

***Strengthening School Improvement***

***Addressing Barriers to Learning & Teaching and  
Re-engaging Disconnected Students:***

***Transforming Student & Learning Supports by  
Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable  
System of Learning Supports***

Topics Covered:

- I. Why a *system* of learning supports is imperative for school improvement policy and practice
- II. What the long-standing approach to student problems in districts and schools has been
- III. Expanding School Improvement Policy & Reframing Student and Learning Supports
- IV. Toward a Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable System of Interventions

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For an overview of resources available at no cost from the Center, see the Center website:

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

## ***I. Why is a System of Learning Supports Imperative for School Improvement?***

### **Some Major Concerns**

- High Student Dropout Rates
- High Teacher Dropout Rates
- Continuing Achievement Gap
- So Many Schools Designated as Low Performing
- High Stakes Testing Taking its Toll on Students
- Plateau Effect

***Teachers shouldn't be expected to do it alone!***

The imperative is well-stated by the Carnegie Task Force on Education:

*School systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students.*

*But . . .*

*when the need directly affects learning,  
the school must meet the challenge.*

## The Challenge: *Doing More with Less*

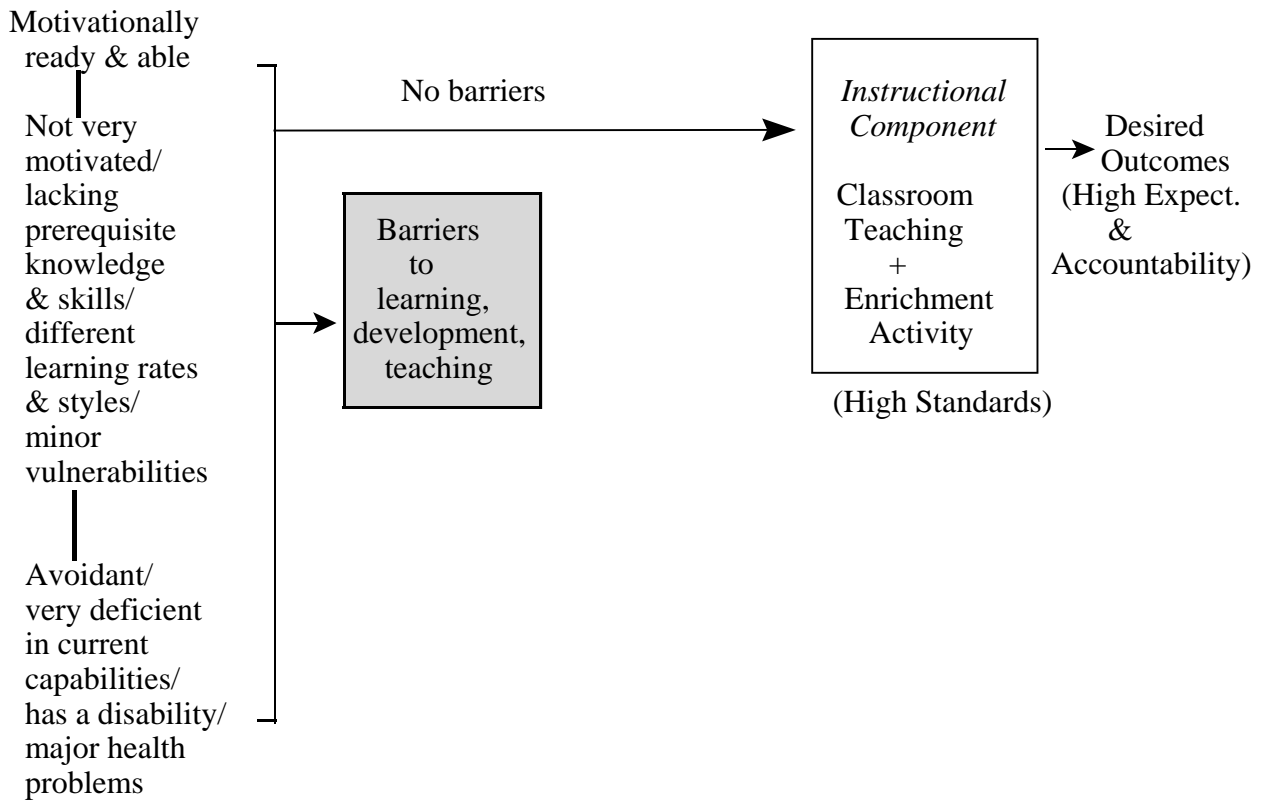
We all know that sparse resources  
(people, budget, time, etc.)  
are a constant challenge.

## The Challenge:

### Addressing *All* Students; Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

#### **Range of Learners**

(categorized in terms of their response to academic instruction at any given point in time)



#### \*Examples of Risk-Producing Conditions that Can be Barriers to Learning

##### E n v i r o n m e n t a l   C o n d i t i o n s\*\*

##### P e r s o n   F a c t o r s\*\*

###### *Neighborhood*

- >extreme economic deprivation
- >community disorganization, including high levels of mobility and crime
- >violence, drugs, etc.
- >gangs
- >racial and ethnic conflicts

###### *Family*

- >chronic poverty
- >conflict/disruptions/violence
- >substance abuse
- >modeling problem behavior
- >abusive caretaking
- >inadequate provision for quality child care
- >problems stemming from minority, immigrant, homeless, foster care, juvenile offender status

###### *School and Peers*

- >enrollment and attendance hurdles
- >poor quality school
- >negative encounters with teachers
- >negative encounters with peers &/or inappropriate peer models

###### *Individual*

- >medical problems
- >low birth weight/neurodevelopmental delay
- >psychophysiological problems
- >difficult temperament & adjustment problems
- >inadequate nutrition
- >English is a second language
- >learning and mental disorders

\*\*A reciprocal determinist view of behavior recognizes the interplay of environment and person variables.

## Examples of *Risk-Producing Conditions* that Can be Barriers to Development and Learning

### E n v i r o n m e n t a l   C o n d i t i o n s \*

### P e r s o n   F a c t o r s \*

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## Examples of *Protective Buffers*

Conditions that prevent or counter risk producing conditions – strengths, assets, corrective interventions, coping mechanisms, special assistance and accommodations

### E n v i r o n m e n t a l   C o n d i t i o n s \*

### P e r s o n   F a c t o r s \*

#### **Neighborhood**

- >strong economic conditions/ emerging economic opportunities
- >safe and stable communities
- >available & accessible services
- >strong bond with positive other(s)
- >appropriate expectations and standards
- >opportunities to successfully participate, contribute, and be recognized

#### **Family**

- >adequate financial resources
- >nurturing supportive family members who are positive models
- >safe and stable (organized and predictable) home environment
- >family literacy
- >provision of high quality child care
- >secure attachments – early and ongoing

#### **School and Peers**

- >success at school
- >safe, caring, supportive, and healthy school environment
- >positive relationships with one or more teachers
- >positive relationships with peers and appropriate peer models
- >strong bond with positive other(s)

#### **Individual**

- >higher cognitive functioning
- >psychophysiological health
- >easy temperament, outgoing personality, and positive behavior
- >strong abilities for involvement and problem solving
- >sense of purpose and future
- >gender (girls less apt to develop certain problems)

## Examples of Conditions for *Promoting Full Development*

Conditions, over and beyond those that create protective buffers, that enhance healthy development, well-being, and a value-based life

### E n v i r o n m e n t a l   C o n d i t i o n s \*

### P e r s o n   F a c t o r s \*

#### **Neighborhood**

- >nurturing & supportive conditions
- >policy and practice promotes healthy development & sense of community

#### **Family**

- >conditions that foster positive physical & mental health among all family members

#### **School and Peers**

- >nurturing & supportive climate school-wide and in classrooms
- >conditions that foster feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness

#### **Individual**

- >pursues opportunities for personal development and empowerment
- >intrinsically motivated to pursue full development, well-being, and a value-based life

\*A reciprocal determinist view of behavior recognizes the interplay of environment and person variables.

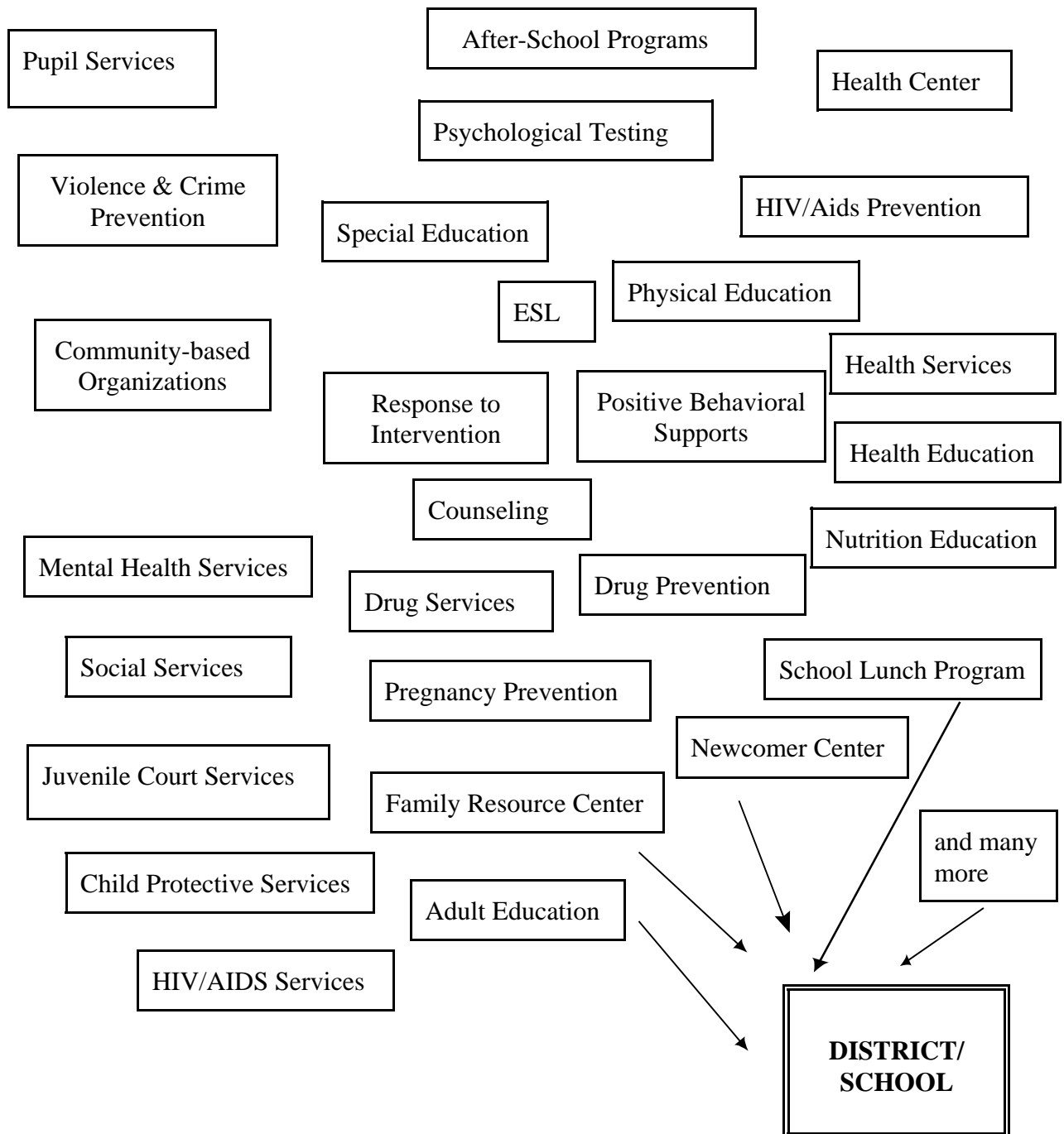
For more on this and for references to relevant literature, see:

Adelman, H.S., & Taylor, L. (2006). *The school leader's guide to student learning supports: New directions for addressing barriers to learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

## II. Current Approach to Addressing Barriers at Schools

**What we see around the country: Much activity, much fragmentation!**

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.\*



\*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.

Fragmented policy ↔ Fragmented practices

*What does this mean for systemic change?*

Current Situation is that the efforts to provide supports to address barriers are **marginalized** in policy and practice.

This leads to

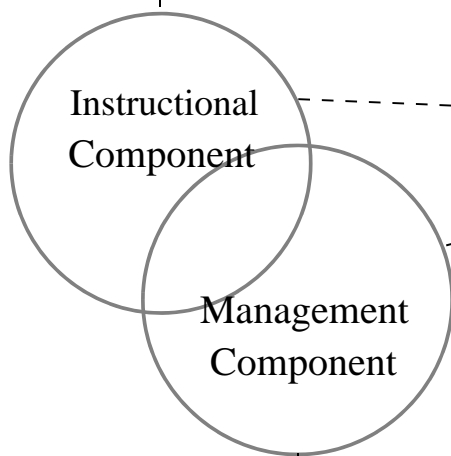
- Fragmentation
- Poor Cost-Effectiveness (up to 25% of a school budget used in too limited and often redundant ways)
- Counterproductive Competition for Sparse Resources (among school support staff and with community-based professionals who link with schools)

## Here's a Look at the Marginalization

### Graphically Clarifying the Policy Problem

**This is how school improvement policy & practice addresses barriers to learning and teaching**

*Direct Facilitation of Learning & Development*



*Governance and Resource Management*

*Other concerns are seen as supplementary*

- >Concern for Safe Schools
- >Some Student & Family Assistance

Besides offering a small amount of school-owned student "support" services, schools outreach to the community to add a few school-based/linked services.



### ***III. Expanding School Improvement Policy & Reframing Student and Learning Supports***

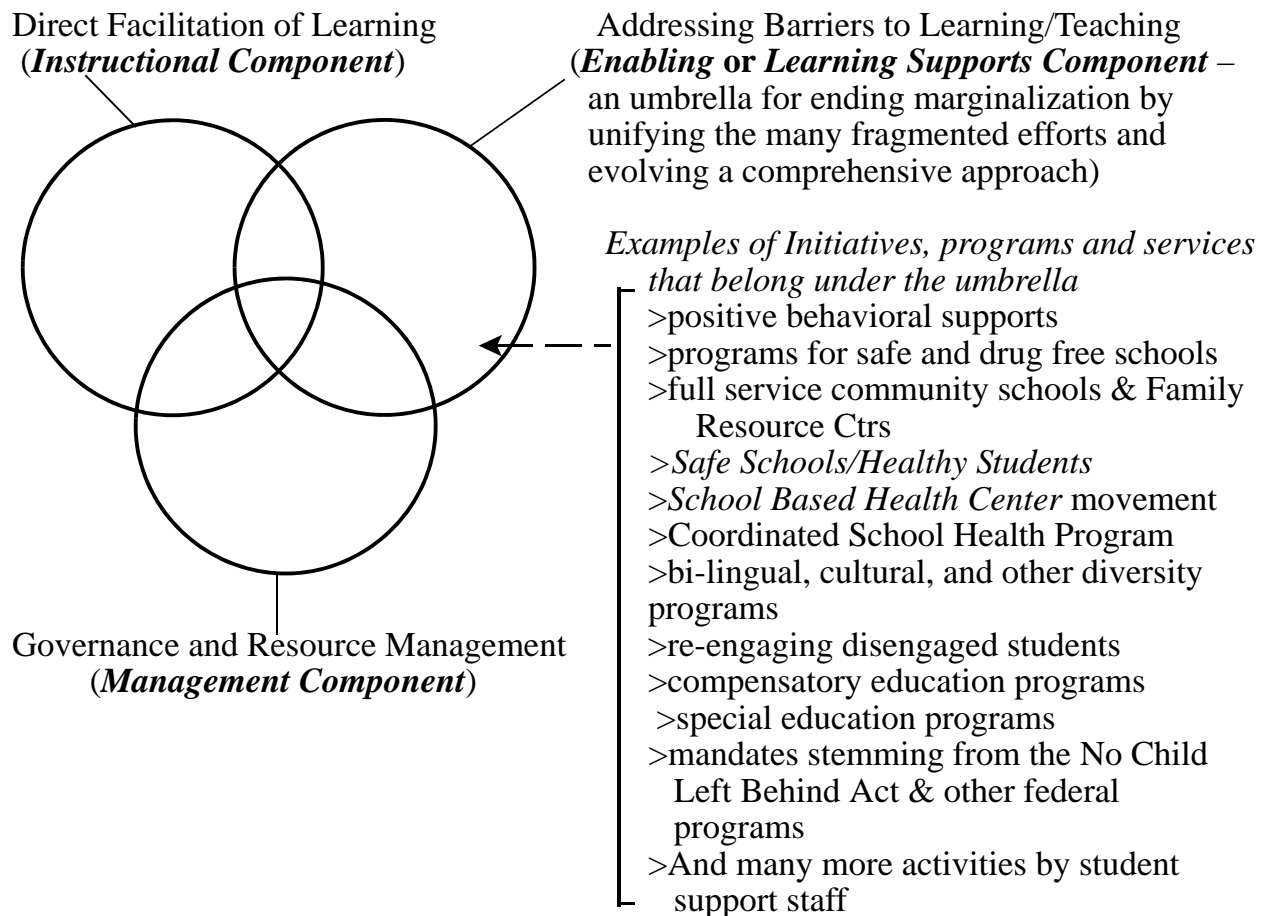
Clearly, there are some student and learning supports; what's missing is a dedicated, unified, and comprehensive component directly focused on:

(1) addressing barriers to learning & teaching

AND

(2) re-engaging students who have become disconnected from classroom instruction & schools

The need is to expand to a three-component policy framework with the intent of developing a Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable System of Student and Learning Supports



## IV. Toward a Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable System of Interventions

### **Rethinking Student and Learning Supports**

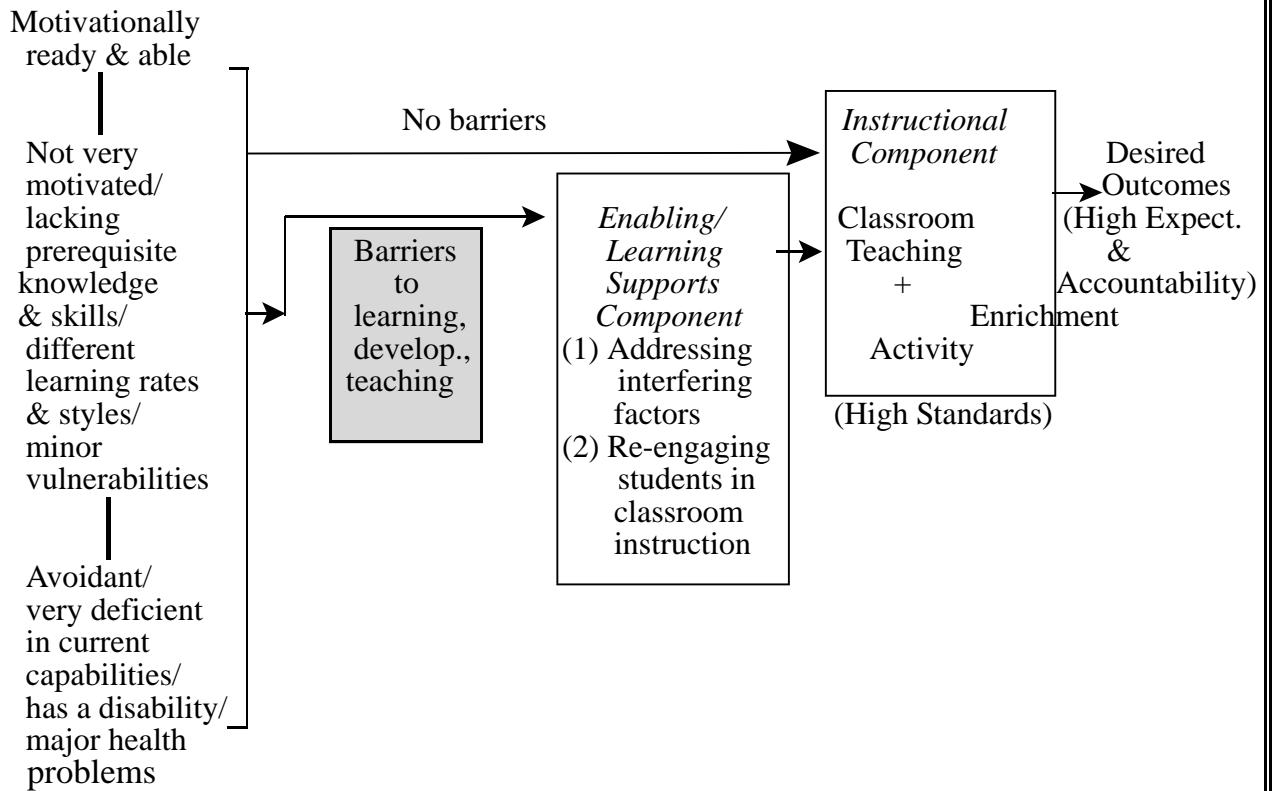
Drawing on the trailblazing work of various state and local education agencies – see Where's It Happening?

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/nind7.htm>

**Here are some of the prototypes that these  
pioneering efforts have adopted/adapted**

# Prototype of an Enabling or Learning Supports Component to Address Barriers to Learning and Re-engage Students in Classroom Instruction

*Range of Learners*  
 (categorized in terms of their response to academic instruction at any given point in time)



\*In some places, an Enabling Component is called a Learning Supports Component. Whatever it is called, the component is to be developed as a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports at the school site.

**A Unified, Comprehensive, & Systemic  
Learning Supports Component is  
*Standards-Based and Accountability-Driven***

The intervention framework consists of

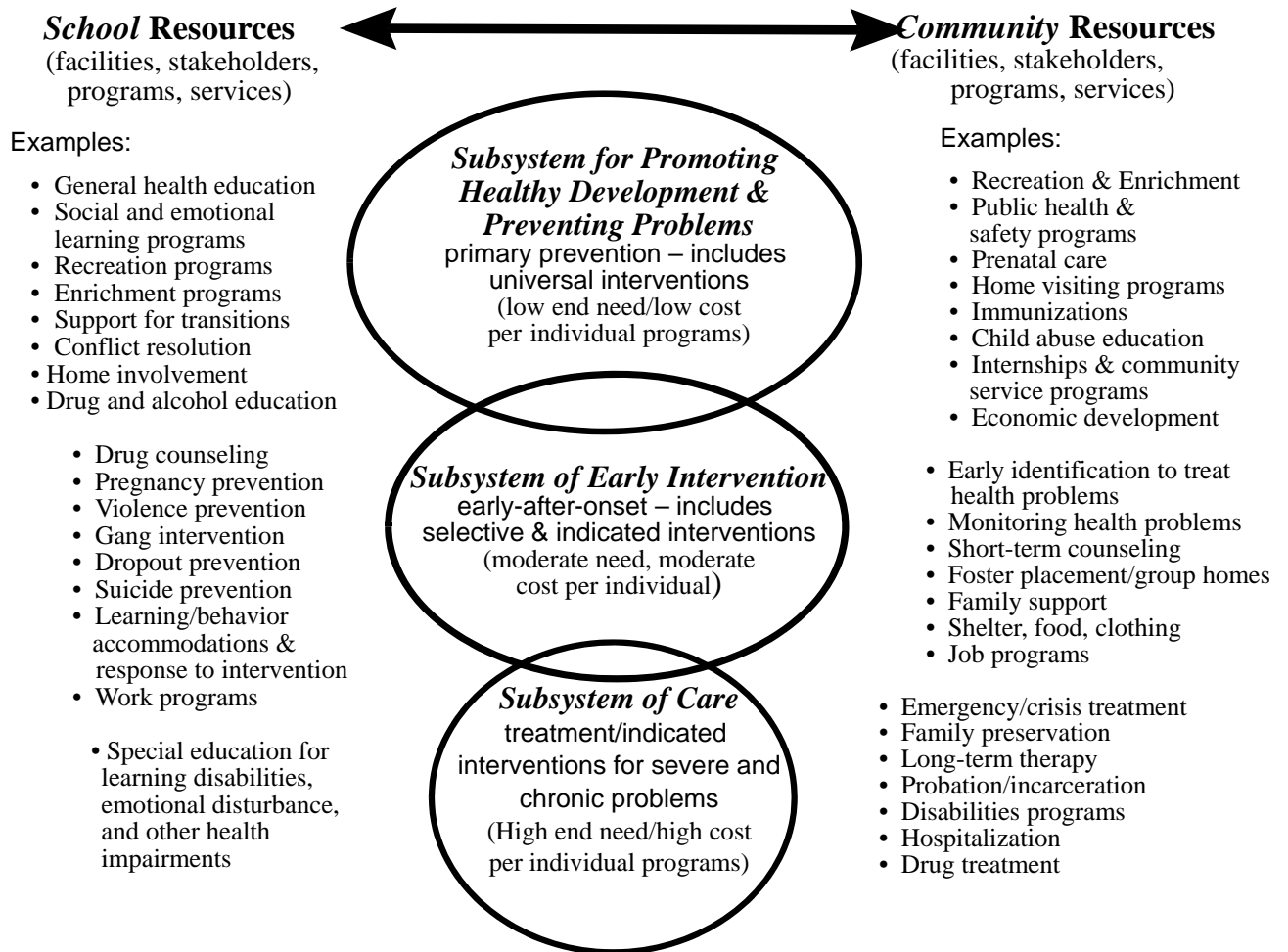
- a full *continuum* of interventions

&

- an Organized and Delimited Set of *Content Arenas*

**Prototype for Clarifying Levels of Intervention Continuum:\***  
**Interconnected Subsystems for Meeting the Needs of All Students**

*One Key Facet of a Unified and Comprehensive Framework*



Systemic collaboration is essential to establish interprogram connections on a daily basis and over time to ensure seamless intervention within each system and among *systems for promoting healthy development and preventing problems, systems of early intervention, and systems of care.*

Such collaboration involves horizontal and vertical restructuring of programs and services

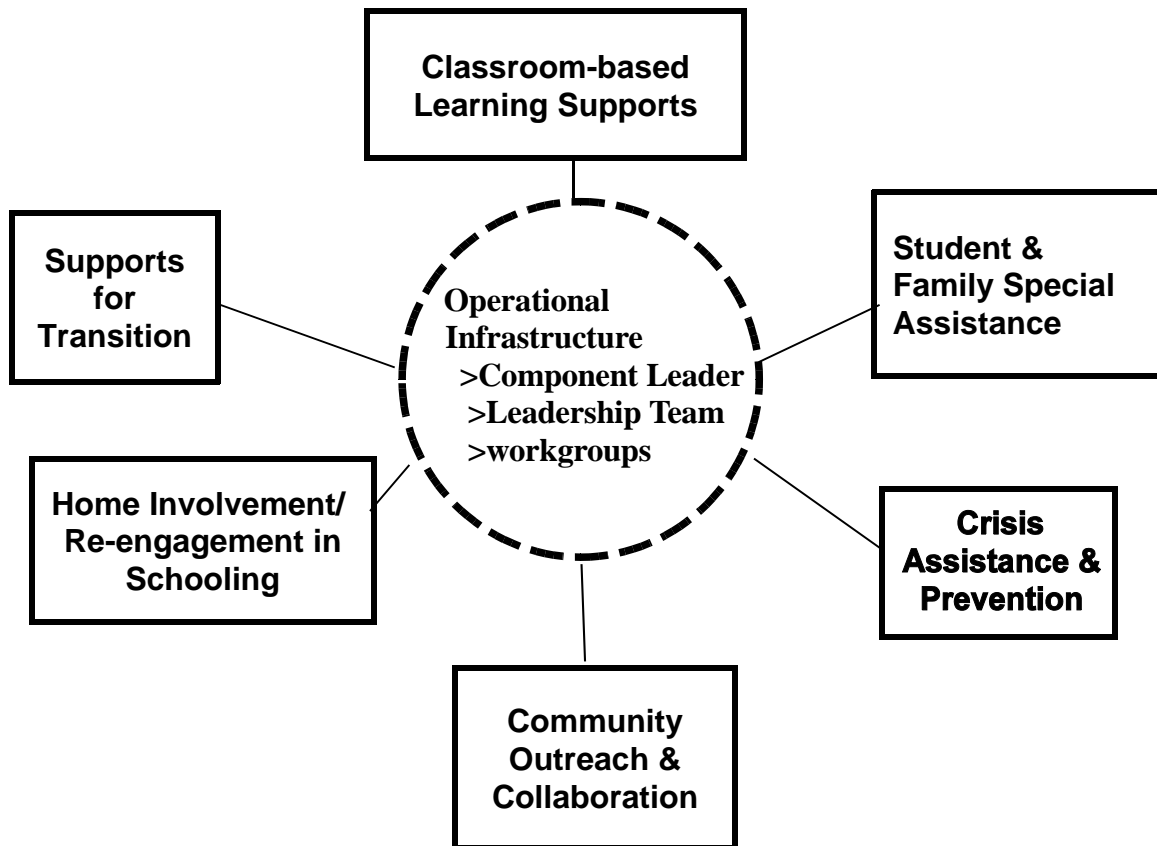
(a) within jurisdictions, school districts, and community agencies (e.g., among departments, divisions, units, schools, clusters of schools)

(b) between jurisdictions, school and community agencies, public and private sectors; among schools; among community agencies

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\*Various venues, concepts, and initiatives permeate this continuum of intervention *systems*. For example, venues such as day care and preschools, concepts such as social and emotional learning and development, and initiatives such as positive behavior support, response to intervention, and coordinated school health. Also, a considerable variety of staff are involved. Finally, *note that this illustration of an essential continuum of intervention systems differs in significant ways from the three tier pyramid that is widely referred to in discussing universal, selective, and indicated interventions.*

# Prototype Categories of *Basic Content Arenas* for Learning Supports Intervention



Note: *All categorical programs can be integrated into these six content arenas.*

Examples of initiatives, programs, and services that can be unified into a system of learning supports include positive behavioral supports, 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, Safe Schools/Healthy Students projects, CDC's Coordinated School Health Program, bi-lingual, cultural, and other diversity programs, compensatory education programs, special education programs, mandates stemming from the No Child Left Behind Act, and many more.



Descriptions and major examples of activity in each of the six basic content arenas are available in the new, free online book entitled:

*Transforming Student and Learning Supports:  
Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System*

This resource can be easily accessed at

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf> .

(The chapters also provide protocol frameworks and many specifics for a systemic learning supports component to replace the existing marginalized and fragmented set of student and learning supports in districts and schools. The work also stresses that transformation can be done by redeploying existing resources and garnering economies of scale.)

See the information about the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports* –  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

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For more specific examples and mapping and analysis self study surveys for each arena, see the Center's online resource aid:

*Resource Mapping and Management  
to Address Barriers to Learning:  
An Intervention for Systemic Change*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resourcemapping/resourcemappingandmanagement.pdf>

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# Combining the Continuum and Content Arenas Provides the Framework for a Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable System of Supports\*

## Levels of Intervention

		Subsystems for Promoting Healthy Development & Preventing Problems	Subsystem for Early Intervention (Early after problem onset)	Subsystem of Care
		<b>Intervention Content Arenas</b>	Classroom- Based Learning Supports	
	Supports for transitions			
	Home Involvement/ (Re)engage. in Schooling			
	Community Outreach/ Collaboration			
	Crisis/ Emergency Assistance & Prevention			
	Student and Family Special Assistance			
		Accommodations for differences & disabilities	Specialized assistance & other intensified interventions (e.g., Special Education & School-Based Behavioral Health)	

\*Note: Various venues, concepts, and initiatives will fit into several cells of the matrix. Examples include venues such as day care centers, preschools, family centers, and school-based health centers, concepts such as social and emotional learning and development, and initiatives such as positive behavior support, response to interventions, and the coordinated school health program. Most of the work of the considerable variety of personnel who provide student supports also fits into one or more cells.

# ***Reworking Operational Infrastructure***

In reworking infrastructure, it is essential to remember

***Structure***

***Follows***

***Function!***

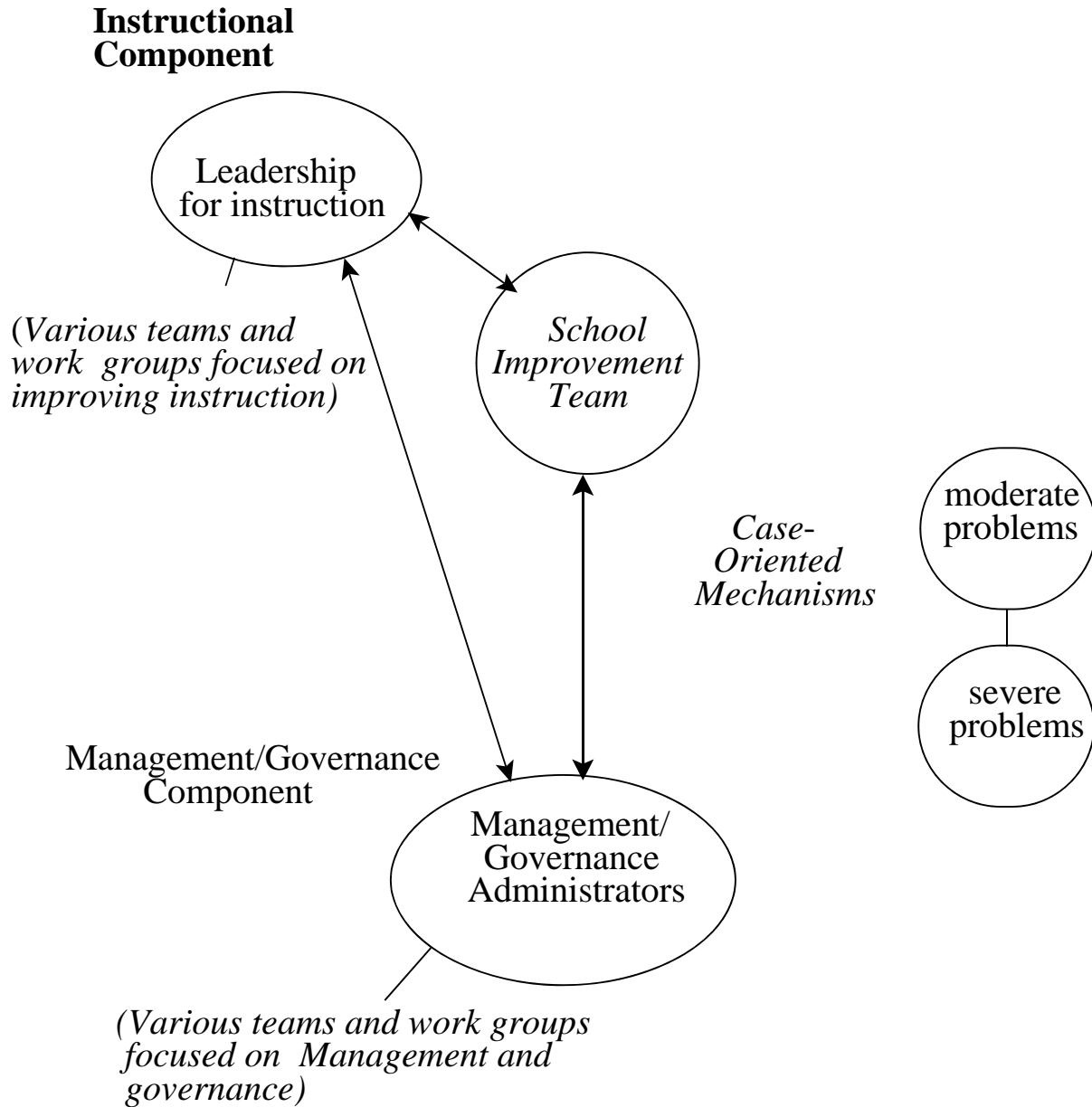
Developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports involves reworking the organizational and operational infrastructure for

- **schools**
- **feeder patterns**
- **districts (and departments of education)**
- **school-community collaboratives**
- **regional and state education agencies**

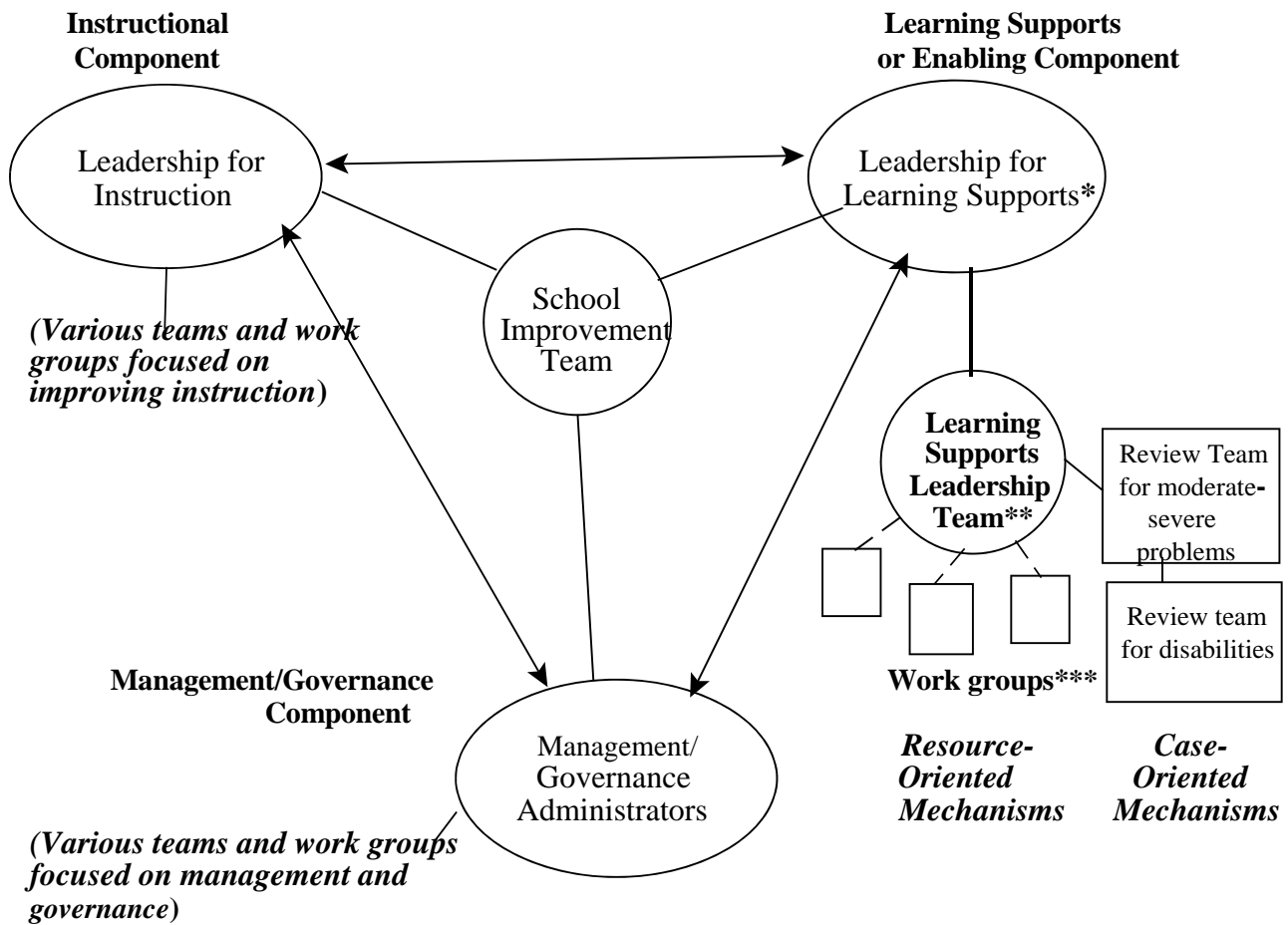
The point is to ensure the operational infrastructure at schools, LEAs, and SEAs has a leader and staff focused on planning & developing a Learning Supports Component. Specifically, the need is for

- >Administrative Leader for Learning Supports Component
- >Learning Supports Leadership Team
- >Workgroups

# What the Student Support Infrastructure Looks Like at Most Schools



## Example of an Integrated Infrastructure at the School Level (Should be paralled at the district level)



\*Learning Supports or Enabling Component Leadership consists of an administrator and other advocates/champions with responsibility and accountability for ensuring the vision for 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 work groups – Initially, these 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, work groups can be combined. Others are formed as needed by the Learning Supports Resource Team to address specific concerns. These groups are essential for accomplishing the many tasks associated with such a team’s functions.

For more on this, see

><http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/infrastructure/anotherinitiative-exec.pdf>

><http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentssupport/toolkit/aidk.pdf>

## Differentiating a Case-Team from a Learning Supports Component Leadership Team

What a school probably has is a Team Focused on Specific Individuals & Discrete Services

### a Case-Oriented Team

Sometimes called:

- Child/Student Study Team
- Student Success Team
- Student Assistance Team
- Teacher Assistance Team
- IEP Team

#### EXAMPLES OF *FUNCTIONS*:

- > *triage*
- > *referral*
- > *case monitoring/management*
- > *case progress review*
- > *case reassessment*



What a school also needs is a Leadership Team for Developing a Unified & Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

### a Resource & System Development-oriented Team

(Focused on *all* students and the *resources, programs, and systems* to address barriers to learning & promote healthy development)

Possibly called:

- Learning Supports Resource Team
- School Support Resource Team
- Learning Supports Leadership Team
- Learning Supports Development Team

#### EXAMPLES OF *FUNCTIONS*:

- > *aggregating data across students & from teachers to analyze school needs*
- > *mapping resources*
- > *analyzing resources*
- > *enhancing resources*
- > *program and system planning/development – including emphasis on establishing a full continuum of intervention*
- > *redeploying resources*
- > *coordinating-integrating resources*
- > *social "marketing"*



## **Connecting Resources Across a Family of Schools, a District, and Community-Wide**

Operationally, it is invaluable to connect feeder patterns or a “family” of schools in the same geographic area in order to

- >focus on common concerns,
- >maximize use of limited resources, and
- >achieve economies of scale

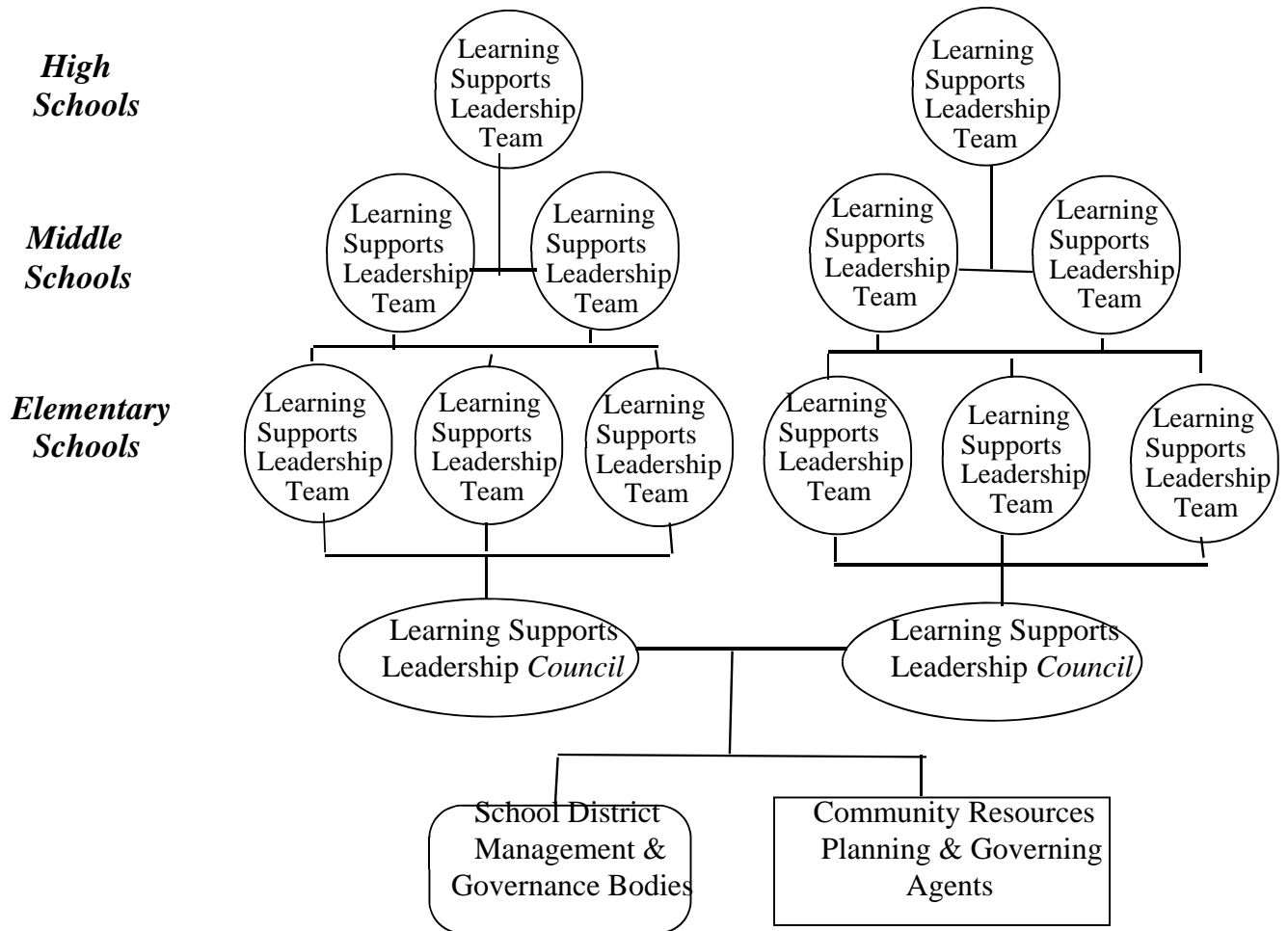
When personnel and activities are shared by several neighboring schools, they help minimize redundancy, reduce costs, and enhance equity.



# Connecting Resources Across a Family of Schools, a District, and Community-Wide

*Enhancing a system of learning supports by connecting resources across*

- *a family of schools*
- *a district*
- *community-wide*



## Resources from the UCLA Center

### UCLA Web site

The Center at UCLA has extensive resources which are free and readily accessible online. These include:

- >Resources to help meet daily needs related to student learning, behavior, and emotional concerns
- >Policy and practice analyses to help rethink current student and learning supports
- >A system development toolkit to help design and implement a unified, comprehensive, and equitable learning support system
- >A practitioner's toolbox, and more . . .

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

### Online Technical Assistance and Coaching

The Center at UCLA provides free technical assistance for all relevant inquiries and provides free distance coaching for those moving forward with transforming student and learning supports.\*

Contact: [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

\*For system change resources, see

*System Change Toolkit for Transforming Student Supports into a  
Unified & Comprehensive System for Addressing Barriers to  
Learning and Teaching*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>