start reinforcing the good in your fellow teachers and in your students. While it sounds corny, the better you make another feel, the better you will feel. Stop putting others down and you will not only feel better but you will be plucking away at your vulture's feathers. Third, "you

pluck feathers every time you block a self-put-down and start thinking positively" (p. 40). Fourth, "you pluck feathers when you learn to turn your head around and use the force of the old, negative way of thinking about yourself to run over self-put-downs and work at making positive points" (p. 42). In conclusion, each of us needs a can of "vulture off" repellent. If we can pluck the vulture's feathers, one by one, then we may be able to retain a healthy teacher self-concept. If we cannot pluck the vulture feathers, one by one, then we may never have a healthy teacher self-concept.

Those of us who keep our vultures under control and underfed have what we call "anorexic vultures." If we have anorexic vultures, then we are likely to have a healthy teacher self-concept. If we have "overfed, fat, obese vultures," then we are likely to have an unhealthy teacher self-concept. Our goal then must be to keep the vultures off our shoulders and out of instructional environments. If we can begin to feel good in one facet of our life, we might begin to be able to manage the other facets in our lives that cause us to have fat vultures. The old rule applies here, "one day at a time" in order to improve our self-concepts. Each day ask yourself, "How fat or how skinny is my vulture?" If it is fat, reduce it before you go to school. If it is skinny, don't feed it when you get to school. Figure 13.1 demonstrates the characteristics of teachers with "fat vultures" or poor self-concepts versus teachers with "anorexic vultures" or healthy self-concepts.

<b><u>HEALTHY SELF-CONCEPT</u></b>	<b><u>UNHEALTHY SELF-CONCEPT</u></b>
Influences students positively	Influences students negatively
Projects a positive, confident view of one's self	Projects a negative self-image
Positive influence on student's learning	Negative influence on student's learning
Composed and in control	Nervous, anxious, timid, or out of control
Fewer misbehavior problems	More misbehavior problems
Fewer student misbehavior problems	More student misbehavior problems
More effective communicators	Ineffective communicators
Puts students at ease	Makes students tense and anxious
More productive	Less productive
Can say "no" to students without backlash	Afraid to say "no" because of student response or they will lose their popularity with students

**Figure 13.1 Characteristics of Teachers With Healthy or Unhealthy Self-Concepts**

In conclusion, teachers with big, fat, healthy vultures may have a lower teacher self-concept than teachers with skinny, anorexic vultures. Communication with others and ourselves is the key to a healthier, stronger teacher self-concept.

### **Strategies for Increasing Teacher Self-Concept**

One of the methods for improving self-concept is to use a combination of cognitive restructuring and coping statements. We need to cognitively restructure or alter the way we think of ourselves. We literally need to think different thoughts when we begin to think negative thoughts. At the same time we should make mental statements to ourselves about how well we have done, not how poorly we have done. For example, instead of saying "I sure did a lousy job teaching that unit," we should say " I did the best I could with the unit; next time I will know how to improve the unit and teach it better." In other words, as soon as the vulture begins to swoop to pluck at our self-esteem, we swat it away by using positive self-statements.

Another method for improving self-concept is to take a "walk down memory lane." We should sit down, think, and then write about the positive experiences we have had in our educational experiences. Remember, we dwell on the negative too much. We are very good at punishing ourselves. Here we are suggesting that we dwell on the positive. Occasionally when working with teachers we ask them (anonymously, of course) to write about a positive classroom experience in their careers that made them feel good about being a teacher. Here are a few of their responses:

One first grade teacher wrote: A six-year-old boy in my class that had not talked the whole year in Kindergarten and who refused to interact with others at play time really turned around in my class. While I can't take full credit because I think he matured some through the year, I did apply what I had learned in our Communication Program. It worked. He became one of the most well-liked boys in the class. The first time he hugged me brought a tear to my eye. He, in fact, talked a great deal the last quarter of the year!

An adult educator wrote: I worked for two years to convince a waitress I knew that she had the potential to attend and succeed at college. She finally started classes two years ago. She has been an "A" student, loves bookkeeping. Recently she was able to leave her low paying waitress job for a bookkeeper's job with a credit union. Her new position includes good pay, benefits, and potential promotion.

A substitute teacher wrote: A group of special problem children remembers who I am and never fail to say hello, or give me a hug when I am in their school. Their regular teacher told me that this was unusual. She said, "These kids usually don't remember who the substitute is."

Another teacher wrote: A few years ago I saw a lady in a local store. She said, "Mrs. Jones, you probably don't remember me, but you had my daughter several years ago. Her name was Jane." Her mother went on to say that I had been one of her favorite teachers and whenever anyone mentioned teachers, Jane would give an impressive description of her favorite teacher. It was a pleasure to be considered 'the best teacher Jane had ever had.'

Occasionally, generate a list of words that you would use to describe yourself as a teacher. Attempt to use positive words that truly describe you and your teaching style. If you cannot generate any positive words, then you need to either work on your self-esteem or your teaching style. You decide which needs the work.

Teachers should take pride in degrees earned, awards, and any honors bestowed upon them. We should display our degrees, awards, and honors in our classroom. Often the students and parents are not aware of the honors and degrees we have received. We should display certificates from any education-related workshops we have attended or coordinated. Other professionals display their honors, so should we.

You might try to be less harsh on yourself when you have made a mistake. Mistakes occur. Some are more critical than others. Look at your error, evaluate its potential harm, correct it, and then move onto other things. Often we blow our own errors out of proportion, letting them blur and impact our future actions and behaviors. Unless the mistake is catastrophic or not correctable, we should correct it the best way possible and move on. If correcting a mistake means apologizing to a student or colleague, then do it. They'll know you made a mistake and never corrected it if you don't correct it. And they may remember you and the mistake for the rest of their lives.

We should make an effort to reduce negative self-statements in other areas of our lives. Most of us are critical and unforgiving of our character flaws as educators as it is, we don't need to be constantly feeding ourselves negative self-statements about other areas. For example, if you are overweight, there is no reason to constantly remind yourself (particularly in front of others) that you are overweight. You know it and they can see it.

If we can develop a sense of humor about some of our problem areas, then we might be able to cope more effectively. Often a sense of humor will soften or lessen the vulture impact on our self-concept. We are not suggesting a dark or black sense of humor that feeds the vulture, we are simply suggesting having a sense of humor about some of your daily encounters. Occasionally, laughing something off will help you recuperate or keep the vultures from going into a feeding frenzy.

Lastly, if we establish a supportive, positive, highly affective classroom environment for our students, then our self-images will be stronger and more secure. As the classroom goes, so does our self-esteem. If the class goes well, so does our self-esteem. If the class goes poorly, so does our self-esteem. We are a reflection of our students. Only the most insensitive teacher is not a reflection of her or his students. Of course, this suggestion is easy to make, but difficult to implement. It takes teacher planning, care, good instructional approaches, sensitivity, and effective communication to have a supportive classroom climate.

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# INCREASING CLASSROOM AFFECT THROUGH TEACHER COMMUNICATION STYLE



## Chapter Thirteen Objectives

1. Define and discuss four of the components Teacher Communication Style (TCS).
2. Explain the importance of teacher clarity and the basic approaches one can take to improve clarity in the classroom.
3. Define "teacher immediacy" and how one can be more immediate in the classroom using a range of nonverbal behaviors.
4. Understand the importance of humor in the classroom.

Good teachers make good students. Good students make good teachers. Every teacher has a style of communicating. A teacher cannot not have a style of communicating. Even when a teacher is attempting not to communicate, there is a link to communication and communicator style. This chapter will explore the concept of communicator style, types of communicator styles, teacher communication style, and educational outcomes.

## Communicator Style Concept

Norton provided the theoretical framework and foundation for the construct of communicator style. He said, "style in the context of interpersonal communication is the way one communicates" (p. 47). He continued to define communicator style "as the way one verbally, nonverbally, and paraverbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered, or understood" (p. 58). He suggested communicator style is marked by the following characteristics: It is observable, multifaceted, multi collinear, and variable, but sufficiently patterned. Communicator style is visible. It is visible, apparent, and observable. Norton states:

If one is said to have an animated style of communicating, then it is expected that certain kinds of liveliness can be observed that might be operationalized as a function of frequency of gestures, body movement, and actively expressive eye and facial behavior. (p. 47)

Every person, every student, every teacher has an observable style of communicating. One teacher might be more open and attentive than another teacher. While another teacher

might be more responsive and immediate than her or his close colleagues. While some styles have more distinctive, more visible characteristics than others, all communicator styles are observable.

*Communicator style is multifaceted.* Each person does not necessarily have one style, but aspects of many styles. A person can simultaneously communicate with a variety of complimentary communicator styles. For example, a teacher might simultaneously communicate in a friendly, attentive, and relaxed style throughout a class period. This is not to suggest that the teacher is moody or unpredictable. It simply says that each of us has a communicator style with many facets and we can communicate with others using a combination of communicator styles.

*Communicator style is multi collinear.* Norton states "this means that many style variables are not independent from each other; variance is shared" (p. 48). For example, to suggest that a teacher is dominant and dramatic suggests that the essential elements in the dominant style overlap with the essential elements of the dramatic style. If the dominant style requires more talk time and the dramatic style requires overstating, joking, and stories that heighten interest, then it is easy to see that they might be the same. However, a teacher can be dramatic without being dominant and vice versa. Norton concludes by stating that:

The combination of styles can have a synergistic impact. A person with a dominant, relaxed style exudes confidence. A person with a nondominant, nonrelaxed style might signal insecurity. Any blend of styles can combine synergistically to signal a unique metamessage. The communicator has an incredibly high number of stylistic combinations that can give form to literal meaning. (pps. 48-49)

This synergistic blend of communicator styles would suggest that teachers can send a strong communication message to their students. In addition, the right combination of communicator styles could be very effective in communicating content and affect to students.

Lastly, *communicator style is variable*, but sufficiently patterned. While each person probably has a primary communicator style, he or she can, on occasion, deviate from his or her own primary communicator style. Norton states, "a style profile is not an absolute portrayal of the way a person communicates" (p. 49). Situational demands might influence a person to alter her or his primary communicator style. Norton concludes by stating, "In



short, most style profiles are variable, but sufficiently patterned to create resistant expectations" (p. 50).

In conclusion, communicator style is observable, multifaceted, multi collinear, and variable, but sufficiently patterned. The more a student knows and communicates with a teacher, the more likely the student will be able to predict the primary communicator styles of that teacher. The more a student is acquainted and communicates with a teacher, the more likely the student will be able to detect and understand deviations in the teacher's communicator style. A teacher's recurring communicator style is more likely to communicate expectations than a teacher's immediate, current style. A teacher's communicator style may be interpreted differently by different students. Lastly, teachers who seem to have no consistent, primary communicator style may be perceived by students as moody and unpredictable. For example, while many comedians attempt to be flexible, adaptable, and different, if you observe closely they still have a primary communicator style which varies according to the audience, situation, and content. This leads us to a discussion of the subconstructs, dimensions, facets, factors, or types of communicator style. Many of the descriptions below are based on the original works of Norton.

## **Types of Communicator Styles**

There are nine primary types of communicator style. We will discuss the style types and their corresponding communication behaviors and characterizations below.

### **Dominant Style**

The dominant communicator style is reflected by the verbal and nonverbal components which signal a communicator is "in charge" or dominant. For example, a person using a dominant communicator style speaks very frequently, comes on strong, dominates informal and formal conversations, takes charge of conversations, directs conversations, exhibits dominant nonverbal behaviors such as vocally loud, speaking faster, little hesitating, dominant movements and gestures, and controlling eye contact. The person who uses a dominant communicator style is viewed by others as in control, competent, confident, self-assured, forceful, and competitive.

### **Dramatic Style**

The dramatic communicator style is reflected by the verbal and nonverbal components which signal a communicator is vivid, striking, attempting to emphasize a point, or be dramatic. For example, a person using a dramatic communicator style has very

picturesque speech; verbally or nonverbally exaggerates to emphasize a point; acts out, tells jokes, anecdotes, or stories; highlights, stresses, and emphasizes points quite frequently. They may also overstate; understate; tell fantasies; use metaphors, allegories, sarcasm, or satire; and regularly use nonverbal behaviors which assist in the dramatization. The person who uses a dramatic style is viewed by others as memorable, visible, observable, attractive, and popular. However, many persons can only use this intensely vivid style on occasion. If used often, it may become wearing not only on the listener but on the speaker.

### **Contentious Style**

The contentious style is reflected by the verbal and nonverbal components which signal a communicator is argumentative. For example, a person using a contentious style has an argumentative tone, has a difficult time stopping her or himself from arguing, enjoys arguing, often shows others proof to support their argument, insists upon preciseness from others in arguments, is quick to challenge others, and is generally quarrelsome. The person who uses a contentious style might be perceived in two diverse ways. They may be viewed as competent and confident like the dominant style or they may be viewed as unpleasant, rude, and aggressive. If used often, the contentious style might alienate individuals in the communicator's immediate surroundings.

### **Animated Style**

The animated style is reflected by the verbal and nonverbal components which signal a communicator is lively, spirited, or outgoing. For example, a person using an animated style is very nonverbally and verbally expressive, uses many expansive gestures, and uses many facial expressions, gestures, body movements, and vocal variety. Their emotional state is generally known by those in their immediate surroundings, and they are highly expressive communicators. They may be viewed as outgoing, lively, memorable, excitable, and distinctive. People generally enjoy being around and communicating with an animated person. However, even animation can be taken to the extreme. If a person is animated at all times, they may be perceived by others as jumpy, emotionally immature, easily excited, and easily aroused.

### **Impression Leaving Style**

This style variable refers to "whether a person is remembered because of the communicative stimuli he or she projects" (Norton, 1983, p. 68). Impression leaving

depends on the source communicating cues that leave an impression and the receiver receiving and processing the cues that leave an impression. If either fails to adequately perform her or his function, then impression leaving may be nonexistent. Impression leaving is when a person's speech or style of presenting has left an impression on another, or the way a person presents her or himself leaves an impression on others. People whose communication activity leaves an impression have been memorable in some way. Of course, most persons want to leave a positive impression on others.

### **Relaxed Style**

The relaxed style is reflected by the verbal and nonverbal components which signal a communicator is calm, cool, and collected. For example, a person using a relaxed style is very nonverbally and verbally relaxed, controls nervous mannerisms, calm while speaking both orally and physically, and is generally viewed as a relaxed, calm, communicator. These persons are free from nervous mannerisms, habits, or behaviors. Their voice is calm, anxiety free and non anxious. Persons who use a relaxed style of communicating are perceived to be calm, competent, easy going, confident, and comfortable with themselves and the communication situation.

### **Attentive Style**

The attentive style is reflected by the verbal and nonverbal components which signal a communicator is listening, being attentive, and is attending to or concentrating on the communication situation at hand. For example, an attentive person can repeat back what another has said, be empathetic with listeners, listen very carefully, appear as if they are listening, and react in such a way that it is clear they were listening intently and earnestly. Persons who use an attentive style of communicating are perceived to be listener-oriented, caring, effective communicators, empathetic, and good.

### **Open Style**

The open style is reflected by the verbal and nonverbal components which signal a communicator is open, revealing, and honest. For example, people using an open style are very nonverbally and verbally open. They express emotions, attitudes, and feelings quite frequently. They often reveal personal, perhaps intimate things about themselves to others. It seems that the open style, like the contentious style, is a double-edged sword. Persons with an open communicator style may be viewed as highly self-disclosive and revealing, uninhibited, unsecretive, unreserved, and perhaps conversational. On the other hand, they

could also be considered as too revealing, too open, too personal, too intimate, too outspoken, too frank, and unreserved.

### **Friendly Style**

The friendly style is reflected by the verbal and nonverbal components which signal a communicator is outgoing, likes communication, likes her or his audience, is at ease with the audience, and is fond of and friendly with the audience. For example, a person using a friendly style is very nonverbally and verbally friendly: they smile a lot; laugh; show affection for others; show encouragement and support for others; express admiration for others; use others' first names; acknowledge others' verbal and nonverbal contributions; and are generally positive toward others. Persons with a friendly communicator style are usually perceived as sociable and outgoing, and are well-liked and well-received by others.

### **Precise Style**

The precise style is reflected by the verbal and nonverbal components which signal a communicator is careful, directed, focused, and precise in their presentation. For example, a person using a precise style is very nonverbally and verbally directed, unambiguous, clear, focused, and pointed, often using nonverbal cues to emphasize or highlight certain valuable points in her or his communication.

It is clear from the work on communicator styles that style influences how others see the communicator. It is evident that one's style influences how others react to us. It is evident that style may determine whether a receiver reacts negatively or positively toward a source. And, it is evident that communicator style could have far reaching implications for teachers in the classroom. Every teacher has a primary communicator style with recurring other styles that he or she can use effectively, ineffectively, appropriately, or inappropriately. The next section reviews what we mean by teacher communication style and the primary components of an effective teacher communication style. This discussion is based upon the original work of Norton's in the communicator style arena.

## **Teacher Communication Style**

The definition of teacher communication style is based upon and derived from the communicator style construct. *Teacher Communication Style (TCS) is the teacher's ability to verbally and nonverbally communicate effectively and affectively with the learner so that the learner's opportunity for optimal academic achievement is enhanced and their behavior is managed.* Based upon the research by Norton in educational environments, we have

come to the conclusion that six of the communicator style components are essential to effective and affective teacher communication style. The six communication style components which comprise the teachers' communication style construct are: the friendly, precise, attentive, lively and animated, relaxed, and dramatic styles. Below is a discussion of each based upon educational situations.

The **friendly** component of teacher communication style assumes that the teacher is friendly, outgoing, and sociable with the students. It also suggests the teacher confirms, supports, and encourages students in positive ways. The teacher who is friendly talks with and interacts with the students rather than teaching at or talking at the students.

The **precise** component of teacher communication style assumes that the teacher is precise, directed, and guiding as to the content the students should or should not know. It also suggests the teacher instructs in an unambiguous, precise style. Their communication is precise, orderly, coordinated, and to the point. These teachers are very good at explaining content, giving content, using examples to assist in their teaching, and being in control of their subject matter.

The **attentive** component of teacher communication style assumes that the teacher is attentive, listener-oriented, and focused. The attentive teacher is able to convey to the student that he or she is being listened to and what he or she says is being concentrated upon or focused upon by the teacher. In fact, the teacher demonstrates this by incorporating students' remarks and comments into the presentations and lectures. The attentive teacher is alert, actively listening, and actively absorbing what students have to say.

The **lively, animated** component of teacher communication style assumes that the teacher is lively, spirited, and enthusiastic both verbally and nonverbally. The teacher's nonverbal and verbal behaviors indicate he or she is actively involved in the art of teaching. Lively, animated teachers are more likely to be remembered by their students than nonlively, unanimated teachers. Lively, animated teachers are also more likely to visibly expend energy and movement to keep their students' attention when explaining content. These teachers are saying, "listen up and attend to this subject matter."

The **relaxed** component of teacher communication style assumes that the teacher is calm, in control, and collected in her or his communication behaviors. This teacher is not hindered by nervous mannerisms, habits, or movements. They are seen by their students as in control, coordinated, competent, and confident.

The **dramatic** component of teacher communication style assumes that the teacher is occasionally outlandish and communicates for heightened effect. They often overstate,

understate, or alter the literal meaning of content for heightened student awareness and attention. In addition, this teacher may use overstatement, understatement, wild comparisons, outlandish stories, metaphors, objects, pictures, movements, anecdotes, puns, jokes, sarcasm, and satire to secure students' attention.

It is important to note that while each teacher may exhibit a primary teacher communication style, a teacher's style can change based upon the situation and the audience. All of the above style variables are positively related to positive classroom outcomes, positive communication outcomes, and teacher effectiveness. While the dramatic style may only be used occasionally, if used in a timely fashion, it can be just as effective, if not more so than some of the other teacher communication styles, at making a point.

A good or effective teacher who uses teacher communication style effectively and affectively can impact the classroom in a variety of positive ways. A mixed or moody teacher can negatively impact the classroom in a variety of ways, and a poor teacher, one who doesn't employ effective teacher communication style components, can impact the classroom in negative ways. A teacher with good teacher communication style has a positive impact on students' cognitive and affective learning, has fewer student discipline problems, has students with higher self-concepts, has an increase in the amount of student feedback and honesty of feedback. The student/teacher relationship is more positive, the student/student relationship is more positive, and teacher satisfaction and self-concept increases as opposed to the mixed or poor teacher. The mixed or moody teacher has a negative impact on all student/teacher relationship variables and learning. Because of the unpredictable style of the teacher, the students become learned helpless and very little learning or communication takes places in the classroom. The poor teacher might have a moderate increase in students' cognitive learning; the student learns in spite of the teacher's, poor, dull style, but otherwise the impact is negative on all student/teacher and learning variables.

To summarize, the six primary components of teacher communication style are rarely observed in isolation. In other words, the teacher's communication styles are inextricably related and are often used simultaneously. An effective teacher can "effectively communicate" with her or his students by using a variety of the teacher communication styles without being perceived by their students as moody or unpredictable. Every teacher manifests some degree of friendliness versus unfriendliness, preciseness versus non-preciseness, attentiveness versus non-attentiveness, liveliness versus non-liveliness, calmness versus agitation, and dramatic versus non-dramatic. Each teacher must learn which teacher communication style to use in which instructional situation. Teachers who do

not use the appropriate teacher communication styles are ineffective teachers. Norton suggests this conclusion by stating, "ineffective teachers are oblivious to the impact of style or do not know how to make the style variables work for them" (p. 241). Effective teachers are friendly, precise, attentive, lively, relaxed, and dramatic. Whereas, ineffective teachers are unfriendly, imprecise, inattentive, unlively, agitated, and undramatic. In conclusion, teacher communication style is essential to positive instruction, positive communication between teacher and student, and positive communication between students. Teachers who do not possess effective teacher communication styles may be perceived as ineffective (perhaps even misbehaving) teachers.

### **Teacher Communicator Behaviors That Build Affect**

A number of communicative behaviors have been shown to actually build affect in the classroom. This section is going to examine three specific sets of behaviors that have been directly linked to building affect in the classroom: clarity, immediacy, and humor.

#### **Teacher Clarity**

We all remember times when our teachers were nonsensical when they were teaching during class. Imagine sitting in a classroom when a teacher throws out these two phrases: "tintintibulation of the metallic cylinders" and "exuberance on the celestial sphere." While these two phrases may seem a little daunting at first, the actual meanings are quite simplistic. The first phrase can commonly be said as "jingle bells", and the second phrase is "Joy to the World." These two common Christmas carols can serve as a good example of the problem of teacher clarity. The first two phrases, although correct, are neither meaningful nor clear to your average person. Instead, the use of the second two phrases is obviously clearer. Often teachers get so caught up in "teaching jargon" that the meaning of a lesson is lost on its students. We've all experienced teachers that are so jargon laden that understanding them is very difficult. We as teachers, need to truly focus more of our energy on making sure that our students are able to understand us in the classroom. In this section, we will explore what teacher clarity actually is and some ways that we as teachers can be more aware of clarity problems.

So, what is teacher clarity?! While most of us immediately conjure images in our heads of what a clear teacher actually is, the literature on the subject isn't quite as crystal clear. First, a clear conceptualization of what the term "clarity" means is important. Eisenberg (1984) discussed the term clarity in terms of organizational communication when he wrote:

Clarity ... is a relational variable which arises through a combination of source, message and receiver factors.... In trying to be clear, individuals take into account the possible interpretive contexts which may be brought to bear on the message by the receiver and attempt to narrow the possible interpretations. Clarity, then, is a continuum which reflects the degree to which a source has narrowed the possible interpretations of a message and succeeded in achieving a correspondence between his or her intentions and the interpretation of the receiver. (pp. 29-30)

In essence, a person who has achieved clarity has limited the possible number of interpretations that could be made for what he or she communicated. We've all experienced periods in our life when we have been misunderstood or have misunderstood someone because of a lack of clarity in the communicated message. Civikly (1992) identified five behaviors that students saw as separating the most clear teachers from the least clear teachers: (a) Gives the student individual help; (b) Explains something and then stops so students can think about it; (c) Explains the work to be done and how to do it; (d) Repeats questions and explanations if students don't understand them; and (e) Asks students before they start to work if they know what to do and how to do it. While each of these five behaviors aid in clarity, each of these concepts are affect related as well. Taking the time to slow down and be clear is an easy way for a teacher to demonstrate that he or she cares about her or his students. Lowman (1984) summed up the issue of clarity in the classroom when he wrote, "Outstanding teaching is characterized by stimulation of emotions associated with intellectual activity: the excitement of considering ideas, understanding abstract concepts and seeing their relevance to one's life, and participating in the process of discovery" (p. 12).

Chesebro (2002) broke communication clarity in the classroom down into two major categories of clarity: verbal and structural. Verbal clarity is a teacher's ability to lecture in a fluent manner (few verbal surrogates like "uhs" and "umms"), clearly explain course content, and use appropriate and meaningful illustrations to help students further understand the content. One of the authors of this text had a professor in college who actually said the verbal surrogates "uhh" and "umm" 167 times in a 30 minute period (as counted by three students in the class). The students in the professor's class had been driven crazy the point where they started keeping track of her verbal surrogates in a game like fashion. One day they took bets.



Structural clarity relates to the teacher's ability to maintain and inform her or his students about the structure of lesson before, during, and after the lesson. In reality, structural clarity is closely related to the simple speech structure you probably learned in your first writing or public speaking class. A good lecture has all of the components of a good speech or paper. Teachers need to preview what will be learned during that class period. Teachers need to organize the material in a manner that makes sense and does not seem to jump around a lot. When switching topics during a lecture, a teacher needs to make sure that he or she clearly transitions from one topic to the next to avoid leaving any students behind. When the lecture is over, the teacher needs to go back over the lecture and hit the highlights again to reiterate what has happened during the lecture. One idea to help with overall structural clarity is to provide students with skeletal outlines of a lecture. This allows students to stay on top of where the teacher is located in the lecture notes and know where the lecture is going. And trust us, if a teacher by chance skips a section on your outline, students will be right there to point it out. Preiss and Gayle (2006) found that structural clarity increased learning across all instructional contexts.

The last part of structural clarity involves the use of visual aids. Students will take more away from a lecture when they are able to both see and hear content. This does not mean that teachers should go overboard and turn every lecture into a computer slide presentation, but if you are talking about the various sections of the human brain, students will remember more of your presentation if they can see either a model of a brain or a real one.

### **Teacher Immediacy**

Mehrabian's (1971) original concept of immediacy examined the perceived psychological or physical closeness between two people. Though immediacy is strictly a perception concept, it has been shown to be very important in the learning environment. Numerous research studies have shown that a student's perception of her or his teacher's immediacy in the classroom has an impact on all three of Bloom's knowledge levels: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor (Comstock, Rowell, & Bowers, 1995). In a study conducted by Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey (1987), it was found that "moderate immediacy is necessary for cognitive learning and low immediacy may suppress such learning. However, high immediacy may not increase cognitive learning over that generated by moderate immediacy" (p. 587). Overall, a teacher's ability to be immediate with her or his students has been shown to greatly impact the learning environment.

We have all had teachers that were lively and we just felt connected with while in their classrooms. Maybe it was their animated style or the way that they knew everyone's name in the classroom. Somehow we just felt psychologically and/or physically closer to these teachers than to our other teachers. These amazing teachers had developed a form of immediacy that our other teachers were unable to produce.

Immediacy can come in one of two basic forms: verbal and nonverbal. While a lot of research has shown the benefits of both verbal and nonverbal immediacy, Richmond and McCroskey (2000) believe that nonverbal immediacy is by far more important in a learning situation. Verbal immediacy behaviors, in part, include behaviors like using a student's name in class; using inclusive language like "we" and "us", instead of exclusive language like "you" and "them", and clarity. Nonverbal immediacy behaviors, like Comstock, Rowell, Bowers (1995) suggested, can be seen in all aspects of nonverbal communication.

***Proxemics*** (*physical distance*). Immediate teachers have been shown to decrease the physical distance between themselves and their students. Immediate teachers will avoid having barriers between themselves and their students such as desks and podiums. Immediate teachers will also move in and around their students while teaching.

***Haptics*** (*physical touch*). Immediate teachers have been shown to use appropriate touch around their students. A slight pat on the shoulder or upper back can be a sign of immediacy for most students. Teachers must be careful when they are touching students for fear of sexual harassment allegations. Before touching any student, think of the benefits and possible costs, and then touch with common sense.

***Vocalics*** (*vocal variation and vocal expressiveness*). Immediate teachers are teachers who use a variety of vocal ranges. The opposite of vocal variety is the infamous monotone teacher whose very voice can put anyone to sleep. This rather unpopular teacher persona has been perfected by Ben Stein the law professor turned actor (*Ferris Buller's Day off & The Wonder Years*) and game show host (*Win Ben Stein's Money*). To be immediate, teachers should use a range of vocal behaviors that make the lecture varied and more pleasant to listen to during class. At the same time, being overly or constantly vocally animated is also non-immediate. Teachers should attempt to find a verbal style that is pleasant and effective.

***Kinesics*** (*facial animation, open postures, gestural activity, and body relaxation*). Immediate teachers have been consistently found to have very specific kinesic patterns. Immediate teachers have faces that are animated and fun to watch while speaking – think of Robin Williams. They also do not cross their arms in front of them or place barriers between themselves and their students. This open body orientation allows the students to

connect with them on a deeper level. Immediate teachers also use more gestures than non-immediate teachers. Non-immediate teachers tend to stand very stiff and do not move very much. Immediate teachers use appropriate gestures as a way to emphasize points and demonstrate what they are saying during class. Lastly, immediate teachers are more relaxed and in control of a teaching situation. One of the greatest and most immediate teachers/speakers is Tony Robbins. When people watch Tony Robbins speak they are drawn to him because of his larger than life size (He is 6'6"), facial animation, open posture, gestural activity, and relaxed body orientation. The opposite of Tony Robbins is former Vice President Al Gore. One of Al Gore's biggest problems when running for vice president and then for president was his lack of the attributes that makes teachers and speakers like Tony Robbins so popular. Al Gore does not have facial animation. He always had a closed posture, rarely gestured (and when he did it looked scripted), and, as the jokes said, looked very stiff and not relaxed. Who would you be more interested in listening to during class, an animated lively teacher or a teacher that has about as much personality and kinesic immediacy as a tree?

**Eye Contact** (*getting and maintaining eye contact*). Immediate teachers are teachers who look their students in the eyes. Students want to know that their teachers know that they are sitting there in the classroom. The easiest way to communicate that you know a student is there is to look at her or him.

**Chronemics** (*time orientation*). Immediate teachers are teachers who are seen spending more time with students, arriving early, staying late, and just making themselves more accessible to their students. Maybe consider getting yourself an e-mail address so your students can e-mail you. If you decide to make yourself this available and immediate, make sure you place limits on your availability for your own sanity. Tell your students that if they have a last minute question you will check your e-mail at a specific time, but you won't look before or after that time. This will place parameters on this tool for your benefit, but will also make your students feel that you are more accessible.

**Physical Appearance** (*physical qualities*). Physical appearance is the most important aspect of initial attraction. Teachers that are attractive are perceived as more immediate. This does not mean that you have to be a super model to be an immediate and affective teacher, but it is important that a number of characteristics are adhered to when concerned with dress. First, informal but socially appropriate attire which is not conservative is important to be seen as immediate. You do not need to look like you just stepped off the cover of *Vogue* magazine or out of the pages of *Abercrombie and Fitch Quarterly*, but appropriate attire, as described above, is important. One of the authors remembers being in

high school during the 1990s and having a teacher who only wore polyester, and had a bad toupee. He was not the poster child for immediacy behaviors. Also, a clean-cut appearance is helpful in creating immediacy in the classroom. In addition, teachers should be careful not to wear clothing or accessories that are distracting. If your clothing or accessories clangs or clangs while you walk, this is highly distracting and non-immediate.

### **Teacher Humor Assessment**

Researchers have been examining humor from a variety of different vantage points, attempting to see how individuals differ in production of and response to humorous messages. When students are asked to generate a list of characteristics that are seen as positive teacher attributes, a strong sense of humor has consistently been one of the primary responses. In fact, a number of studies have shown humor to be very positive in the learning environment. Humor has been correlated with student affect, learning, perceived teacher credibility (Wrench & Richmond, 2000); classroom compliance and level of behavioral problems (Punyanunt, 2000); immediacy (Wanzer & Frymier, 1999); and reducing test and classroom anxiety (Tamborini and Zillmann, 1981). Humor has been shown to be a very positive benefit to the classroom environment, but it is definitely a double-edged sword.

Too often when teachers hear that humor is beneficial they try to inappropriately integrate humor into their classroom. At the same time, some teachers actually try to stifle humor because they see it as frivolous and not a part of the educational environment. Humor is actually a VERY beneficial and naturally occurring part of the learning environment, but this is not to say that humor cannot be improved and made better. While humor studies may sound like a lot of fun, to those of us who do research in this area, it's anything but a laughing matter. Humor is serious business, and when used appropriately, can have amazing results in the classroom. Avner Ziv (1988) is one of the foremost researchers on humor in the classroom, a professor at the University of Jerusalem in Israel, and is former president of the International Society of Humor Studies. Dr. Ziv has found that teachers can actually be taught to integrated humor into their classrooms with positive results. He also found that when teachers integrate humor into one section of a class and kept their other section to a traditional style, the students in the humor section scored significantly higher on a standardized test at the end of the semester. Figure 13.1 is a copy of the Humor Assessment Instrument (HA). This short measure is a personal report of the use and perception of humor in one's daily life.

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### Humor Assessment

Directions: The following statements apply to how people communicate humor when relating to others. Indicate the degree to which each of these statements applies to you by filling in the number of the your response in the blank before each item:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I regularly communicate with others by joking with them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. People usually laugh when I makes a humorous remark.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I am not funny or humorous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I can be amusing or humorous without having to tell a joke.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Being humorous is a natural communication orientation for me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I cannot relate an amusing idea well.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. My friends would say that I am a humorous or funny person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. People don't seem to pay close attention when I am being funny.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Even funny ideas and stories seem dull when I tell them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I can easily relate funny or humorous ideas to the class.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I would say that I am not a humorous person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I cannot be funny, even when asked to do so.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I relate amusing stories, jokes, and funny things very well to others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Of all the people I know, I am one of the "least" amusing or funny persons.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I use humor to communicate in a variety of situations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. On a regular basis, I do not communicate with others by being humorous or entertaining.

SCORING: To compute your scores follow the instructions below:

- 1. How to Score:
  - Step One: Add scores for items 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, & 15.
  - Step Two: Add scores for items 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14 & 16.
  - Step Three: Add 48 to Step 1.
  - Step Four: Subtract the score for Step two from the score for Step Three.

Source:

Wrench, J. S., & Richmond, V. P. (2004). Understanding the psychometric properties of the Humor Assessment instrument through an analysis of the relationships between teacher humor assessment and instructional communication variables in the college classroom. *Communication Research Reports*, 21, 92-103.

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### Figure 13.1 Humor Assessment (HA)

So, by this point you're hopefully wondering how humor can be beneficial in the learning environment. While studies are not completely clear on what is actually happening when students are exposed to humor in a classroom, the following biological basis probably has something to do with this phenomenon. When students are exposed to something they

find humorous, endorphin levels rise creating a natural rush. When students are later required to recall information associated with the humor that created the natural rush, they have higher recall rates than students who are not exposed to humor. In essence, the addition of humor to a teaching situation allows for better storage in long-term memory and faster recall and retrieval from long-term memory because of the increased endorphin levels at the time of the storage.

As teachers there are a number of simple things that can be done to add humor to the learning environment. First, a simple warning – don't let humor that you use in class be unnatural for you. We all have different styles for delivering humor. Just like Jerry Sienfeld, Ellen Degeneres, Jeff Foxworthy, Chris Rock, Dennis Miller, and Whoopi Goldberg have different standup shticks, each of us as teachers needs to find humor that naturally works for us. Second, another warning – make sure that humor that is used in class is applicable to the content that you are teaching. Often people who are not familiar with using humor in a classroom will try to randomly tell stories or jokes that have no apparent point. While students may remember the jokes at a later point, they may not know why the humorous story was told. One of the authors remembers a professor that told a humorous story about being at a drive-through restaurant. Not knowing how much something cost, he asked the person on the other side of the intercom who responded "can't you read?" At this point the professor, in a rather funny fashion, talked about how offended he was that this minimum wage worker would question his ability to read. Most of the students laughed at the story, but none of the students or the professor's teaching assistants knew the point of the story.

One way to include humor into your lesson plans is to tell funny stories and jokes or show cartoons that apply to the content. Maybe you're teaching United States history. Find a copy of "American History According to High School Students" and read it to your classroom. If you haven't seen this infamous little revisionist history lesson, it is a rather funny depiction of American History that starts with Washington Discovering America and ends with the Japanese bombing the Pearly Gates. Another way to include humor in your class is to include humorous test items on your tests. The inclusion of humorous test items has actually been shown to decrease student test anxiety and raise students' test scores. Also, look for humorous examples in the news and on television that exemplify concepts that you are going to be teaching. A number of magazines such as *Reader's Digest* and *The Saturday Evening Post* are known for their humorous anecdote and joke sections. The more you use humor in the classroom, the more natural it will become.

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### Chapter Fourteen Objectives

1. Define and explain what temperament is and how it differs from learning theory.
2. Be able to explain and differentiate among the four personality types.
3. Understand the strengths and weaknesses associated with the four personality types.
4. Understand the basic blends that can happen among the four personality types.
5. Explain how the four personality types can influence both teacher behavior and student behavior in the classroom.

Have you ever noticed that there are people who are not like you in the world? Maybe you work with one of these “strange” people? Maybe you live with one of these “strange” people? And quite possibly, you may even teach one of these “strange” people. You know for a fact that if these people would just do what you say and become more like you, they would live better and happier lives. We all have a tendency of looking at those around us and finding the faults. It’s hard to realize that maybe, just maybe, it’s us and not them that needs to change. We spend so much time focusing on what we consider to be faults in other people, and very little time trying to understand ourselves. One way to become an affective teacher in the classroom is to learn to understand yourself and those around you.

One way to start understanding other people is to understand ourselves and where our attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs actually come from. With increasing evidence, scientists are learning that a great portion of the way we behave is biologically driven. Though some people believe that this is a new or futuristic concept, this idea dates back to a philosopher and physician that most of us are familiar with, Hypocrites. Hypocrites is primarily remembered today for the Hippocratic Oath that all medical doctors take to become physicians, “First do no harm.” But Hypocrites did a lot more than just write this one famous oath.

Hypocrites noted that there were a number of different types of patients that came into his office. He originally thought that it was an amount of bile that ran through a person’s body that caused them to act the way they did. Some were loud, always wanted to talk, and used lots of gestures. He called these people Sanguines and thought that they

were full of red-bile. He saw that other people were more low key, and quiet, and very perfectionistic. He called these people Melancholies and thought that they were full of black-bile. Other people were very matter of fact and control oriented, always in a rush to do something, and rather abrupt leaders. He called these people Choleric and thought that they were full of yellow-bile. Lastly, he saw a group of people who were very peaceful, laid back, and lazy. He called these people Phlegmatics and thought that they were full of phlegm. For many years, Hypocrites' conceptualization of human temperament reigned as the predominant thought on how humans behaved. In fact, the primary cure for most illnesses was to let out some of the bile as a means to fix the problem. Instead of going to a doctor, you went to your local barber who could give you a quick haircut, a shave, and a little bloodletting.

As medical technology and understanding grew, this practice was discarded as out of date and not really an accurate way for dealing with human ailments. Along with the practice of bloodletting, Hypocrites' temperament conceptualization was also seen as out of date and a new theory (learning theory) started to dominate most academic thought. During this time period, people started to believe that we were born as blank slates and our environment shaped us into the people we eventually became. The formation of modern genetic research, as we know it today, started in 1865 with the groundbreaking treatise on heredity by an Austrian monk named Gregor Mendel. Mendel was the first scientist to propose that humans were actually similar to their biological parents through a process he called heredity. Everything from a person's IQ (Begley, 1998; Lemonick, 1999); to impulsiveness, openness, conservatism, and hostility; (Nash, 1998); to communication apprehension (Beatty, McCroskey, & Heisel); and verbal aggression (Beatty, Valencic, Rudd, & Dobos, 1999) can be linked to biology. With the completion of the Human Genome Project, the understanding of human behavior as an innate part of our being is becoming more understood (Begley, 2000; Golden & Lemonick, 2000).

While recent genetics research has been proving that Hypocrites was on the right track, a number of researchers have revitalized his old concepts of the Sanguine, Melancholy, Choleric, and Phlegmatic as a way to understand human behavior. Florence Littauer originally published her version of Hypocrites' four-quadrant personality conceptualization in her world-renown book *Personality Plus* in 1983. From 1983 to 1992, her book had been through twenty-six printings, and had become one of the most widely published texts in other languages (besides English) around the world. In fact, *Personality Plus* has been a national best seller in many nations around the world. The following test (figure 14.1) will indicate where you score on the Temperament Testing Scale (TTS).

### Temperamental Testing Scale

**Instructions:** On the scales below, indicate the degree to which each of the adjective pairs represents you. Do not over think these items. Numbers 1 and 7 indicate a very strong feeling. Numbers 2 and 6 indicate a strong feeling. Numbers 3 and 5 indicate a fairly weak feeling. Number 4 indicates you are undecided.

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1.	Animated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Withdrawn
2.	Daring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Hesitant
3.	Sociable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alienated
4.	Confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Worrier
5.	Extrovert	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Introvert
6.	Bold	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Timid
7.	Funny	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dull
8.	Productive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Lazy
9.	Mixes Easily	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Loner
10.	Sure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Doubtful
11.	Talker	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Listener
12.	Unsatisfied	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Satisfied
13.	Scatterbrained	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Analytic
14.	Domineering	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Diplomatic
15.	Inconsistent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Consistent
16.	Involved	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninvolved
17.	Haphazard	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Systematic
18.	Frank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mediator
19.	Irrational	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Rational
20.	Short-tempered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Laidback

**Figure 14.1 Temperamental Testing Scale**

## SCORING

To compute your scores, add your scores for each item as indicated below:

Sanguine-Melancholy Continuum – Add All Odd Questions -- Get Score \_\_\_\_\_

Choleric-Phlegmatic Continuum – Add All Even Questions -- Get Score \_\_\_\_\_

Scores for each continuum should be between 10 and 70.

Sanguine-Melancholy Continuum – Scores between 10 & 35 indicate a Sanguine Nature. Scores above 45 indicate a Melancholy Nature.

Choleric-Phlegmatic Continuum – Scores between 10 & 35 indicate a Choleric Nature. Scores above 45 indicate a Phlegmatic Nature.

### Explanation of Scores

The Further you are away from 40 on both continuums indicates the strength of that temperamental state.

**First example**, if you are a solid 10 on the Sanguine-Melancholy Continuum, then you are VERY

Sanguine in nature, and if you are a solid 70 Choleric-Phlegmatic Continuum, then you are VERY Phlegmatic, which would give you a temperamental blend of Sanguine-Phlegmatic.

**Second Example**, if you are a solid 30 on the Sanguine-Melancholy Continuum, then you are Moderately Strong Sanguine in nature, and if you are a solid 70 Choleric-Phlegmatic Continuum, then you are VERY Phlegmatic, which would give you a temperamental blend of Sanguine-Phlegmatic with a primary temperament of Phlegmatic and a Secondary temperament of Sanguine.

### Use this Scale to understand your results:

10-20	VERY STRONG
20-30	STRONG
30-35	FAIRLY STRONG
35-40	AVERAGE
45-50	FAIRLY STRONG
50-60	STRONG
60-70	VERY STRONG

If you find yourself in the weak to average on both scales, you may be phlegmatic in nature because they have a tendency of blending very well on both scales.

When you examine your scores, do not get the idea that there are specific good personality or temperament patterns and bad ones. Too often people get the idea that one specific personality type is better than another personality type. Though specific personality

types will function better in specific situations, all four types are equally useful and equally needed in society and in the educational system.

## **Four Personality Types**

Let's examine the four personality types individually, so we can start to see the positive and negative aspects of all four types. One very important point that needs to be made is that all four types have specific strengths and weaknesses, and *any strength when carried to an extreme can become a weakness!!!*

### **Popular Sanguine**

The Popular Sanguine is always the life of the party. This person generally has a group of people around them at all times. Sanguines are always looking for their next audience. One of the first tell-tale signs that you are either a Sanguine yourself or are interacting with a Sanguine is a loud nature that Sanguines generally have. Sanguines are not only loud in their voices; they are also loud in life. Sanguines also have a tendency to seek each other out in social situations. At a departmental party once, I was talking with two colleagues and the three of us just kept getting louder and louder and laughing harder and harder. We were having a great time. It wasn't until after we had cleared the entire house that one of the hosts came inside and pointed out that we had driven everyone else out onto the porch because of the racket.

Sanguines are also loud in life. Sanguine women, typically speaking, wear very bright clothing and quite possibly lots of jewelry. One Sanguine woman I used to work with wore so much dangling jewelry that you could hear her coming down the hall. With each step she took, a clanging of metallic rhythms was made. While society expects men to dress more professionally and conservatively in business situations, Sanguine men will still try to find a way to enjoy themselves and make a statement with their clothing. Sanguine men will have loud or fun ties that they wear.

Sanguines also tend to be very open in life. Very rarely will you find a Sanguine that doesn't have her or his mouth open. Sanguines are always talking. And while talking can be a very important tool in life, when a person does not know how to stop talking, it can become a very powerful weakness. Sanguines also can be typically noticed by their open body orientation. Sanguines tend to have very open bodies (no barriers or crossed arms when they are talking), and tend to use a lot of gestures. In fact, you can typically spot a Sanguine from across a room simply by the gestures that he or she uses. Because Sanguines use a lot of gestures when talking to people and have an open body orientation,

they are also very nonverbally immediate. Sometimes though, Sanguines become too immediate and become too touchy-feely for those people who are around them. Sanguines also tend to have a very open life. There are very few secrets that a Sanguine has. People should also be careful when telling Sanguines secrets of their own because often when a thought has made it through the brain it's already out of their mouths. Figure 14.2, is a list of the major Sanguine strengths and weaknesses identified in the Temperament Testing Scale.

<b><u>STRENGTHS</u></b>	<b><u>WEAKNESSES</u></b>
Animated	Scatterbrained
Sociable	Messy
Extrovert	Unpredictable
Funny	Permissive
Cheerful	Disorganized
Optimistic	Changeable
Mixes easily	Inconsistent
Talker	Haphazard
Popular	Loud
Spontaneous	Irrational

**Figure 14.2 Sanguine Strengths and Weaknesses**

Overall, Sanguines are great to have around. They definitely are able to spice up any party and even provide loads of entertainment in the office. They have magnetic personalities that just draw people to them. They are friendly, funny, work quickly, and love to talk. Sanguines do have a variety of emotional needs that Littauer and Littauer (1998) noticed: Attention, Affection, Approval, and Acceptance. Sanguines have the need to have attention from all people who are around them. They also tend to be very affectively oriented. Sanguines need to be touched and touch other

people. This touch helps them feel connected with those people who are around them. When a Sanguine is not getting touch, he or she may try to find types of touch that are not pro-social. Sanguines also have an innate desire to get approval for every deed that they do. When a Sanguine makes a mistake, and people get irritated and focus on the mistake, the Sanguine does not feel approved of as a person. Lastly, a Sanguine needs to feel accepted as is. Too often Sanguines feel like the people around them are trying to quiet them down, be more respectful, be more efficient with their time, and get things done perfectly, and all of these things make a Sanguine feel not accepted. A Sanguine's basic desire in life is to have fun. Any time one of these emotional needs is not being met it causes life to not be fun any longer, and ultimately can cause a Sanguine to experience depression. A depressed Sanguine will attempt to relocate those feelings of fun and happiness through multiple sexual partners, drugs, alcohol, shopping, eating, and any other activity, pro- or anti-social, that allows them to be around other people. More than anything

Sanguines fear being unpopular, being ignored, growing older, not being attractive, being lonely, and not having enough money to live a fun and joy filled life.

### **Perfect Melancholy**

Where the Sanguine is loud, the Melancholy is quiet. These people like to have the quietness of their surroundings because it helps them to think and contemplate. Sanguines need people to discuss things with and determine the best course of action when a problem arises, Melancholies prefer to think about the problem and then determine an appropriate course of action over time. In fact, loud and obnoxious Sanguines are one of the ultimate gripes that Melancholies have with the world. Melancholies often just don't understand why these "other" people feel the need to talk all the time. Melancholies are also very sensitive and deep people and need other people to understand their sensitive nature. This sensitive nature is very hard for Sanguines to understand. Sanguines just don't understand why Melancholies feel the need to contemplate and analyze when there are plenty of fun and exciting things to do and talk about in life.

Where the Sanguine's life is loud, the Melancholy's life is quiet. This quietness is not only good for respective contemplation of the world, but it is also good because it allows a Melancholy to feel what is going on around them. Melancholies tend to dress in very traditional fashions. Both men and women will wear minimal jewelry, black, brown, gray, and navy colors. When a Melancholy person does wear an outfit that has color, it is typically a primary color. Often, a Sanguine will give a Melancholy a very loud and flashy outfit for a holiday or birthday. The Melancholy will feel the need to wear this outfit because it was given to them, but will dislike the outfit because it is out of their nature and too flashy for their taste.

Where the Sanguine's life is open, the Melancholy's life is closed. Melancholies operate on a need to know basis only. Where you can learn a Sanguine's whole life story in about thirty-minutes, it may take an entire lifetime for a Melancholy to open up to a person about who they really are. When problems arise, Melancholies expect other people to just know what is wrong, and then take care of the situation. Melancholies expect you to feel what is going on inside of them. Even their nonverbals are very closed in nature. Melancholies tend to have small precise gestures that are close to the body. They do not feel the need to flail their arms like the Sanguines do. Melancholies also like to have very clean-cut and noticeable symmetry in their physical appearance. If a Melancholy walked into a room and found out that he or she had a piece of toilet paper attached to her or his shoe, it would mortify the Melancholy. The Sanguine would laugh at the situation and then keep

telling the story to anyone who would listen. The Melancholy, on the other hand, would probably go into a form of depression obsessing on how that made them look to others and who had seen them like that. Where Sanguines are very touchy-feely, Melancholies are touch-me-nots. In fact, hugging a Melancholy is a lot like hugging a tree. Political examples of these two personalities are President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore. Clinton is a Popular Sanguine who loved to touch and be touched; whereas, Gore was a very melancholy and stiff person.

Melancholies are very schedule-oriented individuals. This can be great because it helps organizations to keep striving ahead. At the same time, you can become so overly scheduled in life that nothing gets accomplished. Once when interviewing an applicant for a job, we were discussing what hours he thought he would be able to work. He said he needed to consult his schedule and we said, "go ahead." He then proceeded to pull out a full size three-ring binder. For each day, he had a full two-page spread that had fifteen-minute increments outlined on where he was supposed to be. He also had seven different colors of ink that represented different types of information on his schedule. After consulting this planner, he then said, "let me check my other one just to make sure." At this point, he pulled out a palm-pilot and gave us exact times he would be able to work. While all of us sat in absolute shock (what happens when you have a group of Sanguines interviewing), we were drawn to this man because of his unique ability to schedule. At the same time, it was his ability to schedule his life that ended up becoming a problem later. When a project needed to get done, he didn't have the ability to stay later than his specific office hours because he had already scheduled in other commitments. Once out of curiosity, I looked at his schedule and saw that he had even penciled in time to eat, sleep, and shower. He even had a thirty-minute relaxation period on Wednesday nights from 8:00-8:30. While being scheduled is definitely a strength for a melancholies, if a schedule becomes more important than living it can be a weakness.

Melancholies also have a hard time finding and keeping personal relationships. What relationships they do develop tend to be very strong and deep relationships. Where the Sanguine will have hundreds of friends and constant activity, the Melancholy will develop a small inner-circle of people they truly care about through their life. When I was in college living in the dorm there was a guy on my floor named Caleb. Caleb was an obvious perfect melancholy. His goal in life was to complete his genealogy from his family all the way back to Adam and Eve. He had books upon books about his family history both in the United States and in Europe. Well, I decided that this guy needed a new friend that would help to get him out of his dorm room occasionally. He didn't go out to parties or do anything that /



saw as fun, so I took it upon myself to become his new best friend. I would drag him places and make him do things with me and all of my friends. Because of me, people on our floor who didn't even know Caleb existed knew who he was; people had assumed that his roommate lived alone because they had never seen Caleb leave his room. Amazingly, after that year I saw him only once. I the high energy Sanguine, had simply been too overbearing for him and when the year was over, he found his escape. Figure 14.3 has a list of the strengths and weaknesses of a Melancholy.

<b><u>STRENGTHS</u></b>	<b><u>WEAKNESSES</u></b>
Listener	Withdrawn
Analytic	Alienated
Orderly	Too Introverted
Planner	Over planning
Organized	Dull
Persistent	Depressed
Consistent	Pessimistic
Systematic	Loner
Rational	Unpopular
Quiet	Strict

**Figure 14.3 Melancholy Strengths and Weaknesses**

Just like the Sanguine has specific emotional needs, Littauer and Littauer (1998) propose that Melancholies also have four basic emotional needs: Sensitivity, Support, Space, and Silence. Melancholies need to have others be sensitive to their feelings. Melancholies need to know that you understand what they are feeling. Often when a Melancholy gets depressed they will stay depressed for a period of time and need you to come where they are and demonstrate empathy. Sanguines can have fifteen manic-depressive states in the hour they get up in the morning (I woke up – depressive

– I took a shower – manic – I stubbed my toe – depressive – I get to eat Poptarts – Manic). A second emotional need for Melancholies is support. My friend, Kris, was going through a stage of chronic depression and needed me to come and be with him and support him in the pit of depression. Sadly, I was not able to be with him in that pit 100% of the time, but I was able to support him when he was down. Where I tried my best to demonstrate empathy, my happy, bubbly nature sooner or later would surface and drive him crazy. Thankfully, he understood that I am just a naturally Sanguine person, and that even when I am depressed I function through depression in a different way because of my personality. A third emotional need for Melancholies is the need to be alone. Melancholies just need down time some times. Unlike the Sanguines who thrive on people and get depressed when they don't have an audience, Melancholies feel claustrophobic when they are around too many people and some times just need to have some downtime. This downtime can be very unhealthy for a Melancholy who is depressed because he or she will sit and have compulsive negative thoughts, and these thoughts could lead to the Melancholy doing harmful things to

her or himself. The last emotional need that Melancholies have is a need for silence. This goes along with the previous need of being alone, without people. Silence is golden in the eyes of the Melancholy. Melancholies truly believe in the ancient Turkish riddle that says, "Perfect is the thing that if you say its name, you destroy its meaning."

In life, Melancholies have a basic desire to have perfection. Melancholies will get depressed when life isn't perfect. While we all cognitively understand that perfection is impossible, Melancholies have an internal drive that makes them strive towards perfection. This innate strength has allowed Melancholies to do many great things in history. Let's face it, if Michelangelo had been a Sanguine, the Sistine Chapel would still have a tarp thrown over the pews and paint by number grid on the ceiling. However, when one strives towards a goal that is humanly unrealistic, it can cause a Melancholy to be in a state of constant depression. Melancholies also become depressed when they believe that the emotional pain they are going through is unbearable. Since Melancholies are deep and introspective people, they often feel the weight of emotional pain in a different way than the other three personalities. They let it drag them to deeper levels of pain than the other personalities. When a Melancholy sees no way out from under this pain, they become depressed. Lastly, Melancholies get depressed because people do not understand what they are feeling and going through. Melancholies so desperately want to be understood and loved through the silent pain they are experiencing. When a Melancholy gets depressed he or she may withdraw from people in an unhealthy manner. They may take to bed or become agoraphobic refusing to leave their house, and quite possibly use drugs or alcohol as a way to blot out imperfections and failures. A Melancholy's basic desire is to have perfection. They are so afraid of making a mistake and being a failure, having to compromise or lower their standards, or that no one will ever be able to understand them.

### **Powerful Choleric**

Cholerics are easy to find. Just look for the person who seems to be leading a group, and you've probably got yourself a Choleric. Cholerics are the kind of people who will join organizations if they think there's the possibility of getting a leadership position in the group. Once, I actually joined an organization for the pure purpose of leading it. I didn't know what the organization truly did, their goals, or its purpose, but I sure knew that I could lead the organization – and I did. Cholerics are also noticeable because of their intensity, their "always on the go" attitude, and their quick pace. Cholerics always have things to do, people to see, and projects to complete, so don't even dare to stand in their way unless you want to see the wrath of a Choleric. Cholerics are always doing, never

being. Choleric are the people who lead motivational seminars on getting rich and being more productive. These people are very picky about how things should be done, and generally are right. Where the Melancholy will diligently think about and then implement a plan of strategy when a problem arises, a Choleric will make a split-second decision on how to handle the problem and then proceed with all her or his might. And, generally speaking, Choleric make good decisions. This often infuriates the Melancholy who will spend a lot of time trying to come up with an appropriate solution only to find out the Choleric came up with the same idea and implemented it already. At the same time, this brashness and split-second decision-making can get a Choleric into trouble.

At one job I had, I was overseeing a good number of people who were implementing a number of projects conceptualized by myself and a small inner group of leaders in the organization. One of my subordinates came to me with an idea that he thought was new. I quickly told him that we had already discussed that idea before he was hired and had decided not to do it. I told him not to waste his time trying to do it because I would just be forced to veto it if it came across my desk again. I thought I was being very judicious in the way that I handled my subordinate, but he (who happened to be a Melancholy) felt that I had been rude and insensitive to his feelings. We eventually became friends, but it took a long time before he was able to trust me with his ideas. Choleric are going so fast, that they often forget that they might be stepping on the "little-people" in the way of their goals.

You can tell a Choleric by their nonverbals from across the room. A Choleric wears clothing that looks sharp, but is functional. There are a number of very specific gestures that are totally Choleric oriented: pointing or shaking their fingers at people; pounding their fist on objects or in their hands to add emphasis to what they are saying; hand on hip along with the "I can't believe you just did that look." Cell phones were designed for Choleric on the go. What better invention of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century than a tool that allows you to complete work during that useless driving and walking time!?

Choleric are goal oriented and production oriented. They always have some direction they are headed in, and do whatever it takes to make sure the task gets accomplished. Figure 14.4 has a list of the strengths and weaknesses of a Choleric.

The decisions that a Choleric makes are often dead on target, but sometimes a Choleric may make bad decisions because he or she does not think the decisions out. A great example of Choleric making bad decisions in American History can be seen in the Bay of Pigs mistake. Too many aggressive Choleric got together and did not completely analyze the situation, but went headstrong into the worst military defeat in the US Military's history. Choleric need to be careful to get all necessary information before making a hasty decision.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
Powerful	Headstrong
Strong-willed	Impatient
Daring	Unsatisfied
Confident	Domineering
Leader	Overly Involved
Bold	Aggressive
Decisive	Frank
Productive	Short-tempered
Sure	Stubborn
Doer	Fast

Littauer and Littauer (1998) proposed that Choleric have four basic emotional needs: Loyalty, Control, Appreciation, and Credit. Choleric have an emotional need to have loyalty from those around them. Since Choleric are constantly leading people, having loyalty from those they are leading becomes very important. If an individual is not loyal, it makes a Choleric feel as though he or she has not been an effective leader. Choleric also need to have a sense of control. Choleric like to know that they have control over their lives at all stages of life. If you are dealing with a

**Figure 14.4 Choleric Strengths and Weaknesses**

Choleric child, giving her or him some responsibility is a simple way to increase her or his self-esteem and feelings of worth. Choleric also like to be appreciated for their dedicated service. Choleric are hard workers, and they want to be appreciated for their loyalty to others or organizations that they work for, both paid and voluntary work. Lastly, Choleric want to get credit for the work that they do. Choleric do a lot of work and want to know that other people notice the work that they are doing.

When I was in high school, I belonged to the youth group at my church. I ran almost everything possible. I spent more time at the church working on projects than the minister did (OK slight exaggeration). At first, I was constantly complimented for the work that I was doing, but after time I became a wall hanging and I stopped getting the compliments. As soon as I stopped being recognized for the work that I was doing, I stopped doing the work. At that point, people thought I was mad or angry because I wasn't doing the behavior that I had done for a long time. Choleric thrive on getting credit for their good works.

Choleric have a basic desire to have control in their lives. Choleric become depressed when they feel that they are not in control. When a Choleric wakes up and feels that he or she is no longer in control, depression is going to hit them until they are able to regain control in their lives. Also, any life problems that cause an unbalance in a Choleric's life can cause depression. Problems with finances, job, spouse, children, or health can all be problems that cause a Choleric's life to spiral into a depressive state. Lastly, a Choleric will become depressed when he or she feels totally unappreciated. As a way to deal with stress and depression, Choleric may work harder, exercise more, or avoid unyielding situations. While some people will see the working harder and increased levels of exercise as beneficial,

these can become obsessions that lead to an individual becoming a work-a-holic or possibly developing a body obsession disorder. Choleric, as a whole, are very prone to social-anxiety disorders. When they believe that they will do, or have done, something wrong or even perceptually wrong they will obsess on this mistake and fear that it will make them look dumb, inferior, not capable, or irresponsible. Ultimately, Choleric fear losing control of their lives, financial disasters, and/or becoming weak and incapacitated.

### **Peaceful Phlegmatic**

If a Choleric, Sanguine, Melancholy, and Phlegmatic were trying to get from point A to point B, very different methods would be used. A Choleric would just quickly, in a frantic pace, with arms flailing go from point A to point B. A Sanguine would start on their way, see an old acquaintance along the way get into a great conversation about old times. They would tell stories, and if the Sanguine ever made it to point B, they probably wouldn't even know why they were there in the first place. A Melancholy would sit down and map out the most effective way to get from point A to point B. In today's world, the Melancholy would probably go on the Internet and have a mapping program develop a number of possible paths that they could take from point A to point B. Then the Melancholy would cross-reference these computer-generated maps with the most recent Atlas they can find. While the other three are moving (in different fashions) from point A to point B, the Phlegmatic person just thinks that there's no reason to travel from point A to point B in the first place, so why not just stay where they are and take a nap. The primary statement that a Phlegmatic makes is, "Why stand when I can sit, and why sit when I can lay down."

Where the Choleric are filled with constant energy and an innate desire to move and get things accomplished, the Phlegmatic is steady, consistent, and evenly balanced. When they walk across the room they can be noticed because they generally just seem to flow – as if walking on clouds. They tend to wear the most casual clothing. If they can spend their entire lives without putting on a dress or tie, their lives could be perfect. Phlegmatics use minimal gestures, because moving takes energy and why do something that is just not necessary. Figure 14.5 provides a list of the basic strengths and weaknesses that a Phlegmatic has.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
Peaceful	Hesitant
Follower	Compromising
Slow	Worrier
Adaptable	Timid
Patient	Indecisive
Satisfied	Lazy
Diplomatic	Doubtful
Mediator	Uninvolved
Laid-back	Nonchalant
Obliging	Watcher

As a whole, Phlegmatics are easygoing and adaptable. In fact, Phlegmatics are sometimes referred to as the chameleon personality because they are so easily adaptable. When they test on the Temperament Testing Scale they can seem fairly balanced because they have learned how to take on attributes of all four of the personality types. Phlegmatics have a tendency for being low key and their laid-back quality may allow them to become lazy. Phlegmatics also have no conceptualization of time. I have a number of phlegmatic friends who do not know the meaning of the phrase

**Figure 14.5 Phlegmatic Strengths and Weaknesses**

“on time.” One time when I had reservations for a birthday dinner, I had to tell my friend Jennifer to be there an hour early just to make sure she would be on time. To all of our surprise, she showed up on time and I hadn’t even started to get ready. Once, when my best friend Constinia and I had a dinner date, she got wrapped up in a television show and was nearly two hours late.

The basic desire that Phlegmatics have is to have peace. When a Phlegmatic’s life is in chaos, needs to confront something, or has pressure to produce, it may cause a Phlegmatic to become depressed. My friend Janet was asked to fire one of her employees. She became seriously depressed because she knew that she was going to have to confront one her employees and let him go. For days, she made herself sick worrying about the confrontation that she knew was coming. After two days off because she had made herself physically ill, she went into her office only to find out that the employee had already put in his two-week notice. Also, Phlegmatics are not production-oriented people. My best friend Constinia and myself were writing an article together. I kept getting irate because I didn’t think she was writing her portion fast enough. My constant nudging of her to get her portion done, only made it harder for her to get it done. The more I pressured her, the more helpless she felt, and the harder it was for her to get the article written.

When confronted with stress and depression, Phlegmatics have a tendency to find escape in books or television. To a Phlegmatic, finding escapes in books and television shows allows them to disassociate themselves with the problem that is plaguing them, and allows them to find momentary peace and relaxation. Phlegmatics will also eat and sleep as a way to be merry and happy. Phlegmatics eat to get to a relaxed state. Phlegmatics will

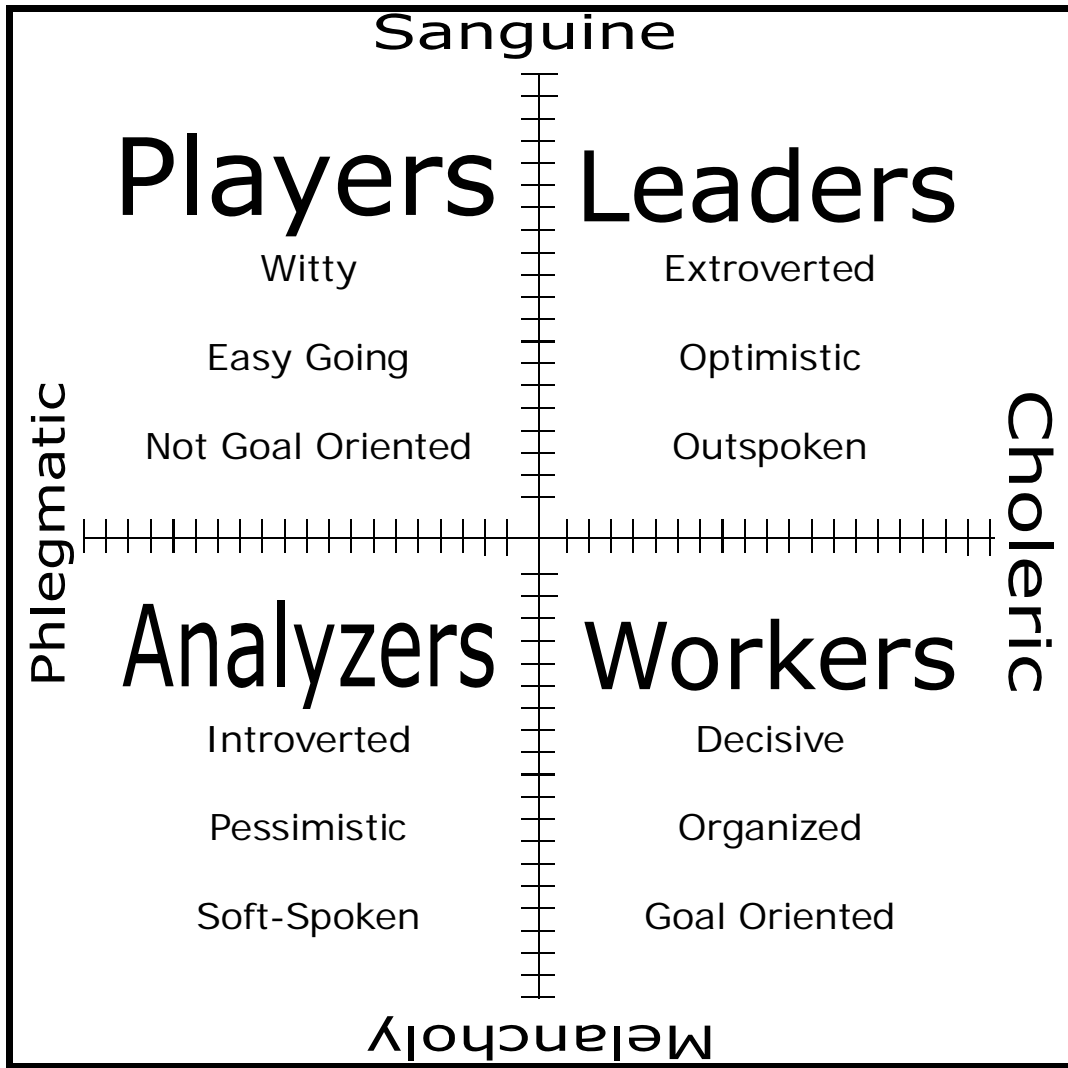
also withdraw from people and just kind of tune out life. Phlegmatics do not want to be in a chaotic state. Some Phlegmatics will turn to drugs and alcohol as a way to blot out reality of a problem or to get power to overcome a fear. The basic fears that Phlegmatics have are that they will be pressured to work all the time, get left holding the bag on a project, or face a conflict that appears overwhelming.

### **Personality Blends**

Most people are not just one strong personality type. While there are some that truly are just one type, most of us have a clear primary personality and a clear secondary personality that drives our behavior. Still others have two strong primary personality types. The basic combinations are Sanguine-Choleric, Choleric-Melancholy, Melancholy-Phlegmatic, and Phlegmatic-Sanguine. Each of these pairs can occur with either personality type as the primary and either as the secondary. For information about the natural blends of the personalities, see Table 14.6.

### **Conclusion**

When people decide to teach, their temperamental and personality patterns are not separated from their classroom. Your biological temperament does impact your classroom. Often teachers teach out of their own temperamental patterns. Even the way that we control our students is done through our temperaments. Sanguines control by charm and wit – “You’ll just love this new idea that I’ve had.” Melancholies control through a threat of moods – “If you do that I’m probably going to get depressed.” Choleric control others through a threat of anger – “You know what happened last time you did that!” And Phlegmatics control through procrastination. “If I wait long enough, someone else will do it and get it done.” Our temperaments are such an important part of who we are and how we behave.



**Figure 14.6 Temperamental Blends**

Overall, this information is useful when you allow it to influence the way that you interact with and understand other people. If you learn everything there is to know about personality, and still treat everyone as if they are identical to you, then the point of this information has been lost. The first major implication for this information in the classroom is how both a teacher's and a student's temperamental patterns affect the educational environment. When you create a situation where two people will invariably interact, understanding how those interactions will affect one another is extremely important. If a highly neurotic student is having a panic attack on the day of a test, the last thing he or she needs to hear from her or his teacher is, "Don't worry. It's just a test, not the end of the world." Teachers need to be trained to interact with their students based on temperament differences. Eysenck and Eysenck (1995) and Littauer and Littauer (1998) reported that



when teachers teach to an individual student's temperament that the child performs at a significantly higher rate than when a teacher uses a general style of teaching. At the same time, teachers should be aware that preferential treatment appears to be given to extroverted (Sanguine) children in the elementary and junior high levels; and hence, extroverted children tend to out perform their more introverted (Melancholy) peers. In later years however, introverts tend to out perform their extroverted counterparts. Eysenck and Eysenck (1995) suggest that:

This is due largely to the fact that relatively free and easy methods of teaching adopted in most primary schools suit extroverted children, who thrive on informality and like to flit from topic to topic fairly quickly. Introverts prefer the formal teaching atmosphere of the later secondary school. They like to get their teeth into a topic and persevere with it, and generally do better at secondary and tertiary levels where emphasis is on specialism. (p. 320)

What we can see from this finding is that teachers across the board are not teaching to student's temperamental styles and thus impacting the learning that occurs.

If you want to know your students' temperaments, you can use the scale discussed in this chapter. If you are teaching younger students, ask them to think about a play. Would they rather be an actor? The person in the spotlight soaking up the applause, having fun? Would they rather be the writer? Meticulously going over each revision of the script trying to make it perfect? Would they rather be a director? The person telling everyone where they need to be and when they need to get there having complete control over the show? Or would they rather be in the audience? Sitting back and just enjoying the show in a peaceful atmosphere? This is a good way to get a quick picture of what a person's personality is.

Remember, "So far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men [and women]" Romans 12: 18. When you enter into your classroom, realize that your temperament and personality affects the affect in your classroom. If you are dealing with a Sanguine student, and you're a Melancholy teacher, expecting them to become just like you is unrealistic. Help each of your students to become fulfilled in your classroom in the way that is best for them. For a further discussion on teaching with Personality Plus, see Littauer and Littauer's (1998) book *Getting Along with Almost Anybody*.

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## TEACHER COMMUNICATION: PERFORMANCE AND BURNOUT

# 15

### Chapter Fifteen Objectives

1. Review some jobs that have likelihood of burnout. Review where you fit into the various jobs discussed.
2. Discuss which teachers are most likely to suffer burnout. Review why this group is likely to suffer burnout.
3. Discuss the five major symptoms of teacher burnout. Give an example of each symptom.
4. Review how people entering the burnout syndrome feel about their students, co-workers, and others.
5. Review how teacher burnout might impact professional performance in the classroom and communication with students, co-workers, and supervisors.
6. List the causes of burnout and how to handle it before it happens to you.
7. What are the major types of crises that can lead to burnout? Give an instructional example from your own school for each type of crisis.
8. List successful and unsuccessful methods for handling/coping with burnout/stress. Discuss communication strategies for dealing with potential burnout.

A teacher's job is multifaceted. A teacher's job is never done. A teacher's job is difficult. A teacher's job is rewarding. A teacher's job is grueling. A teacher's job is demanding. A teacher's job is enjoyable. A teacher's job is arduous. A teacher's job is playing many roles.

As teachers we have many, many instructional and communication roles which others in our environment expect us to perform without flaws or problems. As teachers, we are the single most important entities in some of our students' lives. As a result, we often have monumental communication demands placed upon us. We have communication demands placed upon us by the community, parents, supervisors, other teachers, and our students.

The average teacher spends more time communicating with others in her or his school system than performing any other task. In fact, most all of a teacher's duties are linked to some form of communication, either verbal or nonverbal. It is no wonder that one in three teachers will feel some type of fatigue, exhaustion, weariness, or even burnout by

the end of a school year. There is nothing more demanding or taxing than communicating with numerous persons day in and day out. A teacher is constantly adapting, readjusting, and changing to meet the communication needs of her or his audience. This chapter will focus on the many roles of the classroom teacher, symptoms of burnout, causes of burnout, and methods for preventing or reducing teacher burnout.

### **Teaching: A Multifaceted Job**

As stated earlier, a teacher has a multifaceted job. The roles that a teacher performs are many. Some of the most common roles teachers are expected to perform are: controller, pedagogical manager, supporter, evaluator, facilitator, disciplinarian, formal and informal authority, expert, socializing agent, change agent, arbitrator, and primary communicator. All of these roles are demanding, require communication, and reflect on the teacher's performance in the eyes of others. Teachers rarely communicate in isolation and their communication is not a one-way, hypodermic needle type of communication. Teachers' communication is an interactive process, in which teachers communicate, others react, and the process continues. Hart (1986) suggests the interactive process of teaching: "Teachers act. They act on people. And they are acted upon in return. This is the physics of educating" (p. 5).

Galvin (1990) views the many roles of teachers as interactive. In viewing roles as interactive, she posits a description of three dimensions of interactive roles. The three dimensions are: the personality and background of the teacher; the relationships the teacher is involved in while holding the position of teacher; and the school expectation and feedback. Each of the dimensions impacts a teacher's life and performance.

Galvin (1990) states "your personal characteristics and previous experience affect classroom behavior" (p. 196). For example, if you are a very responsive and immediate instructor, you will expend a lot of time and energy establishing a positive, affective relationship with your students. If you attended college where there was an emphasis on the interpersonal, nonverbal, organizational, and intercultural aspects of a classroom environment, then you would have different expectations about how you should manage, organize, and teach your classes.

In addition, Galvin suggests that our students' personal characteristics and previous experiences affect our classroom behavior. For example, if our students are homogeneous in terms of socioeconomic status, religion, background, language, and so on then these characteristics impact their expectations of us and how we organize our classroom.

She states, "your relationships with students, faculty, and administration will also influence your role" (p. 197). If you seem to have a strong communication rapport with most of your students, then you will have less difficulty communicating with most of your students, whereas, if you have a poor communication rapport with most of your students, then you will have more difficulty communicating with most your students. If you are homophilous with, and well-liked by, most of your colleagues, you may have a better communication relationship with them. On the other hand, if you are too dissimilar and not well-liked by most your colleagues, then you may have a less-than-perfect communication relationship with them. Lastly, if you understand organizational policy, work within the system, and are not too aggressive with your supervisor, then you may survive better than teachers who do not work within the system, do not obey organizational policy, and are aggressive with their supervisors.

"Institutional expectations directly affect your teaching" (p. 197). All of us are expected to follow the established guidelines of the organization. If we manage recess, collect lunch money, do bus duty, handle extracurricular activities, and turn in grades when expected, we will probably be left alone by our administrators. Whether we like it or not, there are many mundane expectations attached to our job which we must follow in order to avoid conflict with our administrators.

In conclusion, "roles are inextricably bound to the communication process. Teacher and student roles are developed and maintained through communication" (Galvin, 1990, p. 197). The roles we perform as teachers are often many and complex. The roles we perform as teachers all involve some form of verbal or nonverbal communication. It is the communication attached to these roles that is one of the primary instigators of teacher burnout. Since the teachers' roles we will be discussing require major amounts of communication, it is likely some of us will be burned out after several years, or perhaps only months, of attempting to meet these roles. Before we discuss symptoms of burnout, we will review the many roles of an instructional manager.

## **Roles of an Instructional Manager**

While there are hundreds of roles that a teacher performs on a daily basis we have chosen to use the primary role functions provided by Galvin (1990). She explicates five major role functions. They are: providing content expertise; providing learning management; providing evaluative feedback; providing socialization; and providing personal models.

### **Providing Content Expertise**

"The finest teachers care passionately about their subject. They find joy in talking about the field of study that pervades their lives" (Galvin, 1990, p. 200). Regardless of our content area of expertise, each of us is committed to disseminating knowledge to our students so that they can grow, develop, and foster a love of learning. Whether we are English, math, science, communication, home economics, or foreign language teachers, we are constantly striving to learn more and enrich ourselves in our field of content so that we can keep up-to-date with our content area. We not only want to stay up-to-date for ourselves but so that we have current knowledge which we can disseminate to our students.

### **Learning Management**

"Not only must teachers know their subjects; they must communicate them effectively with learners" (Galvin, 1990, p. 201). Learning management means creating a classroom environment in which there are numerous instructional opportunities to learn, to demonstrate learning, and to communicate with the instructor. Every teacher can be successful by using instructional strategies or methods which enhance student learning and recall. Every teacher can be successful by implementing communication strategies which allow the student to ask questions, discuss subject matter, bring up new ideas, or comment on previous ideas. Learning management is not simply finding the right teaching style for you or the best instructional method. Learning management is being able to effectively communicate with the student so the student wants to ask questions, pursue more content, and recall the content at a later date. The most successful teachers are cognizant of the importance of effective teacher communication in relation to learning management. The most successful teachers are effective communicators of content.

### **Providing Evaluation and Feedback**

One of the more difficult roles we have to fulfill is that of providing evaluations and feedback to our students. The evaluation or feedback process often interferes with the successful transmission of information to our students. Students, regardless of their age, usually perceive feedback to be evaluative, most likely negative, and a way the teacher uses to demonstrate her or his power. Grades, of course, are the most common form of feedback in the instructional process. Teachers must work hard at mastering a number of ways of giving evaluations or feedback to their students. Grades cannot be the only form of feedback. For most of us, if grades were the only form of feedback, we would have quit long ago. The same is true for many of our students.

Providing feedback and evaluations in such a way that students will not be "turned off" to the teacher, the task, or the content, takes a very highly skilled communicator. Teachers must decide what feedback works well, when, and how to use it. This suggests that we must be constantly communicating with our students, and changing to adapt to their needs. This, basically is what we are doing. As teachers we are constantly giving evaluative feedback of some type to our students and they are constantly evaluating us. The skilled communicator knows when to use peer feedback, peer assistance, written feedback, oral feedback, one-on-one feedback, one-to-many feedback, encouragement, supportiveness, and responsiveness.

### **Providing Socialization**

"Classrooms are the settings for academic socialization to an entire field and to ways of thinking" (Galvin, 1990, p. 202). Classrooms are the environments where students learn about the world, societal rules, peoples of the world, economy, governments, everyday events, cultural happenings and displays, and the communication process. We provide our students insight into all the above. Galvin notes:

As a representative of an academic field and an academic way of life, a teacher discusses his or her intellectual positions, research interests, and the process of intellectual growth. Students question, react, and contribute positions learned elsewhere. (p. 202)

While many outside of education like to think our impact in the socialization arena is low, we know better. Our communication impact on our students assists them in cultural, social, and academic awareness.

### **Personal Role Models**

"Teachers teach who they are as well as what they believe intellectually" (Galvin, 1990, p. 203.). Through our verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors we teach our students who we are, what we are, and what we believe. From the first moment a student spies us in our schools, he or she is formulating an opinion of who we are based upon our communication behaviors. We should constantly ask, "How do our students see us?" Do they view us as friends, mentors, counselors, enemies, rule breakers, rule maintainers, active participants in the classroom, passive participants in the classroom, conflict managers, or as irrelevant to them?

We teach our students how we feel about them, the classroom, the subject, the text, the school, the administrators, and the educational model through our communication. We cannot not communicate our feelings to our students. We cannot not communicate how we feel about them. We cannot not communicate how we feel about ourselves to them. Our students expect to see us as friends, positive role models, and mentors. Our students expect to see us as competent communicators, knowing how, when, and what to communicate, and being able to communicate effectively. They expect us to be effective communication role models, which means we are constantly on the spot to be "perfect" communicators.

The preceding five functions encompass most roles that teachers are expected to fulfill in the classroom. The key to successful fulfillment of the five functions is successful, competent, teacher communication. Learning to communicate effectively is not as easy as one might think. Like any other subject it takes time, effort, study, and practice. And like any other subject we can have successes and failures. Being a competent communicator can reduce classroom problems and disturbances, and increase student affect. Attempting to fulfill all these roles and the communication demands of each role may be a factor in teacher burnout. Below is a discussion of symptoms and causes of teacher burnout. Lastly, methods for handling or coping with burnout will be discussed.

## **Teacher Burnout**

Every few months there is a new listing of jobs that cause burnout. It seems that on every list the job of "teacher" is very near the top of the list, if not in the top five jobs that cause burnout. Here is a listing of some jobs that commonly carry the potential for burnout besides teaching: psychologist; nurse; doctor; social worker; air traffic controller; counselor; stock market trader or analyst; truck driver; insurance executive or salesperson; lawyer; garment industry buyer; dentist; minister; middle level managers; and child care persons. This is by no means an exhaustive list of the potential burnout jobs. This is only a sampling of the jobs that have the potential for employee burnout.

The fact remains that "teacher" is usually near the top of every list of potential jobs that cause burnout. Why is our job so taxing? Why are we likely candidates for burnout? What is burnout? Job burnout is an affliction where an employee begins to slowly but steadily and surely feel fatigued, weary, tired, discouraged, uncomfortable, disenfranchised, disengaged, hostile, and inadequate in her or his job position. Teacher burnout is when a teacher begins to gradually but surely feel fatigued, weary, tired, discouraged,



uncomfortable, disenfranchised, disengaged, hostile, and inadequate about her or his job position.

Burnout or "battle fatigue" or "school fatigue" does not occur overnight; it is a slow, creeping, insidious, affliction that steadily works its way into a teacher's spirit. Eventually, if unnoticed or not managed, burnout can lead to feelings of dislike, discontent, hostility, and non-caring on the part of the teacher. Let us be specific about two points:

1. Teachers who are caring, committed, dedicated, and competent communicators are most likely to be prone to experience burnout.
2. Teachers who are constantly talking (whining) about burnout, overwork, and over commitment are not likely to be candidates for burnout. In fact, these whining teachers are more than likely contributing to the more competent teachers' burnout.

It is the rare person who recognizes burnout in her or himself before a colleague, friend, or spouse recognizes it. Those who talk about how "burned out they are" are probably not. Paradoxically, it is the committed, dedicated, hard working, competent communicators and teachers who are prone to burnout. They rarely recognize it until someone else points it out to them and then they often don't believe their colleague. Why, then, are teachers who are competent communicators prone to burnout? Because they are constantly bombarded with many communication circumstances, which require them to be experts. They are experiencing communication overloads on a daily basis. The average teacher talks to or with more than thirty persons on a daily basis. Each of these communicative situations demands a different style of communication. Those of us who are in high communication demand jobs are simply more prone to burnout, even if we are the most competent of competent communicators. It is ironic that competent communicators are prone to burnout, but it makes sense. Below is a discussion of the symptoms of teacher burnout.

### **Symptoms of Teacher Burnout**

In order for someone to be a candidate for burnout, they must have a number of the symptoms and they must have the symptoms for a long period of time. Burnout does not occur overnight. Burnout is a process of beginning to feel weary, tired, and unconcerned about our job and the people we used to care about. Remember, you must have had a

number of the symptoms below for a long period of time before you can say you are experiencing burnout.

### **Communication Symptoms**

Communication disorders or negative change in one's communication style is a major, if not the major, symptom of teacher burnout. A teacher who is normally caring, concerned, dedicated, and committed gradually begins to communicate non-caring, non-concern, non-dedication, and non-commitment. This type of change in communication style is a definite sign that the teacher may be experiencing burnout. Other forms of communication may be present. For example, the teacher may communicate hostilities, anxieties, frustrations, and inadequacies that they never communicated before. They become hostile, anxious, frustrated, and often feel inadequate in their communication attempts. They have lost their self-assuredness, confidence, and dedication. They will often communicate in a hostile manner with colleagues, administrators, and students, when they never did in the past. Communication disorders could also include teacher destructive communication strategies such as: calling students, colleagues, or administrators by ugly names; attempting to control all communication situations; withdrawing from many communication situations; creating communication distractions when others are talking; being rude in conversations by interrupting others or ignoring others' communications; talking in a dull, monotone voice; mumbling; rambling in conversations; disregarding or not listening when others are talking to them; often asking others to repeat comments or questions; making ugly jokes about others; seem to have misplaced their sense of humor; and communicating with nonverbally aggressive or isolating behaviors (e.g., physically pushes students, or keeps the door to office closed when it used to be open and so on).

### **Physiological Symptoms**

Physiological symptoms are also major predictors of teacher burnout or fatigue. These symptoms can be isolated by the individual but they often don't pay attention to physiological changes. Some of the symptoms we will refer to are non-gender specific, while others clearly are female or male symptoms. Some physiological symptoms of burnout are: High blood pressure; high blood sugar or increased glucose level; weight gain or weight loss; increased or a slowed heart rate; dryness of the mouth; insomnia; increased sleeping patterns; profuse sweating; dilation of eyes; increase in aches and pains; headaches; migraines; swallowing problems; digestive problems; hypertension; increase, recurrence, or emergence of allergies, asthma, or other medical problems; colitis; ulcers; difficulty

urinating or need to urinate more often; menstrual problems; and hot or cold flashes. Often a person who is experiencing burnout, has chronic, continued physical deterioration which others notice but they often don't notice. Occasionally we can recognize another teacher in our school who is having a physical metamorphosis right before our eyes. He or she is physically falling apart.

### **Behavioral Symptoms**

Behavioral symptoms or actual behaviors are also predictors of teacher burnout or fatigue. Some of the behavioral symptoms are: Becoming accident prone; falling; not watching where walking; emotional outbursts; odd physical behaviors or ticks develop; impulsive actions occur; nervous giggle or laughter; needs a prescription drug or alcoholic reinforcer during the day; begins or increases smoking; consumes more food; and seems nervous or anxious most of the time. Last but not least are clear-cut job related or organizational symptoms.

### **Organizational Symptoms**

Organizational symptoms are behavioral and attitudinal changes which occur in teachers as a function of being burned out. In reading these behaviors keep in mind that they are changes in a person's normal behavior. Below are some of the organizational behaviors or symptoms teachers exhibit when approaching burnout: Tardiness or lateness for work or class; cavalier attitude about paperwork, assigned duties, and school policy; at times border line insubordination; refusal to do any extra assignments other than what is the normal teaching assignment; refusal to participate in teacher or school workshops; breaks school rules; ignores school rules; student projects, papers, and assignments turned back late, if at all; skips or fails to perform minor duties, such as in cafeteria during lunch; leaves class often; ignores students who don't follow school policy; encourages students and others teachers to break school policy; and generally conveys the attitude that "I can do what I want, you can't fire me," or the attitude that says "I just don't care anymore." Figure 16.1 is a measure you might use which lets you determine how you feel about your position.

In conclusion, no one behavior or attitude is predictive of teacher burnout or fatigue. As stated earlier, there must be a number of symptoms that occur over a long period of time to assume that one is experiencing burnout. The first symptoms to look for are either a negative change in communication style or physiological symptoms. It is the caring,

competent communicators and teachers who are most prone to burnout. If you are one of these, begin watching for burnout before it has consumed you.

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### Teacher Burnout Measure

Directions: Complete the following measure and calculate your score. This measure is designed to determine how you currently feel about your job and its related aspects. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly and circle your first impression. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I am bored with my job.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I am tired of my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I am weary with all of my job responsibilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. My job doesn't excite me any more.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I dislike going to my job.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I feel alienated at work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I feel frustrated at work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I avoid communication with students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I avoid communication with my colleagues.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I communicate in a hostile manner at work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I feel ill at work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I think about calling my students ugly names.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I avoid looking at my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. My students make me sick.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I feel sick to my stomach when I think about work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I wish people would leave me alone at work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I dread going into a classroom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I am apathetic about my job.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I feel stressed at work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I have problems concentrating at work.

SCORING: Add up your scores for all 20 items.

INTERPRETATION: 20-35 means you have few burnout feelings; 36-55 means you have some strong feelings of burnout; 56-70 means you have substantial burnout feelings; and 71-80 means you are experiencing burnout.

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**Figure 16.1 Teacher Burnout Measure**

### Causes of Teacher Burnout

While there may be many causes of teacher burnout, the two primary causes are continued job stress over long periods of time and communication overloads. These two factors combined with other variables such as personal, financial, physical, or emotional

problems can cause a good, effective teacher to become a poor, ineffective teacher. Again, job stress over long periods of time can contribute to burnout, as can, communication overloads over long periods of time. Both combined form a deadly effect of causing a good, caring, dedicated teacher to gradually but slowly turn into a poor, ineffective, non caring teacher. Of course, the outcomes of burnout are devastating. The teacher may feel useless in her or his job. The teacher may negatively impact student behavior, performance, communication, and affect. The teacher may lose the esteem and respect of her or his colleagues and administrators. And lastly, the teacher may lose esteem and respect for her or himself. It is a shame but more and more teachers are reporting burnout and there doesn't seem to be a quick, workable solution available. We should do all we can do to avoid burnout and assist any colleagues we think are experiencing burnout.

One major cause of burnout can be attributed to a crisis that may arise in an individual's life. According to Roberts (1991), a crisis "can be defined as a period of psychological disequilibrium, experienced as a result of a hazardous event or situation that constitutes a significant problem that cannot be remedied by using familiar coping strategies" (p. 4). Pittman (1987) explains further, "A crisis results when stress comes to bear upon a system and requires change outside the system's usual repertoire" (p. 4). Pittman (1987) goes on to discuss the different types of crises that can arise. All crises affect an individual at work because these crises have a tendency of zapping one's strength away, which makes it very difficult for the person to concentrate, and ultimately leads to lower productivity, harsher feelings towards one's work, and eventually burnout.

### **Bolts from the Blue**

Though this form of crisis is the least likely to strike, these crises can cause a person to experience psychological disequilibrium. This type of crisis is a crisis that is completely unavoidable and just comes out of nowhere: house burns down, collapsed economy, air plane crash, lottery ticket wins, black sheep of the family returns home.

### **Developmental**

Humans experience developmental crises all through our lives. Events like births, marriages, deaths, child launching (when a child leaves the nest), retirement, and death are all examples of developmental crises. These crises are unavoidable and often influence us in ways that are completely unexpected. A person may love teaching, but when her or his spouse dies, the teaching is no longer rewarding and the person becomes burned out.

## **Structural**

Structural crises are crises that occur because a member of the family on a recurring basis does not allow the family to exist in equilibrium. Examples of structural crises are alcoholic/drug addicted family members, violent family members, or adulterous family members. These members of our family prevent us from being able to concentrate on anything but their care. Eventually all of our energy goes into caring, or enabling, this family member that outside factors (such as work) just seem like annoyers.

## **Caretaker**

Caretaker crises are crises that occur when a person who is supposed to have power is not exercising her or his power correctly. If a subordinate suddenly finds that he or she has to do not only their job, but also their boss's job at the same time, this can lead to a caretaker crisis. This kind of crisis can effect a family when a child finds her or himself in a parental position. In essence, the person who has legitimate power is forcing a subordinate who does not have legitimate power into a position that requires the necessary legitimate power for action to occur. This leads to burnout because a person is given too much to do too quickly, with no preparation.

## **Methods for Avoiding Burnout**

1. One of the primary means of avoiding burnout is to avoid overloads for long periods of time. Remember it is the caring, high achieving teacher who is most likely to suffer burnout. Therefore, on occasion we need to say in a firm, but polite way "NO" to someone's request to perform an extra duty or do an extra job. Often we don't realize how overloaded we are until we are to the point of exhaustion and then we don't know what to unload.

2. Every time we accept a new assignment, we should attempt to realign or redistribute other assignments. If this means moving another responsibility onto another colleague, then we should do so. Each of us can only effectively handle so many responsibilities before we aren't handling any of them well. Before we get caught in the "overload trapping" let's give up some of our responsibilities. It is bad enough to be overloaded, but it is worse to do a poor job.

3. Avoid communication with others which might lead to conflict. Conflict in an organization can wear us down, take time away from our jobs, and leave us in a state of depression, confusion, and burnout. For example, severe conflict such as labor versus

management can cause an employee to feel overloaded, depressed, depersonalized, and insecure.

4. Reduce the physical demands or stresses placed on us at work and home. While this suggestion may seem trivial, sometimes demands such as moving furniture, carrying heavy loads, lifting, working in a poorly lighted environment, working in a foul environment, working in high temperatures, or working in overly crowded, highly dense environments can cause stress to increase. If we can reduce physical stresses then we might be able to reduce psychological stresses.

5. We should attempt to reduce uncertainty in our school environment. Miller, Ellis, Zook, & Lyles (1990) suggest that uncertainty reduction can have a positive impact on stress and help prevent employee burnout. By participating in certain decision making groups, procuring needed information about our jobs, and seeking needed feedback from others, employee uncertainty can be reduced and burnout can be avoided.

6. Teachers need a communicatively responsive support group available to them just as many other American workers and professionals have. Teachers need to communicate with someone who understands, has empathy for, and can communicate about their problems. Too often schools assume that teachers can handle any problem because they handle so many problems in their daily educational lives. Teachers are like other professionals, they are very good at handling problems which arise in the work environment, but terrible at managing their own problems.

7. Teachers who are on the road to burnout should reduce the communication demands in their environment or at least give themselves "**five minutes off from communication.**" This is not to suggest that teachers should avoid communication with others. It is a suggestion to have more control over whom, how long, how often, and when we communicate with someone or about a certain issue. Often we feel in order to be effective communicators we have to communicate all the time, when in fact in order to be an effective communicator we need to have effective communication. Occasionally take "five minutes off from the communication" that surrounds you in your school. This allows you to collect your thoughts and feel less stressed.

8. Occasionally say to yourself, "good job, nice work, way to go, I made it through another day." Cognitively and orally restructuring how we react to our days and situations can make any day or situation more manageable. As H. Peck Sr. used to tell his children, "Sometimes you have to be your own best cheerleader." As B. Peck used to tell her children, "Be kind to yourself, stop being so hard on yourself." In conclusion, practice random acts of kindness and caring on yourself once in awhile.

## Mentoring to Prevent Burnout

There's an old story about a parakeet named Pretty Boy. Over many years Pretty Boy's master had taught him to sing a number of songs. The master would name a song, and Pretty Boy would just start to sing away. One day the master was using a vacuum attachment that was just perfect to clean Pretty Boy's cage. The phone rang and Pretty Boy's master picked up the phone and stopped paying attention to the hose. The next thing the master knew the parakeet got sucked up into the vacuum cleaner. In fear, the master ripped open the vacuum cleaner's bag finding Pretty Boy among the dirt and grime. The master quickly rushed Pretty Boy to the nearest sink and gave Pretty Boy a bath. Realizing the error in this bath, the master quickly grabbed a hair dryer to dry the scared bird. A week later, a reporter named Marlene from the local paper heard about the famous parakeet's mishap. She went to the master's house and asked the master how Pretty Boy was doing. Without expression, the master turned and looked at Marlene and said, "Pretty Boy doesn't sing much anymore. He just sort of sits and stares."

The story of Pretty Boy is a great example of some of the problems teachers face in the schools. During teacher education at the collegiate level, teachers are taught to sing a lot of great songs. Sadly, when the teacher is placed into the school, they are often not prepared for what is expected. The vacuum hose called students quickly causes many unexpected problems, the bath of paperwork drowns the teachers even more, and the hair dryer of administration quickly tries to take care of situations in an ineffective manner. All of these things combined together cause a teacher who at one point was ready to sing on request, to become stagnant and just sort of "sit and stare." According to an article in *Techniques: Connecting Education & Careers* (2000), 50% of teachers in urban areas leave in their first year. This number is even higher for teachers living in rural areas. With the coming crisis of teacher shortages, coming up with new ways to retain teachers is becoming increasingly important. One way to retain teachers is through in-school and out-of-school mentoring programs.

Mentoring, as a concept, goes back thousands of years to Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*. Homer tells the story of an elderly and wise sea captain named Mentor who gives Odysseus's son, Telemachus, guidance while his father is gone on his long journey. In modern times, the word mentor is used to refer to a relationship where one individual with more knowledge and experience aids another individual who has less knowledge and experience. Bell (2000) defines a mentor as "someone who helps someone else learn something that he or she would have learned less well, more slowly, or not at all if left



alone" (p. 53). Blair-Larsen (1998) believed that the basic goal of a mentoring program "whether implemented at the state or local level is to offer intervention that orients new and returning teachers to the school and community and to provide instructional and interpersonal support that fosters professional development and retention of teachers" (p. 602).

While there are a number of different ways to enter into a mentoring situation, we discuss three different types of mentoring programs. First, individuals can enter into a mentoring partnership like Bell (2000) suggests. In this form of mentoring, the mentor and the person being mentored realize that they can learn from each other. As we become more grounded in our fields, we often forget to listen to new perspectives and ideas. By mentoring an individual who has less experience, a more seasoned professional can learn some new ideas while imparting the wisdom they have received over the years through trial-and-error.

A second mentoring perspective is through co-mentoring groups. Co-mentoring groups, as Lick (2000) suggests, involve the whole faculty as a mentoring tool. Lick describes the co-mentoring groups as those "in which members of the group mentor one another. In constructive co-mentoring groups, each person acts as a sponsor, advocate, and guide. They teach, advise, critique, and support each other to express, pursue, and finalize goals" (p. 47). In this type of mentoring concept, mentoring is an ongoing process in which everyone plays a role. While these types of groups are hard to get started and keep maintained, the benefits of mentoring beyond just the first year of teaching can be very important.

The third approach to mentoring is a new approach that a number of universities are using around the nation to keep up with first-year teachers entering the field. Eisenman and Holly (1999) noticed that most mentoring programs do not provide types of support necessary for continued professional development of the novice teacher. For this reason, the research team investigated the use of telementoring as a possible fix to correct this problem. Telementoring is using new technology to allow professional teachers to communicate with other teachers and university professors as a means of mentoring. Students were able to log onto a specific web page to keep in touch with students they went to school with, ask questions, and discuss problems related to the field. Overall, this method of mentoring was shown to be effective and all of the teachers involved in the mentoring program stayed beyond their first year.

In summary, if you are burned out or moving toward burnout, you will not be any good in the classroom, for your school, or to yourself. You will have hostile feelings about

others, feel dehumanized, feel alienated, and feel as if you are an inadequate communicator and teacher. In order to remain a competent communicator and professional you must learn to reduce stress, reduce communication overloads, and reduce workloads. If burnout overcomes us, we will not be effective professional educators, communicators, or personal role models. If you are not good to yourself, no one else will be good to you either. Good teachers are hard to find so let's take care of ourselves.

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**To Mrs. Russell:  
Without You This Never  
Would Have Happened**

**Appendix  
A**

Growing up, I was the child that everyone dreaded to have show up in their classroom. I was unruly, talkative, and slow. As early as Kindergarten the teachers decided that I was too slow to keep up with the other children, so I was placed with other slow learners. All throughout my elementary career I was anything but the ideal student. I was a troublemaker. In the second grade, students who misbehaved were forced to wear a red block of wood with a gigantic sad face painted on it called a sad face block. When a student was forced to wear the block, s/he could not talk to anyone but the teacher. I personally think I still have a rope chafe from where the rope bit into the back of my neck on almost a daily basis.

My grades were also the poorest declaration of a school system. If I was lucky, I got the occasional C. My parents hoped that one-day I would actually be allowed to graduate high school, or at least get a GED and go work at some fast food restaurant. In the third grade, my teacher truly hated me. When my grandfather had visited one day, he demanded that I be removed from the teacher's classroom because of the spiteful and mean spirited way that she related to me.

Then when I was in the fourth grade, the resource (the term used for slower students) classroom was taken away because they needed the space for "normal" students. After searching throughout the entire building, the administration decided that our class was to be held in a janitor's closet. Throughout my entire elementary career I was constantly being told by teachers and administrators that I was stupid, slow and just not good enough to be with the other students. To say that my self-esteem was "Shot to Hell" would be putting it nicely. I often felt like I had been God's only mistake. I felt useless, dumb, and bad. Being forced to wear a red block that symbolized that I had made a mistake, forced me to become introverted and unaware to life's joys. Being told that I was not good enough to have a classroom, but that there was a lovely janitor's closet where I could learn, made me think that I was only as good as the trash that inhabited my classroom. Constantly being told that there was no hope for me and that I might as well not even try, had killed the spirit of a once bright and eager child.

At the beginning of my sixth grade year, I was given the opportunity to join the school orchestra. The only problem was that if I joined orchestra I would not be able to be

in resource any longer. My parents and the school administrators hashed it out and it was decided that I would be allowed to join the orchestra. Therefore, I joined the main stream of the school for the first time.

My homeroom teacher was a gentlewoman of about forty-five. She welcomed me into her class on the first day of school with a big smile and the desire to teach. The sixth graders were located in portables or classrooms that a school district can transport from one place to another when a school needs more classes and it would be too expensive to add on to the school. This was the first time that I was in a classroom where I could only see and hear my teacher. Before this, all of the "regular" classrooms had been in open-concept classrooms – these are classrooms where there are no walls and doors between the connecting classrooms. In these classrooms, students could see and hear everything that was going on in every room around them. This had always made it extremely hard for me to focus on what the teacher was saying, and since I was a poor student, I had always been placed in the back of the room near the other classrooms.

Having a closed room in the sixth grade allowed me to focus only on what the teacher was saying, and not everything else that was going on around me. My homeroom teacher was named Mrs. Russell. Mrs. Russell was a first year teacher at my school, even though she had been teaching for years elsewhere. She was friendly and would only be negative when she absolutely had to discipline a child.

Mrs. Russell decided at the beginning of the year that every student in the room was going to have a specific job within the classroom. I was quickly assigned to be the desk monitor. I half think that I got this specific job because my desk was the most horrendous area anyone could ever imagine. My job was very simple, after school each day I would check everyone's desk and make sure that it was clean. If the person's desk was clean, I would put a blue piece of paper on it. If a student collected five blue strips they would then get candy from Mrs. Russell. If their desk was dirty, they would receive a yellow strip of paper and be forced to give up all of their blue strips. If a student received two of these, they would be held after school in detention. I was the one who came up with the entire idea. Mrs. Russell used this format of checking desks until the day she retired in May 1997. For the first time in my life I had a passion about something. I loved the power that being the desk monitor actually gave me. I never once abused the power because I knew that Mrs. Russell had instilled trust in me to be just. Over and over she would compliment me on doing a great job. She also would say things like, "You're going to grow up and be something pretty special." "You can do anything you want in life Jason, as long as you put your mind to it."

Mrs. Russell was the first teacher who had ever been nice to me. She told me that I was a person. She showed me that I was a good person despite what the sad block had said. She told me that I was smart; I just had to apply myself and do the work. She told me that I was worthy of living as a human being. Many people talk about that one teacher that just absolutely changes their life. Mine would definitely have had to have been Mrs. Russell.

That year my grades went from C's and D's to A's and B's. The dramatic change came simply because one teacher loved and cared enough to take the time to work with me and show me how much she cared. As one former president of the National Speakers Association, Cavett Roberts, once said, "They don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care!"

At the end of my sixth grade year I was encouraged by Mrs. Russell to apply to the honors junior high school. I discussed it with my parents and we decided that I should try to apply. I filled out the paper work and acquired the proper recommendations, but figured I had no chance of making it.

About a month later, my principal announced over the loud speaker that anyone who had applied to a magnet school needed to come to the main office. All of the students who had applied to the honors junior high mingled around the room. Some leered at me wondering what "the dummy" (what many classmates referred to me as) was doing there. Since my last name starts with a "W," I was the last one to get their letter of acceptance or rejection. I took a huge breath and gulped as I slid my finger under the envelope's sealant. I was in! I leaped for joy and told everyone I saw. I had gone from being one of the dumb resource kids to being in an honors junior high school. There were many people around the room who had not been accepted into the program. People that had always stuck their noses in the air when I walked by thinking of me as the "dummy" did not even get into the school. I had finally come around in my academic life.

Not only did I go to the honors junior high, but I also went to the honor's high school and ended up graduating Magna Cum Laude from college. My road to academic and intellectual maturity has been a tough one at many times. I often wonder how many kids like myself were left on the side of the academic road. How many brilliant kids never meet their Mrs. Russell and therefore never achieve the potential that they actually have. I also wonder where I would be if I had not had a teacher who showed me that she cared.

Currently I am finishing my doctorate in communication studies and curriculum and instruction (who would have guessed). I have also had the opportunity to teach classes on the University level. If anything, Mrs. Russell has inspired me to be the kind of teacher that she was for me. I hope that I will always recognize a diamond in the rough. I hope that I

will never pass a student on thinking that they just are not smart enough. I hope that I will boost my students' self-esteem, not destroy it. Mrs. Russell is a very hard act to follow as a teacher, but is a wonderful role model.

I'll never forget the day I entered into my old elementary school for Mrs. Russell's retirement party. I had never stepped foot in the building since I left. I had kept in touch with Mrs. Russell. When I had graduated from high school, she and her husband sent me a graduation present. When I had a short stint as a radio talk show host for a Christian radio station, Mrs. Russell was my biggest fan.

Walking into that school brought a flood of emotions upon me. I remember looking at the door that led to the janitor's closet where I had spent a lot of the fourth grade. I remember seeing classrooms and feeling the torment that went along with those rooms. But then there was Mrs. Russell, the woman whom I had come to say thank you. Even now as I write, I still have huge tears that swell in my eyes as I think about her generosity and loving spirit.

I gave her a small teddy bear (the school's mascot) with a huge bouquet of balloons from my family. (My dad had wanted to build a monument in her honor, but that would have been going a little over board, right?) I also gave her a copy of a paper I had written in college dealing with an event or person that changed your life.

It often amazes me at how God knows when we need someone the most and miraculously places him or her in our lives at those times. Without Mrs. Russell in my life, who knows where I would have gone and what I would have done?

When I graduated with my undergraduate degree, I dedicated my undergraduate thesis (just like I will for my master's thesis and my doctoral dissertation) to "Mrs. Russell – With out you this never would have happened."

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Wrench, J. S. (2000). To Mrs. Russell. In D. James (Ed.) *Teens Can Bounce Back: Stories for the Waves of Life*, (pp. 85-92). Camp Hill, PA: Horizon Books.

### **Conclusion**

We sincerely hope after reading this textbook, that you can be Mrs. Russell for all of your students. Mrs. Russell was a teacher who was like you. She did her job and built affect in her classroom. Building affect in the classroom is unbelievably important. This story could have been about you.

## Glossary

**Accommodator (Type IV Learner):** These learners perceive information concretely and process it actively. They learn well by trial and error, with teachers who serve as evaluators and remediators, but who encourage self-discovery. They are dynamic learners with a very practical orientation; they prefer to teach themselves and then share what they have learned with others.

**ADDIE:** Instructional design model that stands for Analyze-Design-Develop-Implement-Evaluate.

**Affective Learning:** Learning that emphasizes behaviors and objectives that have some emotional overtones and encompasses a learner's likes and dislikes, attitudes, values and beliefs.

**Assimilator (Type II Learner):** These learners perceive information abstractly and process it reflectively. Schools are traditionally designed for these learners, who value sequential thinking, details and expert opinion. They are data collectors, more interested in ideas than applications, and they learn best with teachers who assume the role of information giver.

**Attitude:** A predisposition to respond to people, ideas, or objects in an evaluative way.

**Behavioral Self:** Aspect related to self-concept that evaluates how one acts or what one does (e.g., I play, I read, I ride a bike, I go to school, I do nothing, etc.).

**Belief:** Our perception of reality about whether something is true or false.

**Bolts From the Blue:** A crisis that comes out of no where (e.g., house burns down, you are robbed, etc.).

**Bullying:** The use of verbal and/or nonverbal messages to intimidate another person.

**Caretaker Crisis:** A crisis that occurs because a person who is suppose to have power is not exercising her or his power correctly (e.g., when the child has to take care of her or his parent).

**Chronemics:** The ways in which different cultures perceive and use time.

**Closed-Ended Questions:** Type of question that provides a small range of possible correct answers. Answers can be predicted, require limited thought by the student, and can be answered with brief responses.

**Cognitive Learning:** Learning that emphasizes recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of intellectual abilities and skills.

**Communication:** The process of a person or persons stimulating meaning in the mind of another person or persons by means of verbal and/or nonverbal messages.

**Communication Apprehension:** The fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons.



**Converger (Type III Learner):** These learners perceive information abstractly and process it actively. They seek utility and enjoy solving problems that test theories against common sense. They resent being given answers, and they have a limited tolerance for “fuzzy” ideas that cannot be applied practically. They learn best with teachers who act as coaches while facilitating hands-on experience.

**Crisis:** A period of psychological disequilibrium, experienced as a result of a hazardous event or situation that constitutes a significant problem that cannot be remedied by using familiar coping strategies

**Developmental Crisis:** A crisis that comes when entering a part of the life cycle (e.g., birth, marriage, death, etc.).

**Diverger (Type I Learner):** These learners perceive information concretely and process it reflectively. They are innovative, imaginative, and concerned with personal relevance. They need to clarify the ways in which a new concept or area of study links with previous experiences before they are receptive to learning it. They learn best through methods that encourage brainstorming and empathy.

**Esteem Needs:** Needs affiliated with the desire to have status, dignity, respect, recognition, attention, and to be appreciated by others.

**Evaluation Apprehension:** The fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated evaluative situations in the classroom. Often EA relates to test anxiety.

**Formative Feedback:** Form of feedback/evaluation where learners are assessed throughout an instructional unit to determine where problems are encountered in mastering prerequisite or needed skills.

**Haptics:** The study of the type, amount, uses of, and the results of tactile behavior.

**Identity Self:** Aspect related to self-concept that evaluates who or what we are (e.g., I am a student, I am a friend, I am a club president, I am a thug, etc).

**Immediacy:** The degree of perceived physical or psychological distance between people in a relationship.

**Instructional Communication:** The process of the teacher establishing an effective and affective communication relationship with the student/learner so that the learner has the chance/opportunity to achieve the optimum/ideal/best success level in the instructional environment.

**Instructional Objectives:** Statements that describe what students will be able to do after completing a prescribed unit of instruction.

**Judging Self:** Aspect related to self-concept that evaluates what we do and who or what we are (e.g., I am an effective student, I am a poor student, I am a lousy football player, I am a bad student, I am the troublemaker in class, etc.).

**Kinesics:** The study of the communicative aspects of gestures and bodily movements.

**Learning:** The acquisition of knowledge/information/skills which results in a change in thinking and/or behavior in one or all of the three learning domains.

**Learning Environment:** Physical and/or psychological circumstances/surroundings in which learning takes place.

**Learning Preference:** The choice of one learning situation or condition over another.

**Learning Style:** The manner in which an individual perceives and processes information in learning situations.

**Learning Theory:** Problematic social scientific theory for human behavior that alleges that humans are born as “blank slates” with no personality characteristics, so humans must learn their personalities.

**Love and Belongingness Needs:** Needs that encompass a hunger for affection, caring, belongingness, and perhaps love.

**Mastery Learning System:** System of learning that allows each student to spend whatever time is needed to master content before being presented with new material.

**Modified Mastery Learning System:** System of learning based on the mastery learning system but limits the number of opportunities students have for demonstrating mastery of instructional objectives.

**Need for Affection:** A learner’s need associated with being liked and giving and receiving affection from others.

**Need for Control:** A learner’s need associated with being capable of making decisions.

**Need for Inclusion:** A learner’s need to have successful associations and interactions with other students.

**Oculesics:** The study of eye behavior, eye contact, eye movement, and the functions of eye behavior.

**Open-Ended Questions:** Type of question that provides a wide range of appropriate responses and require a higher level of thinking.

**Overpersonal:** Ramification of a student not achieving her or his need for affection in the classroom that leaves her or him too open, too honest, reveals too much (often inappropriate) information about themselves, rush relationships, throw caution to the wind, quick to reveal intimate information about themselves, and prone to ignore academic needs in order to satisfy their need for affinity.

**Personality:** A person’s phenotype, or the interaction between an individual’s genotype (see temperament) and her or his environment (nurture, diet, socialization, etc...), which is a reflection of her or his experiences, motivations, attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors.

**Personality Traits:** An individual’s predispositions for responding in a certain way to various situations.

**Physiological Needs:** Basic needs such as food, water, air, sleep, rest, and need for activity or stimulation.

**Poker Chip Theory:** Theory of learning that metaphorically sees the teacher as a poker dealer who has the ability to either take away a player/learner's chips. The chips represent the player/learner's self-esteem.

**Proxemics:** The study of the ways in which humans use and communicate with space.

**Psychomotor (Behavioral) Learning:** Learning that emphasizes performance of a motor act or skill.

**Receiver Apprehension:** The degree to which individuals are fearful about misinterpreting, inadequately processing, and/or being unable to adjust psychologically to incoming messages.

**Reflected appraisal:** Shaping of one's self-concept by messages received from others.

**Rhetorical/Relational Theory of Instructional Communication:** Theory of instructional communication proposed by Beebe and Mottet that examines student and teacher needs and goals in the classroom.

**Safety Needs:** Needs for safety or protection from threats of harm or actual physical harm.  
**Skill Lesson:** The mental and motor activity required to execute some manual tasks.

**Self-Actualization Needs:** Needs associated with the desire to do or be what you are uniquely suited for. Maslow only believed that a VERY select group of people ever truly self-actualized in history (Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mohammed, and Ghandi).

**Self-Concept:** The beliefs and attitudes we have about ourselves, or the totality of the perceptions we have about ourselves.

**Self-Esteem:** Refers to the way a person evaluates her/himself in terms of overall worth. The way we perceive ourselves and our actions and our opinions regarding how other people perceive us.

**Social Comparison:** Shaping of one's self-concept through conscious and unconscious comparison of others.

**Structural Crisis:** A crisis that occurs because of a member of the family – often recurrent (e.g., alcoholic family member, abusive family member, etc.).

**Student Misbehavior:** Verbal or nonverbal communication behaviors which interfere with student learning or another student learning.

**Summative Feedback:** Form of feedback/evaluation where learners are provided feedback by a teacher at the completion of a unit of instruction.

**Teacher Apprehension (Fear of Teacher):** The fear or anxiety associated with interacting or communication with teachers.

**Teacher Clarity:** The process by which an instructor is able to effectively stimulate the desired meaning of course content and process in the minds of students through the use of appropriately-structured verbal and nonverbal messages.

**Teacher Indolence:** Form of teacher misbehavior epitomized by repeated teacher absence, repeated tardiness, unprepared and disorganized, deviation from syllabus, late return of work, and information overload.

**Teacher Incompetence:** Form of teacher misbehavior epitomized by unclear lectures, apathy towards students, unfair testing, boring lectures, information overload, lack of knowledge of subject matter, unintelligible foreign or regional accents, inappropriate volume, and bad grammar/spelling.

**Teacher Misbehavior:** Verbal or nonverbal communication behaviors which interfere with student learning.

**Teacher Offensiveness:** Form of teacher misbehavior epitomized by inappropriate sarcasm/putdowns, verbal abuse, unreasonable/arbitrary rules, sexual harassment, negative personality, and favoritism/prejudice.

**Temperament:** An individual's genotype, characteristics present early in life caused by human biology.

**Traditional Learning System:** System of learning focuses on the teacher as the dispenser of information and is targeted to the average student, so the responsibility of learning rests with the student.

**Underpersonal:** Ramification of a student not achieving her or his need for affection in the classroom that leaves her or him cold, unfeeling, cautious about relationships, reveal only superficial information, because of reluctance to reveal information the teacher and other students inaccurately interpret and inappropriately respond to the student's communication behaviors.

**Values:** Our enduring conceptions of the nature of right and wrong, good and bad.

**VARK Model:** Learning style model created by Neil Fleming to represent the Visual-Aural-Reading-Kinetic learning modalities.

**Vocalics (paralanguage):** The study of the communicative value of vocal behavior and includes all oral cues in the stream of spoken utterances except the words themselves.

**Vulture Statements:** Self-generated, self-defeating statements that people make to themselves that have a negative effect on both self-esteem and self-concept.

**Writing Apprehension:** The fear and anxiety associated with writing situations.



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