10 Best Practices in the Use of Learning Supports Leadership Teams to Enhance Learning Supports

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OVERVIEW

Case-oriented work has long dominated school psychology. While we are all concerned when a specific student manifests a learning, behavior, or emotional problem, a one-child-at-a-time focus has obvious limitations in schools where many are not doing well. As a result of a case-by-case orientation, many school psychologists and their student-support colleagues are not yet in tune with the concept of support staff leadership teams that focus on developing unified and comprehensive systems to address barriers to learning and teaching. In fact, some say to us: "What's that got to do with my job?" Others say: "What's that got to do with helping kids?"

Pursuit of best practices for carrying out leadership functions that are oriented to redeploying resources for system development is essential for ending the marginalization that continues to seriously impede the contribution of student support staff and that leads to reductions in force. Leadership teams focused on system development and enhancing how resources for addressing barriers to learning and teaching are used represent a major change in school operational infrastructure. This change enables the engagement of support staff in the type of analyses essential if school improvement planning and decision making are to create a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports at a school.

It is widely conceded that supports to address barriers to learning and teaching tend to be fragmented and narrowly focused and reach only a small proportion of those in need. Moreover, sparse budgets lead school psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses, and other support staff into counterproductive competition with each other and with community professionals working with schools. Clearly, changes are needed. Support staff leadership teams can play a major role in altering this unacceptable status quo.

As school psychologists know, what happens for students depends first and foremost on who makes decisions about resources and who plans the details for school improvements. But the reality is that prevailing infrastructure mechanisms marginalize the influence of those most directly concerned about addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems. So, pursuit of best practices makes it essential to rethink school and district leadership and operational infrastructure to correct this deficiency. We have addressed this and related systemic change matters in detail elsewhere (Adelman & Taylor, 2006a, 2008a, 2010; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2005a, 2011a, 2012a). The focus here is on new leadership teams and work groups designed to be a permanent part of a school and district infrastructure for unifying and developing a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports. Such mechanisms are essential to school improvement, and they provide a vehicle for school psychologists and other student support staff to expand their role and functions to encompass system development for school improvement. This is the key to moving from being seen as concerned only with providing services to a few of the struggling students to playing an essential leadership role

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in ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

Pioneering work across the country conceives support staff leadership mechanisms from the school outward (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d). That is, first the focus is on school-level mechanisms. Then, based on analyses of what is needed to facilitate and enhance school-level efforts, mechanisms are conceived that enable clusters or families of schools to work together. The objectives in doing so are to increase efficiency and effectiveness and achieve the financial benefits that can be garnered from combining resources in pursuit of shared and overlapping functions. From this perspective, system-wide mechanisms are designed or redesigned to support the work at each school and among clusters of schools (e.g., those in feeder patterns).

The type of leadership mechanisms delineated in this chapter, at a school, for multiple school sites, and system-wide, enable school psychologists to play a critical role in school improvement efforts to unify and develop a comprehensive system of student and learning supports. Such mechanisms provide ways to (a) arrive at decisions about resource allocation; (b) maximize systematic and integrated planning, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation of student and learning supports; (c) outreach to create formal working relationships with community resources to bring some to a school and establish special linkages with others; and (d) upgrade and modernize the approach to providing student and learning supports in ways that reflect the best intervention thinking and use of technology. At each system level, these tasks require that all support staff adopt some new roles and functions and that parents, students, and other representatives from the community enhance their involvement. They also call for redeployment of existing resources as well as identifying new ones.

All schools have some activity focused on specific concerns, such as learning problems, substance abuse, violence, teen pregnancy, school dropouts, and delinquency. When viewed as a whole, an extensive range of activities oriented to students' needs and problems are found in many school districts. Some programs are provided throughout a school district, and others are carried out at or linked to targeted schools. The interventions may be designed to benefit all students in a school, those in specified grades, and/or those identified as having special needs. The activities may be implemented in regular or special education classrooms and may be geared to an entire class, groups, or individuals or they may be designed as pull-out programs for designated students. They encompass efforts to improve classroom and school-wide climate and a range of curricular and clinically oriented activities.

While schools can use a wide range of people to help students, most school-owned and operated services are offered as part of pupil personnel services. In large districts, school psychologists, counselors, social workers, and other specialists may be organized into separate units. Such units straddle regular, special, and compensatory education. Analyses of the situation find that the result is programs and services that are planned, implemented, and evaluated in a fragmented and piecemeal manner.

Service staff at schools tend to function in relative isolation of each other and other stakeholders, with a great deal of the work oriented to discrete problems and with an overreliance on specialized services for individuals and small groups. In some places, a student identified as at risk for grade retention, dropout, and substance abuse may be assigned to three counseling programs operating independently of each other.

Even in settings with relatively few services, such fragmentation not only is costly, it breeds counterproductive competition and works against developing cohesiveness and maximizing results. The problems inherent in all this have long been of concern to support staff and their professional organizations, as well as policy makers at state and federal levels (e.g., Fagan & Wise, 2000; Marx & Wooley, 1998).

With the intent of dealing with the above concerns, trailblazing schools across the country are pioneering the use of a leadership mechanism that focuses specifically on how resources are used and enhanced in order to improve how they provide student support activity (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2012b). This mechanism differs in its functions from the case-oriented teams most schools have for reviewing individual student/family problems (e.g., a student support team, an Individualized Educational Program [IEP] team). The functions of such case-oriented teams include referral, triage, and care monitoring or management. In contrast, a student- or learning-supports leadership team at a school focuses on system development by enhancing use of all available resources associated with addressing barriers to student learning and promoting healthy development.

Two metaphors help differentiate the two types of mechanisms and the importance of both. A case

orientation fits the starfish metaphor: The day after a great storm had washed up all sorts of sea life far up onto the beach, a youngster set out to throw back as many of the still-living starfish as he could. After watching him toss one after the other into the ocean, an old man approached him and said, "It's no use your doing that, there are too many. You're not going to make any difference." The boy looked at him in surprise, then bent over, picked up another starfish, threw it in, and then replied, "It made a difference to that one!" This metaphor, of course, reflects all the important efforts to assist specific students.

The leadership and resource-oriented focus is captured by a different metaphor: One weekend a group of school staff went fishing together down at the river. Not long after they got there, a child came floating down the rapids calling for help. One of the group on the shore quickly dove in and pulled the child out. Minutes later another child, then another, and then many more children were coming down the river. Soon everyone was diving in and dragging children to the shore and then jumping back in to save as many children as they could. In the midst of all this frenzy, one of the group was seen walking away. Her colleagues were irate. How could she leave when there were so many children to save? After long hours, to everyone's relief, the flow of children stopped, and the group could finally catch their breath. At that moment, their colleague came back. They turned on her and angrily shouted, "How could you walk off when we needed everyone here to save the children?" She replied, "It occurred to me that someone ought to go upstream and find out why so many kids were falling into the river. What I found is that the old bridge had several planks missing, and when children tried to jump over the gap, they couldn't make it and fell through into the river. So I got some folks to help fix the bridge." Fixing and building better bridges is a good way to think about prevention, and it helps underscore the importance of taking time for system development that improves and enhances use of limited resources.

Clearly, as the widespread policy and practice emphasis on Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 service levels suggests, schools need to pursue system development and resource-oriented functions in addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems, as well as individual cases (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2011b). Since case-oriented teams are widely implemented, it seems essential to increase understanding of the importance of ensuring there also is the type of system

development focus that leads to an increased emphasis on prevention and responding as early after problem onset as feasible. Such an emphasis is critical to reducing the number of students who end up needing to be responded to as cases. It also can help school psychologists as they strive to play a greater role in school improvement planning and decision making.

We initially demonstrated the feasibility of resource-oriented leadership teams in the Los Angeles Unified School District (Lim & Adelman, 1997; Rosenblum, DiCecco, Taylor, & Adelman, 1995). Currently, such a team is being introduced in many schools across the country (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2012a; Education Development Center, 2011). Initially, the mechanism was designated by names such as Resource Coordinating Team and Resource Management Team. For purposes of this discussion, we will use the current preference to identify the mechanism as a Learning Supports Leadership Team.

Creation of leadership mechanisms focusing on learning supports at schools, for families of schools, and at the district level provides an often missing facet of the operational infrastructure (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2005b). Where this facet is missing, certain functions may be given short shrift. Examples include analyses of how existing resources are deployed and clarification of how the various human and financial resources from public and private sectors can be woven together. When too little attention is paid to such functions, it hampers efforts to (a) weave together existing school and community resources; (b) enable programs and services to function in an increasingly cohesive and cost-efficient way; and (c) develop, implement, and evaluate over time a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports.

Available evidence suggests that, by transforming current approaches for addressing barriers to student learning and teaching, mechanisms for system development are vital in reducing marginalization and fragmentation of student and learning supports (Adelman & Taylor 2006a; Education Development Center, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Moreover, when such mechanisms are created in the form of teams, they also can be vehicles for building working relationships and can help solve turf and operational problems. In all, a Learning Supports Leadership Team provides a structure for pursuing the type of functions specified in the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) 2010 *Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services* (NASP, 2010).

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

System development and improving and enhancing use of limited resources involve carrying out a variety of functions in a proactive way. These include providing leadership, capacity building, oversight for mapping and analyzing current resource use, establishing priorities for program development, making recommendations for resource deployment or redeployment and enhancement to improve programs and systems, and participating in decision making.

When the focus is on system development mechanisms for student and learning supports, the following intents are provided for:

- *All students:* Use resources to address the diverse needs of the many as well as the few and do so in ways that level the playing field and enable every student to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.
- *Build a school-site infrastructure:* Establish and sustain organizational and operational mechanisms that are linked into an effective and efficient infrastructure at the school site.
- *Build infrastructure for a family of schools:* Connect schools in a complex or feeder pattern to maximize use of available resources and achieve economies of scale.
- *Connect with the district central office infrastructure:* Ensure that site-based and school cluster efforts are effectively linked to and nurtured by the central office.
- *Connect schools across districts:* In small rural school districts and where schools are organized into separate high school and elementary districts this is both appropriate and necessary.
- *Build school–community collaborative:* Connect school and community infrastructures and braiding school–community resources.
- *Evolve a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of learning supports:* Rethink and deploy resources in ways that evolve student support services into a unified and comprehensive learning supports component that is treated as a primary and essential facet of school improvement.

Team Composition

It is conceivable that one person can perform many of the basic functions described above. However, given the nature and scope of the work, it is preferable to have several stakeholders put their heads together and function as a formal Learning Supports Leadership Team.

Some schools find the idea of establishing another team unappealing. In such cases, an existing team (e.g., student or teacher assistance teams, school crisis teams, healthy school teams, or school improvement teams) can perform the system development functions. In adding these functions to another team's work, however, great care must be taken to structure the agenda so sufficient time is devoted to the leadership tasks. For small schools a large team often is not feasible, but a two-person team can still do much of the work. The point is to get started and build over time the type of team that fits the setting. The key is not to lose sight of the system development functions the team needs to pursue and what needs to be accomplished.

The team meets as necessary. Frequency of meetings depends on how ambitious the group's agenda is and time availability. Initially, this may mean once a week. Later, when meetings are scheduled for every 2–3 weeks, continuity and momentum are maintained through interim tasks performed by individuals or workgroups. Because some participants may be at a school on a part-time basis, one of the problems that must be addressed is that of rescheduling personnel so that there is an overlapping time for meeting together. Of course, the reality is that not all team members will be able to attend every meeting, but a good approximation can be made at each meeting, with steps taken to keep others informed as to what was done. Well-organized and well-trained teams can accomplish a great deal through informal communication and short meetings.

Where a new team is established, it might begin with only a few people. Then, as feasible, it can expand into an inclusive group of informed, able, and willing stakeholders. Although a Learning Supports Leadership Team might be created solely around psychosocial programs, the intent is to focus on resources related to all major learning supports programs and services. Thus, the team tries to bring together representatives from each of these programs and services. Because various teams at a school require the expertise of the same personnel, some people will necessarily be on more than one team. The following are the types of stakeholders who are candidates for such a team:

- Administrator responsible for student and learning supports (e.g., assistant principal)
- School psychologist
- Counselor
- School nurse

- School social worker
- Attendance and dropout counselors
- Safe and drug-free school staff
- Behavioral specialist
- Special education staff
- After-school program staff
- Bilingual and Title I program coordinators
- Health educators
- Representatives of community agencies involved regularly with the school (e.g., community entities involved with physical and mental health, welfare and protective services, juvenile justice)
- Student and family representation (when appropriate and feasible)
- Others who have a particular interest and ability to help with the functions, including regular classroom teachers, noncertificated staff (e.g., front office, food service, custodian, bus driver, school resource officer)

In establishing the team, school psychologists can play a key role in convening initial participants and facilitating the establishment of the mechanism.

For the team to function well, there must be a core of members who have or will acquire the ability to carry out identified functions and make the mechanism work (others are auxiliary members and work group participants). They must be committed to the team's mission. Building team commitment and competence is an ongoing task. The team must have a dedicated leader/facilitator who is able to keep the group task-focused and productive. It also needs someone who records decisions and reminds members of planned activity and products. Whenever feasible, advanced technology (management systems, electronic bulletin boards and e-mail, clearinghouses) are used to facilitate communication, networking, program planning and implementation, linking activity, and a variety of budgeting, scheduling, and other management concerns.

A Learning Supports Leadership Team forms small workgroups as needed to address specific concerns (e.g., mapping resources, planning for capacity building, addressing problems related to case-oriented systems), develop new programs (e.g., welcoming and social support strategies for newcomers to the school), implement special initiatives (e.g., positive behavior support), and so forth. Such groups usually are facilitated by a member of the leadership team who recruits a small group of other stakeholders from the school and community who are willing and able to help. The group facilitator provides regular updates to the leadership team about workgroup progress and brings

back feedback from the team. Ad hoc workgroups take on tasks that can be done over a relatively short time period, and the group disbands once the work is accomplished. Standing workgroups focus on defined program areas and pursue current priorities for enhancing intervention in a given arena (e.g., helping design cohesive approaches to provide supports for various student transitions, enhancing home and school connections). Case-oriented teams such as student assistance or study teams and IEP teams, in effect, are standing workgroups and provide invaluable system data for the Learning Supports Leadership Team's deliberations.

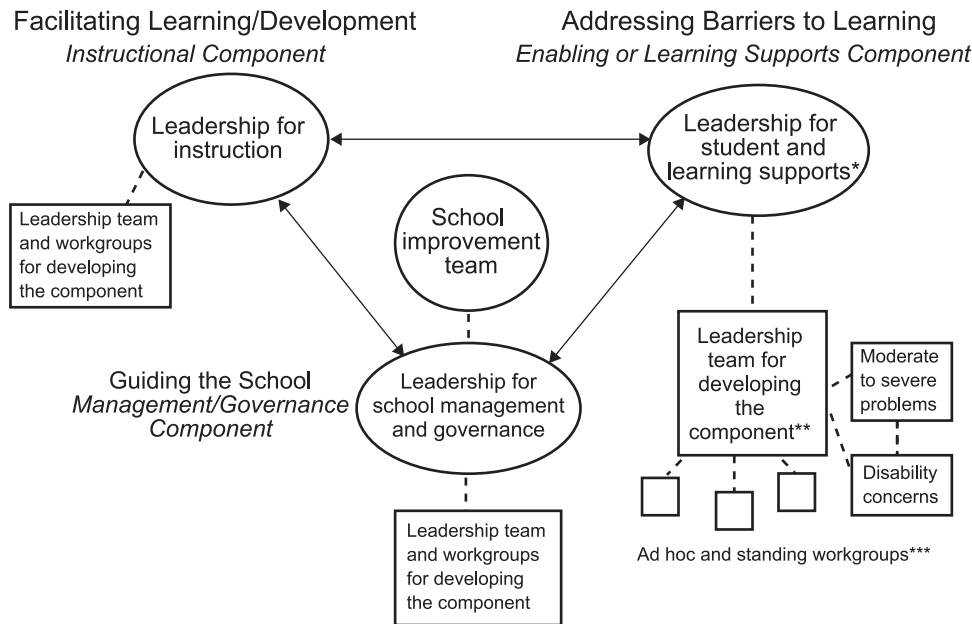## Not an Isolated Mechanism but Part of an Integrated Infrastructure

System development mechanisms at all levels cannot be isolated entities. The intent is for each to connect to each other and be part of an integrated infrastructure. We focus here on the school level. Extrapolations can be made from there.

A Learning Supports Leadership Team must be a formal unit of a school's infrastructure. It must be fully connected with the other infrastructure mechanisms at the school (e.g., those associated with instruction and management/governance). Figure 1 illustrates relationships of such a team to other major infrastructure units.

Having at least one representative from the Learning Supports Leadership Team on the school's governing and planning bodies (e.g., the principal's decision-making team, school improvement planning team) ensures the type of infrastructure connections that are essential if student and learning supports are to be maintained, improved, and increasingly integrated with classroom instruction. In most cases, having the administrator who is responsible for student and learning supports on the team provides the necessary link with the school's administrative decision making related to allocation of budget, space, staff development time, and other resources. Moreover, as discussed below, where clusters or families of schools are working together, representatives from each of the schools meet together periodically (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; Taylor, Nelson, & Adelman, 1999).

A well-designed Learning Supports Leadership Team complements the work of a site's governance body by focusing on providing on-site overview, leadership, and advocacy for all activity specifically used to address barriers to learning and teaching. However, for this to

Figure 1. Learning Supports Leadership Team as Part of an Integrated Infrastructure at a School Site

Facilitating Learning/Development
Instructional Component

Addressing Barriers to Learning
Enabling or Learning Supports Component

Leadership for instruction

Leadership for student and learning supports*

Leadership team and workgroups for developing the component

School improvement team

Guiding the School
Management/Governance Component

Leadership for school management and governance

Leadership team for developing the component**

Moderate to severe problems

Disability concerns

Leadership team and workgroups for developing the component

Ad hoc and standing workgroups***

Note. For more on this, see the *Reworking Infrastructure* (Section B) of the Center's Toolkit for Rebuilding Student Supports Into a Comprehensive System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching: smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkitb3.htm *Learning supports or enabling component leadership consists of an administrator and other advocates/champions with responsibility and accountability for ensuring the vision or the component is not lost. The administrator meets with and provides regular input to the Learning Supports Leadership Team. **A Learning Supports Leadership Team ensures component cohesion, integrated implementation, and ongoing development. It meets weekly to guide and monitor daily implementation and development of all programs, services, initiatives, and systems at a school that are concerned with providing learning supports and specialized assistance. ***Ad hoc and standing workgroups initially are the various teams that already exist related to various initiatives and programs (e.g., a crisis team) and for processing cases (e.g., a student assistance team, an IEP team). Where redundancy exists, workgroups can be combined. Others are formed as needed by the Learning Supports Leadership Team to address specific concerns. These groups are essential for accomplishing the many tasks associated with such a team's functions.

be the case, the team must be properly constituted, trained, and supported.

Establishing and building team capacity, of course, are not simple tasks. As a result, it is essential to think in terms of a phase-in process (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2005a). Because establishing such a team involves significant organizational change, staff assigned to accomplish the tasks must have the skills of a systemic change agent. We designate this type of change agent as an *organization facilitator* and it is the type of role many school psychologists could learn to play (Adelman & Taylor 2006a; Lim & Adelman, 1997; Rosenblum et al., 1995).

Anyone chosen to create organizational change must be assured the full administrative support and be specially trained as a change agent. The training must include developing expertise to help school sites, families of schools, and districts implement and institutionalize substantively new approaches.

In brief, organization facilitators are catalysts and managers of change. As such, they strive to ensure that changes are true to the design for improvement and adapted to fit the local culture. Such a facilitator also must be an effective problem solver, responding quickly as problems arise and designing proactive strategies to counter anticipated barriers to change, such as negative reactions and dynamics, common factors interfering with working relationships, and system deficiencies. All this must be accomplished in ways that increase readiness and commitment to change while enhancing empowerment and a sense of community.

Organization facilitators also can help organize basic interdisciplinary and cross training to create the trust, knowledge, skills, and the attitudes essential for the kind of working relationships required if the resource-oriented mechanism is to operate successfully. Because the work of resource-oriented teams involves promoting systemic changes at a school, an organization facilitator

helps team members understand how to be effective agents of change as they work with a site's stakeholders to restructure programs and infrastructure mechanisms. This includes matters such as planning, implementing, and formatively evaluating stakeholder development (coaching, with an emphasis on creating readiness both in terms of motivation and skills; team building; providing technical assistance) and ongoing capacity building and support.

We have focused here on an organization facilitator as a change agent for one school. Such an individual, however, might rotate among a group of schools. In large school districts, a cadre of such professionals might be used to facilitate change across an entire district.

BEST PRACTICES IN THE USE OF LEARNING SUPPORTS LEADERSHIP TEAMS TO ENHANCE LEARNING SUPPORTS

In keeping with the fundamental organizational principle emphasizing that structure (e.g., an operational infrastructure mechanism) follows function, we discuss best practices for a Learning Supports Leadership Team in terms of its major functions.

Functions

When we describe a Learning Support Leadership Team, some school staff quickly respond that they already have one (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2011c). When we explore this with them, we usually find what they have is a case-oriented team (e.g., a student study team, student success team, student assistance team). To further clarify the difference between teams, we contrast the functions of each. In doing so, the intent is to highlight the differences in agenda and the need for

mechanisms to carry out both sets of functions listed in Table 1.

As noted already, the resource-oriented functions are pursued not just to enhance coordination, but to make progress toward the overall aim of developing a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of learning supports (i.e., a learning supports component). In pursuing its functions, the team provides what often is a missing link for developing, implementing, managing, and enhancing programs and systems in ways that integrate, strengthen, or stimulate new and improved interventions (Higgins, Weiner, & Young, 2012).

For example, such a mechanism can be used to (a) map and analyze activities and resources to improve their use in preventing and ameliorating problems; (b) build effective systems for referral, case management, and quality assurance; (c) enhance procedures for management of programs and information and for communication among school staff and with the home; and (d) explore ways to redeploy and enhance resources, such as clarifying which activities are nonproductive, suggesting better uses for resources, and establishing priorities for developing new interventions, as well as reaching out to connect with additional resources in the school district and community.

About Mapping and Analyzing Resources

Schools have a variety of programs and services to address barriers to learning and teaching, and these consume a significant amount of resources. The interventions range from Title I programs, through extra help for low performing students, to accommodations for special education students. From what school administrators usually tell us, when the various sources of support are totaled at schools with substantial

Table 1. Different Functions of Case-Oriented and System Development Leadership Teams

Case-Oriented Team Functions	System Development Leadership Team Functions
Triage	Aggregating data across students and from teachers to analyze school needs
Referral	Mapping resources in school and community
Case monitoring/management	Analyzing resources
Case progress review	Identifying the most pressing program development needs at the school
Case reassessment	Coordinating and integrating school resources and connecting with community resources
	Establishing priorities for strengthening programs and developing new ones
	Planning and facilitating ways to strengthen and develop new programs and systems
	Recommending how resources should be deployed and redeployed
	Identifying where additional resources exist and developing strategies for accessing them
	Social marketing

amounts of federal and special project funding, learning supports account for about 25% of the resources. However, because school leaders are mainly focused on enhancing instruction in direct ways, essential efforts to provide a well-designed learning supports system continue to be marginalized, and resources are deployed in a fragmented and often wasteful and ineffective manner. One result of marginalizing supports for students is that school improvement efforts continue to pay little attention to the need for and potential impact of rethinking how these resources can be used to enable student learning by doing more to address barriers cited in the literature as risk factors (Adelman & Taylor 2006b; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2004; Taylor & Adelman, 2004).

Whatever the actual percentage of resources used for student and learning supports, the fact is that in too many locales these resources are expended in ad hoc, piecemeal ways (Marx & Wooley, 1998). A Learning Supports Leadership Team can reverse this trend. The key to doing so involves mapping, analyzing, and managing resources with a clear emphasis on what needs to be done to help all students have an equitable opportunity to succeed at school (see Appendix A).

To determine high frequency needs of a school, the team uses aggregated data about student learning and behavior. For example, a team at an elementary school may find that 30% of the third graders have problems reading or a high school team might find that 40% of the students are not graduating. Awareness of such needs raises the question of what resources already are being expended to address the problems (Academy for Educational Development, 2002; Dewar, 1997; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Following initial mapping, the focus turns to analyzing how resources are currently used and considering how they might be redeployed to improve efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching. The goal is to develop specific recommendations for improving the work at each school through enhancing use of the school's existing resources, as well as enhancing resources through collaboration among the family of schools and with neighborhood entities (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1990). The tasks are to clarify what parts are in place, what is still missing, and how to braid and enhance resources to improve matters.

What Parts Are in Place

Discussion focuses on how effective and efficient current efforts are. Special attention is given to identifying redundant efforts, inefficient use of resources, and ineffective activities. With respect to what is seen as ineffective, analyses differentiate between activities that might be effective if they were better supported and more effectively implemented and those that are not worth continuing because they have not made a significant impact or because they are not well conceived. This facilitates generating recommendations about what should be discontinued so that resources can be redeployed to enhance current efforts and fill gaps.

What Is Still Missing

Every school has a wish list of needed programs and services. The analyses put these into perspective of the vision for a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approach to addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development. By doing this, the analyses provide an appreciation of major gaps. Thus, rather than making ad hoc choices from a long list of wishes, recommendations can be based on systematic analyses of what current efforts require enhancement and what gaps need to be filled.

How to Braid and Enhance Resources to Improve Matters

Analyses focus first on how resources are being used at a school: Which resources are being used with the greatest impact and which are not? Is there redundancy? Ineffective activity? Programs where costs far outweigh benefits? Inefficiencies due to lack of coordination? Are there promising programs that are under supported? Are there serious gaps in addressing high priority needs that have been identified by the school's governance body?

Based on the analyses, immediate priorities are set and recommendations are formulated with respect to how best to deploy and redeploy resources to have the greatest impact.

Essentially, the work involves conducting a gap analysis. That is, existing resources are laid out in the context of the adopted vision for a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approach to addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development. This provides a basis for a discussion of matters such as (a) what is working and whether certain activities should no longer be pursued (because they are not effective or not as high a priority as other activities that are needed); (b) what are current priorities with respect to important areas of need and what resources might be redeployed and braided to meet the priorities, including enhancing existing promising practices and filling gaps; and (c) what are strategies and timelines for improving the system of learning supports.

Having accomplished a school-level analysis, the focus turns to how a family of schools (neighboring schools, especially those in a feeder pattern) might braid resources to address common concerns. At this juncture, the family of schools explores how community resources might be woven into the effort (Dedrick, Mitchell, & Roberts, 1994; Kingsley, Coulton, Barndt, Sawicki, & Tatian, 1997). Schools in the same geographic (catchment) area have a number of shared concerns, and feeder schools often are interacting with students from the same family. Furthermore, some programs and personnel are (or can be) shared by several neighboring schools, thus minimizing redundancy and reducing costs. Appendix B highlights the ways school-based Learning Supports Leadership Teams connect families of schools (e.g., feeder patterns) by establishing Learning Supports Leadership Councils.

Moving to the next level, recommendations are made for how to better use the resources district and community agencies offer at central locations or to a few select schools. And, finally, the work turns to whatever extramural grants are available to schools, districts, and community entities to help turn the vision of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of learning supports into reality.

Tools to Aid in Mapping and Analyzing Resources

Mapping and analyzing resources is a major systemic intervention. There are many tools that can aid the process. Such tools are highlighted in the annotated bibliography at the end of this chapter.

One set of tools specifically designed to enhance school improvement planning for addressing barriers to learning and teaching are the self-study surveys developed by the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. These surveys focus on what currently is being done, whether it is being done well, and what else is desired. The set includes an overview Survey of System Status, which covers the leadership and coordination systems needed in developing an effective learning support component and surveys for each of the following six arenas for enhancing learning supports: (a) classroom-based strategies to enable learning, engagement, and reengagement of those with mild-moderate learning, behavior, and emotional problems; (b) support for transitions; (c) prescribed student and family assistance; (d) crisis assistance and prevention; (e) home involvement and engagement; (f) outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including

recruitment of volunteers. The set also includes a special survey focusing on school-community partnerships.

Such self-study surveys can be used by any mechanism concerned with mapping and analyzing resources. For example, members of a Learning Supports Leadership Team initially might work separately in responding to survey items, but the major benefit comes from the shared understanding that arises during group discussions. The discussion and subsequent analyses also can provide a form of quality review.
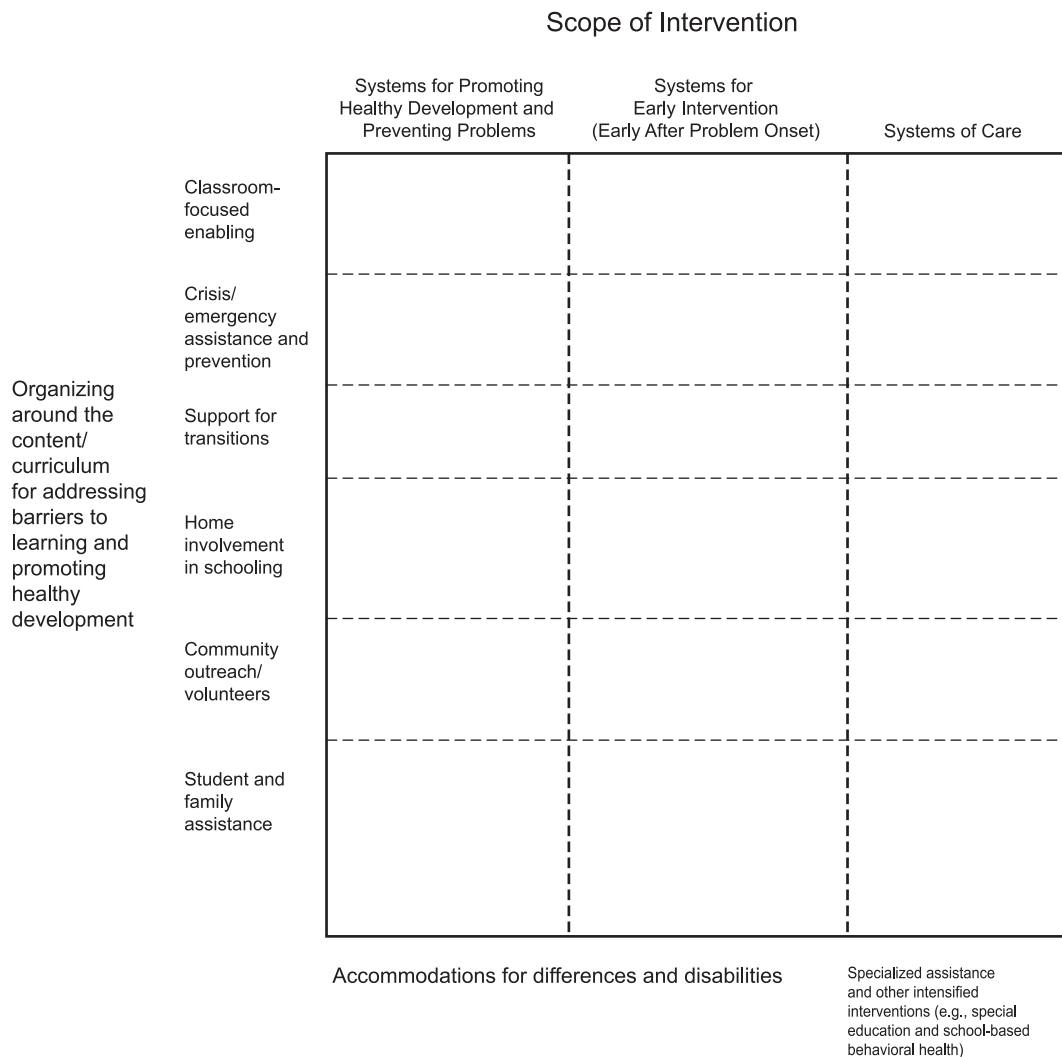
As another tool in effectively mapping and analyzing resources and their deployment it is helpful to have a broad framework of the scope and content of learning supports. An example of such a framework is illustrated in Figure 2. This matrix integrates a conceptualization of primary areas of focus for intervention and traditional levels (e.g., promotion and prevention, early intervention, and treatment; Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 service levels) but conceives of them as integrated systems of intervention (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2011b).

Role of a Learning Supports Leadership Team in Helping Establish a Unified and Comprehensive Learning Supports Component

Again, we stress that the ultimate aim of pursuing a Learning Supports Leadership Team is not only to end the fragmentation of student and learning supports but also to end the marginalization of the whole enterprise (Adelman & Taylor, 1997a, 2006a, 2012). Toward these ends, Learning Supports Leadership Teams can play a key role by rethinking and deploying resource use in ways that transform student support services into a unified and comprehensive enabling or learning supports component that is treated as a primary and essential facet of school improvement. Appendix C highlights the phases of such system development.

Major school improvement, of course, requires creating readiness, building consensus, and influencing action by key stakeholders for such a major systemic change (Adelman & Taylor, 1997b, 2008b; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2005a). The information arising from mapping and analyses of resources provides an important database that can be communicated to key stakeholders to help them understand the benefits of change (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996; Mizrahi & Morris, 1993). Also important to making effective change is the inclusion of the evidence base for moving

Figure 2. A Unifying Umbrella Framework to Guide Rethinking of Learning Supports

Scope of Intervention

	Systems for Promoting Healthy Development and Preventing Problems	Systems for Early Intervention (Early After Problem Onset)	Systems of Care
Classroom-focused enabling			
Crisis/emergency assistance and 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 and promoting healthy development

Accommodations for differences and disabilities   Specialized assistance and other intensified interventions (e.g., special education and school-based behavioral health)

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

in new directions (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2004).

Data to Guide the Work and Evaluate Progress

All resource-oriented teams need data to enhance the quality of their efforts and to monitor their outcomes in ways that promote appropriate accountability. While new teams often do not have the resources for extensive data gathering, sound planning and implementation require that formative evaluation data be amassed and analyzed. In the process, data can be collected that

provide a base for a subsequent evaluation of impact. All decisions about which data are needed should reflect clarity about how the data will be used.

The data for formative evaluation and team impact may already have been gathered from existing documents and records (base rate needs assessments, resource directories, budget information, census data, school, police, hospital, and other organization's reports).Where additional data are needed, they may be gathered using procedures such as checklists, surveys, semistructured interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. Of course, all data indicating that the team is having a positive impact should be widely shared as soon as it is available.

SUMMARY

System development leadership mechanisms are a key facet of school improvement efforts to transform and restructure daily operations for student and learning support. In some schools as much as 25% of the budget may be going to problem prevention and correction. Every school is expending resources to enable learning, and few have a mechanism to develop a unified and comprehensive system and ensure increasingly effective use of existing resources. Such a mechanism contributes to cost efficacy of learning supports activity by ensuring all such activity is planned, implemented, and evaluated in a coordinated and increasingly integrated manner. Creating system development leadership mechanisms also is essential for braiding together school and community resources and encouraging intervention activity to function in an increasingly cohesive way.

One of the primary and essential tasks a Learning Supports Leadership Team undertakes is that of taking stock of school and community programs and services that are in place to support students, families, and staff. A comprehensive gap assessment is generated as resources are mapped and compared with data on the unmet needs of and desired outcomes for students, their families, and school staff. Analyses of what is available, effective, and needed provide a sound basis for formulating priorities and developing strategies to link with additional resources at other schools, district sites, and in the community and enhance resource use. Such analyses also can guide efforts to improve cost effectiveness.

In a similar fashion, a Learning Supports Leadership Council for a complex or family of schools (e.g., a high school and its feeder schools) and one at the district level provides mechanisms for analyses on a larger scale. This can lead to strategies for cross-school, communitywide, and district-wide cooperation and integration to enhance intervention effectiveness and garner economies of scale.

Learning supports leadership mechanisms can reduce fragmentation and enhance cost efficacy. This mechanism can also guide school stakeholders in evolving the school's vision, priorities, and practices for learning supports and working to enhance resources in an integrative way. That is, with appropriate leadership from school psychologists and other student support staff, such a mechanism can play a key role in ending the marginalization of student and learning supports by transforming fragmented activity into a system of learning supports. In doing so, the focus needs to be on all school resources, including compensatory and special education, support services, adult education, recreation and enrichment programs, and facility use, as well as all community resources (including public and private agencies, families, businesses; services, programs, facilities; institutions of higher education; professionals in training; and volunteers including professionals making pro-bono contributions).

The long-range aim is to weave all resources together into the fabric of every school and evolve a unified and comprehensive component that effectively addresses barriers to development, learning, and teaching. As leaders and policy makers recognize the essential nature of such a component, it will be easier to braid resources to address barriers. In turn, this will enhance efforts to foster healthy development. When resources are combined properly, the end product can be cohesive and potent school-community partnerships. These partnerships are essential to fulfilling society's aims of closing the achievement gap and ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school and beyond.

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APPENDIX A: ABOUT RESOURCE MAPPING AND MANAGEMENT

- *Why mapping resources are so important:* To function well, every system has to fully understand and manage its resources. Mapping is a first step toward enhancing essential understanding and, done properly, it is a major intervention in the process of moving forward with enhancing systemic effectiveness.
- *Why mapping both school and community resources are so important:* Schools and communities share (a) goals and problems with respect to children, youth, and families; (b) the need to develop cost-effective systems, programs, and services to meet the goals and address the problems; (c) accountability pressures related to improving outcomes; and (d) the opportunity to improve effectiveness by coordinating and eventually integrating resources to develop a full continuum of systemic interventions.
- *What are resources:* Among other resources are programs, services, real estate, equipment, money, social capital, leadership, and infrastructure mechanisms.
- *What we mean by mapping and who does it:* A representative group of informed stakeholder is asked to undertake the process of identifying what currently is available to achieve goals and address problems and what else is needed to achieve goals and address problems.
- *What this process leads to:* (a) Analyzing to clarify gaps and recommend priorities for filling gaps related to programs and services and deploying, redeploying, and enhancing resources; (b) identifying needs for making infrastructure and systemic improvements and changes; (c) clarifying opportunities for achieving important functions by forming and enhancing collaborative arrangements; and (d) creating social marketing.
- *How to do resource mapping:* First, do it in stages (start simple and build over time). Clarify people/agencies who carry out relevant roles/functions. Next, clarify specific programs, activities, services (including information on how many students/families can be accommodated). Then, identify the dollars and other related resources (e.g., facilities, equipment) that are being expended from various sources. Finally, collate the various policies that are relevant to the endeavor. At each stage establish a computer file and in the later stages create spreadsheets.
- Use benchmarks to guide progress related to resource mapping.

APPENDIX B: DEVELOPING AND CONNECTING MECHANISMS AT SCHOOL SITES, AMONG FAMILIES OF SCHOOLS, AND DISTRICT-WIDE AND COMMUNITYWIDE

A multisite team can provide a mechanism to help ensure cohesive and equitable deployment of resources and also can enhance the pooling of resources to reduce costs. Such a mechanism can be particularly useful for integrating the efforts of high schools and their feeder middle and elementary schools. This clearly is important in addressing barriers with those families who have youngsters attending more than one level of schooling in the same cluster. It is neither cost effective nor good intervention for each school to contact a family separately in instances where several children from a family are in need of special attention. With respect to linking with community resources, multischool teams are especially attractive to community agencies that often do not have the time or personnel to make independent arrangements with every school.

In general, a group of schools can benefit from a multisite resource mechanism designed to provide leadership, facilitate communication and connection, and ensure quality improvement across sites. For example, a multisite body, or what we call a Learning Supports Leadership Council, might consist of a high school and its feeder middle and elementary schools. It brings together one to two representatives from each school's Learning Supports Leadership Team (see Figure B1).

The council meets about once a month to help (a) coordinate and integrate programs serving multiple schools, (b) identify and meet common needs with respect to guidelines and staff development, and (c) create linkages and collaborations among schools and with community agencies. In this last regard, it can play a special role in community outreach both to create formal working relationships and to ensure that all participating schools have access to such resources.

More generally, the council provides a useful mechanism for leadership, communication, maintenance, quality improvement, and ongoing development of a comprehensive continuum of programs and services. Natural starting points for councils are the sharing of needs assessments, resource maps, analyses, and recommendations for reform and restructuring. Specific areas of initial focus would be on local, high priority concerns, such as addressing violence and

Figure B1. Connecting Mechanisms for Learning Supports Across All Levels
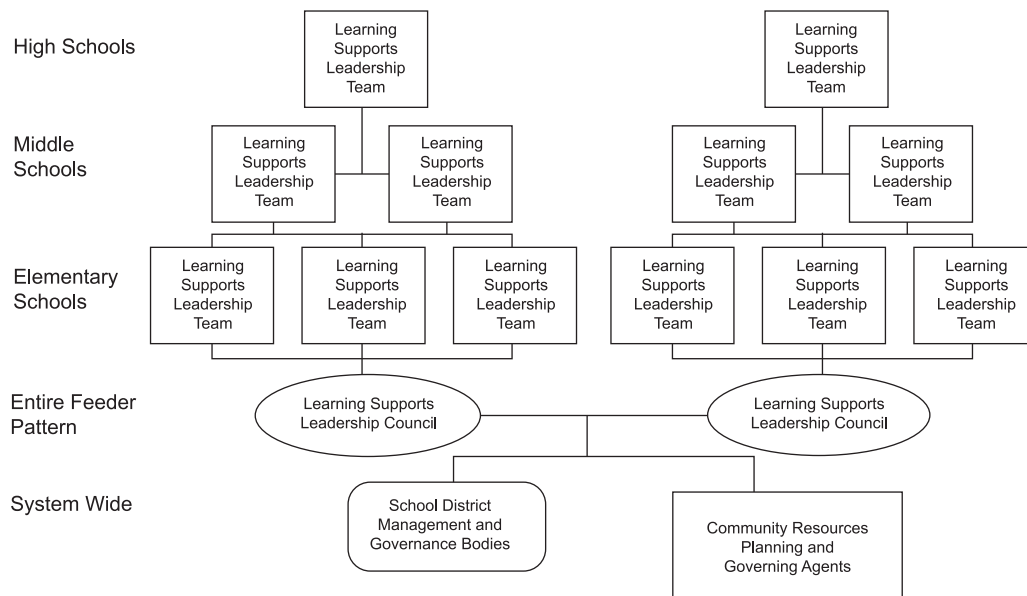
developing prevention programs and safe school and neighborhood plans.

Representatives from Learning Supports Leadership Councils would be invaluable members of planning groups (e.g., service planning area councils, local management boards). They bring information about specific schools, clusters of schools, and local neighborhoods and do so in ways that reflect the importance of school–community partnerships.

APPENDIX C: ESTABLISHING A COMPREHENSIVE LEARNING SUPPORTS SYSTEM

At all levels key stakeholders and their leadership must understand and commit to systemic changes for the proposed innovation. Commitment must be reflected in policy statements and creation of an infrastructure that ensures essential leadership, resources, motivation, and capability for developing an effective system of learning supports.

Developing such a system requires blending resources. Thus, the emphasis throughout is on collaboration—cooperation, coordination, and, where viable, integration—among school and community stakeholders. Planning and accountability related to the following four phases of systemic change use data from evaluation of major antecedents, transactions, and outcomes.

First phase: Creating readiness and commitment

- Introduce basic ideas to relevant groups of stakeholders to build interest and consensus for the work and to garner feedback and support
- Establish a policy framework and obtain leadership commitment. The leadership should make a commitment to adopt a comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching as a primary and essential component of school improvement.
- Identify a leader (equivalent to the leader for the instructional component) to ensure policy commitments are carried out for establishing the new component.

Second phase: Start up and phase in—Building infrastructure and capacity

- Establish temporary mechanisms to facilitate initial implementation/systemic change (e.g., a steering group, an organization change facilitator) and develop the capacity of these mechanisms to guide and manage change and provide essential leadership during phase in.
- Formulate specific start-up and phase-in actions.
- Refine infrastructure so that the component is fully integrated with the instructional and management components. (a) Establish and train an administrative leader. (b) Ensure there is a resource-oriented mechanism (e.g., a Learning Supports Resource Team) and train those who staff it in how to perform

major resource-oriented tasks (e.g., mapping, analysis, coordinating, planning, setting priorities for program development, enhancing intervention systems. (c) Help organize workgroups for each major arena of component activity and facilitate their initial mapping and analysis of resources and formulation of recommendations. (d) Develop ad hoc workgroups to enhance component visibility, communication, sharing, and problem solving.

- Establish a system for quality improvement and evaluation of impact and integrate it into school improvement planning, evaluation, and accountability.
- Attempt to fill program/service gaps and pursue economies of scale through outreach designed to

establish formal collaborative linkages among families of schools (e.g., a feeder pattern) and among district-wide and community resources (e.g., through establishing a Learning Supports Resource Council).

Third phase: Sustaining, evolving, and enhancing outcomes

- Plan for maintenance and institutionalization.
- Develop strategies for maintaining momentum and progress.

Fourth phase: Replication to scale and generating creative renewal