

Uphill

Helping Students
Who Struggle in
School

Both Ways

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To Mom and Dad . . .

*And to Alexander, for his continued optimism
on the journey up the hill*



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CHAPTER FOUR

CREATING COHESIVENESS

*How to Be an Energizer Educator and Reach
All Students in Your Classroom*

NEWTON'S FIRST LAW

Students in motion tend to stay in motion . . . or so it seems. There has been a dramatic increase in the diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in our country in recent years. According to “A.D.D.—A Dubious Diagnosis?”, an investigative report on Ritalin and ADD produced by the Merrow Report and aired on PBS in 1995, an estimated two million children in America are currently receiving medication as treatment for ADD or ADHD. As an eighth grader at a school in Maryland, Matt Scherbel wrote a diatribe about the negative effects of Ritalin. He wrote about how the drug made him feel unlike himself for six hours a day. His answer to the medication question lay in his expectation of his education: “The schools should shape our education around our idiosyncratic minds, our quaint minds, our quirky minds, our crackpot minds, our curious minds. Where would we be without eccentric people?”¹

The ongoing debate about overdiagnosis, underdiagnosis, or whether “those kids just ought to learn to behave” is a moot point for many teachers. Theory must grapple with sociology outside of the classroom doors because in spite of the struggle, the seat next to the teacher’s desk is always

occupied. There is a palpable energy that runs through ADHD kids. It is more than their unraised hands, their incessant chatter, and the frequent sharpening of their pencils. It is greater than the drumming on the desk, the shuffling feet, and the thrice-an-hour requests to go and get a drink. It is a life force that permeates outward from them. Sometimes that force is so great that the cart overtakes the horse. It's the childhood feeling of running down a hill . . . both exhilarating in its freedom and frightening in the secret fear that our feet may not stop.

Yet, as the title of this book suggests, we do not often let children run downhill. Instead, we command them upward. School is a difficult place for children whose feet were meant to fly.

ALPHABET SOUP

I've always taught the "alphabet kids"—that is, those students who have the scarlet letters of a disability on their cumulative folders. Even now, in working with students who don't have special education labels, there is still the invisible brand of "at-risk." I've never quite understood the professional purpose of labeling. I realize, of course, that there is a practical purpose. Students are categorically labeled in order to receive federal funds. They are grouped according to a pre-defined set of traits in order to receive appropriate services. I liken this to the fact that my house has a number. The number means that I will receive my mail. My driver's license has a number, too, and a special label about wearing corrective lenses. I understand the necessity of that, too. Yet, as important as both those labels are, none of my colleagues address me as "1811." None of my friends call me "Organ Donor." No salesman has ever clapped me on the shoulder and boomed, "Welcome, Corrective Lens Wearer." It's absurd to think that in our personal and professional worlds, we are considered labels. We are, instead, people with unique gifts,

talents, and quirks. Why then, do so many good-hearted and well-intentioned educators allow a label to make them into an educational Cyclops? A myopic view of any student, but especially a special education student, places that student at risk. Not only is it an uphill journey, but that student must also hold the steaming bowl of alphabet soup, careful not to spill it as she travels on her way. Such treatment is unfair. It's unkind and it's educationally hazardous. Take it from me, number 1811.

THAT SMARTS!

“Will you draw for me, Alvaro?” could often be heard in my classroom during Alvaro’s seventh- and eighth-grade years. Alvaro is a gifted artist and the other students recognized his natural talent. He was flattered by their requests and almost always obliging. He enjoyed being able to do what he loved and to be admired for it. School was otherwise difficult for him and his artistic talent allowed him to shine. Yet sometimes, there was frustration in his smile and hesitancy in his hand. He often had to interrupt his own projects to assist. Sometimes, it seems, he became tired of his talent. Sometimes, too, the others were resentful. They were jealous that they could not produce the consistent level of quality that Alvaro was able to bring to his art.

“Yer, would you mind reading with Christine? Could you take just a minute and help Brandon? Do you have time to do flashcards with Dillon?” The academically gifted are a great classroom resource. Teachers rely on their consistency and their abilities. It is comforting to know that our educational message is being delivered and our gifted students often give clear feedback on our delivery. They are able to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways. Yet sometimes, they get tired. Sometimes they get bored. And often they are resented by their classmates. Flattery gives way to annoyance as their teachers hold up their projects and say, “Class, this is

what an A project looks like.” They shrink in their seats as the class rolls its eyes and sighs. On the next project, they decide to dummy it down a bit. It is a vicious cycle.

Giftedness. Special Education. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). All these words are synonymous with opportunity—and all are invitations for risk. It is not, however, a deductive process. It is not true that all gifted, special education, or ADHD children are at-risk. It is not even true that the current educational environment poses a risk to all such learners. However, the traits expressed by all three groups compound the threat of risk. Add to these factors the contentious relationships at the onset of adolescence and we have the perfect formula for frustration, alienation, school failure, and school dropout.²

FRONT LINES AND FAULT LINES

The first remedy towards creating whole learners out of all learners is to stop engaging in educational probate. It is time to call a moratorium on blame, diagnosis, and debate and to simply start dealing with the students who are seated in the desks or at the tables in our classrooms. Specific education for the gifted and talented has struggled since its inception. It is federally recommended and not federally required. This means that districts often do the minimum level of service required to appease vocal parents and to compete with neighboring districts. There are many school administrators, teachers, and members of the public who refuse to acknowledge that those with an academic gift or an outstanding talent don't simply have an easy road. They do not understand that intelligence without appropriate affect is as damaging to students as affect without accompanying intellect. Even when faced with the statistics of a bell-shaped curve, they understand the necessity of providing alternative services for a child whose IQ is 70 but do not comprehend the need for services for a child whose IQ is 130. The 30 standard devia-

tion points that qualify the learner have more power in a downward direction.

Overdiagnosed? Overmedicated? Underfunded? Misunderstood? Undisciplined? Students with ADHD may be any of these or they may be none of them. ADHD is a medical condition determined by a doctor. Clearly, there are cases of misdiagnosis. Sometimes, parents without skills raise children with impulsive, disorganized, and hyperactive behaviors. While these children may not be classically ADHD, they certainly evidence ADHD behaviors. I will never forget second-grader Joshua. He was the first child to open my eyes to the impact of ADHD as a medical condition. Joshua screamed his way through first grade. He hit his peers, yelled obscenities at everyone, and seemed to enjoy digging his pearly white teeth into tender teacher flesh whenever possible. As a second-year teacher, I was cowed by the knowledge that I needed to get a tetanus shot for a human bite. Joshua never stopped moving and was incapable of sitting at a desk. He knew all of his letters, all of the sounds, and could read very well. He couldn't draw or write and he sacrificed many a pencil in his rage at being unable to do so.

Joshua's seven-year-old world rapidly deteriorated both at home and at school. He was becoming too much for his well-intentioned single mother to handle. His little brother was cooperative and quiet and Joshua's mother didn't understand her first-born feral child. She took him to a doctor who immediately began treating him for ADHD. On his first day with medication, Joshua sat at his desk. He raised his hand. He could print legibly. He didn't bite anyone all day.

Does that mean that medication is the answer? No, it means that medication was the answer for Joshua. There have been countless other students diagnosed with ADHD who have needed dietary changes, behavioral remediation, consistency in parenting, or a combination of all of these. What matters is that the condition and the child are not ours to judge—they are ours to educate.

The National At-Risk Educator's Network (NAREN) uses a bumblebee as a symbol of the organization. The reason for doing so is profound.

Because of its unwieldy body and disproportionately small wing size, scientists studying aerodynamics once stated that, technically, the bumblebee should be incapable of flying. And yet fly it does. Many people—including far too many educators, counselors and social workers—believe that trying to educate and train at-risk kids is a waste of time because they will never amount to much anyway. Many of these kids do still learn to fly despite the great weights they often carry inside them. Fly, many most certainly can and do; and fly, they all most certainly could, with better informed and more supportive educational stakeholders.³

Special education students are at risk of becoming bumblebees, too. It is an atrocity when teachers seek to make their own lives easier by denying special education students access to a field trip because they are educated out of the mainstream. I have worked with children written off because of their educational label and I have worked with teachers who seemed to desire a label for every student in their classroom. I have also worked with countless caring, giving, welcoming teachers who bent over backwards to view all students in their charge as unique learners. I've always felt that it was a positive that such teachers are internally rewarded for their displays of open-mindedness. The explicit educational response is to simply shift more needy learners into their classrooms. Unfair? Inequitable? Maybe, but that doesn't matter to the learning disabled (LD) student with his hand waving in the air.

Theoretically, the ongoing debates about what is educationally sound are not only appropriate, they are necessary to promote change. Practically, however, they do not help a teacher to meet the just-in-time (JIT) needs of her students. Judgments and debates become immoral when they influence inaction in a classroom. When a teacher waits for ser-

vices, passes the educational buck to a specialist, decreases expectations due to a label, or fails to create an individually constructivist curriculum, she is engaging in a process of educational probate that diminishes the will of the child.

THE ENERGIZER EDUCATOR

In a comprehensive tome dedicated to the unique needs of visual-spatial learners, Linda Kreger Silverman (2002) offers several keys for success for “twice exceptional” learners. Several pieces of her advice extend to at-risk learners with any of the multiple intelligences.

1. Show them, don’t just tell them. Teach them to picture concepts.
2. Use hands-on learning experiences.
3. Don’t make them show their work—let them find the answers their own way.
4. Avoid timed tests.
5. Allow the use of a computer for all written work.
6. Give them advanced concepts even if they haven’t mastered easier work.
7. Expose them to role models of successful twice exceptional individuals.
8. Let them tape-record lectures.
9. Use earphones to block out auditory distractions.
10. Have a place in the classroom where they can retreat when they are overstimulated.
11. Shorten written assignments and allow them to be dictated.
12. Allow the use of a calculator.⁴

I called this section the energizer educator because a good educator keeps going and going. He keeps searching for the teaching techniques that will best match the learning

styles of his students. The energizer educator recognizes his profession as an immersion into lifelong learning. This teacher extends himself beyond the hours of the school day. He marches past the critics who tell him that giving tests orally is enabling or that modifying expectations is unfair. Energizer educators have self-confidence; an ongoing commitment to creativity, flexibility, and quality; and an ability to trust students. In addition to these traits, an exemplary teacher must have the ability to keep up with the children's high energy levels and constant questioning. The teacher must have an almost limitless ability to listen and must have the stamina to direct, redirect, and respond appropriately, seemingly *ad infinitum*. Finally, the teacher must possess a tolerance for students with high levels of curiosity, for independent and creative thought, and for frequent challenges to the existing way of doing things.⁵

"Humor isn't for everyone . . . just those who want to have fun, enjoy life, and feel alive." This quote by Anne Wilson Schaef highlights another essential quality of the energizer educator. Dr. Stuart Robertshaw, also known as Dr. Humor, is known nationally for his motivational efforts to encourage everyone to infuse more humor into their lives. In 1987 a publisher asked him to review a textbook on child development. "There was a chapter on joy, creativity and humor in young children," Robertshaw recalls, "and there was a quote that got my attention. It said that, on the average, preschool children laugh or smile 400 times a day, but adults over the age of 35 laugh or smile only 15 times a day."

That set Robertshaw to researching the subject. He'd always been a humor collector, keeping files of cartoons and funny stories. But he started looking deeper. "I spent about four hours a week for the next three months in the library reading about humor," he says. He was amazed at what he found—for instance, medical studies showing that laughter lowered blood pressure and produced endorphins, the body's natural painkillers.⁶

Much of the resistance to using humor in the adult world comes from the seriousness of our schooling. Why bother

using humor when you can make a point as fiercely as possible and get on with it? Author Marshall McLuhan has an answer: “Those who draw the distinction between education and entertainment don’t know the first thing about either.” Think about it. When we’re babies, we’re trained to expect good things of people. We encourage playfulness even into the first few years of school. Then the same behavior that your teachers rewarded you for in the earlier years of school got you sent to the principal’s office by the fifth and sixth grade.⁷

A basic tenet of building relationships is to “do no harm.” This maxim is critical to the use of humor in a classroom. Any humor that uses stereotypes or put-downs, or that encourages a negative atmosphere does harm. Positive humor, however, serves to unify and relax students, creating ideal conditions for learning.

My seventh-grade math class was really struggling with algebraic equations. I was at the board using different-colored markers and attempting to show the difference between a “5y” and a “5.” I drew a dog’s head around the first number and a cat’s head around the second. I told the students that trying to add the two was like trying to mix cats with dogs. Later in the lesson, I asked a student who was struggling, “Can you mix cats and dogs together?” His response was “Sure, but you get a mutant.” The entire class burst into laughter and the tone of “no mutants in math class” was set. The group was cohesive, motivated, and their collective sense of frustration with the mathematical concept was greatly reduced.

In my first year as a teacher, I had a long, narrow special education classroom. In the name of student management, I segregated it, putting up walls and dividers to separate the most disruptive of my learners. Fresh from the university and armed with the belief that I was responsible for the complete control of student actions, I behaved like a drill sergeant for much of the day, allocating points for positive behaviors and redirecting negative behaviors time and time again. Yet my classroom was most functional when my students all sat at the common table and learned together.

Slowly the walls came down and my students began to feel a sense of group accountability.

It is my firm belief that classrooms must be fluid, tolerant, and cohesive. The expectation of positive character traits, the infusion of humor, and an atmosphere of accountability create a familial bond among learners. This connection is integral to students who are at-risk. Unification implies shared power. When a student started to decorate his “cubicle” in that first year of teaching, I came to the startling realization that I was actually giving him and the others who were “walled off” more power. This was especially highlighted by the fact that his décor of choice was Playboy centerfolds!

Fourteen years after that first year, in a new school district, equipped with a classroom the size of a shoebox and ten animated “at-risk” seventh graders before me, I made a simple announcement. “This is our space. We are all responsible for it. We are all responsible for each other. We don’t have to even like one another to respect one another but it sure would help. So try to find one likable thing about everyone in here.” That class was together for two years and moved into a larger room during the second year. The students commented on occasion that they missed the “forced togetherness” of the previous classroom. During the first year, the class of ten expanded into twelve; they grew taller, broader, and more tolerant. They went through all the stages of group development—they formed, they normed, they stormed, and they performed. And many of them cried when it was time to say goodbye and move on to the high school because they felt as if they were disbanding a family.

15 MPH IN SCHOOL ZONES

Many facets of the educational environment are controlled for both students and staff. We are told what to teach, when to teach it, when to use the restroom, when to eat lunch, and when to head for home. Often this guidance comes in the form of a master schedule enforced by a series of bells.

Teachers are great companions on long-distance car trips because we've learned to forestall our biological urges for forty-seven minutes or more of instructional time. The mechanisms that regulate the school day are put into place for a variety of reasons; safety, convenience, and curriculum all affect the boundaries of a student's day.

Just as there are components that protect the functions of an institution, so, too, the inner workings of a classroom and the individual methodology of an instructor create miniature learning zones within that institution. "Educator, know thyself" is perhaps the best advice that can be given—maximal learning is dependent upon fluidity, tolerance, and cohesion and those intangible traits are directly reflected in a teacher's style.

Whether defining a curriculum, resolving a conflict, or infusing humor into instruction, a teacher performs best when he is true to his own personal style. I used to love to go into the classroom of a colleague, Bob, and watch him teach. His classroom was always decorated cheerfully and tastefully. Personal photographs adorned his desk, plants grew in all corners of the room, and there were several pieces of artwork that reflected his own whimsical nature. He always greeted each of the students warmly and by name. He inquired after family members who had been his students in years gone past. He had nicknames for the students who needed extra attention and it was obvious that everyone present felt comfortable and safe. He began each of his social studies classes by allowing the students to read the daily newspaper and discuss the headlines. It was a practice that only took five minutes but it allowed all voices and opinions to be heard. Students could comment on any article, ranging from the national news to a local editorial to the latest antics of Charlie Brown, or students could simply read the paper without commenting at all.

Bob was also a master at pacing his curriculum. The newspapers would rustle and I would shuffle in my seat, convinced, at first, that too much instructional time was passing by. I knew that Bob had a full agenda for each day and I

never failed to be amazed by the natural grace that propelled him through his lesson plans. He would frequently stop to ask questions, tell personal anecdotes, or allow the students to share thoughts, and he still accomplished all that he set out to do.

As a middle school principal, I was able to watch many effective teachers in action. I witnessed language teachers bound by grammar texts and those who never opened the book. I saw hands-on science in well-equipped laboratories and science taught in sparse classrooms without even running water. I heard teachers insist on correct spellings and others who simply said “Do your best.” I was immersed in classrooms alive with technology and in others where a notebook and a pencil were the most appropriate tools. Time and again I discovered that authentic individuals are the most effective teachers. Classroom practices vary widely but educators who are comfortable with themselves, believe in their methodologies, and have genuine positive feelings for students create environments that are ripe for real learning.

AND THESE THREE THINGS REMAIN

The only child of neatnik, structured parents, I am a self-professed “relaxed whirlwind” who always has to trudge down to the Department of Motor Vehicles and pay an extra fee to recover the title and registration for my car because I’ve inevitably misplaced the original. While being both laid-back and a whirlwind may seem an oxymoron, I can assure you both from personal experience and from extensive work with students who struggle in school that it is not. It is not only possible to have eight fingers in eight pies while seated in one chair—it is how many of us live our lives. It is the ability to first organize, then generalize, and finally to transition successive skills that allows individuals to wear a plethora of hats and successfully perform a variety of unrelated tasks.

When I was about eight, I discovered a terrific way to clean my room. I simply opened up my top dresser drawer,

removed the clothing, swept the contents of a dresser top replete with soda cans, tissues, and apple cores into the drawer, and then shoved the clothing back on top. It even looked neat when my mother came to inspect. Of course, not everything fit into the drawers with the clothing, and thus the corners of the closets and the crevices of the toy box were also always overflowing with any number of treasures and a fair amount of refuse. This worked, of course, until my mother began to wonder why I never carried anything *out* of my bedroom and why my sweatshirts began to smell like a vintage apple orchard well after harvesting time. It was then that I learned that organization needs both a purpose and a plan.

Students must be taught both the purpose and the plan of organization. Purpose answers the question about why organization is important. Is it because an adult inspector will check their work? It is so that assignments can be found? Is it so that they can get to their classes on time and have the necessary materials? Is it so that they don't have to listen to the teacher badger them about the mess beneath their desk?

Purpose is important because it reflects motivation. In my early days of cleaning, I was motivated only by my mother's stamp of approval so that I could be finished with my chores and play outside. Later, after more than a few lost treasures prompted hours of searching and gallons of tears, I was motivated by a more internal desire to keep things that were precious to me. Still later in life, I was nudged toward increased orderliness in order to get to work on time, maintain a good credit rating, and have a presentable home.

Disenfranchised students often lack purpose because they lack both external and internal motivation. Before a teacher can even begin to help a student build a plan for organization, she must establish a sense of purpose. One of the best ways to do this is to make organization both rewarding and nonthreatening. A kind word and a pocketful of Starburst candies go a long way in providing a purpose for organization. When I first meet a group of students, I compliment them when they have their materials in class; sometimes, I provide an intermittent reinforcement in the form

of a piece of candy to those students who are prepared. I write positive notes home, send them with a complimentary note to the principal, or allow them to leave a few minutes early at the end of the day or at lunchtime as an acknowledgement that organization is of value in my classroom. I also ask them probing questions about their motivation and the plans behind their organization. I make it a point to let the other students know that organization is not easy and that Jim or Nakama is not simply lucky. I ask questions such as, "How did you know what to bring to class today? Where did you keep it so that you could find it? Do you always keep things there? When did you start doing that? Did it take you a while to get organized like that? Are there any positives associated with your organizational system? Are there any negatives? Would you recommend it to other people?"

When students are not organized or prepared, I empathize. I let them know that I struggle with staying organized, too. I tell them that their lack of organization is a problem in my classroom and I ask them if they have a solution for solving it. If they don't, I remind them that we are a team of learners and offer to ask the class for suggestions. Some students welcome this and others quickly come up with at least one solution. My goal is not to outline a lifetime fraught with difficulty due to a chaotic personal style, but rather to instill an initial sense of purpose. I finish by asking my students what their solution is for "today" and then for "tomorrow." A "today" solution might mean borrowing the necessary materials from a friend, going to a locker (and staying after school), or using something from the "kid cupboard" in the classroom. A "tomorrow" solution might be writing in the assignment notebook, scribbling a note on an arm, or making a decision to keep materials in the classroom for a while. This is the beginning of a development of a plan.

Providing students an underlying purpose by using positive words, edible treats, or reinforcement from others doesn't always work. Students may feel manipulated or simply wish to be oppositional. Usually, I have a private conversation with those students. I acknowledge that using small

rewards is a way to inspire organization. I agree that it is somewhat manipulative. And then I tell them that it is only because I care. I tell them that because I care, I try to make learning life skills somewhat painless and that organization is a life skill. I also tell students that they will always have my acceptance and that I will like them in spite of their behavior but that I will never permit them to be without purpose, either. In short, I tell them that I will keep bugging them because organization is important and that having a purpose and a plan are even more important. Eventually, most students smile and tell me that they'll get a purpose if only I'll stop talking. I smile back and ask them for a "tomorrow" plan.

When I speak of goal setting with students, I use the words "today" and "tomorrow" very specifically. Students who struggle in school typically do not have the capacity to think about long-term goals. The stresses of their immediate worlds take up too much of their care and their intellect and they cannot envision "ten years from now when you get a job." The term *staging* refers to dividing tasks into small units and performing each subtask independently; staging is a very effective way to encourage purposeful, planned organization for students. Thus, "I want you to have an organizational plan for language class tomorrow" has more validity to students than "I want you to have a plan for not misplacing any more work." Often, it has taken years for students to achieve the state of chaos that they are immersed in, and it is unrealistic to expect immediate and global progress. We are often in a professional hurry because we don't have the luxury of time. We want to give Greg all of the organizational proficiencies necessary in one large lesson because we fear for his academic future if he does not possess those skills. The truth of the matter is, though, that Greg does not possess the skills, must learn them as progressively as he has learned other life skills, and that time is not on our side. Just as we would not hand a primer to a nonreader and command them to read, we cannot expect Greg to generalize all of the skills he needs quickly and adeptly.

***SPECIFIC PLANS FOR TEACHING
ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS***

Two Folders

Most disorganized students are overwhelmed by the traditional “folder for every class” system. Instead, the student should simply use two folders, one for work to be finished and turned in and one for work that has been graded. It is important that the student be given time and adult supervision with the daily sorting of papers into the folders. The only task of sorting is to place papers into appropriate piles. It is not the time to discuss incomplete work. Once the work is sorted, the student should develop and share with an adult a plan for the contents of the “unfinished” folder.

Lockers and Desks

Disorganized students need a plan for cleaning out lockers and desks. It is overwhelming to them to hear “clean your desk.” Often, they will remove only the noticeable trash and simply heap the rest of the contents into a more organized pile. Instead, an adult needs to break down the task. “I want you to put all the loose papers in a pile” could be a first step. When that step is completed, the next direction should be given, “Put all the things you write or color with in one pile.” This process would continue until the contents of the desk were organized. On future “cleaning trips” a teacher might remind a class about how they cleaned their lockers last time and ask the students to write a list showing the sequence to be used in tidying their personal space.

Space Within a Classroom

When it is practical, it is extremely helpful to provide a small space within the classroom for a student’s materials. Some teachers allow students to keep textbooks in the classroom so that they can be prepared for class. Others

keep a store of materials for students to use. A personal space, however, also allows a student to keep items of importance inside a classroom and helps them to feel connected to the learning environment. I've discovered that my students will store items in "secret" places within the classroom if they don't have a cubby or a desk or a shelf to call their own.

Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like

It is helpful to discuss with students, either as a group, or individually, what good organization looks like, sounds like, and feels like. A chart with three columns can be made to show the positive effects of organization. It is important to brainstorm ideas with students. Examples might be: Organization looks like having a pencil and a notebook, like writing in an agenda, or like putting all homework in the correct folder. Organization sounds like, "Here is my homework, Mrs. Smith" and like "I can find that in my locker." The feelings associated with organization may be *confident*, *less hassled by teachers*, or *satisfied*.

Positive Envisioning

In all situations with students, whether it is in the formation of basic organizational skills or in the later generalization or transition of those habits, positive envisioning allows them to get a picture of success in their minds. Students will feel strange, at first, creating a mental picture of themselves arriving on time to class with all of their materials. It is best to start with non-threatening envisioning, such as "Imagine yourself winning the lottery. What does your face look like? Which store in the mall would you visit first? Picture yourself walking through the mall. Feel the linoleum under your feet. You're at the store, what is the first thing that you touch there?" From exercises like this one, you can lead to more mature envisioning. For instance, "Imagine that you stayed up late last night and did your homework and

that you put it in your backpack. When you get to class, picture yourself reaching into that backpack and pulling out the homework. How does the teacher respond? How do you feel?" Students can give a positive visualization to most school situations and may feel more secure in attempting to match their behaviors to the representation in their heads.

THE MODERN MAJOR GENERALIZATION

After developing a purpose and a plan for organization, students must learn to generalize skills between subject areas first within the classroom and then to transition those abilities across all subject areas. The *Dimensions of Learning* model (DOL) states that learning does not stop with acquiring and integrating knowledge. Learners develop in-depth understanding through the process of extending and refining their knowledge (e.g., by making new distinctions, clearing up misconceptions, and reaching conclusions). They rigorously analyze what they have learned by applying reasoning processes that will help them extend and refine the information.⁸

A crucial but often unrecognized dimension of learning is the capacity to make use of prior experience as well as emerging experience in new situations. It is necessary to observe learners over a period of time while they engage in a variety of activities in order to account for the development of this important capability, which is at the heart of creative thinking and its application.⁹ Ongoing observation and reflection are critical to successful generalization of behaviors. Students who struggle in school typically have difficulty making consistent connections across environments, often because there is a vast difference between their school, home, and community. As a school principal, I sometimes had students use my office phone to call a parent and tell them about the conversation they had just had with me

regarding some misbehavior. My dialogue with the students was typically calm, probing, focused, and optimistic of future behavioral change. I remember talking with Jared one spring day about his frequent outbursts in class. Throughout our discussion he was respectful, sharing not only that sitting still was difficult for him but also that he was upset with a good friend. Because it was not Jared's first time in the office for similar behavior, he also received a consequence and the directive to call his mother and share our discussion and his consequence with her. Before Jared could even complete his story and his subsequent plan of action, I could hear his mother screaming and shouting curses at him over the phone. Certainly Jared had a purpose and a plan and an ability to generalize respectful behavior as far as my office door, but the struggle to maintain that behavior on a daily basis across environments was a burden for him. The positive modeling found in schools is only a small portion of the modeling present in a child's home and community. In Chapter 5, I'll address positive strategies for working with parents and community members to effect more fluid (and more likely) change for students. It is more than the village that raises a child; it is the quality, the character, and the caring of that village. A karate instructor who worked with my students for nine weeks had this to say on leadership, "If you want to know if you're a good leader, look behind you and watch what your followers are doing. If they are on the right track, so are you." It is vital that all who influence children know the good, do the good, and love the good. It is the only way to love the children.