Addressing Barriers

New ways to think . . .

Better ways to link

to Learning

Special Edition

Opportunities for Change in Challenging Times:
School Improvement and Learning Supports

Is it the best of times or the worst of times? The economy is in trouble, but new leadership brings with it significant opportunities for transforming schools.

Barack Obama has called for fresh thinking and new ideas. But, don't count on new money. In schools, the need is for innovations that better ensure equity of opportunity for all students. This will require braiding existing resources into new and more cost effective ways of working together. Lessons learned over the past few years indicate that in addition to high quality teaching, improved instruction aligned with testing, and collaborative staff development, a broader school improvement agenda is needed. In particular, it is clear that prevailing school improvement designs are too limited in nature and scope to counter factors that interfere with effective school learning and teaching.

In recent years, there has been a remarkable disconnect between what is planned and what is needed. For increasingly more students to profit from quality instruction, school improvement efforts must be strengthened through a high level policy and practice commitment to developing a comprehensive system of student and learning supports at every school. And, the first implementation steps can be accomplished redeploying existing school resources allocated for student and learning supports – followed by outreach to a wide range of community resources *to fill high priority gaps*.

Take special note that moving student supports in new directions involves more than coordinating services, co-locating and integrating community resources, and applying a three tier approach. The necessary systemic transformation encompasses these matters, but goes much further. The need is not for additional piecemeal and ad hoc initiatives; the need is for fundamental transformation of how schools provide equity of opportunity and how schools and communities weave resources to achieve this result.

Pioneering Efforts Already Are Underway

Iowa provides a statewide example (e.g., see the state's design document entitled: *Enhancing Iowa's Systems of Supports for Development and Learning* (2004). As Judy Jeffrey, chief state school officer for Iowa stresses in introducing the design:

> "Through our collective efforts, we must meet the learning needs of all students. Not every student comes to school motivationally ready and able to learn. Some experience barriers that interfere with their ability to profit from classroom instruction. Supports are needed to remove, or at least to alleviate, the effects of these barriers. Each student is entitled to receive the supports needed to ensure that he or she has an equal opportunity to learn and to succeed in school. This [design] provides guidance for a new direction for student support that brings together the efforts of schools, families, and communities.
>
> If every student in every school and community in Iowa is to achieve at high levels, we must rethink how student supports are organized and delivered to address barriers to learning. This will require that schools and school districts, in collaboration with their community partners, develop a comprehensive, cohesive approach to delivery of learning supports that is an integral part of their school improvement efforts."

The intent is to transform school improvement efforts to ensure development of a comprehensive, multi-faceted, and cohesive system for addressing factors that interfere with learning, development, and teaching. Our Center has produced policy and practice analyses and prototype frameworks that can be helpful in articulating the need and guides for such systemic change (see references). This body of work represents a new ingredient in addressing long-standing problems that have been marginalized in education policy at all levels. It has particular relevance for moving forward in addressing psychosocial and mental and physical health concerns, closing the achievement gap, reducing school violence, stemming the tide of dropouts, shutting down the pipeline from schools to prison, and promoting well being and social justice.

In this time of change and as the reauthorization process for the ESEA resumes, it is essential to encourage policy makers to incorporate a fresh focus on how districts can develop a comprehensive system of student and learning supports at every school. They need to recognize that such a system must be fully integrated into school improvement planning. Such a system must be designed to enable a truly personalized approach to instruction. It must ensure strategies for school governance that mobilize high levels of stakeholder involvement and community resource commitment. All this is key to creating safe schools, positive school climate, and community schools because such desired environments are emergent qualities (i.e., they stem from how schools pursue instruction, provide learning supports, and manage and govern on a daily basis).

Many Proposals; which are Comprehensive?

We recognize that at this juncture, there is a continuing stream of proposals for how to move forward in improving schools. And, given the current difficulties confronting so many schools, more and more leaders are calling for a renewed focus on *student/learning supports*. This includes calls for the ESEA reauthorization to establish "a comprehensive approach" to supporting students (and their families).

Too often, however, what is being identified as *comprehensive* is not comprehensive enough, and generally the approach described is not about developing a *system* of supports but a proposal to enhance coordination of fragmented efforts. Many times the emphasis mainly is on health and social services, usually with the notion of *connecting* more community services to schools. In some instances, the focus expands to include a variety of piecemeal programs for safe and drug free schools, family assistance, after-school and summer programs, and so forth. All these programs and services are relevant. But, most proposals to improve supports still fail to escape old ways of thinking about what schools need both in terms of content and process for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

In this special edition of the Center's journal, we highlight the nature and scope of a comprehensive system of student and learning supports and then discuss moving toward such an approach as the next evolutionary stage in school improvement policy and practice.

Effective instruction is, of course, fundamental to a school's mission. None of us want to send our children to a school where teachers do not have high standards, expectations, and competence. At the same time, the reality is that many factors can interfere with learning and teaching. Teachers in low performing schools point to how few students appear motivationally ready and able to learn what the daily lesson plan prescribes. Teachers in the upper grades report that a significant percentage of their students have become actively disengaged and alienated from classroom learning. And, "acting out" behavior, especially bullying and disrespect for others, is rampant. (So is passivity, but this attracts less attention.) One result of all this is seen in the increasing number of students misdiagnosed as having learning disabilities (LD) and attention deficit-hyperactivity disorders (ADHD). Another result is the number of dropouts and pushouts (students and teachers).

Teachers need and want considerable help in addressing barriers to student and school success. Unfortunately, the sparse help they currently receive is grossly inadequate. It is time to move toward developing a comprehensive system of student and learning supports to enable all students to learn and all teachers to teach effectively.

What is a Comprehensive Approach to Student and Learning Supports?

In discussions of *What is a comprehensive approach?*, questions that commonly arise include:

If we coordinate what we have and connect with some community services, isn't that a comprehensive approach?

It's a good start, but focusing only on what is doesn't get us to what needs to be. Analysis will indicate major intervention gaps. And, coordination stops short of establishing the type of expanded policy and practice that is needed as a basis for integrating and fully developing *student/learning supports* as a primary and essential component of school improvement. A colleague recently described the needed analysis as "viewing the work from the balcony." She indicated that when she moved from implementing programs at a school and responding to the daily crises and took a job at the district office she saw the range of separate programs, people, and initiatives and realized that "We couldn't be effective if we kept working this way." In making changes, coordination was just a first step. Beyond that, her team found a significant mismatch between the data on what the district's students and schools needed to succeed and what was currently being done. This clarified major systemic gaps, and new priorities were set to develop a comprehensive system for learning supports. It's this shift in thinking that leads to a long term strategy for building a comprehensive system that can ensure *all* students have an equal opportunity to succeed in schools.

What are the barriers to developing a comprehensive approach?

The main barriers involve escaping old ways of thinking and learning how to reframe and develop understanding of what amounts to a paradigm shift in calling for a comprehensive approach to student supports. As the following article indicates, a paradigm shift is underway with respect to how schools address barriers to learning, development, and teaching. This shift will be accelerated through the public-private collaboration our Center has formed with Scholastic, Inc.'s Community Affairs Unit and through work currently being initiated by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

The shift is from a *marginalized and fragmented* set of student support services to development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive *system of learning supports*. Such a system weaves together what schools already are doing and enhances the effort by inviting in home and community resources, with an emphasis on filling high priority systemic gaps.

As indicated in Exhibit 1, the intent goes beyond improving coordination and increasing services. The aim is to develop

- • an integrated and systemic continuum of interventions and

- • a multifaceted and integrated set of content arenas into *a cohesive classroom and school-wide component for supporting learning.*

Such a component has two facets: (1) *addressing interfering factors* and (2) *re-engaging students* in classroom instruction. (Note: The emphasis on re-engagement recognizes that interventions that do not address student disengagement are insufficient in sustaining, over time, student involvement, good behavior, and effective learning at school.)

A related and commonplace barrier stems from the continuing stream of "new" initiatives and priorities. A constant challenge in developing a truly comprehensive approach is to avoid mission drift. This requires using every special project, initiative, pilot, and reorganization in a strategic, system building manner. Those developing comprehensive systems must always ask: "Where does this fit in the broad picture of a comprehensive approach to students supports?" Then, if it fits, they must ensure it addresses current priorities for filling gaps and enhancing the system.

How might a comprehensive approach be framed as a guide for school improvement?

Pioneering districts and state departments of education have found it easy to adapt and adopt the matrix illustrated in Exhibit 2. It integrates the continuum of interventions with the content or curriculum of student support and provides a planning tool to guide school improvement in clarifying where current and proposed activity fits and what is missing.

Exhibit 1

More Than Coordination, More than Services

Comprehensive means more than coordination

The need is for *system building* within and across a *continuum of intervention.* This encompasses integrated *systems* for
  (a) promoting healthy development and preventing problems,
  (b) responding as early after problem onset as is feasible, and
  (c) providing for those whose serious, pervasive, and chronic problems require
      more intensive assistance and accommodation.

Comprehensive approaches to student and learning supports involve much more than enhancing availability and access to health and social services or limiting the focus to any other piecemeal and ad hoc initiatives for addressing barriers to learning, development, and teaching.

Just as efforts to enhance instruction emphasize well delineated and integrated curriculum content, so must efforts to address external and internal factors that interfere with students engaging effectively with that curriculum. At schools, the content (or curriculum) for addressing a full range of interfering factors can be coalesced into six classroom and school-wide arenas. These focus on:

  (1) *enhancing regular classroom strategies to enable learning* (e.g., improving instruction for students who have become disengaged from learning at school and for those with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems)

  (2) *supporting transitions* (i.e., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions)

  (3) *increasing home and school connections*

  (4) *responding to, and where feasible, preventing crises*

  (5) *increasing community involvement and support* (outreaching to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers)

  (6) *facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed*.

The complexity of factors interfering with learning, development, and teaching underscore the need to coalesce efforts to address the variety of factors that interfere with a school accomplishing its mission. A number of institutional indicators and evidence from pioneering work on moving in new directions to enhance student and learning supports all herald a paradigm shift supporting development of a *comprehensive system* encompassing the scope and content outlined above and illustrated in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2

**Matrix for Reviewing Scope and Content of a
Component to Address Barriers to Learning***

Scope of Intervention

	System for Promoting Healthy Development & Preventing Problems	System for Early Intervention (Early after problem onset)	System of Care
Classroom-Focused Enabling			
Crisis/ Emergency Assistance & Prevention			
Support for transitions			
Home Involvement in Schooling			
Community Outreach/ Volunteers			
Student and Family Assistance			

Organizing around the

Content/ "curriculum"

(for addressing barriers to learning & promoting healthy development)

Accommodations for differences & disabilities Specialized assistance & other intensified interventions (e.g., Special Education & School-Based Behavioral Health)

*Note that specific school-wide and classroom-based activities related to positive behavior support, "prereferral" interventions, and the eight components of Center for Prevention and Disease Control's Coordinated School Health Program are embedded into the six content ("curriculum") areas.

Note: *The following recent brief report from the Center is reproduced here to further highlight the paradigm shift related to student and learning supports.*

Moving Toward a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: The Next Evolutionary Stage in School Improvement Policy and Practice

As our policy reports have indicated, school improvement policies, planning, and practices have not been effective in dealing with factors leading to and maintaining students' problems, especially in schools where large proportions of students are not doing well (Adelman & Taylor, 2008a; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2005a and b).

Pressure is increasing for expanding the nature and scope of school improvement efforts in order to reduce dropouts, close the achievement gap, and ensure all students have an equal opportunity for success at school. The evidence suggests that a major focus of this expansion will be on the development by schools of a *comprehensive system of learning supports.*

Pioneer Work

With respect to state legislation, Hawai`i appears to have been the first to pass legislation in 1995 for what the state calls a *Comprehensive System of Student Supports* (CSSS). Since then, a variety of places around the country have adopted language for a policy umbrella covering efforts to address barriers to learning, development, and teaching (see Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2007). However, without adequate support and guidance, too many have not flourished. For example, in California, legislation for a *Comprehensive Pupil Learning Supports System* was introduced in 2006 and again in 2007; it was passed by the education committee and died in appropriations. In recent years, a fair number of school districts, regional, and state departments have flirted with facets of what has been designated as new directions for improving student supports. Some have proceeded in fits and starts; others are moving forward in promising ways.

All these initial efforts have benefitted from lessons learned from initiatives that have pursued strategies for enhancing student supports. These include endeavors for co-locating community health, social, and recreational services on school campuses, efforts to develop full-service community schools, and proposals for developing new roles and functions for school-employed student support staff (e.g., American School Counselor Association, 2005; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2007, 2008a and b; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005).

A Paradigm Shift

We view what has transpired up until now as the early stage of a paradigm shift for how schools address barriers to learning, development, and teaching. The shift is from a *marginalized and fragmented* set of student support services to development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of learning supports (Adelman & Taylor, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, in press; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008c). Such a system weaves together what schools already are doing and enhances this with home and community resources, especially to fill high priority systemic gaps.

A few prominent indicators of the shift are seen in:

- Iowa's statewide design for a system of learning supports (Iowa State Department of Education with the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development, 2004);

- the move by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to hire it's first director of *Systems of Support for Student Learning*, who will be spearheading a Systems of Student Support task force funded through a grant from the Gates Foundation; (The task force is to be convened early next year and will inform and define specific areas of the Council's work in this arena.)

- establishment of a public-private collaboration between the Community Affairs Unit of Scholastic Inc. and our Center at UCLA focused specifically on enhancing leadership for school policy and practice to promote development of a comprehensive system of learning supports; this is a key facet of Scholastic's *Rebuilding for Learning* initiative (Adelman & Taylor, in press);

- the ongoing work of the *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support*; in 2008, the initiative has directed increasing attention to engaging superintendents and departments and schools of education (see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/ndannouncement.htm);

- various Congressional bills introduced over the last couple of years that have highlighted the growing need for rethinking student and learning supports (some of which have been enacted, albeit in an ad hoc manner).

The shift is from

a marginalized and fragmented set of student support services

to

development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of learning supports

Another indicator is the adoption of the term *learning supports* by divisions, departments, and units at state and district levels. Of course, name changes commonly are adopted as terms gain in popularity. Fad-like use of terminology without adequate, substantive change in practices is always a concern.

Learning Supports: Some Key Policy and Practice Considerations

It remains the case that a strong academic program is the foundation from which all other school-based interventions must operate. Given that the academic program is personalized (e.g., plans and uses instructional strategies that account for both individual and group interests, strengths, and weaknesses), a learning supports component at a school is essential for addressing factors that interfere with students benefitting from improvements in academic instruction.

About Learning Supports

As defined in proposed legislation in California: "*Learning supports* are the resources, strategies, and practices that provide physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports intended to enable all pupils to have an equal opportunity for success at school. To accomplish this goal, a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive learning support system should

be integrated with instructional efforts and interventions provided in classrooms and school-wide to address barriers to learning and teaching."

In moving toward the development of new directions for learning supports as the next stage of school improvement, pioneering work around the country stresses that:

1. Every school has a wide range of learners and must ensure equity of opportunity for *all* students and not just a few.

2. External and internal barriers to learning and teaching interfere with schools achieving their mission.

3. To meet the challenges for the many students in need, school districts must design and implement learning support systems that are comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive, and institutionalize them at every school.

4. Learning support systems must address barriers to learning and teaching and ensure that students are engaged and re-engaged in classroom learning. Such systems must reflect the best available science, with a special emphasis on intrinsic motivation theory and practices.

5. In order to meet the goal of all children learning to high standards or reaching proficiency, the system of learning supports must be fully integrated with instruction.

6. Developing a comprehensive system of learning supports requires weaving together the resources of school, home, and community. This involves an operational infrastructure that ensures the learning supports system is treated as primary and essential in planning school improvement.

7. Equity requires developing a comprehensive system of learning supports that plays out in every school in a district.

Four Core, Interrelated Systemic Considerations

With the above in mind, our work has highlighted four core systemic matters with which decision makers and planners must grapple in developing effective *systems* for addressing barriers to learning and teaching (e.g., see Adelman & Taylor, 2006a; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008a, 2008d). These considerations, highlighted in the Exhibit 3, stress the need to:

>Expanding policy

- *Expand policy* – broadening policy for school improvement to fully integrate, as primary and essential, a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching (with the focus on matters such as enhancing home and community engagement and school safety and climate embedded in natural and authentic ways),

>Reframing
 intervention

- *Reframe interventions in-classrooms and school-wide –* unifying the fragmented interventions used to address barriers to learning and teaching and promote healthy development under an umbrella framework that can guide development of a comprehensive system at every school,

>Reconceiving
 infrastructure

- *Reconceive infrastructure –* reworking the operational and organizational infrastructure for a school, a family of schools, the district, and for school-family-community collaboration with a view to weaving resources together to develop a comprehensive system,

>Framing the
 implementation
 problem as
 systemic change

- *Rethink the implementation problem –* framing the phases and tasks involved in "getting from here to there" in terms of widespread diffusion of innovations in organized settings that have well-established institutional cultures and systems.

Exhibit 3

Four Fundamental and Interrelated Considerations*

Policy Revision

Framing Interventions to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching into a *Comprehensive System of Interventions*

Rethinking Organizational and Operational *Infrastructure*

Developing *Systemic Change Mechanisms* for Effective Implementation, Sustainability, and Replication to Scale
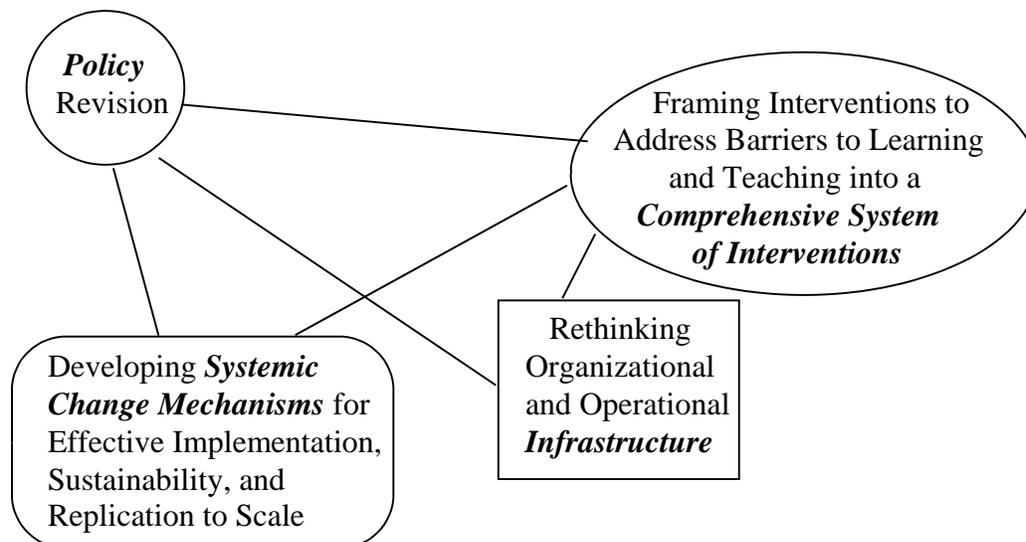
*Additionally, because of the overemphasis on using extrinsic reinforcers in all aspects of efforts to improve schools, we find it essential to re-introduce a focus on *intrinsic motivation* in planning related to all four concerns (Brophy, 2004; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Moller, 2005; National Research Council, 2004).

Prototype Frameworks

In addressing the four core, interrelated systemic considerations, the Center has formulated a set of frameworks to underscore the need and as potential guides for moving forward (Adelman & Taylor, 2006, 2008b; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008a). These include:

(1) *Expanding Policy.* Effective policy for a comprehensive system of learning supports requires moving beyond the current approach to school improvement because that approach marginalizes learning supports; it primarily emphasizes two components – instruction and governance/management. The new approach expands school improvement policy to add a third primary component focused on addressing barriers to learning and teaching. In doing so, it provides for guidelines that delineate:

- a unifying umbrella policy concept,

- a comprehensive systemic intervention framework,

- an integrated infrastructure at all levels for developing a comprehensive system of learning supports and ensuring that it is a full partner in school improvement planning and decision making

- an expanded school improvement accountability framework

- support and guidance for systemic change and scale-up

(2) *Reframing Intervention.* A prototype of an enabling/learning supports component has been operationalized. The prototype combines an integrated and systemic continuum of interventions and a multifaceted and cohesive set of content arenas. It conceptualizes a system of classroom and school-wide learning supports in terms of a primary *Enabling* or *Learning Supports Component*. Such a component has two facets: addressing interfering factors and (re-)engaging students in classroom instruction. (The emphasis on engagement recognizes that interventions that do not address student disengagement are insufficient in sustaining, over time, student involvement, good behavior, and effective learning at school.)

(3) *Reconceived Operational and Organizational Infrastructure.* Prototype frameworks have been formulated to guide establishment of leadership and workgroups for developing and maintaining a comprehensive system of learning supports. Well-designed, compatible, and interconnected infrastructures at schools, for school complexes (e.g., feeder patterns), at the district level, and for school-community collaboratives are essential. Each level plays a key role in weaving together existing school, home, and community resources and developing a full continuum of interventions over time. Moreover, content and resource-oriented infrastructure mechanisms enable programs and services to be developed and function in an increasingly cohesive, cost-efficient, and equitable way.

(4) *Implementing Systemic Change.* School improvement planning also must be expanded to better address *how* schools and districts intend to accomplish designated changes. In support of this, we have framed and outlined some basics related to systemic change for school improvement (Adelman & Taylor, 2007).

Prototype frameworks underscore the need and provide potential guides for moving forward

School improvement obviously needs to begin with a clear framework and map for what changes are to be made (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2002). It should be equally obvious that there must be a clear framework and map for how to get from here to there, especially when the improvements require significant systemic change. And, in both cases, there is a need to use a strong science-base and provide leadership and adequate resources to facilitate capacity building.

Concluding Comments

As the Carnegie Task Force on Education has stressed:

> *School systems are not responsible for*
> *meeting every need of their students.*
> *But when the need directly affects learning,*
> *the school must meet the challenge.*

The complexity of factors interfering with learning, development, and teaching underscore the need not only to coalesce current efforts but to transform them by ensuring school improvement plans encompass the development of a *comprehensive system of learning supports* as primary and essential in addressing the variety of factors that interfere with a school accomplishing its mission. Evidence from institutional indicators and pioneering work on moving in new directions to enhance student and learning supports all herald a paradigm shift supporting development of a comprehensive and systemic approach.

As the Council for Chief State School Officers stresses in its mission statement: the ultimate aim is to achieve "the vision of an American education system that *enables* all children to succeed in school, work, and life." (italics added)

Thus, whether or not the impending reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act incorporates the new paradigm for supporting learning, we conclude that the next evolutionary stage in enhancing school improvement will and should be a focus on developing a comprehensive system of learning supports.

What the best and wisest parent wants for his [or her] own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy.
John Dewey

> **On the last page is the Center contact info and a Response Form**
> **for indicating interest in and identifying current efforts**
> **related to developing a comprehensive system of learning supports**

This is the third time I've had to tell you off this week, what have you got to say about that?

Thank heavens it's Friday !

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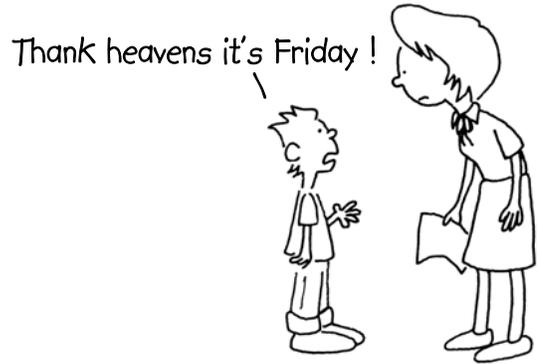
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Making and Disseminating Recommendations is Not Sufficient

Good ideas and missionary zeal are sometimes enough to change
the thinking of individuals; they are rarely, if ever, effective in
changing complicated organizations (like the school) with
traditions, dynamics, and goals of their own.

Seymour Sarason

It's not terribly hard to formulate ideas and recommendations for improving schools. And, in moving them toward acceptance and action, the first concern is *dissemination.* Dissemination entails the many challenges involved in getting ideas and recommendations to the right individuals, groups, and organizations. Acceptance and action, however, require focusing on *diffusion.* Diffusion is the process by which recipients are mobilized to learn and use what has been disseminated. Understanding what enables successful diffusion helps in designing and implementing dissemination strategies in ways that promote recipient use.

While dissemination and diffusion can occur informally, formal efforts require well-designed interventions. In particular, they involve application of strategies that address recipients' interests and capabilities.

> To amplify a bit, below we (a) highlight some strategies related to both dissemination and diffusion and (b) suggest some references for learning more.

Dissemination

The process is that of distribution or circulation. This is accomplished through various delivery mechanisms (e.g., in person and online presentations, hard copy mailing, email, webinars, websites).

Dissemination alone, however, does not guarantee the content is communicated or that recipients will understand it or that they will do anything with what they receive. And, widespread dissemination does not increase the likelihood of any of this. Thus, while dissemination is a necessary precursor, it is insufficient with respect to assuring understanding, never mind mobilizing action.

With a view to use and action, some guidelines in developing dissemination strategies include:

> (1) Clearly convey the *credibility* of both the content and the sender.
>
> (2) As much as feasible, provide free and ready *access*.
>
> (3) *Target specific audiences*. With reference to strategically targeting audiences to promote organizational change, it should be noted that Greenlaugh and colleagues (2004) stress that organizational use and action is more likely when (a) an organization has identified a need, (b) an organization has spent a significant amount of time planning for the adoption of an innovation, including addressing potential problems that may arise from implementation, (c) there is a wide base of support within an organization, as well as high-ranking organization members backing it, and (d) there are sufficient resources for adoption, implementation, and formative evaluation.
>
> (4) *Personalize* for each targeted audience the design of what is disseminated and, as feasible, send it in a personal way.
>
> (5) *Succinct Overview.* Provide an enticing one paragraph overview to stimulate the interest of recipients and increase the likelihood of their paying attention to what is sent. The key here is to underscore the potential value to them.
>
> (6) *Use Networks*. Start with developed networks and over time establish new ones (e.g., networks that include targeted audiences; networks of colleagues who have agreed to help with dissemination).
>
> (7) *Use News Outlets.* Send a news release to relevant listservs, organizational newsletters, clearinghouses, Centers, and so forth.

(8) *Encourage Sharing.* Encourage all recipients to share *at least* the one paragraph overview with others they think might be interested. Alternatively, encourage them to indicate who else should be sent the ideas, recommendations, resources.

(9) *Follow-up.* Did it arrive? Was it understood? Any questions or concerns that need to be addressed? Need guidance to help with use?

Diffusion

This is the process by which recipients are mobilized to learn and use what has been disseminated. The content focus of formal diffusion efforts may be on motivating and facilitating
        (a) acquisition of information and knowledge
        (b) adoption/adaptation of a specific innovation (e.g., a new practice, a new policy),
        (c) pursuit of major reforms and transformative innovations requiring systemic changes.

The figure below illustrates the differences in focus as related to dissemination and diffusion.

Examples of Content Focus

	Information/ Knowledge	New Practice	New Policy	System Change
Dissemination (distribution, dispersion)				
Diffusion (mobilizing recipients to learn and use)				

Process

It should be stressed that the complexity involved in diffusion increases when the focus is on innovation and systemic change because of the many contextual variables that play a role in change. For example, schools, neighborhoods, and agencies are all organized settings with well-established institutional cultures and infrastructures that usually must be accounted for and which are not easily changed. In established organized settings, those who set out to diffuse policies and practices that have been found efficacious are confronted with the enormous and complex tasks of producing systemic changes and going to scale. From this perspective, the implementation problem involves much more than assuring fidelity of application and calls for a high degree of commitment and relentlessness of effort.

Diffusion of innovation research offers some help in thinking about what all of us might consider in developing dissemination and diffusion strategies that connect more effectively with our audiences. Extrapolating from the work of E.M Rogers (2003) and Greenlaugh and colleagues (2004), strategies should be designed to enhance perceptions of:

(1) *Benefits.* This includes delineating what is to be gained from use and action (e.g., how ideas and recommendations meet an organization's needs). With respect to new information or innovations, Rogers emphasizes the concept of *relative advantage.* The degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supercedes. The greater the degree of perceived relative advantage, the more rapid its rate of adoption.

(2) *Compatibility* (fit, match). This refers to the degree to which an idea or recommendation is perceived as consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters. Rogers states that the more compatible it is, the more rapidly it will be adopted.

(3) *Usability*. Language and design should maximize the likelihood that what is sent can be readily understood by the intended audience. The content should highlight use, including how ideas and recommendations might be integrated into existing activity and leverage available resources. Rogers emphasizes the concept of *trialability*. This is the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis. An innovation that is triable represents less uncertainty as it is possible to learn by doing.

(4) *Evidence of impact.* Clearly, references should be included to data, opportunities to observe demonstrations, or any other ways to convey the potential impact of acting on recommendations.

Resources and References

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Fixsen, D.L., Naoom, S.F., Blase, K.A., Friedman, R.M., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature.* Tampa, FL: The National Implementation Research Network, University of South Florida. Http://nirn.fmhi.usf.edu/resources/publications/Monograph

Fleuren, M., Wiefferink, K., & Paulussen, T. (2004).Determinants of innovation within health care organizations. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 16(2),107–123.

Greenhalgh, T., Bate, R., Kyriakidou, O., Macfarlane, F., & Peacock, R. (2005) *Diffusion of innovations in health service organisations: A systematic literature review*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Greenhalgh, T.; Robert, G.; MacFarlane, F.; Bate, P. & Kyriakidou, O. (2004). Diffusion of innovations in service organizations: Systematic review and recommendations. *The Milbank Quarterly, 82*, 581-629.

Rogers, E.M. (2003) *The diffusion of innovations*, fifth edition. New York: The Free Press.

Wejnert, B.(2002) Integrating models of diffusion of innovations: A conceptual framework. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28, 297-326.

Also from the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, see the series of information resources on "Enabling System Change" entitled: *Diffusion of Innovations and Science-Based Practices to Address Barriers to Learning & Improve Schools.* Online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/materials/trainingpresentation.htm#fact

About Opportunities for Change in Challenging Times

What opportunities do you see for advancing a comprehensive system of learning supports?

What challenges do you see in taking advantage of these opportunities?

Do you see ways for our Center to help?

Indicate contact info for any persons you think we should focus on as we pursue diffusion processes related to policy and practice for development of a comprehensive system of learning supports in schools.

Interested in Networking/Sharing/Learning More About the Matters Covered?

Check off any of the following that are a good match with your interests:

_____receiving regular information about the matters discussed in the report

_____being part of a national listserv connecting professionals concerned with these matters

_____convening a leadership institute focused on these matters

_____having a further in-depth interchange with our Center about these or other matters of mutual interest and concern.

Your Name _____ Title _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____)_____ Fax (____)_____ E-Mail

Thanks for completing this form. **Return by FAX to (310) 206-8716.**

(1/09)