

Preface

We had just finished a presentation on new directions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, when a member of the audience confronted Linda. In an exasperated tone, he complained:

What you discussed is nothing but common sense!

He then waited for her to offer a defense. She smiled and said simply:

You're right!

Despite the common sense reality that school improvement policy and practice must move forward in transforming student and learning supports, it has taken some time for major efforts to emerge. In the meantime, external and internal barriers to learning and teaching have continued to pose some of the most pervasive and entrenched challenges to educators across the country, particularly in chronically low performing schools. Failure to directly address these barriers ensures that (a) too many children and youth will continue to struggle in school, and (b) teachers will continue to divert precious instructional time to dealing with behavior and other problems that can interfere with classroom engagement for all students.

Transforming student and learning supports is key to school improvement. To this end, this book incorporates years of research and prototype development and a variety of examples from trailblazing efforts at local, district, regional, and state levels.

Much of our work in recent years was accomplished as part of the national initiative for New Directions for Student and Learning Supports. As of now, this initiative is being morphed into the ~~the~~ *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports*.

This book is the keystone for this initiative. To further help districts and schools make the transformation, the Center is working on developing additional online, free resources – including professional development activities, powerpoints, implementation resources, and a revised System Change Toolkit. We also will continue providing online technical assistance and coaching.

We do want to take this opportunity to thank the many school and community stakeholders, students and families and the staff at our Center for their continuing leadership in moving the field forward and for all that they have taught us. Their contributions are reflected in every aspect of our work.

Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor

Introduction: *Tweaking is Not Enough – The Imperative for Transformation*

Despite the many efforts to improve schools, the attack on public education continues on several fronts from a variety of stakeholders. Concerns continue about the achievement gap, student dropouts, the plateauing of achievement test gains, and low performing schools. Teachers are regularly assailed, are dropping out at high rates, and recruitment is suffering.

The criticisms fuel the movement to privatize schooling.

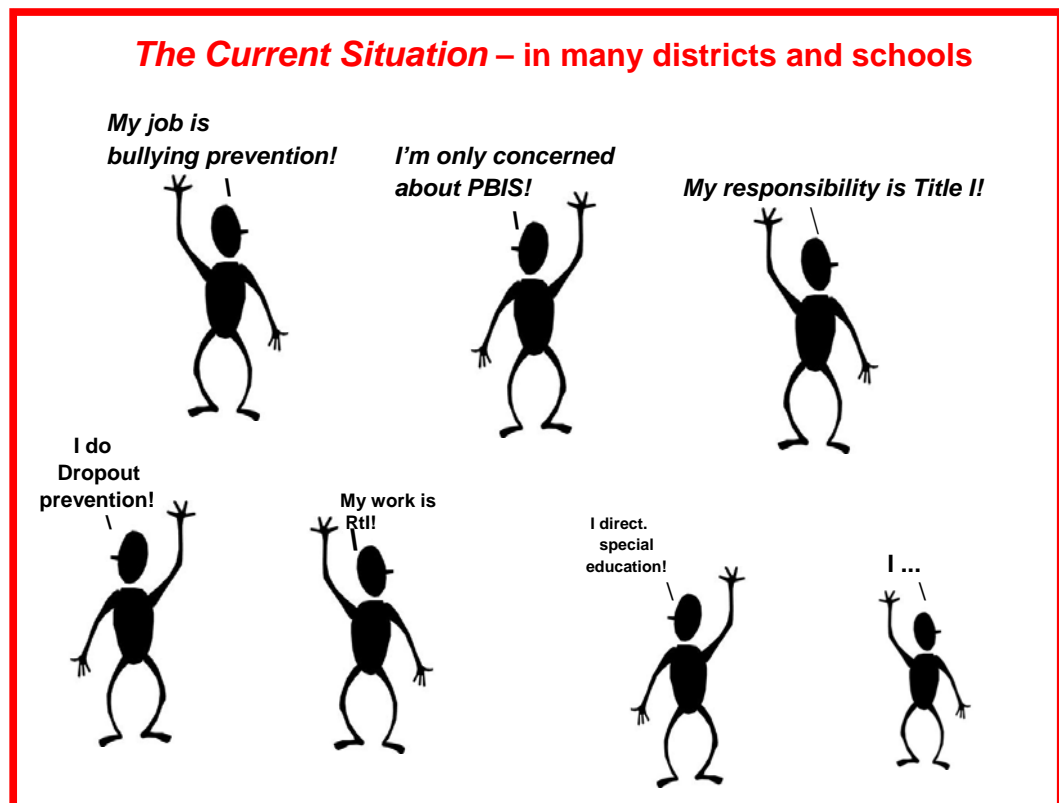
When the many societal problems that hamper school improvement are pointed out, the concerns are branded as excuses. Ironically, at the same time, legislative bodies regularly recognize and wrestle with matters such as bullying, school shootings, substance abuse, disconnected youth, and the many barriers arising from being raised in poverty, being a newly arrived immigrant, and being homeless.

Leaders for school improvement, of course, understand all this. Nevertheless, school improvement guides and planning tend to address barriers to learning and teaching in superficial ways. The trend is to keep tweaking current policies and practices rather than facing-up to the type of systemic transformation that is imperative.

The reality is that schools are confronted daily with multiple, interrelated problems that require multiple and interrelated solutions. These include a host of neighborhood, family, schooling, peer, and personal factors.

Interrelated solutions require various forms of collaboration. Thus, schools must transform how they connect with homes and communities so they can work together in pursuing shared goals related to the general well-being of the young and society.

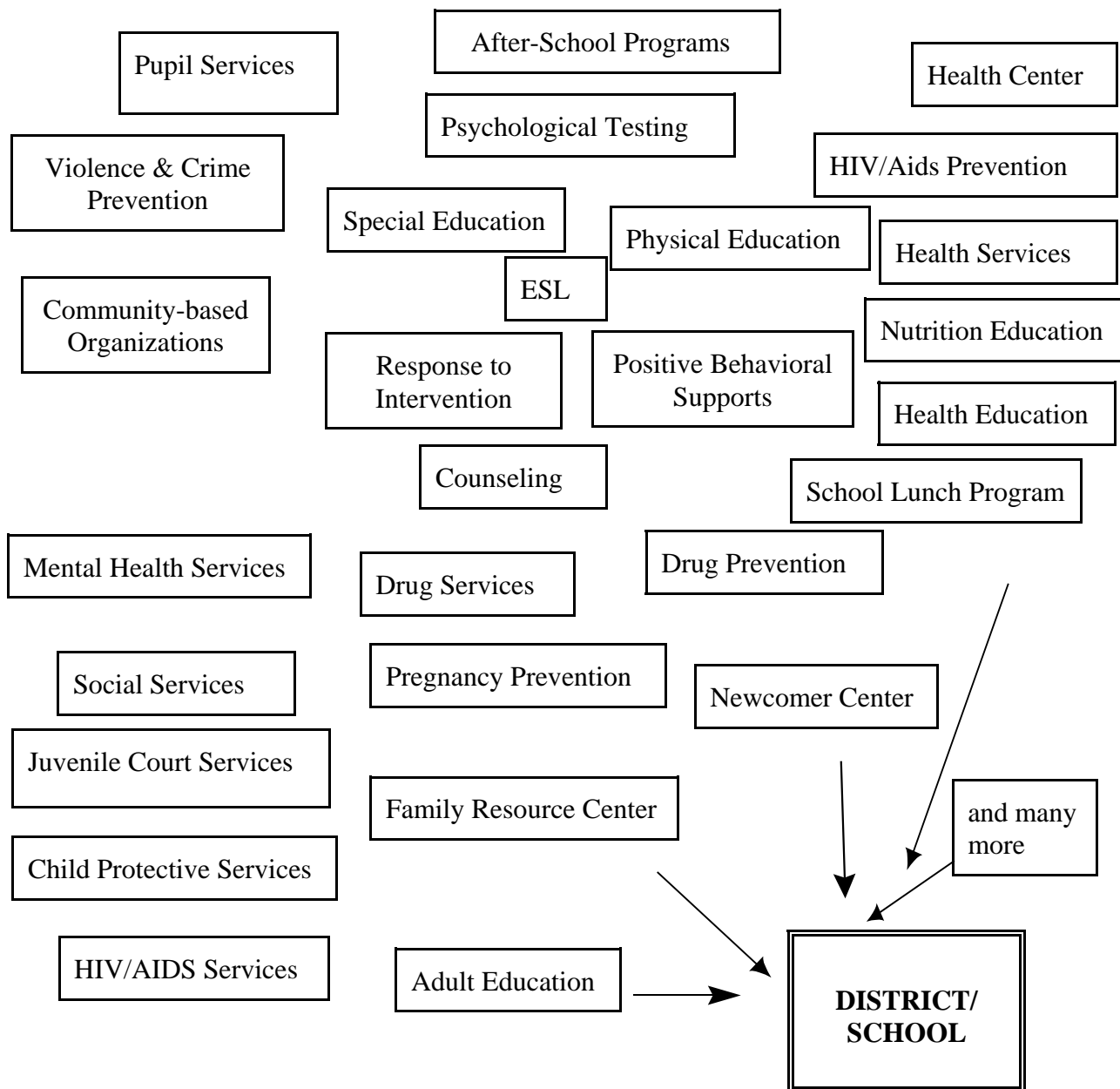
Current approaches to *student and learning supports* generally are not collaborative.



Mapping a district's existing efforts to address problems yields a consistent picture of many practices and fragmented, piecemeal, and usually disorganized activity (as illustrated below). The range of such learning and student supports generally is extensive and expensive.

Exhibit A

Student and Learning Supports: Much Activity, Much Fragmentation!*



*Learning and student supports are the resources, strategies, and practices that aim at enabling all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school and beyond by directly addressing external and internal barriers to learning and teaching.

Schools differ, of course, in what learning and student supports they have; some have few; some have many. Some have connected with community services (e.g., health and social services, after-school programs). Given the sparsity of community services, however, agencies endeavoring to bring their services to schools usually must limit activity to enhancing supports at a couple of schools in a neighborhood.

Moreover, there often is not a good connection between community services and the work of the many school and district-based student support staff whose roles include preventing, intervening early, and treating students with learning, behavior, emotional, and physical problems. Such school-employed personnel include psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses, dropout/graduation support staff, special educators, and others. When school and community efforts are poorly connected, community and school personnel may be working with the same students and families with little shared planning or ongoing communication. And there is almost no attention paid to systemic improvement.

Ironically, some policy makers have developed the false impression that community resources are ready and able to meet all the support needs of students and their families. In the struggle to balance tight school budgets, this impression already has contributed to serious cuts related to student supports (e.g., districts laying off student support personnel). Such cuts further reduce the amount of resources available for student and learning supports.

Why the Fragmentation?

Underlying the fragmentation is a fundamental policy problem, namely the long-standing *marginalization* of student and learning supports in school improvement policy and practice. This problem permeates federal and state legislation and agency activity. The *Every Student Succeeds Act* does little to improve the situation (see Appendix A). As a result, efforts to directly use student and learning supports to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students are likely to remain at best a secondary focus in school improvement planning; .

Because of the marginalization, the continuing trend is to establish student and learning supports through piecemeal policies and implement them in a fragmented and sometimes redundant manner. Then, when budgets tighten, many of these supports are among the first cut. All this contributes to a counterproductive job competition among student support staff and between these school personnel and those community professionals involved with bringing services to schools.

Given the marginalization, fragmentation, redundancy, and counterproductive competition related to student and learning supports, schools are not effectively playing their role in addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Systemic changes are imperative.

This book is about transforming student and learning supports to enhance equity of opportunity. It outlines a policy shift. It presents a unified, comprehensive, and equitable learning supports component to replace the existing fragmented and disorganized set of student and learning supports. It covers what is involved in designing and implementing such an approach. With respect to the costs of systemic change, the emphasis is mainly on redeploying existing resources and garnering economies of scale.

As noted in the preface, much of what is presented is common sense. However, that, doesn't mean making it happen is easy. Transforming schools is anything but easy; not transforming schools, however, is a recipe for maintaining the inequalities found in too many places.

Equity of opportunity is one of democracy's most elusive goals. Public education has an indispensable role to play in achieving this goal, but schools are hampered by fundamental gaps in school improvement policy and practice. The approach discussed in this book is meant to fill some of these gaps.

Leading the way to equity requires high levels of dedication and perseverance. This book is both an invitation and a call to action to all who want to enhance equity of opportunity for students to succeed at school and beyond.

Ultimately, only three things matter about educational reform. Does it have depth: does it improve important rather than superficial aspects of students' learning and development? Does it have length: can it be sustained over long periods of time instead of fizzling out after the first flush of innovation? Does it have breadth: can the reform be extended beyond a few schools, networks or showcase initiatives to transform education across entire systems or nations?

Andy Hargreaves & Dean Fink (2000)

Part I: Reframing for Transformation

Introduction: What Needs to be Done? Four Fundamental and Interrelated Transformation Concerns

Responding to learning, behavior, emotional, and physical problems in an ad hoc and piecemeal manner is counterproductive. School improvement must encompass policy and planning that enables every school to replace the outdated patchwork of programs and services that have emerged for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

The aim is to transform learning and student supports by developing a unified, comprehensive, equitable, and systemic learning supports component that is a full partner with the instructional and management/governance components at district and school levels.

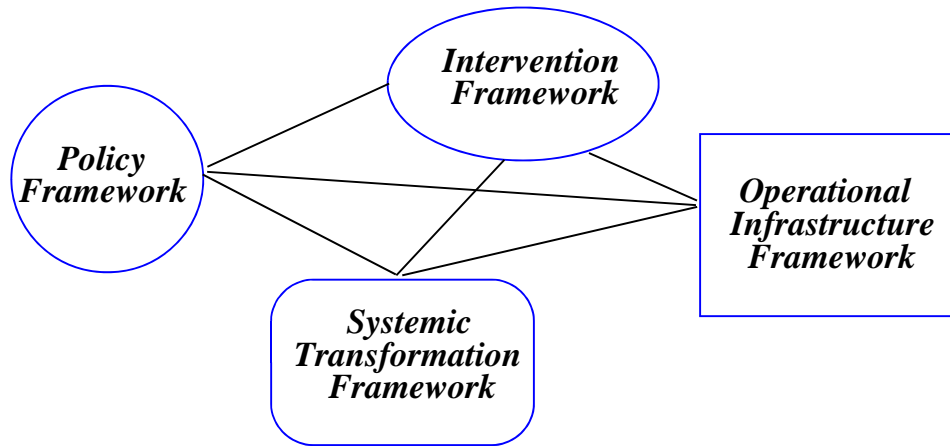
With a view to effective implementation, replication to scale, and sustainability, transforming learning and student supports calls for addressing a set of interconnected concerns. As illustrated in Exhibit B, these involve adopting/adapting prototypes that:



- expand the *policy* framework for school improvement – to fully incorporate all efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching as a third, primary, and essential component (e.g., a student and learning supports component)
- reframe student and learning support *interventions* – to create a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student and learning supports in classrooms and school-wide
- rework the *operational infrastructure* – to ensure effective daily implementation and ongoing development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching
- enhance approaches for *systemic change* – to ensure effective implementation, replication to scale, and sustainability.

We have developed prototype frameworks for each of these concerns. These frameworks are used by trailblazers across the country.

Exhibit B
Fundamental and Interrelated Transformation Concerns



Part I of this book underscores the imperative for transforming student and learning supports and outlines crucial changes in framing policy and intervention.

Part II offers details for improving intervention.

Part III explores ways to rework operational infrastructures and facilitate systemic change.

To paraphrase Goethe:

Not moving forward is a step backward.

Chapter 1. Viewing School Improvement through Additional Lenses

In the last analysis, we see only what we are ready to see. We eliminate and ignore everything that is not part of our prejudices.

Charcot (1857)

Not surprisingly, analyses of school improvement guides and plans indicate the primary focus is on what is mandated and measured. Specifically, such guides stress meeting the demand for standards-based and results-oriented school improvement mainly by elaborating on prevalent thinking about school practices, rather than considering fundamental systemic change. This reflects the assumptions that continuous progress in raising test scores and reducing the achievement gap can be accomplished by intensifying and narrowing the focus of school improvement to matters directly related to instruction and behavioral discipline. These failed assumptions ignore the necessity of fundamentally restructuring school and community interventions and resources in ways that enable learning and promote whole-child development.

WHAT'S MISSING IN MOST SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS?

To understand the crucial facets that are missing in current school improvement policy and practice, education leaders need to revisit current plans using three critical lenses. These lenses focus on:

- *All students* – conceived in terms of differences in current motivation and abilities.
- *Barriers to learning and teaching* – emphasizing external as well as internal factors.
- *Engaging and re-engaging students* – stressing the importance of maximizing intrinsic motivation and minimizing behavior control strategies.

First Lens: All students

Every teacher would like a classroom full of students who appear each day motivationally ready and able to learn what the teacher has planned to teach. What they find is a continuum of students who differ in motivation and abilities. At one end are those who are motivationally ready and able to work with the teacher on what has been planned. Around the middle of the continuum are students who come to school not very motivated and/or able to work with the teacher; these students may lack the prerequisite knowledge and skills for pursuing what is being taught, and/or have different learning rates and styles and possibly some minor vulnerabilities. At the other end of the continuum are students who are very deficient in their current capabilities, students with major disabilities and health problems, and too many who have become very avoidant and completely disengaged from classroom instruction.

Given this, it is important to stress that relatively few youngsters start out with internal problems that interfere with learning. Indeed, internal factors are not the primary instigators for the majority of learning, behavior, and emotional problems encountered at school. That is why it is essential to use the second lens, barriers to learning and teaching, in viewing students who are not doing well.

In our work, we have asked teachers from across the country, “Most days, how many of your students come to class motivationally ready and able to learn what you have planned to teach them?” The consistency of response is surprising and disturbing. In urban and rural schools serving economically disadvantaged families, teachers tell us that about 10 to 15% of their students fall into this group. In suburbia, teachers usually say 75% fit that profile.

Student surveys consistently indicate that alienation, bullying, harassment, and academic failure at school are widespread problems. Discussions with groups of students and support staff across the country suggest that many students who drop out are really “pushed out.” Ironically, many young teachers who “burn out” quickly also could be described as push outs.

Second Lens: Barriers to Learning and Teaching

The notion of barriers to learning encompasses both external and internal factors that interfere with learning and performance at school. Some children bring a wide range of problems stemming from restricted opportunities associated with poverty, difficult and diverse family conditions, high rates of mobility, lack of English language skills, violent neighborhoods, problems related to substance abuse, inadequate health care, and lack of enrichment opportunities (see Exhibit 1.1). Some also bring intrinsic conditions that make schooling difficult.

Exhibit 1.1

Examples of Conditions That Can Increase Barriers to Learning

Neighborhood	Family	School and Peers	Internal Student Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High poverty• High rates of crime, drug use, violence, gang activity• High unemployment, abandoned/floundering businesses• Disorganized community• High mobility• Lack of positive youth development opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Domestic conflicts, abuse, distress, grief, loss• Unemployment, poverty, and homelessness• Immigrant and/or minority status• Family physical or mental health illness• Poor medical or dental care• Inadequate child care• Substance abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor quality schools, high teacher turnover• High rates of bullying and harassment• Minimal offerings and low involvement in extracurricular activities• Frequent student-teacher conflicts• Poor school climate, negative peer models• Many disengaged students and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neurodevelopmental delay• Physical illness• Mental disorders/addictions/Disabilities• Inadequate nutrition and healthcare• Learning, behavior, and emotional problems that arise from negative environmental conditions exacerbate existing internal factors

As a result, at every grade level there are students who come to school each day not quite ready to perform and learn in the most effective manner. Students' problems are exacerbated as they internalize frustrations related to the barriers and the debilitating effects of poor academic or social performance. Addressing the problems begins with a basic appreciation of what causes them.

From the perspective of this lens, good teaching and other efforts to enhance positive development must be complemented with direct actions to remove or at least minimize the impact of barriers (see Exhibit 1.2). Without effective intervention, problems persist and inhibit student development and learning, and foster disengagement.

Third Lens: Engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning

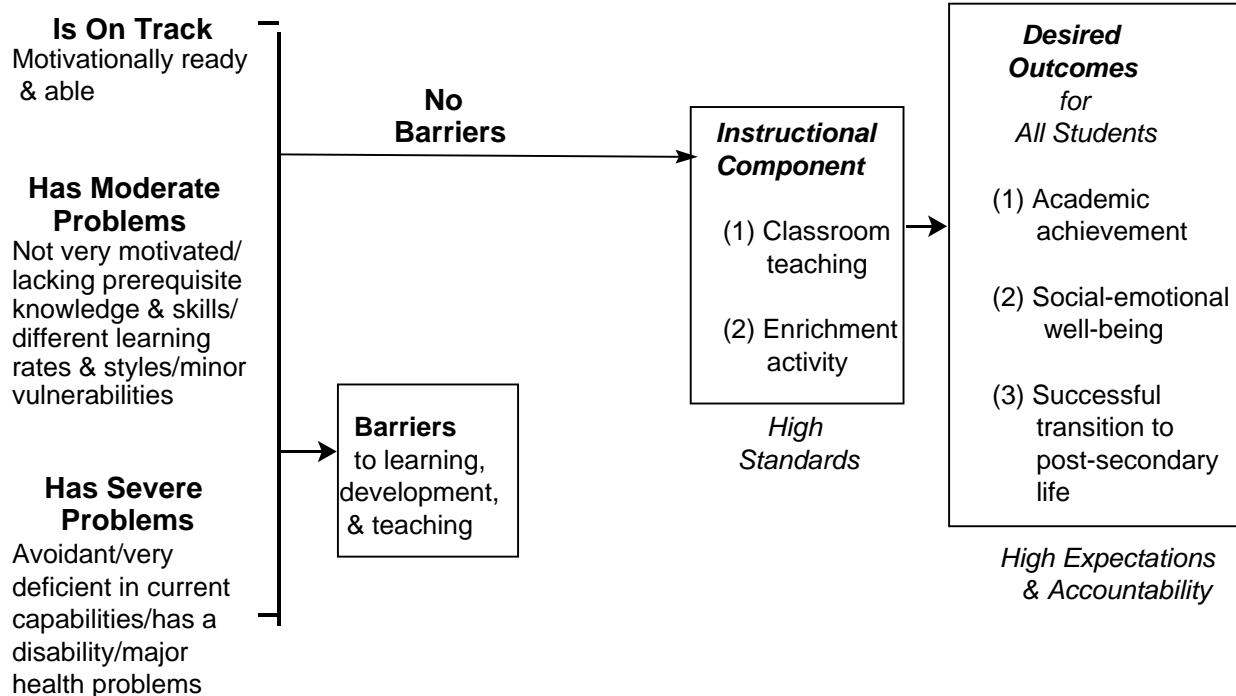
In general, teaching involves being able to apply strategies focused on content to be taught and knowledge and skills to be acquired – with careful attention given to the process of engaging students. Learning is a function of how good a fit there is in the transactions between the learner, the teacher, and other facets of the learning environment. Teaching works fine in schools where most students come each day ready and able to learn what is being taught. As noted, this is not the situation in too many classrooms.

Student engagement involves not only engaging and maintaining engagement, but also re-engaging those who have disengaged. Given the fact that teachers have to provide instruction to the full continuum of learners, schools must provide the range of supports essential to enhancing student engagement and facilitating re-engagement.

Exhibit 1.2 Many Students Experience Barriers to Learning

Range of Learners

(based on their response to academic instruction at any given point in time)



It is commonplace to find that students who have disengaged from the schoolwork at hand tend to misbehave. As teachers and other staff try to cope with those who are disruptive, the main concern usually is classroom management. At one time, a heavy dose of punishment was the dominant approach, but now such strategies are widely criticized. Currently, the emphasis is on more positive approaches designed to provide behavior support in and out of the classroom. For the most part, however, much of the focus on classroom management strategies stresses a form of *social control* aimed directly at stopping disruptive behavior.

An often-stated assumption is that stopping the behavior will make the student amenable to teaching. In a few cases, this may be so. However, the assumption ignores all the work that has led to understanding that a common response to social control is *psychological reactance* (e.g., the motivational need to restore one's sense of self-determination). Minimizing psychological reactance requires minimizing social control practices. Greater attention is required to maximizing intrinsic motivation for classroom learning and minimizing behavior control strategies.

What many of us have been taught about dealing with student misbehavior and learning problems runs counter to what we intuitively understand about human motivation. Teachers and parents, in particular, often learn to over-depend on reinforcement theory, despite the appreciation they may have of the importance of *intrinsic motivation*.

The move away from overreliance on punishment has enhanced advocacy for social skills training, asset development, character education, and positive behavior support initiatives. Any move away from punishment to positive approaches is a welcome one, but it is essential to include an emphasis on helping teachers learn how to enhance student engagement and facilitate re-engagement. (It is noteworthy that strategies for *re-engaging* students in learning rarely are a prominent part of pre- or in-service preparation and too seldom are the focus of interventions pursued by professionals whose role is to support teachers and students.) This is such a fundamental matter for improving schools that, in all our work, we highlight it as a critical facet of school improvement planning.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS FOR CHAPTER 1

Our research has used the three lenses highlighted above to zero-in on ways to redress key problems confronting schools. The lenses underscore the need to focus school improvement planning on the development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports that enables students to get around barriers *and* re-engage in classroom instruction.

The emphasis on enabling student learning and performance fits well with the mission statement of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). That statement stresses:

It is not enough to say that all children can learn or that no child will be left behind; the work involves...achieving the vision of an American education system that enables all children to succeed in school, work, and life.

Ensuring that all children have an equal opportunity to succeed at school and beyond involves building on what is working well at schools, enhancing capacity for promoting promising practices, escaping old ideas that limit school improvement, and establishing new approaches that are effective, replicated, and sustained.

With specific respect to transforming student and learning supports, the need is to pull together such supports into a unified component, and then, over a period of several years, develop a comprehensive and equitable system by interweaving all that a school has with all that the community can bring to the table. We refer to the unified system as a learning supports component. Establishing such a component involves reframing school improvement policy. We turn to that topic now.

**School improvement
is a paradox.**

**That's right. Everyone is
going down the same road
in different directions.**



Chapter 2. Reframing Policy

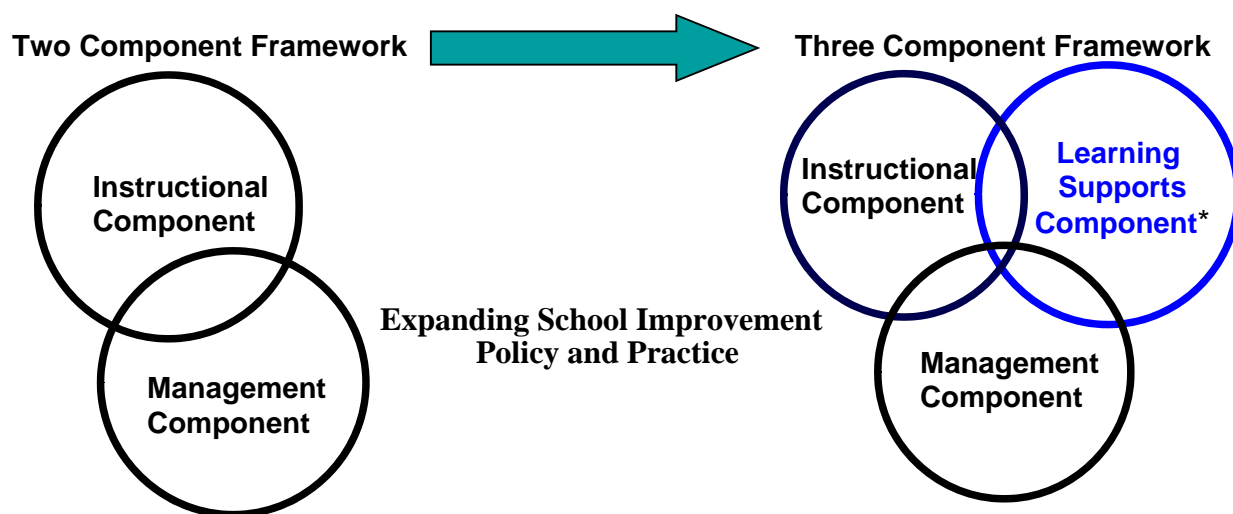
By continuing to marginalize student and learning supports, policy makers continue to marginalize all students who are not doing well at school.

Efforts to *transform* rather than just tinker with student and learning supports require an expansion of current school improvement policy. In most places, school improvement policy and practice is guided primarily by a two component framework (i.e., an instructional component and a management component). The result: all interventions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students are given secondary consideration at best. As already noted, this marginalization is an underlying and fundamental cause of the widely observed fragmentation and disorganization of student and learning supports.

EXPANDING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT POLICY

Ending the disorganization and effectively weaving together whatever a school has with whatever a community is doing to confront barriers to equity of opportunity calls for establishing a three component school improvement framework. As illustrated below, an expanded policy framework is intended to make addressing barriers to *enable* learning a *primary* commitment of school policy.

Exhibit 2.1
Expanded Policy Prototype



*States and districts are trending toward using the umbrella term *Learning Supports*. Learning supports are defined as the resources, strategies, and practices that provide physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports to enable all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school by directly addressing barriers to learning and teaching. In the classroom and school-wide, such supports encompass efforts to reduce the overemphasis on using extrinsic reinforcers and enhance an emphasis on *intrinsic motivation* to promote engagement and re-engagement.

Learning supports are designed to directly address interfering factors *and* to do so in a way that (re-)engages students in classroom instruction. Attention to both these matters is essential because, in general, interventions that do not ensure a student's meaningful engagement in classroom learning are insufficient in sustaining student involvement, good behavior, and effective learning at school.

The type of policy expansion illustrated above is underway in trailblazing states and districts (e.g., see *Where's it Happening?* – online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/trailblazing.htm>). Of special note is the initiative in Alabama where the state education agency has adopted the three component policy framework with plans for statewide implementation. Fifty districts in the state already are moving forward.

RETHINKING ACCOUNTABILITY AND ADOPTING LEARNING SUPPORTS STANDARDS

Because school improvement policy across the country is "standards-based" and accountability driven, expanding the prevailing accountability framework and establishing standards for learning supports are key facets in driving effective implementation of a three component policy.

School Accountability

School accountability is a policy tool with extraordinary power to reshape schools – for good and for bad. As everyone involved in school improvement knows, currently the only accountability indicators that really count are achievement test scores. Achievement tests drive school accountability, and what such tests measure has become the be-all and end-all of what is attended to by many decision makers. This produces a growing disconnect between the realities of what it takes to improve academic performance and the direction in which many policy makers and school reformers are leading the public. The disconnect is especially evident in schools serving what often are referred to as “low wealth” families.

As everyone involved with improving schools knows, the only measures that counted under the No Child Left Behind Act were achievement test scores. Now under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) states are required to incorporate at least one nonacademic indicator into their accountability systems. This is an explicit recognition that more than achievement scores are relevant. Not surprisingly, however, there are concerns about what "nonacademic" indicators are best.

The move to a three component policy framework is intended to expand the framework for school accountability in ways that encompass indicators related to all three components. See Appendix B for a prototype that focuses not only on achievement, but on personal and social development and on improvements that directly address barriers to learning and teaching. The expanded framework is intended to guide formative evaluation and, over time, provide relevant accountability data.

Standards for a Learning Supports Component

Current discussions about standards for school improvement have become locked into debates over the initiative for Common Core State Standards. This limited focus is another indicator of the type of disconnect from reality resulting from the prevailing two component policy framework.

The move to a three component framework provides a focus on the need to complement curriculum and teaching standards with standards and related quality indicators for student/learning supports. Appendix C outlines a prototype of standards and indicators for a learning supports component.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS FOR CHAPTER 2

While not easy, moving to a three component policy framework is essential to student success at school and beyond. An expanded policy framework is necessary to drive transformation in how schools address the many overlapping problems they must deal with each day. It also is crucial in advancing the agenda for whole child development and enhancing school climate.

Establishing equity of opportunity for students in over 15,000 school districts and over 90,000 schools in the USA is an unlikely outcome if school improvement policy is not expanded to fully incorporate a three-component policy framework.

Those currently leading the way in transforming student and learning supports are doing so because they understand the wide range of factors that interfere with students connecting with good instruction. They recognize that too many teachers are confronted with a large proportion of students who are not motivated and ready to learn what is on the teaching agenda for the day. They are committed to designing the type of unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3. Reframing Intervention for Student and Learning Support

Changing the individual while leaving the world alone is a dubious proposition.

Ulric Neisser (1976)

A learning supports component is established by coalescing existing student and learning supports into a cohesive unit and, over a period of several years, developing the component into a comprehensive intervention system that is fully incorporated with instructional efforts.

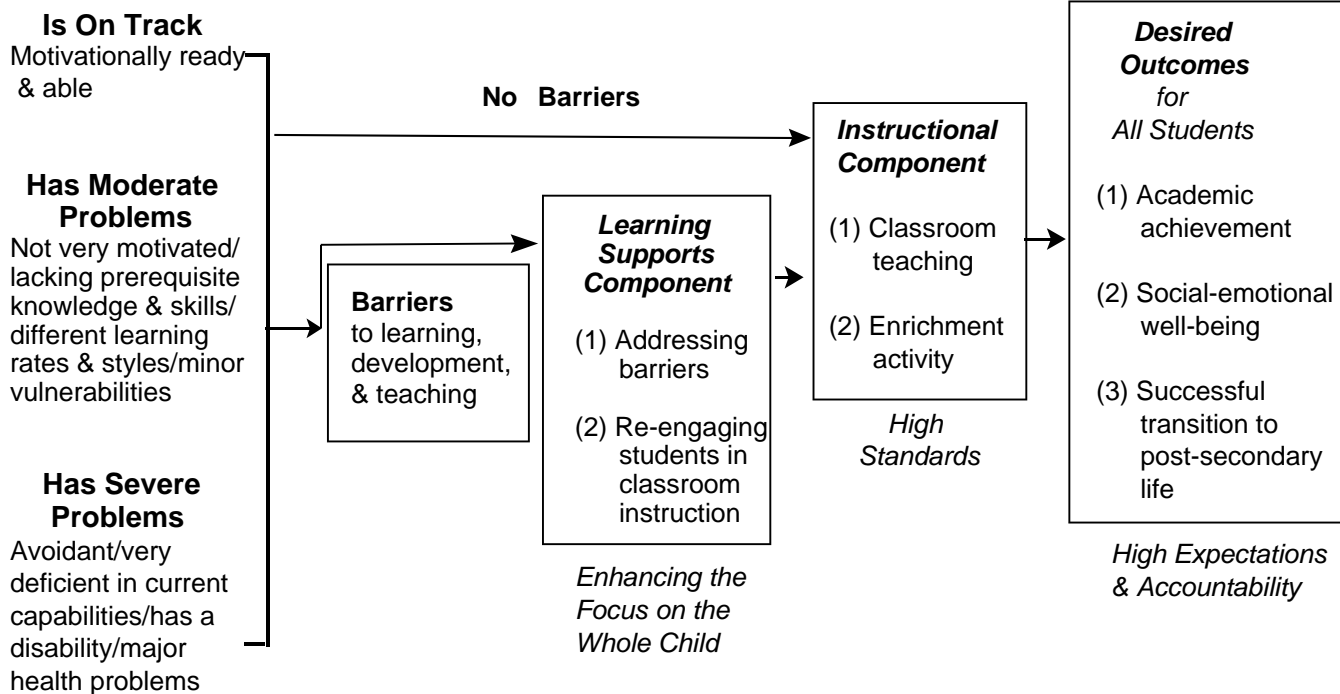
A unified and comprehensive system of learning supports is key to enabling *all* students to have an equal opportunity to learn at school and *all* teachers to teach effectively. Such a system is especially important where large numbers of students are not succeeding. As illustrated in Exhibit 3.1, a learning supports component encompasses classroom and school-wide approaches and is designed to enable students to get around the barriers *and* re-engage in classroom instruction.

Exhibit 3.1

A Learning Supports Component to Address Barriers and Re-engage Students in Classroom Instruction*

Range of Learners

(based on their response to academic instruction at any given point in time)



*A learning supports component is operationalized as a unified, comprehensive, equitable, and systemic approach for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. In keeping with public education and public health perspectives, interventions are designed to provide physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports to enable learning and engagement for *all* students and especially those experiencing behavior, learning, emotional, and physical problems. The interventions are meant to play out in the classroom and school-wide at every school and in every community. In promoting engagement and re-engagement, the interventions stress a reduced emphasis on using extrinsic reinforcers and an enhanced focus on intrinsic motivation as a process and outcome consideration.

INTERVENTION PROTOTYPE

While interventions are commonly framed in terms of tiers or levels, such a framework is an insufficient organizer. To escape the trend to generate laundry lists of programs and services at each level, it is necessary also to group them into a circumscribed set of arenas reflecting the *content purpose* of the activity. So, our intervention prototype has two facets:

- one organizes programs and services into a circumscribed set of *content arenas of activity*;
- the second conceptualizes levels of intervention as a full *continuum of integrated intervention subsystems* that interweave school-community-home resources.

Content Arenas of Activity

As Exhibit 3.2 illustrates, student/learning supports content is grouped into six arenas. These encompass efforts to

- *enhance strategies in regular classroom to enable learning* (e.g., working collaboratively with other teachers and student support staff to ensure instruction is personalized with an emphasis on enhancing intrinsic motivation for all students and especially those manifesting mild-moderate learning and behavior problems; re-engaging those who have become disengaged from learning at school; providing learning accommodations and supports as necessary; using response to intervention in applying special assistance; addressing external barriers with a focus on prevention and early intervening)
- *support transitions* (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate the many hurdles encountered during school and grade changes, daily transitions, program transitions, accessing supports, and so forth)
- *increase home and school connections and engagement* (e.g., addressing barriers to home involvement, helping those in the home enhance supports for their children, strengthening home and school communication, increasing home support of the school)
- *increase community involvement and collaborative engagement* (e.g., outreach to develop greater community connection and support from a wide range of entities, including enhanced use of volunteers and other community resources, establishing a school-community collaborative)
- *respond to, and where feasible, prevent school and personal crises* (e.g., preparing for emergencies, implementing plans when an event occurs, countering the impact of traumatic events, implementing prevention strategies; creating a caring and safe learning environment)
- *facilitate student and family access to special assistance* (including specialized services on- and off-campus) as needed

A brief discussion of and examples related to each of these arenas is provided in Chapters 4-9.

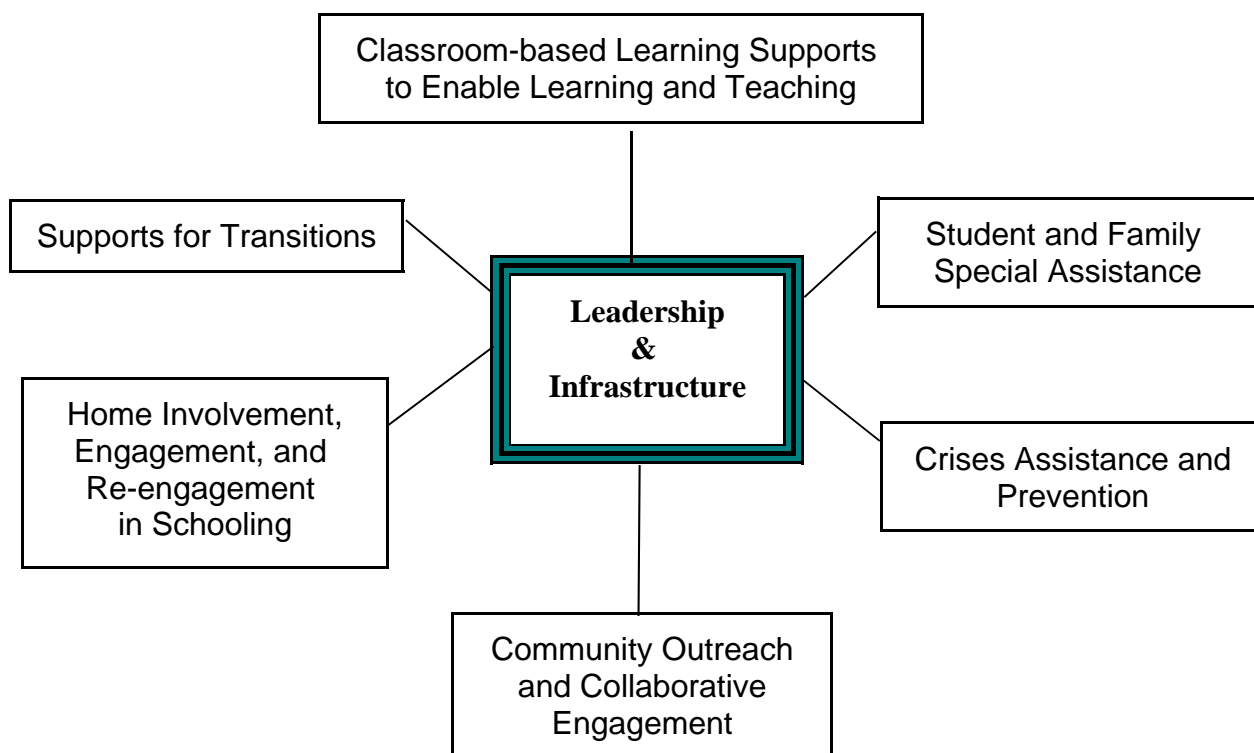
Over the last decade, versions of the six basic arenas have been incorporated in a variety of venues across the country (see examples highlighted and lessons learned in *Where's it Happening?* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/nind7.htm>).

Exhibit 3.2

Prototype for Six Content Arenas

School improvement must include plans to develop a more effective system for directly dealing with factors that keep too many students from succeeding at school and beyond. The first concern is providing a range of supports in the classroom and as necessary outside the classroom so that teachers can enable the learning of students who are not doing well.

Our work over many years stresses that the necessary supports readily clustered into the six arenas illustrated below. (We think of them as the curriculum of learning supports.)



Note: All categorical programs can be integrated into these six content arenas. Examples of initiatives, programs, and services that can be unified into a comprehensive system of learning supports include positive behavioral supports, response to intervention, programs for safe and drug free schools, programs for social and emotional development and learning, full service community schools and family resource and school based health centers, CDC's Coordinated School Health Program, bi-lingual, cultural, and other diversity programs, compensatory education programs, special education programs, mandates stemming from education legislation, and many more.

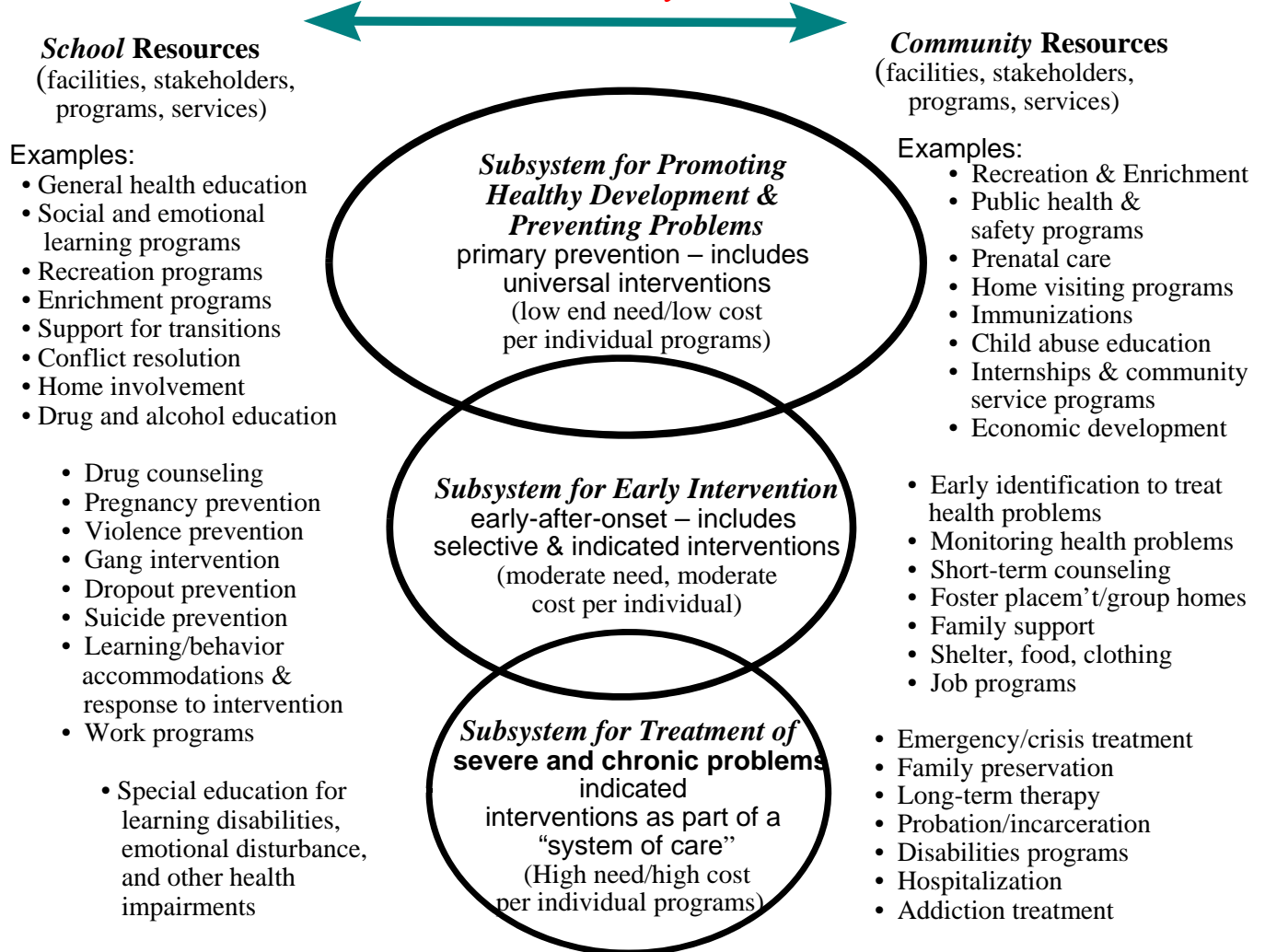
Continuum of Integrated Subsystems: Expanding the 3-tier Model

Beyond intervention content, a fundamental second facet of a unified and comprehensive system or learning supports is on an overlapping and intertwined continuum of interventions that strives to

- promote healthy development and prevent problems
- intervene early to address problems as soon after onset as is feasible
- assist with chronic and severe problems.

As graphically portrayed in Exhibit 3.3, (a) each level represents a subsystem, (b) the three subsystems overlap, and (c) all three require integration into an overall system that weaves together school and community resources. Note that this framework expands thinking beyond the multi-tiered framework that schools tend to use.

Exhibit 3.3 Intervention *Continuum*: Interconnected Subsystems



As a framework for preventing and addressing behavior and learning problems, the Every Student Succeeds Act references use of a school-wide tiered model (also referred to as a multi-tier system of supports). The tiered model is defined as "a comprehensive continuum of evidence-based, systemic practices to support a rapid response to students' needs, with regular observation to facilitate data-based instructional decision-making."

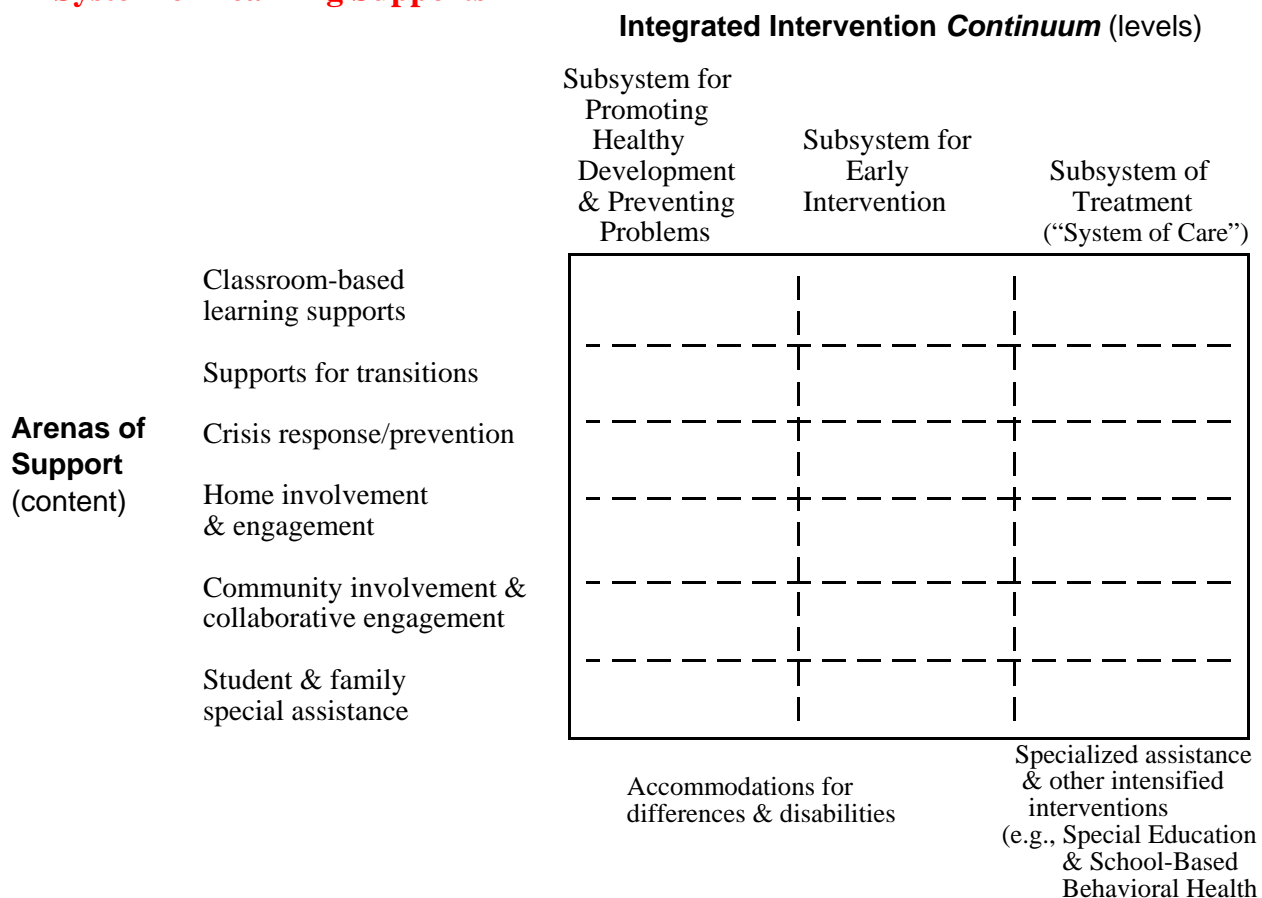
Emphasis on the tiered model is a carryover from previous federal policy guidelines related to Response to Intervention and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. The result over the last few years of this policy emphasis is that schools increasingly are framing student and learning supports in terms of tiers or levels. As currently conceived, however, the multi-tier model is an insufficient organizing framework for developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

The simplicity of the tiered presentation as widely adopted is appealing and helps underscore differences in levels of intervention. However, focusing simply on levels of intervention, while essential, is insufficient. Three basic concerns about such a formulation are that it mainly stresses levels of intensity, does not address the problem of systematically connecting interventions that fall into and across each level, and does not address the need to connect school and community interventions. As a result, it has done little to promote the type of intervention framework that policy and practice analyses indicate is needed to guide schools in developing a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports. In contrast, Exhibit 3.3 illustrates that intervention tiers/levels are better conceived as a set of interconnected, overlapping subsystems that pulls together school and community resources.

As illustrated in Exhibit 3.4, the six *arenas* and the *continuum* constitute the prototype intervention framework for a comprehensive system of learning supports. Such a framework is meant to guide

Exhibit 3.4

Intervention Prototype Framework for a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports



school improvement planning related to developing a learning supports component that is unified and equitable. The matrix provides a framework for mapping what is in place and analyzing gaps.

Effectively designed and developed at a school, a learning supports component increases supports for all students. The emphasis is on

- unifying student and learning supports by grouping the many fragmented approaches experienced at school in ways that reduce the number of separate and sometimes redundant intervention responses to overlapping problems
- addressing barriers to learning and teaching by improving personalized instruction and increasing accommodations and special assistance when necessary
- enhancing the focus on motivational considerations with a special emphasis on intrinsic motivation as it relates to individual readiness and ongoing involvement and with the intent of fostering intrinsic motivation as a basic outcome
- re-engaging disconnected students
- adding specialized remediation, treatment, and rehabilitation as necessary, but only as necessary

In doing all this, a learning supports component enhances equity of opportunity, plays a major role in improving student and school performance and promoting whole child development, fosters positive school-community relationships, minimizes the school's reliance on social control practices, and contributes to the emergence of a positive school climate.

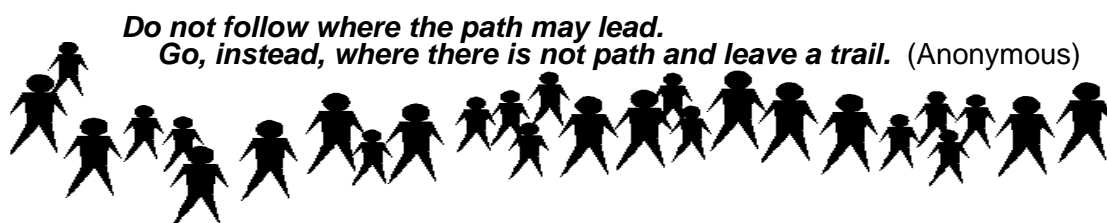
CONCLUDING COMMENTS FOR CHAPTER 3

As Dennie Wolf stressed over a decade ago as director of the Opportunity and Accountability Initiative at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform:

“Clearly, we know how to raise standards. However, we are less clear on how to support students in rising to meet those standards” Then, she asked: “Having invested heavily in ‘raising’ both the standards and the stakes, what investment are we willing to make to support students in ‘rising’ to meet those standards?”

Ultimately, the answer to that question will affect not only individuals with learning, behavior, emotional, and physical problems but the entire society.

It is time for school improvement to encompass policy and planning that enables every school to replace its outdated patchwork of programs and services used in addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Part II discusses how to organize the six content arenas. Part III explores ways to move forward.



A Sample of Center References Relevant to Part I

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Relevant Center Policy & Program Reports & Briefs can be found in --
II. School Improvement and Restructuring Related to Addressing Barriers to Learning & Teaching –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/materials/policyprogram.htm>

Brief overview documents about a *Unified & Comprehensive System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching* can be found in the Center's transformation toolkit online at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

For example, see

What Is a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports?
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/whatis.pdf>

Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/towardnextstep.pdf>

Why do you think we'll do better at school this year?

Because I heard that Congress passed a law that says every student will succeed!

