Addressing Barriers to Learning

New ways to think . . .

Better ways to link

The primary civil rights agenda for the 21st century must be elimination of poverty. The success of that agenda calls for a fundamental expansion of school reform models, policy, and practice.

Expanding School Reform

While some school reform initiatives are having modest success, everyday teachers seek help for increasing numbers of youngsters who are not learning and performing up to standard. This will be even more the case as curbs are placed on social promotion. And, all this means that special education referrals will continue to burgeon. Teachers not only need help with problems, many also would like more support for promoting healthy social and emotional development among their students and enhancing parent involvement.

Unfortunately, programs and services to address barriers to student learning and promote healthy development continue to be a supplementary item on the school agenda. This is not surprising. After all, schools are not in the mental health or social service business. Their mandate is to educate. They tend to see any activity not directly related to instruction as taking resources away from their primary mission. The result is a marginalization of all such activity.

The solution to this marginalization has not been found in the various initiatives to link more services to schools. And, the problem is likely to be with us until school reform models and policies are expanded to fully integrate "education support activity." This involves much *more than* outreach to link with community resources (and certainly more than adopting a school-linked services model), *more than* coordinating school-owned services with each other and with community services, and *more than* creating Family Resource Centers, Full Service Schools, and Community Schools. None of these constitute school/community-wide approaches, and the growing consensus is that comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches are essential in addressing the complex concerns confronting schools, families, and neighborhoods.

Comprehensive approaches call for weaving together school and community resources. They require a basic policy shift that moves schools from the inadequate two component model that dominates school reform to a three component framework. The two component model has served to improve instruction and enhance the ways schools are managed. The limited success of this restricted focus, however, suggests that better student achievement involves more than good instruction and well-managed schools. That is, there is a need to pursue and integrate a third fundamental component that focuses comprehensively on enabling learning by addressing barriers that interfere with development, learning, and teaching.

Such an expanded model for school reform is emerging as the result of exciting, pioneering work underway in several states. Of great significance are (1) current planning in the Memphis City School District to expand school reform, (2) the New American School's Urban Learning Center Model, and (3) a reform proposal recently sent to the Hawaii legislature by the Central O'ahu District.

Memphis City School District (TN)

With 112,000 students, the Memphis City schools constitute the 16th largest district in the country. Under the leadership of Superintendent Gerry House, the district has been immersed in school reform since 1992. Now that good progress has been made related to systemic instructional and management concerns, the district is expanding its agenda to encompass a third component to address factors interfering with students taking full advantage of academic reforms. This expansion is seen as essential given that the

Contents

student population is characterized by high levels of poverty and family/community problems. The majority of students are described as experiencing a myriad of social, economic, health, and environmental factors that present barriers to learning. As a result, many begin school lacking necessary home supports and the emotional, social, and cognitive readiness to take advantage of instructional improvements. And, with each passing day, too many manifest increasing skill deficits and negative attitudes that worsen their plight.

Recognizing the need to expand school reform, Superintendent House directed Associate Superintendent Barbara Jones and her staff to prepare a plan for restructuring the district's Department of Student Programs and Services. The staff met with community representatives to "rethink and reframe how internal and external resources can be restructured to help school sites develop a comprehensive, multifaceted and integrated component for dealing with factors interfering with student achievement." From the process emerged a formal plan entitled *Adding Value, Enhancing Learning.*

The Need for an Enabling Component

The May 1999 draft of the plan indicates that the major systemic changes proposed are built on the premise that, for all children to succeed,

> *... reform efforts must include the following three components: instruction, management, and enabling. Establishment of the enabling component is key to the vision of improved opportunities for students to overcome barriers to learning....*

The plan goes on to state:

> *...The need to ensure the success of the district's mission, goals, and on-going reforms makes it imperative that we move expeditiously to start a process of developing such a component at every school. By moving from fragmented and supplementary "support services" to a comprehensive, multifaceted and integrated component for addressing barriers to learning, schools can enhance the impact of instructional reforms and increase student achievement.*

Furthermore, for children to succeed:

> •*Whole communities must take responsibility for supporting families. School success must become the goal of every social system -- not just of the schools.*

> •*Partnerships among schools, families, and community resources must support the efforts of teachers rather than create a new set of responsibilities and must also strengthen families and neighborhoods.*

> •*Better linkages must be made between schools and all community resources in ways that foster mutual respect, flexibility, family and community focus, and attention to relationships.*

The intent in Memphis is to establish an enabling component beginning at the school level, moving up through the district, and outreaching to link with community resources. As outlined in the May plan:

> *Implementation of an enabling component to address barriers to student growth and development requires building an infrastructure which will bring resources to the school to meet the needs identified by the school staff and the community. The new approach develops capacity at the school level with zone and district supports. Careful attention has been given to the role shift of central office from that of control to support. The new structures and strategies are designed to make the delivery of services to students and their families more efficient and cost effective.*

Specifically, an enabling component becomes the third essential component of the district's school reform. This concept establishes a unifying core around which policy can be formulated to move from a fragmented, narrowly focused service delivery approach to a more comprehensive, integrated continuum of programs and services for students and their families. That is, to counteract factors interfering with student learning and performance, the concept calls for a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. This is a dramatic departure from traditional support services which tend to be narrowly focused, problem-specific and fragmented. Using a school-based coordinating team and school-cluster (zone) mechanisms, each school can address barriers to learning and mobilize interdisciplinary resources in a timely, responsive, and accountable manner.

In addition to enhancing classroom efforts to support learning, the approach provides student and family assistance, responds to and prevents crises, facilitates transitions, increases home involvement in schooling, and seeks greater community involvement and support. As the list of potential benefits (see page 5) underscores, the overriding aim of the systemic changes is to expedite the goals of school reform -- with the focus being, first and foremost, on fostering academic achievement and success for **ALL** children.

Center News
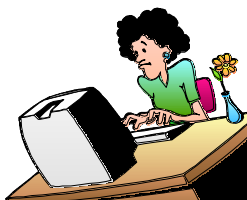
Nᴇᴡ ʀᴇsᴏᴜʀᴄᴇs!

●*School-Community Partnerships: A Guide*

Designed to enhance understanding of the concept of school-community partnerships; to convey a sense of the state of the art in a way that underscores directions for advancing the field; and to provide some tools for those interested in developing and improving the ways schools and communities work together in the best interests of young people and their families. The work is intended as a toolkit -- with material that can be drawn upon to develop a variety of resource aids.

>Part I discusses the nature and benefits of school-community partnerships (e.g., definitions, dimensions and characteristics, principles, and state of the art) and offers recommendations to enhance such partnerships.

>Part II provides guidelines and outlines mechanisms for building and maintaining partnerships.

Appended materials include models and examples of initiatives, tools for mapping resources, examples of funding sources, and a sampling of online resources.

●*Conduct and Behavior Problems: Intervention and Resources for School Aged Youth*

This introductory packet describing a range of conduct and behavior problems using fact sheets and the American Pediatric Association's classification scheme. Discussed are different intervention approaches based on the degree of problem manifested. Interventions include environmental accommodations, behavioral strategies, and medication. Because the intent is only to provide a brief overview, also included is a set of references for further reading and a list of agencies that provide information on these problems and relevant interventions.

●*Sampler on Resiliency and Protective Factors*

Fostering resilience is discussed as an inside-out, deep structure process that involves changing our own belief systems so we see resources and not just problems in youth, their families, and their cultures. Policy concerns related to fostering resilience also are underscored. Topics sampled include: (1) Protective Factors and Resistance to Psychiatric Disorder; (2) Fostering Resiliency; and (3) Intervening in the School, Home, and Community.

In need of technical assistance?

Contact us at:
E-mail: **smhp@ucla.edu**   Ph: **(310) 825-3634**
Write: Center for Mental Health in Schools
Department of Psychology, UCLA
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

Or use our website:

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

If you're not receiving our monthly electronic news (ENEWS), just send an E-mail request to:

listserv@listserv.ucla.edu
leave the subject line blank, and in the body of the message type: **subscribe mentalhealth-L**

Also, if you want to submit comments and information for us to circulate, note them on the form inserted in this newsletter or contact us directly by mail, phone, or E-mail.

What's easy to get into, but hard to get out of?

Trouble!

No more prizes for predicting the rain.

Prizes only for building the ark.
Lewis V. Gerstner, Jr.

Center Staff:
Howard Adelman, Co-Director
Linda Taylor, Co-Director
Perry Nelson, Coordinator
. . . and a host of graduate and undergraduate students

From the Center's Clearinghouse

Search our web site using *Quick Find* for rapid access to Center Prepared Materials and technical assistance on many topics.

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

As fast as we can, we are adding our materials for Internet access (in PDF file format for easy downloading). Refer to the resources section of our web site for directions on downloading.

>>>Just added for downloading<<<

✏ *Social and Interpersonal Problems Related to School Aged Youth*

This intro packet covers fundamental social and interpersonal areas of competence and related problems. The range of interventions discussed stresses the importance of accommodations as well as strategies designed to change the individual.

✏ *Organizations with Resources Relevant to Addressing Barriers to Learning: A Catalogue of Clearinghouses, TA Centers, and Other Agencies*

Categorizes and provides contact information on organizations focusing on children's mental health, education and schools, school-based and school-linked centers, and general concerns related to youth and other health related matters.

For those without Internet access, all resources are available by contacting the Center.

MORE NETWORKS for Mental Health in Schools

Besides the opportunities for networking through the various activities of centers such as ours and our sister center, two national organizations are developing special sections focused on mental health in schools. Each represents a promising forum for all of us, working together, to strengthen our impact.

*The Mental Health Section of the *National Assembly on School-Based Health Care* provides support at both the national and state levels. The section has about 50 members at this time. At the National Assembly meeting, June 25-27 in Washington, DC, the section will elect new leadership, share ideas, and set up work groups focused on emerging issues.

*A new section for mental and social health professionals has been added to the *American School Health Association.* All interested parties are invited to join. Those attending the association's national conference in Kansas City, October 27-30, will meet together to discuss the group's future agenda.

Staff from our center and our sister center are working in various ways to support the development of these groups and is encouraging discussion among the leadership of each section and the leadership of their parent organizations to spark innovative thinking about how the groups can collaborate.

If you are interested in joining and/or attending, contact:

John Schlitt, Ex. Dir.
National Assembly on
School-Based Health Care
666 11th St, NW
Suite 7335
Washington, DC 20001
Ph: 888-286-8727

Susan Wooley, Ex. Dir
American School
Health Association
7263 State Route 43
P.O. Box 708
Kent, OH 44240
Ph: 330-678-l60l

##
FROM OUR SISTER CENTER

The Center for Mental Health Assistance (CSMHA), is a national training and technical assistance center designed to promote the expansion and improvement of mental health services for school-aged children and youth. The Center is directed by Mark Weist, Ph.D. Olga Acosta, Ph.D. is the Coordinator.

The next annual CSMHA conference will be held in Denver, September 16-18, 1999. The theme is *Advancing School-Based Mental Health Services*. Paper, workshop, and poster abstracts are requested on local, state, national and international developments in school mental health, innovative approaches to service delivery, collaboration, integrated services, prevention,

crisis intervention, legal/ethical issues, ways to expand and enhance programs, funding, and evaluation.

Like our center, CSMHA is supported by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Office of Adolescent Health, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Contact: CSMHA, University of Maryland at Baltimore, Department of Psychiatry,
680 West Lexington Street, 10th fl.,
Baltimore, MD 21201-1570; 888/706-0980;
   Email: csmha@csmha.ab.umd.edu
   Website: http://csmha.ab.umd.edu/

##

Memphis City School's Partial List of
Expected Benefits of Implementing an Enabling Component

I. Benefits to Schools

- increased academic performance
- increased retention/graduation rates
- increased attendance
- improved student behavior
- increased school safety
- better communication between school & community
- more family involvement
- improve attitudes and relationships between teachers, students, families

II. Benefits to Students

- improved achievement
- positive attitude toward school and work
- increased self-esteem
- higher quality work
- improved attendance
- reduction in discipline referrals, suspension, & dropouts

III. Benefits to Teachers

- more positive teaching experiences
- greater feeling of teaching success
- reduced stress and frustration
- more support, appreciation, and trust of families
- fewer discipline problems
- early assistance for problems

IV. Benefits to the Families

- increased empowerment and education
- improved, healthier family life and closer relationships with children
- greater community/school support of families
- better communication between home and school
- greater opportunity to participate in important decisions related to academic success
- increased opportunity to get help for a student
- increased access to school resources such as family resource centers, homework hotlines, home visits, classes and workshops specifically for the family

VI. Benefits to the District

- increased academic performance
- increased retention/graduation rates
- improved rates in reaching goals
- improved communications between and among schools, families, and communities
- improved relationships with and opinions about school, students, family, and community
- better use of limited resources for critical needs of youth and families

VII. Benefits to the Communities

- better use of limited resources to address the critical need of linking home and school.
- greater family/community support for school budget and needed school improvements
- fewer incidences of truancy and juvenile crime
- students and family view education as a positive force in their lives
- a better educated workforce
- informed citizens who contribute to the economic welfare and overall success of the community
- healthier families & neighborhoods

(cont. from page 2)

Following are some specific details drawn from an Executive Summary outlining the Memphis plan. Operationally, the idea is to establish the leadership and infrastructure for an enabling component beginning with an interdisciplinary school-based team, followed by establishment of zone level mechanisms for providing specialized resources to schools, and finally ensuring effective district and community linkages. These allow for (1) building capacity to identify, develop, and improve programs and access to resources and (2) increasing efficiency and accountability to better utilize internal and external resources to address barriers to student learning at the school level.

At the School Level

The initial focus is on establishing a School Coordinating Team in each school, composed of school staff and resource specialists. Such a resource team serves as the hub of learner support and is assigned authority to make the decisions necessary to address barriers to student learning. The team's major functions are to (a) identify barriers to learning and strategies to address them, (b) implement programs or services for prevention or intervention, (c) coordinate resources at the school level, (d) make student referrals based on assessments, and (e) develop a resource profile for the school. These functions are to be pursued in relation to five major areas of focus:

- enhancing classroom supports
- health and human services
- family support and home involvement
- community outreach
- extended learning

At the Zone Level ("families" of schools)

To help ensure cohesive and equitable deployment of enabling resources, the plan calls for creating "families" of schools by dividing the district into nine zones. Based on geographical location and feeder school pattern, the learner support zone also is designed to aid the identification of barriers to learning and the facilitation of resource mapping in each zone. For

families with youth attending more than one level of schooling in a zone, this restructuring can increase efficiency and effectiveness and reduce duplication, redundancy, and overlap in resource use. Moreover, by creating a zone database to reflect school, family and community, the district can promote systemic approaches to reducing barriers to learning at the community level and make program and service options attractive to community agencies.

Key mechanisms include a zone facilitator and a zone team. Each *facilitator* guides, coordinates, and ensures effective implementation of (a) the design model, (b) activity to identify existing resources and procure others to support activity at schools throughout a zone, and (c) personnel scheduling so schools receive regular and timely assistance. Zone facilitators also serve as liaisons between zones and with the district level.

The zone *team* also plays a role in coordinating and ensuring needed resources are available to schools. Typical team members include representatives of disciplines (e.g., nurse, social worker, psychologist) and specialities (e.g., specialists in safe and drug free schools, attendance/truancy, special education, community concerns, family advocacy, reform and program design).

At the District Level

Leadership at the district level ensures that enabling activity is coordinated and integrated systemwide. A district level team can best respond to the needs of schools and students by supporting school and zone level efforts. Functions include (a) coordinating and integrating district level activities, (b) establishing community links and collaboratives, (c) ensuring resources are distributed equitably, (d) guiding development of assessment/evaluation instruments, (e) reviewing accountability and quality performance indicators, and (f) addressing factors interfering with the enabling component's effectiveness.

Interagency Council

A community council is another mechanism that can guide partnerships among various agencies that address and serve youth. Such a council provides a context for the district superintendent, agency executives, and community representatives to align and respond to the needs of children, families, and neighborhoods.

Clearly, the Memphis School District's plan is creative and ambitious. As will be evident below, it both draws on other pioneering efforts and, at the same time, adapts that work to fit the specific needs of Memphis at this point in time.

The Urban Learning Center Model at Elizabeth Learning Center (CA)

This evolving school reform model was initiated as part of a venture supported by the New American Schools Development Corporation. The resulting "break-the-mold" comprehensive school reform design was first implemented in Los Angeles and is now being replicated in several localities.

One of the two original demonstration sites is the Elizabeth Learning Center (formerly the Elizabeth St. Elementary School). With the full commitment of the Los Angeles Unified School District's administration, the teachers' union, and a variety of community partners, the site has been transformed over a period of several years. The intensive commitment of the various partners is producing a pre-K through grade 12 model that the U.S. Department of Education recognizes as an important *evolving* demonstration of *comprehensive* school reform. As a result, this *Urban Learning Center Model* is designated in federal legislation as one of the outstanding designs for comprehensive school reform that schools can receive funding to adopt.

The pioneering model expands school reform by formulating a three component approach. That is, the design not only reforms curriculum/instruction and governance/management, it *addresses barriers to learning* by establishing a comprehensive, integrated continuum of *learning supports* as a third essential component. As it evolves, this Learning Supports (or "enabling") Component is providing local, state, and national policy makers with an invaluable framework and concrete practices for enabling students to learn and teachers to teach. Key to achieving these educational imperatives is an ongoing process by which school and community resources for addressing barriers to learning and development are restructured and woven together.

By calling for reforms that fully integrate a focus on addressing barriers, the Learning Supports (or enabling) Component provides a unifying framework for responding to a wide range of psychosocial factors interfering with learning and performance. Besides focusing on barriers and deficits, there is a strong emphasis on facilitating healthy development, positive behavior, and asset-building as the best way to prevent problems and as an essential adjunct to corrective interventions. In defining the component as one that both addresses barriers to learning and promotes healthy development, the framework encompasses the type of models described as full-service schools -- and goes beyond them in creating an approach that is much more *comprehensive*.

Emergence of a comprehensive and cohesive component to enable learning by addressing barriers requires policy reform and operational restructuring. Key here is:

- weaving together what is available at a school,

- expanding this through integrating school, community, and home resources,

- enhancing access to community resources by linking as many as feasible to school programs.

Ultimately, all this calls for major systemic changes. In particular, it requires a restructuring of school-owned enabling activity, such as pupil services and special and compensatory education programs. In the process, mechanisms must be developed to coordinate and eventually integrate these school-owned resources and blend them with community resources. Restructuring also must ensure the component is well integrated with the developmental/instructional and management components. This minimizes marginalization and fragmentation, and ensures programs to address problems play out at the classroom level, school-wide, and throughout the neighborhood.

Operationalizing such a component requires a framework delineating basic areas of enabling activity. It also involves creating an infrastructure to ensure such activity continues to develop and evolve throughout a school. As spelled out in the model, there are six basic interrelated areas of enabling activity. *Classroom-focused enabling* -- stressing classroom reforms that help teachers enhance the way they assist students with "garden variety" learning, behavior, and emotional problems (including ways to enhance motivation, use prereferral interventions and special accommodations, etc.). *Support for transitions* -- encompassing such activity as welcoming and social support for new students and families, articulation, and before and after school programs. *Student and family assistance* -- which provides health and human services offered in the context of a family resource center and a school-based clinic. The remaining areas encompass *crisis response and prevention, home involvement in schooling, community outreach* (including an extensive focus on using volunteers).

Enrollment at Elizabeth Learning Center has increased to 2,800 -- with 2,200 in K-8 and 600 in grades 9-12. Recent reports indicate increases in achievement test performance at all grade levels. Drop out rates declined to 1.22% (compared to 5.28% in surrounding schools and a district-wide

rate of 7.84%). Daily attendance averages 92%. Graduation rates for the first two cohorts were 100% and 98%, respectively, with the majority going on to post-secondary education. With respect to parent and community involvement, besides the 1,000 plus attending adult education classes from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m, local volunteers provide over 12,000 hours each year. Among the important effects of the adult education program is that with so many parents enrolled in English-as-a-second language courses, increasing numbers of students from Spanish speaking homes are entering the school speaking both languages. As a result, there has been less need for bilingual resources in the early grades.

Extensive progress has been made in designing the Elizabeth Learning Center. But there is much more to be done, and several critical expansions are just being developed. One encompasses broadening the nature and scope of adult education at the school and fostering vocational opportunities. (Early in the reform process the site developed a contract with the local community adult school and began offering ESL classes, pre-GED preparation, citizenship, computer literacy, and parenting and parent leadership training. Two parent cooperative child care centers already are operating day and evening to enable parents to attend.) Another area for growth involves programs to enhance *kindergarten readiness* (e.g., by adding Head Start). Such additions should contribute markedly to the educational mission.

Central O'ahu District (HI)

To establish a *School-Based Comprehensive Student Support System* for their 41 schools, this Hawaiian school district has developed a plan entitled *Building Resiliency for Learning*. The effort has taken on an urgency because of a court order (i.e., the Felix Cayetano Consent Decree) that mandates improved school-based approaches in meeting mental health and special education needs. As stated in the plan:

The evolution of a School-Based Comprehensive Student Support System will allow services to students to be delivered within the school and be an integral part of the school's ongoing improvement efforts. ... Today's students have greater needs which interfere with learning. ... Schools must make sense of piecemeal initiatives and programs which attempt to meet these needs.

The intent of the District's plan is to assure that all schools have "(a) developed a comprehensive continuum of programs and (b) established the type of mechanisms that ensure programs remain mobilized and coordinated." The conceptual framework for the work is illustrated on page 8.
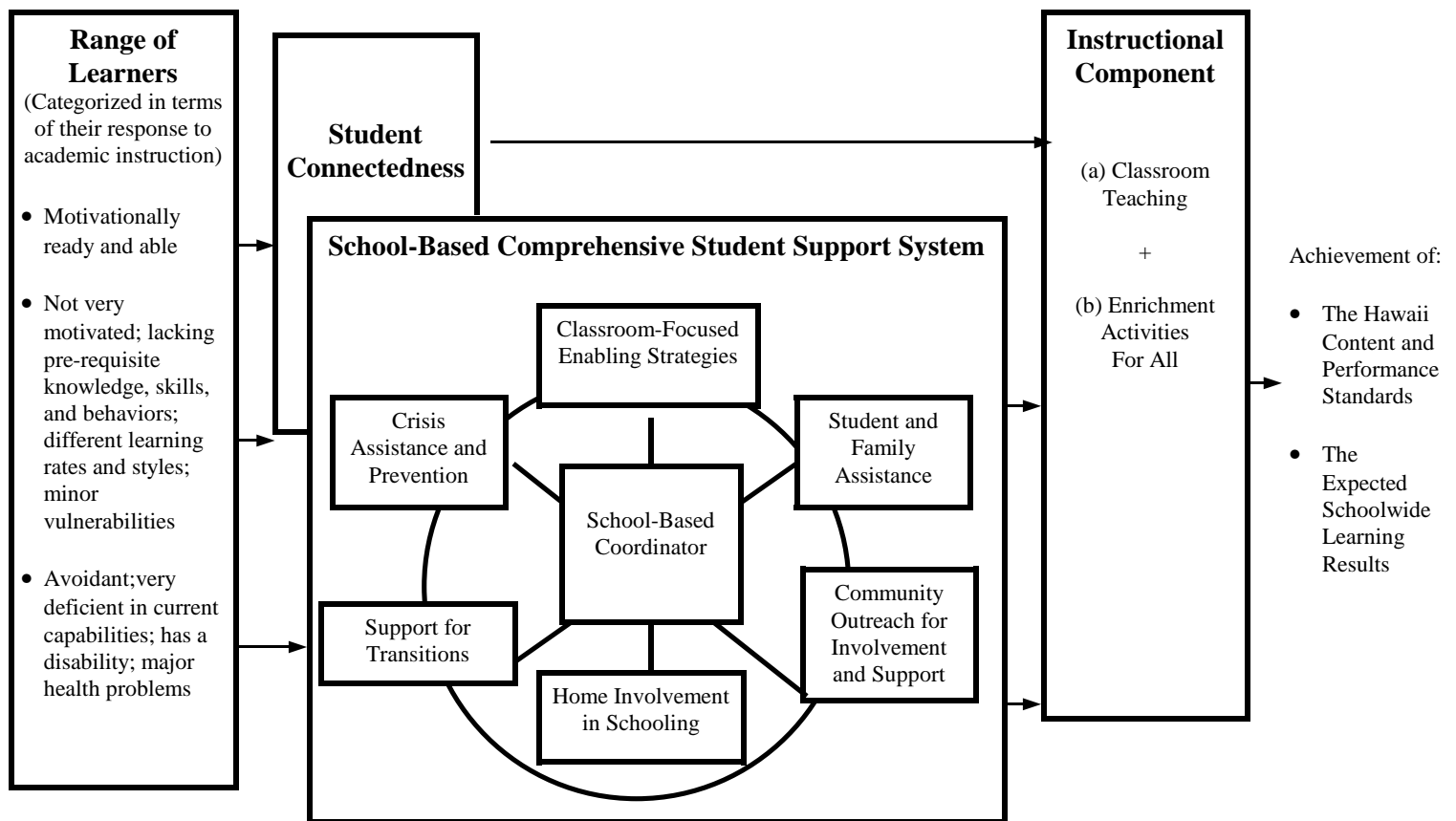
Adopted by Aileen Hokama, Interim District Superintendent — from the work of Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor

What follows are examples of activities in each of the six areas of function illustrated above:

(1) Classroom Focused Enabling -- to assure student learning by enhancing the range of accommodative strategies teachers use and increasing their capacity to teach compensatory strategies. Practices in this area include:
  * Provision of support for identified students;
  *Coordination for support from itinerant teachers;
  *Development of personalized professional development for each teacher;
  *Coordination and/or development of programs to develop aides, volunteers and others who work in the classroom.

(2) Crisis Assistance and Prevention -- to ensure immediate emergency and follow-up care so students are able to resume learning without undue delay through the development of:
  *systems and programs to assure emergency/ crisis response at a site, school complex, and community-wide;
  *prevention programs for schools to address school safety, violence reduction, suicide prevention, child abuse prevention, etc.

(3) Support for Transitions -- a comprehensive focus to address transition concerns through development of:
  *activities to establish a welcoming and socially supportive school community:
  *counseling and articulation processes to support grade-to-grade and school-to-school transitions, moving to and from special education, going to college, moving to post-school living and work;
  *programs for before and after school and intercession to enrich learning and provide recreation in a safe environment.

(4) Home Involvement in Schooling -- to strengthen the Support, collaboration and partnership with home by:
  * addressing specific learning and support needs of adults the home such as ESL classes and mutual support groups;
  * helping those in the home meet their basic obligations to the student with instruction for parenting and helping with schoolwork;
  * enhancing participation in making decisions essential for the student's well-being;
  * mobilizing those at home to problem solve related to student needs.

(5) Community Outreach for Involvement and Support (including a focus on volunteers) -- to support student learning through:

- enhancing involvement and support (linkages with community health and social services; recruiting cadres of volunteers, mentors and individuals with special expertise and resources; finding local businesses to adopt-a-school and provide resources, awards, incentives, and jobs);
- designing programs to train, screen, and maintain volunteers;
- developing programs outreaching to hard-to-involve students and families (those who don't come to school regularly -- including truants and dropouts).

(6) Student and Family Assistance -- Student and family assistance should be *reserved* only for problematic issues that cannot be handled without adding special interventions. The emphasis is on providing special services in a personalized way to assist with a broad-range of needs by:

- utilizing existing social, physical, and mental health programs in the school and community;
- meeting immediate needs with direct services;
- referring for special services and special educ. resources and placements as appropriate;
- developing a stakeholder info program to clarify available assistance and how to access help;
- designing a system to facilitate and evaluate requests for assistance;
- implementing a programmatic approach for handling referrals;
- coordinating all direct service activity;
- developing programmatic approaches for effective case and resource management;
- interfacing with community outreach to assimilate additional resources into current service delivery

As can be seen, the approach represents another operationalization of an enabling component and if properly implemented will move school reform in Hawaii from a two to a three component model.

A Few Relevant References

Adelman, H.S. & Taylor, L. (1997). Toward a scale-up model for replicating new approaches to schooling. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 8,* 197-230.

Adelman, H.S. & Taylor, L. (1997). Addressing barriers to learning: Beyond school-linked services and full service schools. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 67,* 408-421.

Adelman, H.S. & Taylor, L. (1998). Involving teachers in collaborative efforts to better address barriers to learning. *Preventing School Failure, 42,* 55-60.

Adelman, H.S. & Taylor, L. (1998). Reframing mental health in schools and expanding school reform. *Educational Psychologist*, *33,* 135-152.

Center for Mental Health in Schools (1996).*Policies and practices for addressing barriers to learning: Current status and new directions.* Los Angeles: Author.

Center for Mental Health in Schools (1997). *Addressing barriers to student learning: Closing gaps in school/community policy and practice.* Los Angeles: Author

Central O'ahu District (Feb. 1999). *Building Resiliency for Learning: Central O"ahu District's school-based comprehensive student support system*. O'ahu, Hawaii: Author.

Memphis City Schools (May, 1999). *Adding value, enhancing learning: Restructuring student support services.* Memphis: Author.

Rosenblum, L., DiCecco, M.B., Taylor, L., & Adelman, H.S. (1995). Upgrading school support programs through collaboration: Resource Coordinating Teams. *Social Work in Education, 17*, 117-124.

Urban Learning Center Model (1998). *A design for a new learning community*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Educational Partnership.

By any name -- a Component to Address Barriers to Learning

Various locales are approaching mental health concerns by embedding them in the broader concept of addressing barriers to learning. By doing so, they are moving toward an expanded model of school reform. Besides the examples cited above, the Los Angeles Unified School District and the California Department of Education have adopted *Learning Support* as their term for unifying and restructuring enabling activity. A demonstration underway in Minneapolis is using the term *Learner Engagement*. Washington State is beginning to explore the idea of adopting a three component model of school reform with the third component designated as *Learning Environment*. Initiatives for mental health in schools in New Mexico and Maine have chosen simply to use the concept of *addressing barriers to learning*. -- *As always, it's not what you call it; it's what you do with the concept that counts.*

Ideas into Practice
Prereferral Interventions

School violence, poor academic performance, misbehavior in class -- with increasing numbers of students identified as troubled or in trouble, schools must design systems for intervening prior to referral for special assistance. Otherwise, the system will grind to a halt. A *prereferral intervention* process delineates steps and strategies to guide teachers. The following is one example:

(1) *Formulate an initial description of the problem.*

(2) *Get the youngster's view of what's wrong* **and, as feasible,** *explore the problem with the family*.

As every teacher knows, the causes of learning, behavior, and emotional problems are hard to analyze. What looks like a learning disability or an attentional problem may be emotionally-based. Misbehavior often arises in reaction to learning difficulties. What appears as a school problem may be the result of problems at home. The following are some things to consider in seeking more information about what may be causing a youngster's problem.

(a) Through enhanced personal contacts, build a positive working relationship with the youngster and family.

(b) Focus first on assets (e.g. positive attributes, outside interests, hobbies, what the youngster likes at school and in class).

(c) Ask about what the youngster doesn't like at school.

(d) Explore the reasons for "dislikes" (e.g., Are assignments seen as too hard? as uninteresting? Is the youngster embarrassed because others will think s/he does not have the ability to do assignments? Is the youngster picked on? rejected? alienated?)

(e) Explore other possible causal factors.

(f) Explore what the youngster and those in the home think can be done to make things better (including extra support from a volunteer, a peer, friend, etc.).

(g) Discuss some new things the youngster and those in the home would be *willing* to try to make the situation better.

(3) *Try new strategies in the classroom* -- based on the best information about what is causing the problem.

Prereferral Interventions Some Things to Try

• Make changes to (a) improve the match between a youngster's program and his/her interests and capabilities and (b) try to find ways for her/him to have a special, positive status in class, at the school, and in the community. Talk and work with other staff in developing ideas along these lines.

• Add resources for extra support (aide, volunteers, peer tutors) to help the youngster's efforts to learn and perform. Create time to interact and relate with the youngster as an individual.

• Discuss with the youngster (and those in the home) why the problems are occurring.

• Specifically focus on exploring matters with the youngster that will suggest ways to enhance positive motivation.

• Change aspects of the program (e.g.,materials, environment) to provide a better match with his/her interests and skills.

• Provide enrichment options (in and out of class).

• Use resources such as volunteers, aides, and peers to enhance the youngster's social support network.

• Specifically focus on exploring ways those in the home can enhance their problem-solving efforts.

• If necessary include other staff (e.g., counselor, principal) in a special discussion with the youngster exploring reasons for the problem and ways to enhance positive involvement at school and in class.

(4) If the new strategies don't work, *talk to others* at school to learn about approaches they find helpful (e.g., reach out for support/mentoring/coaching, participate with others in clusters and teams, observe how others teach in ways that effectively address differences in motivation and capability, request additional staff development on working with such youngsters).

(5) If necessary, use the *school's referral processes* to ask for additional support services.

(6) Work with referral resources to *coordinate your efforts* **with theirs** for classroom success.

Ideas into Practice
Crisis Assistance and Prevention:
Self-Study Survey

$\Large A$s schools gear up to enhance safety, they need to review their programs and processes for crisis response and prevention. Crisis response ensures immediate assistance is provided when emergencies arise. Also, as necessary and appropriate, it includes follow-up care so students are able to resume learning without undue delays. Prevention activity ranges from creation of a safe and productive environment to development of student and family attitudes about and capacities for dealing with violence and other threats to safety.

Stakeholders can use this survey to map and analyze the status of their efforts to (a) clarify what resources already are available, (b) how resources are coordinated, and (c) what procedures are in place for enhancing resource usefulness. This type of self-study is best done by teams. For example,

a group of stakeholders could use the items to discuss how well processes and programs are functioning and what's not being done. Members of the team initially might work separately in filling out the items, but the real payoff comes from discussing them as a group. The instrument also can be used as a form of program quality review.

In analyzing the status of their crisis-oriented efforts, the group may decide that some existing activity is not a high priority and that the resources should be redeployed to help establish more important programs. Other activity may be seen as needing to be embellished so that it is effective. Finally, decisions may be made regarding new desired activities, and since not everything can be added at once, priorities and timelines can be established.

[Our center offers a variety of resources to aid in building systems for responding to crises and developing programs to prevent violence. See our clearinghouse, resource lists, website. Access information is given on page 3 of this newsletter.]

Survey (self-study) -- Crisis Assistance and Prevention

Please indicate all items that apply

	Yes	Yes but more of this is needed	No	If no, is this something you want?
A. With respect to Emergency/Crisis Response:				
1. Is there an active Crisis Team?	___	___	___	___
2. Is the Crisis Team appropriately trained?	___	___	___	___
3. Is there a plan that details a coordinated response				
a. for all at the school site?	___	___	___	___
b. with other schools in the complex?	___	___	___	___
c. with community agencies?	___	___	___	___
4. Are emergency/crisis plans updated appropriately with regard to				
a. crisis management guidelines (e.g., flow charts, check list)?	___	___	___	___
b. plans for communicating with homes/community?	___	___	___	___
c. media relations guidelines?	___	___	___	___
5. Are stakeholders regularly provided with information about emergency response plans?	___	___	___	___
6. Is medical first aid provided when crises occur?	___	___	___	___
7. Is psychological first aid provided when crises occur?	___	___	___	___
8. Is follow-up assistance provided after the crises?				
a. for short-term follow-up assistance?	___	___	___	___
b. for longer-term follow-up assistance?	___	___	___	___
9. Other? (specify) _____	___	___	___	___
B. With respect to developing programs to prevent crises, are there programs for				
1. school and community safety/violence reduction?	___	___	___	___
2. suicide prevention?	___	___	___	___
3. child abuse prevention?	___	___	___	___
4. sexual abuse prevention?	___	___	___	___
5. substance abuse prevention?	___	___	___	___
6. other (specify) _____	___	___	___	___

Survey (self-study) -- Crisis Assistance and Prevention (cont.)

	Yes	Yes but more of this is needed	No	If no, is this something you want?
Please indicate all items that apply				

C. What programs are used to meet the educational needs of personnel related to this programmatic area?

	Yes	Yes but more of this is needed	No	If no, is this something you want?
1. Is there ongoing training for team members concerned with the area of Crisis Assistance and Prevention?	___	___	___	___
2. Is there ongoing training for staff of specific services/programs?	___	___	___	___
3. Other? (specify) _____	___	___	___	___

D. Which of the following topics are covered in educating stakeholders

	Yes	Yes but more of this is needed	No	If no, is this something you want?
1. how to respond when an emergency arises	___	___	___	___
2. how to access assistance after an emergency (including watching for post traumatic psychological reactions)	___	___	___	___
3. indicators of abuse and potential suicide and what to do	___	___	___	___
4. how to respond to concerns related to death, dying, and grief	___	___	___	___
5. how to mediate conflicts and minimize violent reactions	___	___	___	___
6. other (specify) _____	___	___	___	___

E. Please indicate below any other ways that are used to provide crisis assistance and prevention to address barriers to students' learning.

_____   _____

F. Please indicate below other things you want the school to do to provide crisis assistance and prevention to address barriers to students' learning.

_____   _____

Note: This is one of a set of self-study surveys available from our Center to aid schools and communities in mapping and analyzing activity and resources for addressing barriers to development and learning.

***Please use the enclosed form to ask for what you need and to give us feedback.
Also, send us information, ideas, and materials for the Clearinghouse.***