

**“Nurturing is the Foundation” Policy Proposal Poster
Bibliography & Additional Resources**

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This document includes additional material in the form of the Purpose and the Overview. The purpose was adapted from the poster proposal.

Purpose

This poster proposes a policy intervention for schools and other education policy-making bodies that explicitly acknowledges the role of basic or primary need fulfillment as a “nurturing” foundation for optimal learning. Johnmarshall Reeve (2009) pointed out that most of the reasons for controlling (need thwarting) instead of autonomy supportive teaching practices arise from sources such as policies that are not present in the classroom. The practical implications of well-established theoretical concepts, such as the “basic needs” sub-theory of Self-Determination Theory, may require explicit statement in the policy of schools and other education management organizations in order for appropriate practices and expectations to be properly supported and inappropriate practices and expectations to be systematically eliminated. While researchers and theoreticians are trained to extract the practical implications of theoretical models and to design programs of intervention based on those insights, school managers and the teachers who implement those interventions are not. According to a national study by the Rand Corporation (Glennan et al., 2004) of large-scale school reforms, fidelity to the intentions of the designers of intervention programs is highly variable once the intervention expands beyond the direct control of the designers. The resulting variability typically jeopardizes the effectiveness of the interventions. The policy intervention presented here is designed to help school managers (principals and their superiors) to better understand and implement appropriate management practices that would support both research and intervention programs based on Self-Determination Theory.

Overview

Learning depends on engagement and evidence shows that students and teachers are disengaged (Gallup, 2013). But the problem is not the students and teachers it is the policies that guide their behavior. Current policies guide school leaders to ignore the primary needs of students and teachers. Therefore, we have put together a policy framework to guide school leaders to support the primary needs of all the humans in the system.

Empirical evidence from recent decades indicates that intrinsic motivation and engagement lead to optimal learning and to the best possible learning outcomes, including higher academic achievement and minimal academic anxiety. Other research, however, indicates that there are steady declines in intrinsic motivation and engagement; the only schools not showing those declines are those that make academic instruction optional (rather than mandatory). To aid policymakers and education administrators in creating school conditions that will foster more engagement and better motivations, a policy framework is proposed that presents primary need support as the foundation for optimal learning. A review of the literature substantiates that supporting the primary needs, referred to in this resolution as “nurturing,” leads to intrinsic

motivation and engagement. The three psychological needs for relatedness, autonomy, and competence were originally proposed within self-determination theory and have received consistent and substantial empirical support unlike other models of needs, such as Maslow's Hierarchy. The three psychological needs are non-derivative in nature, applicable across cultures, and have significant, non-neutral impacts on well-being. When an individual's primary psychological needs are thwarted, the individual is likely to experience mental ill-being, such as anxiety, depression, and other various forms of psychological distress. However, when individuals are nurtured (through the support of their primary needs), not only do these individuals show higher intrinsic motivation and engagement, but they also have a greater ability to support others in satisfying their needs.

The implications of the empirically supported claims of this framework are important for both students and teachers. Teachers' primary needs must be supported in order for them to be able to nurture students, and nurturing of students is essential for maximizing learning. The policy framework reaches the conclusion that nurturing, through its facilitation of high intrinsic motivation and engagement, must be recognized, managed, and protected as the foundation for achieving positive outcomes for both students and teachers.

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