II. Policy Considerations

A. Fragmentation, Marginalization, and Counterproductive Competition for Sparse Resources

B. Moving From a Two to a Three Component Policy Framework

>>Group activity – Key Insights about Mental Health in Schools

>>Brief follow-up reading – >Why New Directions for Student Support?

**Orienting Questions:**

In what ways are mental health concerns and efforts to address barriers to learning marginalized in current school policy?

What is a three component framework for school improvement and how does it differ from the current policy emphasis?
II. Policy Considerations

A. Fragmentation, Marginalization, and Counterproductive Competition for Sparse Resources

Keeping a comprehensive continuum of intervention systems in mind, it becomes evident that the prevailing reforms give short shrift to behavior, learning, and emotional problems. The various initiatives do help some students who are not succeeding at school. However, they come nowhere near addressing the scope of need. Indeed, their limited potency further suggests the degree to which efforts to address barriers to learning and development are marginalized in policy and practice.

Analyses of prevailing policies for improving schools indicates that the primary focus is on two major components: (1) enhancing instruction and curriculum and (2) restructuring school governance/management. The implementation of such efforts is shaped by demands for every school to adopt high standards and expectations and be accountable for results, as measured by standardized achievement tests. Toward these ends, the calls have been to enhance direct academic support and move away from a “deficit” model by adopting a strengths or resilience-oriented paradigm. All this is reflected in the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Even when this Act provides for “supplemental services,” the emphasis is primarily on tutoring, thereby paying little attention to the multifaceted nature of the barriers that interfere with students learning and performing well at school.

Policy makers have come to appreciate the relationship between limited intervention efficacy and the widespread tendency for complementary programs to operate in isolation. Limited efficacy does seem inevitable as long as interventions are carried out in a piecemeal and often competitive fashion and with little follow through. From this perspective, reformers have directed initiatives toward reducing service fragmentation and increasing access to health and social services.

At most schools, the trend toward fragmentation is compounded by most school-linked services’ initiatives. This happens because such initiatives focus primarily on coordinating community services and linking them to schools to gain better access to their clientele, with an emphasis on co-locating rather than integrating such services with the ongoing efforts of school staff. The increased fragmentation is ironic since a major intent of agency reforms is to restructure services to reduce fragmentation.

The current state of affairs is illustrated in Figure 3.
Figure 3. *Talk About Fragmented!*

Which of these addresses barriers to student learning?

The call for "integrated services" clearly is motivated by a desire to reduce redundancy, waste, and ineffectiveness resulting from fragmentation. Special attention is given to the many piecemeal, categorically funded approaches, such as those created to reduce learning and behavior problems, substance abuse, violence, school dropouts, delinquency, and teen pregnancy. By focusing primarily on the above matters, policy makers fail to deal with the overriding issue, namely that addressing barriers to development and learning remains a marginalized aspect of policy and practice. Fragmentation stems from the marginalization, but concern about such marginalization is not even on the radar screen of most policy makers.

Despite the emphasis on enhancing collaboration, the problem remains that the majority of programs, services, and special projects designed to address barriers to student learning still are viewed as supplementary or "add-ons" (often referred to as auxiliary services) and continue to operate on an ad hoc basis. The degree to which marginalization is the case is seen in the lack of attention given such activity in consolidated plans and certification reviews and the lack of efforts to map, analyze, and rethink how resources are allocated. Educational reform virtually has ignored the need to reform and restructure the work of school professionals who carry out psychosocial and health programs. As long as this remains the case, reforms to reduce fragmentation and increase access are seriously hampered. More to the point, the desired impact for large numbers of children and adolescents will not be achieved.

In general, fragmentation is worsened by the failure of policy makers at all levels to recognize the need to reform and restructure the work of school and community professionals who are in positions to address barriers and promote development. Reformers mainly talk about "school-linked integrated services" – apparently in the belief that a few health and social services are a sufficient response. Such talk has led some policy makers to the mistaken impression that community resources alone can effectively meet the needs of schools in addressing barriers to learning. In turn, this has led some legislators to view linking community services to schools as a way to free the dollars underwriting school-owned services. The reality is that even when one adds together community and school assets, the total set of services in impoverished locales is woefully inadequate. In situation after situation, it has become evident that as soon as the first few sites demonstrating school-community collaboration are in place, community agencies find they have stretched their resources to the limit. Another problem is that the overemphasis on school-linked services is exacerbating rising tensions between school district service personnel and their counterparts in community-based organizations. As "outside" professionals offer services at schools, school specialists often view the trend as discounting their skills and threatening their jobs. At the same time, the "outsiders" often feel unappreciated and may be rather naive about the culture of schools. Conflicts arise over "turf," use of space, confidentiality, and liability. Thus, competition rather than a substantive commitment to collaboration remains the norm.

In short, policies shaping current agendas for school and community reforms are seriously flawed. Although fragmentation and access are significant concerns, marginalization is of greater concern. It is unlikely that the problems of fragmentation and access will be appropriately resolved in the absence of concerted attention in policy and practice to ending the marginalized status of efforts to address factors interfering with development, learning, parenting, and teaching.
When policy focuses on schools and communities working together, it is essential to recognize that the policy focus is on two major and separate reform movements:

(1) School Improvement Policies

(2) Agency Reform Policies

And, because the focus of agency reform is on services, the tendency for the “community” stakeholders represented in school-community collaboratives mainly to be agency staff.

This leads to too little attention being paid (a) to integrating a full range of community resources with existing school programs and services (see Exhibit 2) and (b) to strengthening families and neighborhoods by improving economic status and enhancing other fundamental supports.

Policies to reform agencies are not the same thing as policies designed to strengthen communities.
Exhibit 2

A Range of Community Resources that Could Be Part of a Collaboration

County Agencies and Bodies
(e.g., Depts. of Health, Mental Health, Children & Family Services, Public Social Services, Probation, Sheriff, Office of Education, Fire, Service Planning Area Councils, Recreation & Parks, Library, courts, housing)

Municipal Agencies and Bodies
(e.g., parks & recreation, library, police, fire, courts, civic event units)

Physical and Mental Health & Psychosocial Concerns Facilities and Groups
(e.g., hospitals, clinics, guidance centers, Planned Parenthood, Aid to Victims, MADD, “Friends of” groups; family crisis and support centers, helplines, hotlines, shelters, mediation and dispute resolution centers)

Mutual Support/Self-Help Groups
(e.g., for almost every problem and many other activities)

Child Care/Preschool Centers

Post Secondary Education Institutions/Students
(e.g., community colleges, state universities, public and private colleges and universities, vocational colleges; specific schools within these such as Schools of Law, Education, Nursing, Dentistry)

Service Agencies
(e.g., PTA/PTSA, United Way, clothing and food pantry, Visiting Nurses Association, Cancer Society, Catholic Charities, Red Cross, Salvation Army, volunteer agencies, legal aid society)

Service Clubs and Philanthropic Organizations
(e.g., Lions Club, Rotary Club, Optimists, Assistance League, men’s and women’s clubs, League of Women Voters, veteran’s groups, foundations)

Youth Agencies and Groups
(e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, Y’s, scouts, 4-H, Woodcraft Rangers)

Sports/Health/Fitness/Outdoor Groups
(e.g., sports teams, athletic leagues, local gyms, conservation associations, Audubon Society)

Community Based Organizations
(e.g., neighborhood and homeowners’ associations, Neighborhood Watch, block clubs, housing project associations, economic development groups, civic associations)

Faith Community Institutions
(e.g., congregations and subgroups, clergy associations, Interfaith Hunger Coalition)

Legal Assistance Groups
(e.g., Public Counsel, schools of law)

Ethnic Associations
(e.g., Committee for Armenian Students in Public Schools, Korean Youth Center, United Cambodian Community, African-American, Latino, Asian-Pacific, Native American Organizations)

Special Interest Associations and Clubs
(e.g., Future Scientists and Engineers of America, pet owner and other animal-oriented groups)

Artists and Cultural Institutions
(e.g., museums, art galleries, zoo, theater groups, motion picture studios, TV and radio stations, writers’ organizations, instrumental/choral, drawing/painting, technology-based arts, literary clubs, collector’s groups)

Businesses/Corporations/Unions
(e.g., neighborhood business associations, chambers of commerce, local shops, restaurants, banks, AAA, Teamsters, school employee unions)

Media
(e.g., newspapers, TV & radio, local access cable)

Family Members, Local Residents, Senior Citizens Groups
II. Policy Considerations

B. Moving from a Two to a Three Component Policy Framework

The limited impact of current policy points to the need to rethink school reform. Our analyses indicate that the two component model upon which current reforms are based is inadequate for improving schools in ways that will be effective in preventing and correcting learning and behavior problems. Movement to a three component model is necessary if schools are to enable all young people to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Moving from a two- to a three-component model for reform and restructuring.

*The third component (an enabling component) is established in policy and practice as primary and essential and is developed into a comprehensive approach by weaving together school and community resources.
Stated simply, the prevailing approaches to school reform do not address barriers to learning, development, and teaching in comprehensive and multifaceted ways, especially in schools where large proportions of students are not doing well. Rather, the emphasis is mostly on intensifying and narrowing the attention paid to curriculum/instruction and classroom management. This ignores the need to fundamentally restructure school and community support programs and services and continues to marginalize efforts to design the types of environments that are essential to the success of school reforms.

A three component model calls for elevating efforts to address barriers to development, learning, and teaching to the level of one of three fundamental facets of education reform. We call the third component an *Enabling Component*. All three components are seen as essential, complementary, and overlapping.

Enabling is defined as “providing with the means or opportunity; making possible, practical, or easy; giving power, capacity, or sanction to.” The concept of an enabling component is formulated on the proposition that a comprehensive, multifaceted, integrated continuum of enabling activity *is essential* for addressing the needs of youngsters who encounter barriers that interfere with their benefitting satisfactorily from instruction. From this perspective, schools committed to the success of all children should be redesigned to *enable learning* by addressing barriers to learning. That is, schools must not only focus on improving instruction and how they make decisions and manage resources, they must also improve how they enable students to learn and teachers to teach.

The concept of an enabling component is meant to provide a unifying framework for reforms that fully integrate a comprehensive focus on addressing barriers to student learning as school improvement moves forward. It underscores the need to weave together school and community resources to address a wide range of factors interfering with young people’s learning, performance, and well-being. It embraces efforts to promote healthy development and foster positive functioning as the best way to prevent many learning, behavior, emotional, and health problems and as a necessary adjunct to correcting problems experienced by teachers, students, and families.

Figure 5a presents a different way of illustrating the inadequacy of the current policy situation. Adoption of a three component model is intended to end the marginalization and fragmentation of education support programs and services at school sites. Moreover, the notion of a third component can be operationalized in ways that unify a school’s efforts in developing a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach.

In sum, given the pressure to increase performance on academic tests, school reformers continue to concentrate *mainly* on improving efforts to directly facilitate learning and instruction and enhancing system management. All efforts to address barriers to learning, development, and teaching are kept on the margins. In effect,
current policy pursues reform using a two- rather than a three-component model. To address gaps in current reform and restructuring initiatives, a basic policy shift must occur. To this end, we have introduced the concept of an “Enabling Component” as a policy-oriented notion around which to unify efforts to address barriers to development, learning, and teaching. The concept underscores that movement to a three component model is necessary if all young people are to have an equal opportunity to benefit from their formal schooling.

Figure 5a. The prevailing two component model for school reform and restructuring.

As illustrated in Figure 5b, a three component model elevates efforts to address barriers to development, learning, and teaching to the level of one of three fundamental, essential, overlapping, and complementary facets of reform. By calling for reforms that fully integrate a focus on addressing barriers, the concept of an enabling component provides a unifying concept for responding to a wide range of psychosocial and mental health factors interfering with young people’s learning and performance. It does so by encompassing the type of models described as full-service schools – and going beyond them. Adoption of such an inclusive concept is seen as pivotal in convincing policy makers to move to a position that recognizes the essential nature of activity to enable learning.
Emergence of a cohesive enabling component requires policy reform and operational restructuring. The emphasis is on weaving together what exists at a school, expanding this through integrating school, community, and home resources, and enhancing access to community resources through appropriate linkages to the school. Central to all this is extensive restructuring of school-owned enabling activity, such as pupil services and special and compensatory education programs. Mechanisms must be developed to coordinate and eventually integrate school-owned enabling activity and school and community-owned resources. And, restructuring also must ensure that the enabling component is well integrated with the other two components (i.e., the developmental/instructional and management components).

Evidence of the value of rallying around a broad unifying concept, such as an enabling or learning support component, is seen in pioneering initiatives across the country. Schools, districts, and states are beginning to explore the value of enhancing efforts to develop a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approach to addressing barriers to student learning. (See Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2003).
Group Reflection and Discussion

Key Insights about Mental Health in Schools

Based on what you learned so far:

Identify and discuss the key insights you have acquired.

Group Process Guidelines:

C Start by identifying someone who will facilitate the group interchange

C Take a few minutes to make a few individual notes on a worksheet

C Be sure all major points are compiled for sharing with other groups.

C Ask someone else to watch the time so that the group doesn’t bog down.
Why New Directions for Student Support?

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

Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents (1989)

Given the range of student learning, behavior, and emotional problems experienced each day by teachers and families, meeting the challenge is complex. Efforts to do so are handicapped by the way in which student support interventions currently are conceived, organized, and implemented.

Student supports usually are mandated, developed, and function in relative isolation of each other. The result is an ad hoc and fragmented enterprise that does not meet the needs encountered at most schools (see Figure 3 in Part II).

Over the many years that school reform has focused on improving instruction, little or no attention has been paid to rethinking student supports. As a result, essential resources are not being used in ways that are essential if schools are to accomplish their mission. This reading highlights the problem and suggests new directions.

Addressing Barriers to Learning . . . Everyday at School

Ask any teacher: “Most days, how many of your students come to class motivationally ready and able to learn what you have planned to teach them?” We have asked that question across the country. 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.

Talk with students: 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 dropout are really “pushed out.”

Ironically, many young teachers who “burnout” quickly could also be described as pushouts.

Although reliable data do not exist, many policy makers would agree that at least 30 percent of the public school population in the U.S. are not doing well academically and could be described as having learning and related behavior problems. In recent years, about 50% of students assigned a special education diagnosis were identified as having a learning disability (LD). Such numbers are far out of proportion with other disability diagnoses, and this has led to a policy backlash. If estimates are correct, about 80% of those diagnosed as having LD in the last part of the 20th century actually did not. This is not to deny that they had problems learning at school or to suggest that they didn’t deserve assistance in overcoming their problems.
Given the above, it is not surprising that teachers, students, and their families continuously ask for help. And, given the way student supports currently operate, it is not surprising that few feel they are receiving the help they need.

Schools must be able to prevent and respond appropriately each day to a variety of barriers to learning and teaching. Those that can’t are ill-equipped to raise test scores to high levels.

**Current Student Support is Fragmented and Marginalized**

Every school has some support programs and services, and across a district one can find a wide range of efforts. Some programs are mandated for every school; others are carried out at or linked to targeted schools. In addition to those that are owned and operated by schools, community agencies are bringing services to school sites. The interventions may be for all students in a school, for those in specified grades, for those identified as "at risk," and/or for those in need of compensatory education.

Student and teacher supports are provided by various divisions in a district, each with a specialized focus such as curriculum and instruction, student support services, compensatory education, special education, language acquisition, parent involvement, intergroup relations, and adult and career education. Such divisions usually are organized and operate as relatively independent entities. For example, many school-owned and operated services are offered as part of what are called pupil personnel or support services. Federal and state mandates tend to determine how many pupil services professionals are employed, and states regulate compliance with mandates. Governance of their work usually is centralized at the district level. In large districts, counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other specialists may be organized into separate units, overlapping regular, special, and compensatory education. The delivery mechanisms and formats are outlined in Table 2 Part I of the module.

At the school level, analyses of the current state of affairs find a tendency for student support staff 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 schools, 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. Such fragmentation not only is costly in terms of redundancy and counterproductive competition, it works against developing cohesive approaches and maximizing results.1

In short, although various divisions and support staff usually must deal with the same common barriers to learning (e.g., poor instruction, lack of parent involvement, violence and unsafe schools, poor support for student transitions, disabilities), they tend to do so with little or no coordination, and sparse attention to moving toward integrated efforts. Furthermore, in every facet of a district's operations, an unproductive separation often is manifested between staff focused directly on instruction and those concerned with student support. It is not surprising, then, how often efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching are planned, implemented, and evaluated in a fragmented, piecemeal manner.
Moreover, despite the variety of activity across a school district, it is common knowledge that few schools come close to having enough resources to respond when confronted with a large number of students experiencing barriers to learning. Many schools offer only bare essentials. Too many schools do not even meet basic needs. Thus, it comes as no surprise to those who work in schools each day that teachers often do not have the supports they need when they identify students who are having learning and related behavior problems.

Clearly, school improvement and capacity building efforts (including pre and in service staff development) have yet to deal effectively with the enterprise of providing supports for students and teachers. And, the simple psychometric reality is that in schools where a large proportion of students encounter major barriers to learning, test score averages are unlikely to increase adequately until such supports are rethought and redesigned. Schools that do not take steps to do so will remain ill-equipped to meet their mission.

Rethinking Student and Teacher Supports

Policy makers have come to appreciate that limited intervention efficacy is related to the widespread tendency for programs to operate in isolation. Concerns have been particularly voiced about categorically funded programs, such as those created to reduce learning and behavior problems, substance abuse, violence, school dropouts, teen pregnancy, and delinquency. And, some initiatives have been designed to reduce the fragmentation. However, policy makers have failed to deal with the overriding issue, namely that addressing barriers to development and learning remains a marginalized aspect of school policy and practice. The whole enterprise is treated as supplementary (often referred to as auxiliary services).

The degree to which marginalization is the case is seen in the lack of attention given to addressing barriers to learning and teaching in consolidated school improvement plans and certification reviews. It is also seen in the lack of attention to mapping, analyzing, and rethinking how the resources used to address barriers are allocated. For example, educational reformers virtually have ignored the need to reframe the work of pupil services professionals and other student support staff. All this seriously hampers efforts to provide the help teachers and their students so desperately need.
**Needed: A Policy Shift.** Current policies designed to enhance support for teachers, students, and families are seriously flawed. It is unlikely that an agenda to enhance academics can succeed in the absence of concerted attention to ending the marginalized status of efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching.

Increased awareness of policy deficiencies has stimulated analyses that indicate current policy is dominated by a two-component model of school improvement. That is, the primary thrust is on improving instruction and school management. While these two facets obviously are essential, addressing barriers effectively requires a third component – a component to enable students to learn and teachers to teach (see Figure 4 in Part II). Such an “enabling” component provides both a basis for combating marginalization and a focal point for developing a comprehensive framework to guide policy and practice. To be effective, however, it must be established as essential and fully integrated with the other two components in policy and practice.

Various states and localities are moving in the direction of a three component approach for school improvement. In doing so, they are adopting different labels for their enabling component. For example, the California Department of Education and districts such as the Los Angeles Unified School District have adopted the term Learning Supports. So has the New American Schools’ Urban Learning Center comprehensive school reform model. Some states use the term “Supportive Learning Environment.” The Hawaii Department of Education calls it a Comprehensive Student Support System (CSSS). In each case, there is recognition at a policy level that schools must do much more to enable all students to learn and all teachers to teach effectively. In effect, the intent, over time, is for schools to play a major role in establishing a school-community continuum of interventions ranging from a broad-based emphasis on promoting healthy development and preventing problems, through approaches for responding to problems early-after-onset, and extending on to narrowly focused treatments for severe problems (see Figure 2 in Part I).

**Guidelines for a Student Support Component.** The guidelines for mental health in schools (see the reading accompanying Unit I of this module) have been adapted as part of the Summits Initiative: New Directions for Student Support.* This adaptation provides a comprehensive set of guidelines for a school’s student support component. Such guidelines not only redefine the vision for student support, they provide a basis for developing standards and quality indicators related to desired results.

*See material from the Summits Initiative at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu*
Reframing How Schools Address Barriers to Learning

School-wide approaches to address barriers to learning are especially important where large numbers of students are not doing well and at any school that is not yet paying adequate attention to equity and diversity. Leaving no child behind means addressing the problems of the many who are not benefiting from instructional reforms. Because of the complexity of ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school, policy makers and practitioners need an operational framework to guide development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive enabling/learning supports component.

Pioneering efforts have operationalized such a component into six programmatic arenas. Based on this work, the intervention arenas are conceived as:

- Enhancing regular classroom strategies to enable learning (i.e., improving instruction for students who have become disengaged from learning at school and for those with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems)
- Supporting transitions (i.e., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions)
- Increasing home and school connections
- Responding to, and where feasible, preventing crises
- Increasing community involvement and support (outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers)
- Facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed.

As a whole, this six area framework provides a unifying, umbrella to guide the reframing and restructuring of the daily work of all staff who provide learning supports at a school (see Part III A of the module).

Research on this type of comprehensive approach for addressing barriers to learning is still in its infancy. There are, of course, many “natural” experiments underscoring the promise of ensuring all youngsters access to a comprehensive, multifaceted continuum of interventions. These natural experiments are playing out in every school and neighborhood where families are affluent enough to purchase the additional programs and services they feel will maximize their youngsters' well-being. It is obvious that those who can afford such interventions understand their value.

Most formal studies have focused on specific interventions. This literature reports positive outcomes (for school and society) associated with a wide range of interventions. Because of the fragmented nature of available research, the findings are best appreciated in terms of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts, and implications are best derived from the total theoretical and empirical picture. When such a broad perspective is adopted, schools have a large research base to draw upon in addressing barriers to learning and enhancing healthy development. Examples of this research-base have been organized into the above six areas and are highlighted in Part III A of this module.
Where Do We Go From Here?

**Policy action is needed** to guide and facilitate the development of a potent component to address barriers to learning (and support the promotion of healthy development) at every school. As recommended by participants in the *New Directions for Student Support Summits Initiative* (2002), the policy should specify that such an enabling (or learning support) component is to be pursued as a primary and essential facet of school improvement and in ways that complement, overlap, and fully integrate with the instructional component.

**Guidelines accompanying the policy** need to cover how to:

1. **phase-in** development of the component’s six programmatic facets at every school

2. **expand standards and accountability indicators** for schools to ensure this component is fully integrated with the instructional component and pursued with equal effort in policy and practice

3. **restructure** at every school and district-wide with respect to

   - redefining administrative roles and functions to ensure there is dedicated administrative leadership that is authorized and has the capability to facilitate, guide, and support the systemic changes for ongoing development of such a component at every school

   - reframing the roles and functions of pupil services personnel and other student support staff to ensure development of the component

   - redesigning the infrastructure to establish a team at every school and district-wide that plans, implements, and evaluates how resources are used to build the component’s capacity

4. **weave resources into a cohesive and integrated continuum of interventions over time.** Specifically, school staff responsible for the component should be mandated to collaborate with families and community stakeholders to evolve systems for (a) promoting healthy development and preventing problems, (b) intervening early to address problems as soon after onset as feasible, and (c) assisting those with chronic and severe problems

In addition, policy efforts should be made to move

- **boards of education** toward establishing a standing subcommittee focused specifically on ensuring effective implementation of the policy for developing a component to address barriers to student learning at each school

- **pre- and in-service programs** for school personnel toward including a substantial focus on the concept of an enabling component and how to operationalize it at a school in ways that fully integrate with instruction.
Concluding Comments

Early in the 21st century, the following state of affairs is evident:

- Too many kids are not doing well in schools.
- To change this, schools must play a major role in addressing barriers to learning.
- However, support programs and services as they currently operate are marginalized in policy and practice and can’t meet the needs of the majority of students experiencing learning, behavior, and emotional problems.
- Rather than address the problems surrounding school-owned support programs and services, policy makers seem to have become enamored with the concept of school-linked services, as if adding a few community health and social services to a few schools is a sufficient solution.

Policy makers at all levels need to understand the full implications of all this. Limited efficacy seems inevitable as long as the full continuum of necessary programs is unavailable and staff development remains deficient; limited cost effectiveness seems inevitable as long as related interventions are carried out in isolation of each other; limited systemic change is likely as long as the entire enterprise is marginalized in policy and practice. Given all this, it is not surprising that many in the field doubt that major breakthroughs can occur without a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of interventions. Such views add impetus to major initiatives that are underway designed to restructure the way schools operate in addressing learning and behavior problems.

A major shift in policy thinking is long overdue. First, policy makers must rework policies for linking community services to schools. Then, they must rethink how schools, families, and communities can meet the challenge of addressing persistent barriers to student learning and at the same time enhance how all stakeholders work together to promote healthy development.

Why must school-linked services be reworked? The social marketing around "school-linked, integrated services” has led some policy makers to the mistaken impression that community resources alone can effectively meet the needs of schools in addressing barriers to learning. In turn, this has led some legislators to view linking community services to schools as a way to free-up dollars underwriting school-owned services. The reality is that even when one adds together community and school assets, the total set of services in impoverished locales is woefully inadequate. In situation after situation, it has become evident that as soon as the first few sites demonstrating school-community collaboration are in place, community agencies find their resources stretched to the limit. Another problem is that overemphasis on school-linked services exacerbates tensions between school district service personnel and their counterparts in community based organizations.

Awareness is growing that there can never be enough school-based and linked “support services” to meet the demand in many public schools. Moreover, it is becoming more and more evident that efforts to address barriers to student learning will continue to be marginalized in policy and practice as long as the focus is narrowly on providing “services.”
Fortunately, pioneering initiatives around the country are demonstrating ways to broaden policy and practice. These initiatives recognize that to enable students to learn and teachers to teach, there must not only be effective instruction and well-managed schools, but barriers to learning must be handled in a comprehensive way. Those leading the way are introducing new frameworks for a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive continuum of programmatic interventions. In doing so, their work underscores that (a) current reforms are based on an inadequate two component model for restructuring schools, (b) movement to a three component model is necessary if schools are to benefit all young people appropriately, and (c) all three components must be integrated fully in school improvement initiatives.

The third component is formulated around the proposition that a comprehensive, multifaceted, integrated continuum of enabling activity is essential in addressing the needs of youngsters who encounter barriers that interfere with their benefitting satisfactorily from instruction. In some places, this is called an Enabling Component; other places use the term learning support component or a component for a supportive learning environment or a comprehensive student support system. Whatever it is called, the important point is that all three components are seen as necessary, complementary, and overlapping and that efforts to address barriers to development, learning, and teaching must be not be marginalized in policy and practice.

The next decade must mark a turning point for how schools and communities address the problems of children and youth. In particular, the focus must be on initiatives to reform and restructure how schools work to prevent and ameliorate the many learning, behavior, and emotional problems experienced by students. This means reshaping the functions of all school personnel who have a role to play in addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development. There is much work to be done as public schools across the country are called upon to leave no child behind.

Endnotes:


3. See: Center for Mental Health in Schools (2001). *Framing New Directions for School Counselors, Psychologists, & Social Workers*. Los Angeles: Author at UCLA.

Materials for use as
Handouts/Overheads/Slides
in Presenting
Part II
II. Policy Considerations

A. Fragmentation, Marginalization, and Counterproductive Competition for Sparse Resources

B. Moving From a Two to a Three Component Policy Framework

>>Group activity – *Key Insights about Mental Health in Schools*

>>Brief follow-up reading –
> *Why New Directions for Student Support?*
Addressing Barriers to Student Learning

What’s the Current State of Affairs?
Which of these addresses barriers to student learning?

When policy focuses on schools and communities working together, we must recognize that we are talking about two major and separate reform movements.

The movements for

*C School Improvement*

*C Agency Reform*

Many of those involved in trying to enhance school-community connections do not understand the implications of all this.
School Reform: *What’s Missing?*

*How does the current reform/restructuring movement in education address barriers to learning?*

- **Instructional Component** (to directly facilitate learning)
- **Management Component** (for governance and resource management)
How does current policy, practice, and research address barriers to development & learning?

A Two Component Model for Reform and Restructuring

Direct Facilitation of Learning (Instructional Component)

Addressing Barriers to Development, Learning, & Teaching (not treated as a primary component)*

Governance and Resource Management (Management Component)

*While not treated as a primary & essential component, every school & community offers a relatively small amount of school-owned student "support" services and community-owned resources – some of which are linked together. Schools, in particular, have been reaching out to community agencies to add a few more services. All of this remains marginalized & fragmented.
The same is true for

*School-linked Services Initiatives*

Fragmented

Counterproductively

Competitive

*Marginalized*
Community Agency Reform is not the same thing as Strengthening Communities

C The major intent of agency reform is to restructure services to reduce fragmentation.

C The emphasis is mainly on interagency collaboration.

C Schools have been included since they offer better access to agency clients. Thus, the concept of school linked services, and the idea of community agencies collocating services on a school site.

Because the focus is on services, little attention is paid to

< integrating community resources with existing school programs and services designed to address barriers to learning;

< strengthening families and neighborhoods by improving economic status and enhancing other fundamental supports.
Who in the Community Might “Partner” with Schools?

C County Agencies & Bodies
Municipal Agencies & Bodies

C Physical and Mental Health & Psychosocial Concerns Facilities/Groups

C Mutual Support/Self-Help Groups

C Child Care/Preschool Centers

C Post Secondary Education Institutions/Students

C Service Agencies

C Service Clubs and Philanthropic Organizations

CYouth Agencies and Groups

C Sports/Health/Fitness/Outdoor Groups

C Community Based Organizations

C Faith Community Institutions

C Legal Assistance Groups

CEthnic Associations

CSpecial Interest Associations and Clubs

C Artists and Cultural Institutions

C Businesses/Corporations/Unions

C Media

C Family Members, Local Residents, Senior Citizens Groups
NEEDED:

A Policy Shift
Moving from a two to a three component model for reform and restructuring

*The third component (an enabling component) is established in policy and practice as primary and essential and is developed into a comprehensive approach by weaving together school and community resources.
Functional Focus for Reform and Restructuring:

Moving to a Three Component Model

Establishes a component for addressing barriers to development and learning which is treated as primary and essential and which weaves together school and community resources to develop comprehensive approaches.

Direct Facilitation of Development & Learning (Developmental Component)

Addressing Barriers to Development & Learning (Enabling Component)

Governance and Resource Management (Management Component)
Group Reflection and Discussion

Key Insights about Mental Health in Schools

Based on what you learned so far:

*Identify and discuss the key insights you have acquired.*

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**Group Process Guidelines:**

C Start by identifying someone who will facilitate the group interchange

C Take a few minutes to make a few individual notes on a worksheet

C Be sure all major points are compiled for sharing with other groups.

C Ask someone else to watch the time so that the group doesn’t bog down.