

## Chapter 2 Ecological Antecedents for Behavior

Ecological antecedents are *complex* antecedent stimuli or events and most non-ecological antecedents are *simple* antecedents or events. One's social ecology is comprised largely of complex antecedents, which will be referred to as *setting events*. For students, the social ecology usually consists of the home, community, school and classroom. Ecological interventions try to modify both antecedent and consequent conditions in the social ecology that affect behavior. In this chapter we will look at complex antecedents for behavior at the school level.

Teachers usually cannot modify complex ecological antecedents such as schools, homes and communities. There are some complex antecedents, however, that teachers can affect. These include many aspects of their classroom and to some extent their school. They can also extend behavioral interventions into other classrooms, programs, or the home. Chapters Three, Four and Five will briefly discuss ecological extensions of classroom interventions. This chapter discusses a number of complex antecedents or setting events that affect behavior management. The setting events discussed fit into three broad groups: school climate, curriculum, and teacher expectations.

### Setting Events

#### School Climate

School climate is the cornerstone of behavior management and is a descriptive term for a complex set of antecedent events that affect behavior (Dietrich, & Bailey, 1996; Kasen, Johnson, & Cohen, 1990). The principal is responsible for providing the leadership for creating a positive school climate. The principal should be a behavior management advocate. The principal should seek humane and just, system-wide rules and procedures that affect discipline. These rules and procedures include those directly related to behavior, such as suspension policy. They also include those indirectly related to behavior, such as grading policy. The principal is also responsible for discretionary rules and procedures within his or her school. A positive school climate, however, goes beyond general policy. A variety of elements go into a positive school climate. For example:

1. Proper curricula.
2. Flexible response to individual needs.
3. Competent personnel.
4. Recognition of accomplishment.
5. A comfortable and safe facility.

A positive school climate promotes the interests of students, not the convenience of administrators and teachers. When policies and attitudes don't promote the interests of students, there is a negative climate. Both students and parents perceive a negative school climate as aversive. As Murray Sidman (1989) has pointed out, a negative school climate alienates both students and

parents. It can also promote either passive or active resistance. One way to assess school climate is to monitor the level of active and passive resistance to a school's program.

Passive resistance, in students, can underlie several problems that interfere with education. For example:

1. Withdrawal from participation in instruction.
2. High absenteeism or truancy.
3. Dropping out of school.

Passive resistance, in parents, can underlie common problems that are often the subject of complaints from educators. For example:

1. A lack of involvement in the educational process.
2. Refusal to become involved in their child's school problems.
3. Use of private school placements.

Active resistance, in students, can include troublesome behaviors. For example:

1. Disruptive behavior.
2. Vandalism.
3. Aggression.

Active resistance, in parents, can include behaviors that often create considerable conflict. For example:

1. Accusations and complaints.
2. Administrative actions.
3. Legal actions.

### Discipline Policy

Discipline policy is an important part of school climate and has at least two levels. The first level is school-wide and includes rules and procedures that generally apply to all students, with some exceptions. For example, Johns, Guetzloe, and Yell (1998) review the legal and regulatory requirements for disciplining students with disabilities which in some cases limits uniform application of general policy. The principal is responsible for discipline where school-wide rules apply. The second level is within an individual classroom and includes the rules for conduct in that classroom. Classroom discipline policy may be wholly or partially consistent across classrooms or unique to each classroom. Classroom policy should not be inconsistent with or contradict school-wide policy. Classroom policy should be, in whole or part, consistent across classrooms and all affected faculty should help set the policy. Formulation of a school-wide, classroom discipline policy should include

input from teachers, administrators, parents and students. A good discipline policy should:

1. Set positive expectations for student behavior rather than simply listing prohibited behaviors.
2. Set objective criteria for determining deviance from expectations, including the seriousness of the deviation.
3. Specify the available consequences for deviation from expectations.
4. Set objective criteria for selecting an appropriate consequence according to the seriousness of the deviation.
5. Provide a systematic process for evaluating the effect of consequences and for modifying the policy.
6. Promote, in teachers, students, parents and the community, a perception of the school environment as reasonable, orderly and safe.

### Recognition of Diversity

The United States is a diverse society that is comprised of peoples from very heterogeneous backgrounds. Even when an individual's family has been in this country for a number of generations, his or her family will probably persist in socializing their members in a manner relatively consistent with their origins. Therefore, it can be expected that persons whose origins lie within a background that is not broadly represented in American culture will have been socialized in a manner somewhat different from the majority. As educators we need to be sensitive to these differences in our students. Schools should also recognize and accept the customs and practices that are a part of each student's cultural heritage to the extent that is reasonable in an educational setting. This practice will help to educate all students about the need to accept differences among people. It will also make all students feel more at "home" in their school and contribute to building a sense of community among the students.

Usually, when we talk about diversity, it is diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds that are the focus. However, it must be kept in mind that racial and ethnic groups are not homogeneous. There is considerable diversity within racial and ethnic groups. To further confound the task of adapting to this diversity is the interaction of socio-economic status, religion, sex and language (not everyone from the same racial or ethnic background have the same language background) with race and ethnicity. Thus, there is a considerable range of variation that can occur. To suggest that sound advice can be given that is valid across this range of diversity is foolish. What is clear is that it is important to recognize and make adaptations to this diversity (McIntyre, 1992).

The first step is simply to recognize that many differences do exist and for quite legitimate reasons. Second, all of us, including those of us from minority backgrounds, must be aware of our tendency to judge other people from our own frame of reference. In short, we often prejudice other people based on our own cultural biases. Therefore, it is important for us as teachers to reserve judgment of our students and their behavior until we have a reasonable understanding of them.

### Recognition of Accomplishment

Every school should have a systematic program to provide recognition for student accomplishment. There are many ways to give recognition to students. Here are some examples of ways you can recognize accomplishments:

1. Through class and hallway bulletin boards.
2. Honors list.
3. Community publications.
4. Letters of commendation.
5. Plaques.
6. Trophies.
7. Dinners.

You must recognize student accomplishment and treat it as something special. Recognition needs to go beyond simple acknowledgment. Positive consequences should follow recognition. There are many possible rewards that might appeal to students. For example:

1. Special privileges such as extra menu choices at lunch, a reserved parking space, or position as a peer tutor.
2. Access to special programs such as clubs, elective courses, or special recreational programs.
3. Passes to school-sponsored events that charge admission such as special trips, dances, or sporting events.
4. Discount coupons to community activities such as skating rinks, movies, or miniature golf.
5. Free rental coupons for taped movies and electronic games.
6. Special enrollment rates in the community for programs like karate, soccer, or gymnastics.
7. Preferential treatment in the community for part-time and summer jobs.

A good recognition program should have objective criteria for qualifying. Objective criteria protect the program from being perceived as unfair. One important consideration in setting such criteria is that differences in ability are taken into account. It is not fair to hold a student with a disability to the same standard applied to students without a disability. On the other hand, students of average ability should not be held to the same standard as gifted students. You should not limit recognition only to outstanding accomplishments. It is also important to recognize students who have made significant improvement. Recognition of improvement should include students who have improved their behavior as well as those who have increased achievement. Recognition for improved behavior is particularly important. It helps to counter the negative expectations misbehavior sets in teachers and students. These negative expectations result in biases that make it very difficult to rehabilitate troublesome students. Recognition of improvement will reinforce good behavior in a student and help to change negative expectations and biases held by others.

### Flexibility of Response

All schools should have a program for academic assistance that is available to any student that needs help. There are several ways to provide this type of assistance. First, set-up a peer tutor program. This can be done within an individual classroom or school-wide. Peer tutors should always receive some instruction in basic teaching techniques before they begin tutoring. Being a peer tutor can be a privilege for students who have a high level of skill in some subject area. Second, recruit adult volunteers such as parents, retirees or business people to serve as tutors. Like peer tutors, volunteers should receive basic instruction in teaching techniques before beginning to work as tutors. Third, assign one or more teachers to tutoring duties during one class period each day. A different teacher tutors each period and tutoring is available throughout the day. Fourth, assign a teacher or teachers to the tutoring program on a full-time basis. Fifth, operate a special help center for a short period before or after school or both. Staff the center with peer tutors, volunteers, or paid personnel. Finally, set-up a help hotline or interactive World Wide Web (WWW) site to operate in the evenings to provide help with homework problems. A WWW site can be set-up at no cost through the Searle Center for Teaching Excellence at (<http://www.nicenet.org>). Again, staff this hotline or site with any of the types of personnel already discussed.

Flexibility of response also requires schools to have a classroom assistance program. This program should provide teachers with immediate help if a classroom crisis occurs. A classroom crisis can have many forms. For example, a crisis may be a medical emergency, a student out-of-control, a student with a weapon, a potential suicide, or an intruder. There should be a system in place that allows quick and easy access to crisis assistance. Access might be through a two-way intercom, an alarm system, telephone, or messenger system between each classroom and the school office. The personnel designated to provide assistance must be able to go to a teacher's aid quickly. These crisis managers should have a variety of skills such as counseling, physical management, and first aid. Crisis managers should also have contacts with community crisis services such as emergency medical services and police. Crisis managers need to know how to contact community services quickly and how to help them when they arrive.

Schools also need to have a system for alerting classrooms about potentially dangerous situations. Administrators should alert the faculty when there are situations such as an outside intruder or a student in the school with a firearm. The school intercom can serve this purpose well by using a set of prearranged signals. The signal could be an announcement over the intercom system for some non-existent individual. For example, "Mr. Wang please report to the office." might signal all teachers that there is an intruder in the building. The signal might also cue a specific action such as locking classroom doors. The all clear signal should be a similar signal over the intercom, for example, "Cancel that last request."

Another useful support program that promotes flexibility is a short-term detention room. This is a room where teachers can send unruly, oppositional, or unprepared students. Such a program needs an adult, but not necessarily a teacher, to supervise students. Students should only work on

assignments in the detention center. Prohibit all non-educational activity. In particular, there should be no activity permitted that might be rewarding like leisure reading or socializing. Detention should last no longer than a class period. An alternative to a detention room is to use adjacent classrooms as detention rooms for students who need to be briefly removed from a class. In this type of program a student is sent to an adjacent class which has a seat reserved for a student who has been “bounced.” If a student goes in, sits down, and remains well behaved until the end of the class period, he or she returns to the normal schedule and that is the end of it. If a student continues to cause trouble then he or she is sent to the school office for further discipline.

Traditionally, suspension has been a mainstay of discipline programs in public schools. A better alternative is an in-school suspension (ISS) program. In-school suspension keeps students in school and engaged in constructive tasks. It also avoids turning students loose in the community where there are many potential rewards available. Suspended students may engage in a variety of rewarding activities. They may sleep late, watch TV or videos, listen to music, snack at will, ride bicycles or motorcycles, drive around in cars, go to movies, or go bowling. They may also meet other youth who are out of school and get involved in various illegal activities, such as drinking, drug use or shoplifting.

There are several basic policy guidelines for an in-school suspension program (Center & McKittrick, (1987).

1. The age range among students in a program should be no more than three grades or three years.
2. A maximum enrollment should be set. The suggested number is fifteen.
3. Specific criteria should be set for assigning a student to the program.
4. All placements should be for fixed periods that are pre-set and uniform.
5. Placement in a program should have a consistent beginning point, for example, Monday or Wednesday.
6. Dismissal from a program should require successful participation in the program. There should be specific criteria for defining success.
7. Failure to meet the criteria for successful participation should result in a hearing to consider other options.
8. Successful participation in an ISS program should be a prerequisite for acceptance in other school programs, for example, athletics.

An in-school suspension program has two curricula options. First, continue with each student's regular curriculum during ISS placement. The major difficulty with this option is logistics. That is, coordinating assignments and materials with a student's other teacher(s). The other option is a stand-alone curriculum for an ISS program. Two possibilities in this option are either a learning skills curriculum or a functional academic curriculum or a combination of both. The major difficulty with the stand- alone option is that students might fall behind in their work in the regular curriculum. However, this would also be true for students suspended from school. One way to reduce this

problem might be to have tasks from a student's regular curriculum assigned as homework.

### Comfort and Safety

The school environment should be a comfortable setting. There should be adequate provision made for a comfortable level of space. Every classroom should have adequate space for the students and the class activities. Adequate space certainly means providing ample room for seating. It also means providing room for specialized functions such as small group work, learning centers, and individualized programming. Space requirements include storage space for each student and for the storage of instructional materials and records. Teachers also need suitable space for non-teaching duties such as planning, conferences and record keeping. In addition, teachers need an area where they can get away from the classroom to take a break. Finally, there must be suitable space for functions such as eating, recreation, discipline, and toileting. Furthermore, the physical facility must have good lighting, ventilation, heating and cooling.

Safety begins with a well maintained physical facility that is adequate for its purposes. In addition, safety depends on having a good discipline policy and following it. Many of the points discussed earlier concerning discipline policy and support programs impact directly on the issue of safety. Safety is an issue throughout the school and not just in classrooms. Safety is also important in bathrooms, the lunchroom, recreational areas, and hallways. Safety concerns include the school grounds and transportation services for students as well. Discipline policy and support programs must satisfactorily address all of these areas of concern.

### Parent Involvement

A positive school climate is much more likely when parents are supportive of the school and involved in its program. Educators frequently complain about the lack of parent interest and involvement in schools. There are at least two reasons parents fail to become involved. First, if parents' perception of the school climate is negative, they will probably be either passive or active resisters. Second, parents seldom feel that they have any constructive avenues for influence available. Traditionally, the only role for parents has been as a member of a PTA or PTO or as a volunteer worker. Parent organizations seldom amount to more than cheerleading squads. These organizations do not provide an opportunity for meaningful input into the educational program. With two-income families being the norm today, few parents have the time for activities that don't make constructive use of their limited time.

Since parents and children are the consumers of our educational programs, they need to have a significant role in the program. Parents need to have a voice in decision making. Every school should have a democratic parent organization that has a voice in the management of the school through an elected advisory committee. The advisory committee should represent the majority and dissenting views of parents on a wide range of matters, including discipline policy, curriculum, and program evaluation. A parent organization should serve as a vehicle for parent-initiated changes.

It should also provide a forum for criticism of existing policies and programs. In addition, there should be an advisory committee that represents parents on a system level. A system-wide committee might include the chairperson for each of the school-level committees. The system-wide committee should represent the views of parents to the superintendent and school board. Educators must provide for this type of input and incorporate it into the decision-making process.

If parents have a mechanism for constructive participation, their interest and involvement in schools will improve. Apathy is, in large part, a product of feeling powerless. Create a process that values parents and makes them feel effective and apathy will decline. Real participation by parents requires that educators recognize the need to share their professional power with the consumer. If educators want parent involvement, they must not be defensive but open and inclusive. Parent participation in education will increase support for public schools and lead to improvements in the schools and their programs.

### Community Involvement

A quality educational program not only needs the involvement of educators, parents and students but also the community. Community resources are very important for the support programs discussed earlier. The community is also a consumer of public education and needs representation in the decision making process. Representative members of the community should sit on school advisory committees along with parents. There are many constituents in the community that need an opportunity for input into public education. These include local businesses and employers, public service agencies and organizations, colleges and universities and vocational and technical schools.

### **Curriculum**

Curriculum and flexibility of response are related topics. However, curriculum is so important it deserves its own section. If schools desire well behaved and motivated students, involved parents and community support, these constituents must perceive the curricula options as appropriate. There is no one curriculum that is right for every student. The varied abilities, interests and goals of students require more than a single curriculum. Examination of traditional, public-school curricula shows that they emphasize preparation for college. Elementary school curricula prepare students for the secondary curriculum, which then prepares students for higher education. Some school systems claim to offer alternative curricula, a few actually do, but the college preparatory curriculum prevails. Further, legislators and others concerned with public education want to strengthen the traditional curriculum. Increasing the requirements in the traditional curriculum may be proper for students with college as their goal. However, such efforts can make the curriculum less flexible and less relevant for students who do not intend to go to college. This latter group accounts for most of the students in the public schools.

In the U.S., estimates suggest that approximately 75% of 18 to 24 year-olds, not still in school, are high school graduates (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). Thus, it appears



that about 25% of the students who enter school will drop-out before graduation. Drop-outs are students who vote with their feet. They choose to get out of an environment that they perceive as negative. Of the remaining 75% who finish high school, about 50% go on to college. Of those that go to college, about 50% graduate. Thus, a college preparatory curriculum only meets the needs of about 20% of the public school population.

Some will argue that the proportion of students entering and completing college should be higher. They might say public schools aren't doing their job and academic requirements for high school graduation aren't rigorous enough. Unfortunately, the only way there can be a significant increase in college attendance is to lower the curricula standards in colleges. Only students who, intellectually speaking, are bright-normal or above can benefit from a college education. Given a normal distribution of intellectual ability, only about one-quarter of the population is college material. Further, not all students with the ability want a college education. Thus, there probably isn't much room for improvement in the proportion of the population graduating from college.

Completing high school or even some college often does not prepare one to make a positive contribution to the adult community. The rate of unemployment for young adults is several times higher than the rate for the general adult population. This would not be the case if most young adults entered the work force with a proper education. Leaders in business, industry and public agencies all lament the level of functional skills in young people seeking employment. Students need functional skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. Skills for problem solving, and independent learning are needed too. There are many life skills such as parenting skills, that are deficit in our youth. Work skills such as taking directions and cooperation that are critical to success are lacking. Finally, there are the skills needed for employment in specific occupations. All of these needs can and should be met by public school programs.

What is a proper curriculum? The curricula options available in public schools are important for students, their parents, and the community. There is wide variation in the needs and goals of these constituencies and within each of them. Therefore, no single curriculum is likely to be proper for every student. Only diverse curricula will meet the wide ranging needs and goals of public school students. Consumers must have input into what curricula will meet their diverse needs. Decisions about curricula matters should not be left solely to professional educators. Students, parents and representatives of the community need to participate in the decision process. An outline of a diverse public school curriculum follows. It is not a proposal but an example. It is simply a stimulus for thought about what a diverse curriculum might look like.

The curriculum example has three levels: *Readiness*, *basic literacy* and *advanced options*. The curriculum is uniform at the first and second levels. It becomes more diverse at the third level. It rests on several assumptions.

1. The delivery model used will promote flexibility in the choice of teaching materials and methods. Such a model will make it possible to adapt to different learning styles and

- rates.
2. The curriculum represents a continuum. Placement in and movement through the curriculum depends on the mastery of objectives.
  3. The curriculum will be open and movement between options available any time a student chooses and meets the entry requirements. The offerings at the upper level are not age restricted. That is, older individuals wishing to return to school and pursue a different option can do so at any time, if they meet the entry requirements.
  4. The curriculum is appropriate for most students, including those with mild disabilities and learning problems. Special adaptations and modifications would be necessary for students with moderate to severe learning problems.

The readiness curriculum (see Figure 2.1) would serve children during the early childhood period. It lays the foundation for basic literacy. There are four strands in this curriculum. First, the language strand would focus on developing language skills including both vocabulary and syntax. It would emphasize language stimulation activities in social situations. Second, the developmental abilities strand would focus on gross and fine motor skills and social skills. It would employ stimulating activities involving movement and peer interaction. Third, the psychological abilities strand would focus on various prerequisites for efficient learning. It would work on abilities like visual and auditory attending and memory and problem solving skills. Fourth, the pre-academic strand would lay the foundation skills for reading and math instruction. It would teach skills such as letter and number discrimination, letter sound relationships and number and quantity relationships. Mastery of the readiness curriculum would be the prerequisite for moving on to the basic literacy curriculum.

The basic literacy curriculum (see Figure 2.2) would serve children during the middle childhood period. It would provide basic literacy skills at a functional level. That is, the essential skills generally needed to function in the everyday world. Delivery of this curriculum would be through classroom instruction with extensive use of both simulated and real-life application experiences. In short, instruction would focus on developing functional academic skills.

This curriculum would also have four strands. First, there is the language arts strand. This strand would have three sub-components: Oral expression, reading and written expression. Second, there is the math and science strand. This strand would have three sub-components: Arithmetic, physical sciences and biological sciences. Third, there is the citizenship strand. This strand would also have three sub-components: U.S. history, civics and current events including geography. Fourth, there is the career development strand. This strand would have three sub-components: Social skills for daily living, occupational awareness and leisure skills. Minimal competency in this curriculum would be a prerequisite to move on to the advanced curriculum options. Minimal competency would be at about third to fourth grade level in traditional terms. Mastery would be competency at about fifth to sixth grade level in traditional terms.

The advanced options curriculum (see Figure 2.3) would serve students in late childhood,

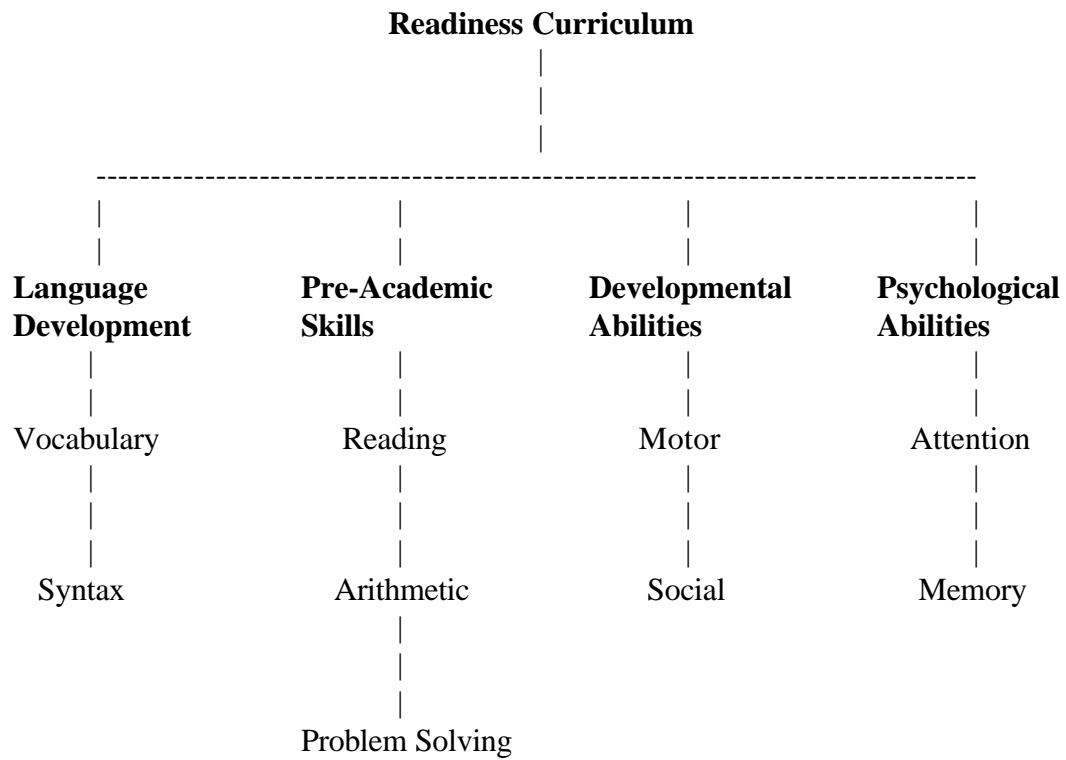


Figure 2.1. A example of a possible structure for a readiness curriculum for the initial years of a school program.

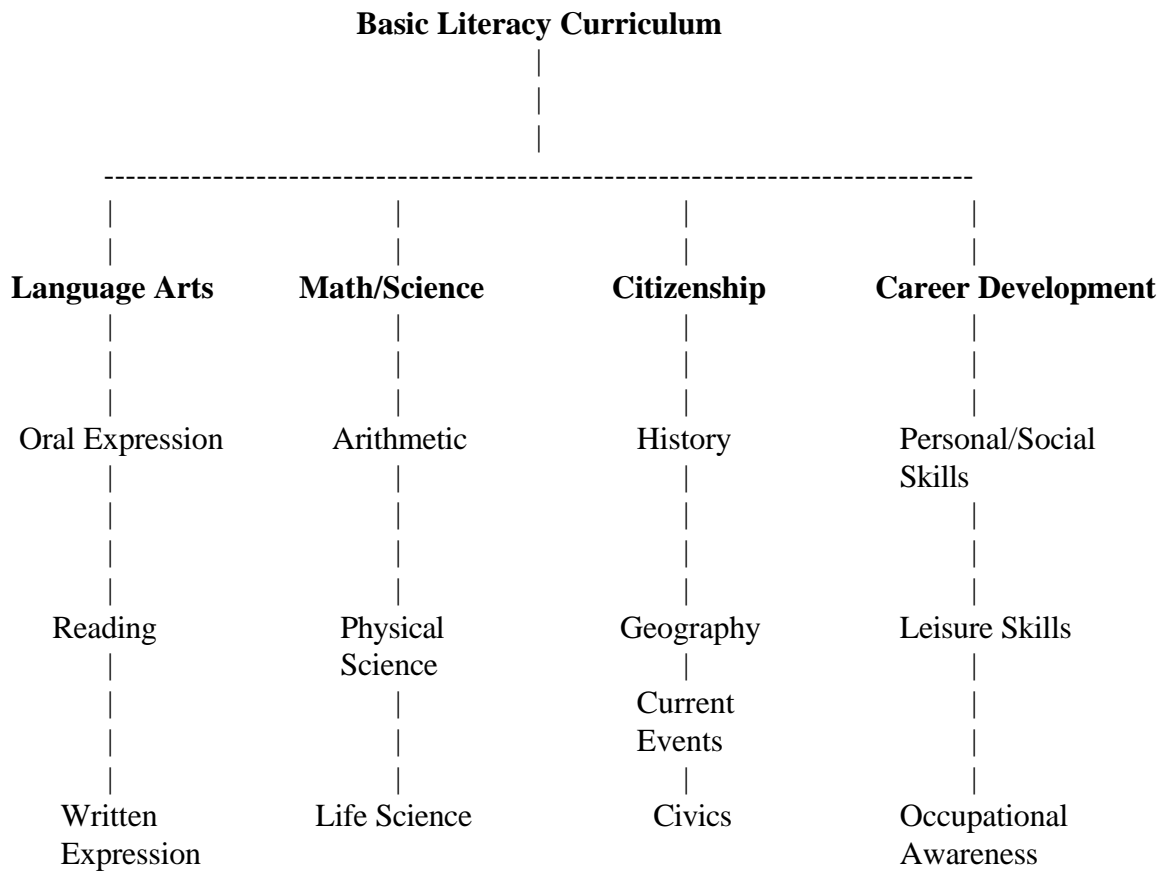


Figure 2.2. A example of a possible structure for a basic literacy curriculum for the intermediate years of a school program.

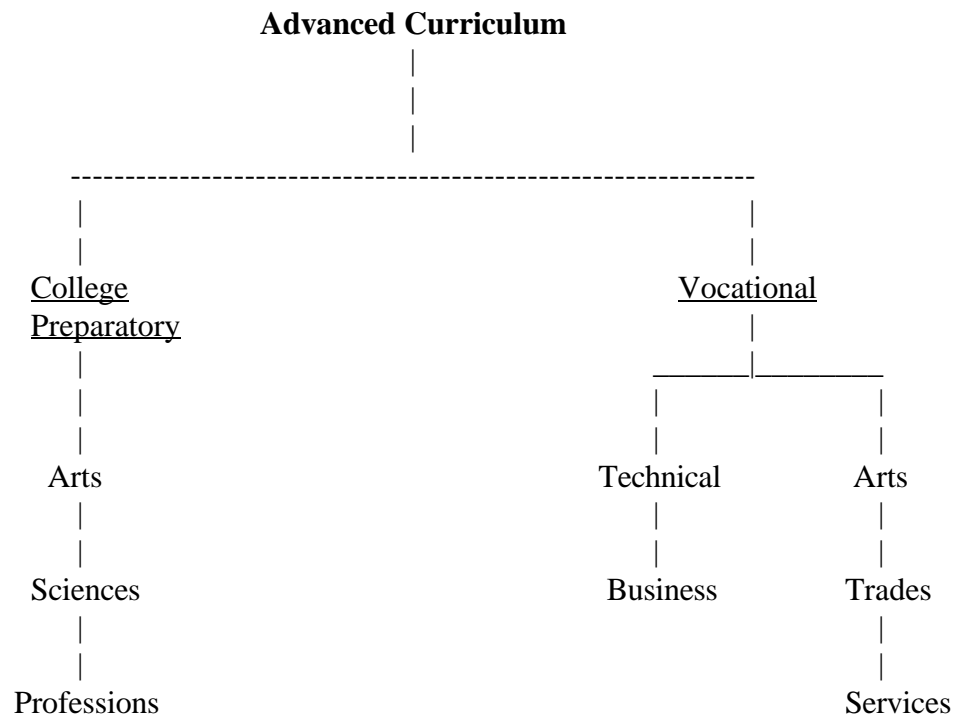


Figure 2.3. A example of a possible structure for an advanced curriculum for the latter years of a school program.

adolescence and occasionally adults. The curriculum would have two major strands: College preparatory and vocational. Entry into the college preparatory curriculum would require mastery of the basic literacy curriculum. Entry into the vocational curriculum would depend upon the strand entered. Entry into the technical and business strands would require mastery of the basic literacy curriculum. Entry into the arts, trades and service strands would require minimal competency in the basic literacy curriculum.

The college preparatory curriculum would have three sub-components. The arts sub-component would be for students interested in pursuing higher education programs in such fields as art, music, literature, history or religious studies. The science sub-component would be for those interested in pursuing higher education programs in such fields as biology, physics, computer science or mathematics. The professional sub-component would be for those interested in pursuing higher education in fields such as education, medicine, law, business or engineering.

This curriculum would have two phases. The introductory phase would emphasize advanced instruction in a broad range of academic disciplines. Advanced instruction would concentrate on the core curriculum in higher education programs. In addition, there would be career development activities for daily living skills, social skills for employment, and career exploration. The specialization phase would emphasize advanced study in the disciplines related to a student's specific career goal. This would also include career internships in appropriate settings.

The vocational curriculum would also have two phases. In the first phase, the students would focus on career specific development of applied academic subjects. This would include career development programs that address daily living skills, social skills for employment, and career exploration. In the specialization phase, the emphasis would be on vocational preparation and supervised work experiences. The vocational curriculum would have five strands. Entry into strands one and two would require mastery of the basic literacy curriculum. Entry into strands three through five would require meeting minimal competency in the literacy curriculum.

The first strand would be the technical strand. This strand would be for those individuals who desire careers in technical fields. Technical careers would include laboratory technician, electronics repair and maintenance work, and communications media. The second strand would be the business strand. This strand would be for individuals interested in careers in fields such as office management, commercial sales, and secretarial services. The third strand would be the arts strand. This strand would be for those pursuing applied careers in commercial art, graphics, and entertainment. The fourth strand would be the trades strand. This strand would be for individuals seeking careers in areas such as construction trades, home appliance repair, and equipment operation. The fifth strand would be the services strand. This strand would be for those interested in careers in service occupations such as retail sales, personal grooming, and child care.

### Curriculum Adjustment

Curriculum can also be looked at less broadly as a setting event for classroom discipline. Below is a story from the author's experience. The story illustrates the use of perceived relevance of curriculum to control off-task behavior and motivation in a ninth grade student.

*Web was a bright, 15 year old, underachiever who was not motivated by any of his classes. He frequently created minor disturbances. Most of the time, Web minded his own business and read books that he brought from home. His favorite reading materials were volumes from a set of books on automobile repair. At the time, Web's goal was to be a mechanic. About the only time Web created a big disturbance was when a teacher took one of these books away from him.*

Two teachers tried to use Web's interest in automobiles. Mrs. Black, his algebra teacher, repeatedly told Web that he couldn't be a mechanic unless he understood algebra. Web knew this was not true. He knew several good mechanics and they didn't know anything about algebra. Mrs. Black was not successful. Mrs. Suder, his English teacher, made a deal with Web. Mrs. Suder gave him a pass each day to go to the library and do research. He could use books he brought from home or books from the library. Mrs. Suder told Web that she wanted him to learn as much as possible about automobile engines. All he had to do was turn in a paper describing in detail what he learned during the semester. She also provided a list of composition standards that the paper had to meet. Mrs. Suder was successful. Web worked diligently on his research, never got into trouble in the library and produced a product that met Mrs. Suder's standards.

Research by the author (Center, Deitz, & Kaufman, (1982) on curriculum adjustment shows that proper individualization of curriculum tasks has important implications for classroom behavior. Appropriate individualization of curriculum tasks must include two steps. First, determine each student's ability level in a given subject area. Second, determine each student's motivated work rate, i.e., how fast they work under reward conditions. When planning instruction and application activities, adjust the demand level of the work based on these two steps. This research shows that an inappropriate match between a student's performance level and the demand level of instructional tasks contributes to behavior problems. When such a condition was present, classroom misbehavior increased by as much as 100%. When a curriculum adjustment brought performance level and task demand level into alignment, there was a significant reduction in the level of misbehavior (see Figure 2.4). Proper planning for instruction is critical for good behavior management in the classroom. If possible, make needed adjustments before beginning work with a student.

Some students exhibit a lot of inappropriate classroom behavior such as being off-task. While off-task they engage in various escape behaviors such as talking or doodling. When these behaviors occur, your first strategy should be to determine if the student's work is properly individualized. Immediate adjustment, on a trial basis, can often provide useful information. The effects of such trials help determine if curriculum adjustment will reduce misbehavior. Curriculum tasks may be inappropriate because they are too difficult or too easy. Even if the demand level is proper, the amount of work expected in a task period may be too much or too little. Of course, the problem may be due to a combination of these factors. When work is too easy or the amount is too small, a

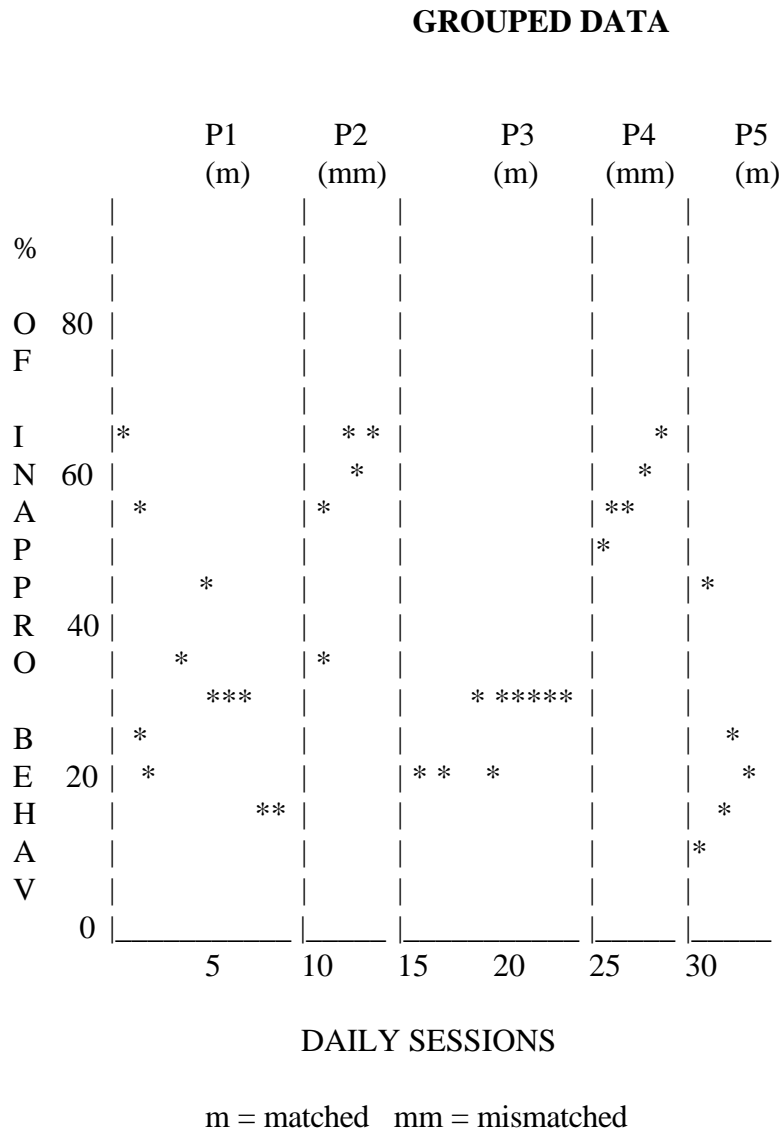


Figure 2.4. A graph showing changes in levels of inappropriate classroom behavior as a function task difficulty and student skill level.



student become bored or finishes too quickly or both. Students will then look for some way to fill up the left-over time. Such students may find a way to entertain themselves at your expense. When work is too difficult or the amount of work is too great, students become frustrated and give up. A frustrated student is in a state of negative emotional arousal. Such students may become explosive or involved in less dramatic forms of disruptive behavior.

If you must give students tasks that some may finish early, have planned activities available for those who finish early that are interesting and not disruptive. Some classes have a regular set of activities of this type. Students in such classes know what and where these activities are. They also know to go get one of them when they finish early.

### Developmental Curriculum

Frank Hewett and Frank Taylor (1980) suggest that a proper curriculum should be developmental. They have designed a curriculum sequence with six stages: *Attention, Response, Order, Exploratory, Social, and Mastery*. As they point-out, many students enter school at the Attention Stage of development. Unfortunately, the beginning academic curriculum in most schools starts at the Order Stage. You can adjust curriculum by using a student's developmental level. When you have identified the predominant developmental stage, you can focus curriculum tasks at that stage (see Figure 2.5). Once a student is successful at one stage, modify his or her curriculum tasks to reflect the next stage in the sequence. This process should continue until the student is functioning at the stage that predominates among his or her classmates. Tasks at a lower level do not have to be different in form from tasks at the predominate developmental level in a class. What is important is to focus on the stage appropriate aspects of the task.

The following is a brief description of the stages in the sequence. Hewett and Taylor's text has a detailed description of the stages along with teaching suggestions.

1. Attention Stage: This stage covers both visual and auditory attention, including both discrimination and memory skills.
2. Response Stage: This stage covers motor coordination, both large and small motor skills, as well as eye-hand coordination. It also covers both non-verbal and verbal language, including articulation, comprehension, and expression. It includes skills for both motor and verbal responses to tasks.
3. Order Stage: This stage covers direction following, including imitation of both position and sequence. It also covers school adjustment, including both task related and person related behavior.
4. Exploratory Stage: This stage covers active participation and knowledge of the environment, including objects, events, experiences and beliefs.

5. Social Stage: This stage includes relationships with others, including both adults and peers and both in and outside the school context. It also covers self-concept including self-confidence, self-efficacy and mood.
6. Mastery Stage: This stage includes self-help, health and hygiene, reading, writing, math and vocational and career development skills. This is the stage at which most teachers want to focus their instruction. However, a student cannot successfully function at this stage if he or she has significant skill deficits at any of the earlier stages.

### **Teacher Expectations**

Any teacher familiar with the classic study by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1969) on teacher expectations and self-fulfilling prophecies will also be careful about his or her personal expectations for individual students. Research shows that your expectations for a student can affect the student's performance. It is not your expectations per se that affect a student's performance. Rather, it is the effect your expectations have on your behavior that affects student performance. Thomas Good and Jere Brophy (1978) examined the connection between teacher expectations and behavior. Their study showed that holding negative or positive expectations for students resulted in different patterns of behavior toward the students.

In particular, they found low expectations associated with a higher level of criticism. Teachers also asked low expectation students fewer questions. In addition, low expectation students got less prompting when they didn't know the answer to a question. They also got more negative feedback for an incorrect answer. When low expectation students gave a correct answer, they often got no positive feedback from their teacher. If they did get positive feedback, they got less than other students. The pattern of teacher behavior toward high expectation students was just the opposite. Other studies show teacher expectations also affect a teacher's non-verbal behavior. Teachers get physically closer to students they have high expectations for. Such students also get more face-to-face interaction with teachers. Further, teachers give high expectations students more signs of approval such as smiles.

Your attitude toward a student can affect the your behavior toward that student. A negative attitude toward a student can arise from many sources. It may result from a bad experience with the student. It may also result from prior experience with a sibling or parent of the student. Often, it is the product of informal remarks made by another teacher about the student. You must try to put aside personal prejudices about students regardless of how they arise. Deal with all students in a professional manner. Professionalism requires positive expectations for every student. You need to watch and judge both your attitudes and behavior toward your students. If they are less than professional, you have a responsibility to change them.

### **An Example of an Educational Task with a Shifting Stage Focus**

The following are objectives for a reading task at different stages:

1. **Attention Stage:** The student will listen to a story and identify and remember characters' names. Or, the student will identify and remember at least five words in the story containing the short "e" sound.
2. **Response Stage:** During oral reading, the student will follow along in the text and underline the central character's name each time it occurs. For a more academic focus, the student will underline each word in the story containing the short "e" sound.
3. **Order Stage:** The student will listen to the story and verbally describe, in proper sequence, the major events in the story.
4. **Exploratory Stage:** The student will listen and follow along in the text. The student will participate in a follow-up discussion of the story. Discussion will include both answering and asking questions about the story.
5. **Social Stage:** The student will listen and follow along in the text. Following the story, the student will participate in a cooperative learning task based on the story.
6. **Mastery Stage:** The student will follow along in the text and read aloud when called on. The student will correctly answer questions on a comprehension work sheet following the story.

Figure 2.5. An illustrative set of task objectives for the same lesson at each of the six stages in the Hewett and Taylor developmental curriculum model.

### Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the "big picture" relative to setting events important to behavior management. You can evaluate your school's climate using the School Climate Checklist (see Figure 2.6). Certainly, some of the topics discussed are outside the control of an individual teacher or even a group of teachers. None, however, are beyond your influence. As a professional educator you have a responsibility to voice your opinions about the needs and goals of your profession. You can serve as a model for good practice within your own classroom. You can also lobby for change at the school level and system level as an individual and through your professional organization.

### School Climate Checklist

Rate each of the items below using the scale provided. Then compute a mean score for your school.

Ratings:

**1 = Poor or non-existent    2 = Fair    3 = Good    4 = Excellent    5 = Out-standing**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. My school provides special academic assistance programs for students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. My school has specific procedures for providing classroom assistance to teachers experiencing a classroom crisis.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. My school has a staffed short-term detention program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. My school has an in-school suspension program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. My school is aware of the diversity among its students and constructively takes this into account in dealing with and planning for students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. My school has programs such as recognition of accomplishment by students that promote a positive climate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. My school offers a variety of curricula options that meet the needs and interests of virtually all students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. My school provides a comfortable and safe environment for faculty, staff and students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. My school has a program for soliciting input from parents on important school issues and for meaningfully involving parents in decisions that affect the school and its programs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. My school has a program for soliciting input from the community served by the school on important school issues and for meaningfully involving the community in decisions that affect the school and its programs.

Total:

Mean:

Note: You might also find it useful to administer this checklist to a sample of faculty, staff and students to see if their perceptions match yours.

Figure 2.6. A checklist that can be used to evaluate your school's climate and identify areas for improvement.

### **Activities**

1. Design a recognition program that you could use in your classroom.
2. Develop a process for evaluating school climate based on the concept of resistance.
3. Evaluate your school's climate using the School Climate Checklist (SCC). Develop some suggestions for how your school might improve its program in any area you rated either (1) or (2) on the SCC.
4. Describe, for a specific subject area, how you might improve the perception of relevance for your curriculum by your students.
5. Develop an objective for a specific subject focused at each of Hewett and Taylor's developmental curriculum stages.

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