SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT UCLA

Addressing Barriers to Learning

New ways to think . . .

Better ways to link

Mental Health in Schools Center Training and Technical Assistance

Volume 3, Number 4
Fall, 1998

And so the pendulum swings back. "No more social promotion!" "Stop passing on failure!" O.K., but let's act quickly to minimize the social and mental health fallout.

Denying Social Promotion Obligates Schools to Do More to Address Barriers to Learning

Everyone understands the downside of social promotion. Why then did social promotion become de facto policy in so many schools? Because the alternative often is grade retention, and everyone knows the slippery slope that produces. As John Holt (1964) cautioned long ago, if we just focus on raising standards, we will see increasing numbers who can't pass the test to get into the next grade and the elementary and middle school classrooms will bulge and the "push out" rates will surge.

Even with widespread social promotion policies, retention is rampant. A recent American Federation of Teachers' report estimates that between 15 and 19 percent of the nation's students are held back each year and as many as 50% of those in large urban schools are held back at least once. With social promotion denied, estimates are that, for example, over 10,000 public school students in Chicago face retention, and over 70,000 in North Carolina could be retained for failing to meet promotion guidelines.

Contents

Last January, a newspaper editorial cautioned:

> *. . . we don't know yet how many students will be able to meet the higher expectations California is in the process of setting for them. Some educators have guessed that more than half of the state's 5 million public school students will fail the tests, but nobody can say for sure. And there is plenty of debate about when and for how long students should be held back. The state will need to weigh the considerable risk that some students, particularly in the upper grades, will drop out rather than repeat another year. Will there be room in the state's many already overcrowded schools to house millions of students for another year or more? With the teacher shortage already a problem, who will teach them?*
>
> (from the *Sacramento Bee*)

The editorial might also have noted that

- research has not found long-term benefits from simply retaining students -- that is most students do not catch up and those who make some gains tend to lag behind again as they move to higher grades
- when students are kept back, they exhibit considerable reactance -- displaying social and mental health problems, such as negative attitudes toward teachers and school, misbehavior, symptoms of anxiety and depression, and so forth
- most schools are ill-prepared to respond with enough proactive programs to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of students who are not ready to move on.

(cont. on page 2)

What's Missing?

School reformers are among the leading advocates for ending social promotion. In its place, the prevailing wisdom is to enhance students' desire to do well at school by instituting higher standards, improving instruction, and insisting on greater accountability. For those who need something more,
the focus is on adding learning supports, such as tutoring, counseling, and summer school.

The concern arises: *Will schools provide enough support?* All districts can list a variety of learning supports they offer. Some are spread throughout the district; others are carried out at or linked to targeted schools. The interventions may be offered to all students in a school, to those in specified grades, to those identified as "at risk," and/or to those in need of compensatory education. The activities may be implemented in regular or special education classrooms and may be geared to an entire class, groups, or individuals; or they may be designed as "pull out" programs for designated students.

On paper, it often seems like a lot. It is common knowledge, however, that few schools come close to having enough. Most offer only bare essentials. Too many schools can't even meet basic needs.

Schools in poor neighborhoods are encouraged to link with community agencies in an effort to expand access to assistance. The problem with this emphasis on school-linked services is that there simply are not enough public resources to go around. Thus, as more schools try to connect with community agencies, they find all available resources have been committed. Agencies then must decide whether to redeploy resources among many schools. In either case, school-linked service only expand availability to a few students and families.

Families who have the means can go to the private sector for help. Those who lack the means must rely on public policy. The sad fact is that existing policy only provides enough learning supports to meet the needs of a small proportion of students. Thus, a fundamental component is missing from the mix of interventions necessary for avoiding retention of an overwhelming mass of students. Without attending to this deficiency in public policy, pendulum swings back and forth between social promotion and retention practices are inevitable and simply amount to political responses to public outcries.

What Should Schools Do?

The basic question that must be answered is: What should schools be doing to enable *all* students to learn and *all* teachers to teach effectively? A satisfactory answer is one that ensures reforms do more than promote the interests of youngsters who already are connecting with instruction. Schools must also address the needs of those encountering barriers to learning.

Although some youngsters have disabilities, the majority of learning, behavior, and emotional problems seen in schools stem from situations where *external barriers* are not addressed. The litany of barriers is all too familiar to anyone who lives or works in communities where families struggle with low income. Families in such neighborhoods usually can't afford to provide the many basic opportunities (never mind enrichment activities) found in higher income communities. Furthermore, resources are inadequate for dealing with such threats to well-being and learning as gangs, violence, and drugs. In many instances, inadequate attention to language and cultural considerations and high rates of student mobility creates additional barriers not only to student learning but to efforts to involve families in youngsters' schooling. And, the impact of all this is exacerbated as youngsters internalize the frustrations of confronting barriers and the debilitating effects of performing poorly at school.

Along with raising standards, schools must move quickly to develop classroom and school-wide approaches to address barriers to learning and teaching. This means working with communities to build a continuum that includes (a) primary prevention and early-age programs, (b) early-after-onset interventions, and (c) treatments for severe and chronic problems. Such a continuum is meant to encompass programs to promote and maintain safety and physical and mental health, preschool and early school-adjustment programs, efforts to improve and augment ongoing social and academic supports, ways to intervene prior to referral for intensive treatment, and provisions for intensive treatment. Such activity must be woven into the fabric of every school. In addition, families of schools need to establish linkages in order to maximize use of limited school and community resources. Minimally, schools that eliminate social promotion must deal proactively with the eight concerns outlined on page 5.

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Center News

LATEST REPORT

Restructuring Boards of Education to Enhance Schools' Effectiveness in Addressing Barriers to Student Learning -- This document is designed to encourage an expanded policy framework for school reform. The specific purpose of the report is to encourage school boards to take another critical step in reforming and restructuring schools. (See page 9 of this newsletter.) For a copy, contact the center. The full report can be downloaded from our web site.

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New Search Engine

We will shortly add one-stop access to a variety of our Center databases. You soon will be able to use keywords to do an integrated search of documents in our clearinghouse, our catalogue of organizations with resources, our catalogue of websites, and the Center's consultation cadre. This will make it easier and faster to find specific resources at our site. Look for it, try a test run, and let us know your ideas for improving the system.

In need of technical assistance?

Contact us at:
E-mail: **smhp@ucla.edu** Ph: **(310) 825-3634**
Write: Center for Mental Health in Schools
Department of Psychology, UCLA
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

Or use our website:

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If you're not receiving our monthly electronic news (ENEWS), just send an E-mail request to:

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leave the subject line blank, and in the body of the message type: **subscribe mentalhealth**

Also, if you want to submit comments and information for us to circulate, note them on the form inserted in this newsletter or contact us directly by mail, phone, or E-mail.

From the Center's Clearinghouse

As fast as we can, we are adding our materials for Internet access (in PDF file format for easy downloading). Refer to the resources section of our web site for directions on downloading.
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

For those without Internet access, all resources are available by contacting the Center.

Some new and revised documents

✏An Annotated Reference List on: *Where to Access Statistical Information Relevant to Addressing Barriers to Learning* -- highlights resources for statistical information on youth, mental health, education, etc. Developed in response to technical assistance requests we've received for this type of information. For access to the most current data, there are references to web sites. This document also is available on line through our web site.

✏Sampler on *School Based Health Centers*. (Our "samplers" provide basic information for accessing a variety of resources on a specific topic, including information on resources).

Recently REVISED Introductory Packets

✏*Violence Prevention and Safe Schools* -- Outlines selected violence prevention curricula and school programs and school-community partnerships for safe schools. Emphasizes both policy and practice.

✏*Least Intervention Needed: Toward Appropriate Inclusion of Students with Special Needs* -- Highlights the principle of least intervention needed and applies the principle to policies for inclusion.

✏*Teen Pregnancy Prevention and Support* -- Covers model programs and resources and offers a framework for practice & policy.

✏*Learning Problems & Learning Disabilities* -- Identifies learning disabilities as one highly circumscribed group of learning problems, and outlines approaches to address the full range of problems.

Do You Know About?

✏*Youth Violence: Lessons from the Experts* (1998) prepared by P. Mann Rinehart, I. Borowsky, A. Stolz, E. Latts, C.U. Cart, & C.D. Brindis. The document looks "at the most violent crimes committed by youth, when possible recognizing that violent crimes against youth are often committed by adults." Topics include: What contributes to youth violence? Violence by the numbers; What protects children/youth from violence? Violence prevention programs; and Influences on responses to violence. Also provides a list of resources and bibliography. Contact: Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health, University of Minnesota, Box 721, 420 Delaware St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

✏*Safe and Smart: Making the Afterschool Hours Work for Kids* -- from the U.S. Dept. of Education. Offers evidence that high quality afterschool opportunities help and showcases exemplary programs. Includes extensive lists of resources and publications. For a free copy, contact: USDOE, Partnership for Family Involvement in Educ., 600 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202-8173. Ph. 877/433-7827. Web: http://pfie.ed.gov/

✏Best Practice Briefs -- To be issued beginning this fall, the publication is described as offering concise, user-friendly state-of-the-art information on best practice models, operational processes and tools, and paradigm shifts in human services that promote better outcomes for children, families, and neighborhoods. For more information, contact Betty Tableman, Editor, Kellogg Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824 Ph. 517/432-2500. Email: tableman@pilot.msu.edu

✏*Learning Together: The Developing Field of Community Initiatives* (1998) by A. Melaville and M. Blank. The report is divided into three parts that "describe the field as it is, raise current issues and major lessons, and suggest future directions. For a free copy, contact: the Mott Foundation, 1200 Mott Foundation Bldg., Flint, MI 48502-1851 or send Email to infocenter@mott.org Ph: 800/645-1766.

FROM OUR SISTER CENTER

The next annual conference of the Center for School Mental Health Assistance (CSMHA) at the University of Maryland at Baltimore will be held in Denver, September 16-18, 1999. The theme is *Advancing School-Based Mental Health Services*. Paper, workshop, and poster abstracts are requested on local, state, national and international developments in school mental health, innovative approaches to service delivery, collaboration, integrated services, prevention, crisis intervention, legal/ethical issues, ways to expand and enhance programs, funding, and evaluation.

CSMHA, is a national training and technical assistance center designed to promote the expansion and improvement of mental health services for school-aged children and youth. The Center is directed by Mark Weist, Ph.D. and co-directed by Bernice Rosenthal, M.PH. Olga Acosta, Ph.D. is the Coordinator.

Like our center, the CSMHA is supported by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Office of Adolescent Health, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Contact: CSMHA, University of Maryland at Baltimore, Department of Psychiatry, 680 West Lexington Street, 10th fl., Baltimore, MD 21201-1570; 888/706-0980;
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Center Staff:
Howard Adelman, Co-Director
Linda Taylor, Co-Director
Perry Nelson, Coordinator
. . . and a host of graduate and undergraduate students

Hardly a family in America has been untouched by mental illness. . . . There could be no wiser investment in our country than a commitment to foster the prevention of mental disorders and the promotion of mental health . . . .

From a report from the Institute of Medicine entitled *Reducing Risks for Mental Disorders: Frontiers for Preventive Intervention Research* (1994). National Academy Press: Washington D.C.

(continued from page 2)

Eight Key Concerns for Schools as They Eliminate Social Promotion

Prevention

**Promoting Prekindergarten Interventions*

(e.g., home and community-oriented programs to foster healthy social-emotional-cognitive development; quality day care programs; quality Head Start and other preschool programs; health and human services)

**In-service for teachers*

(Even given smaller classes in some grades, the need remains for school-based in-service programs so that teachers can enhance strategies for preventing and minimizing barriers to learning and promoting intrinsic motivation for learning at school. A key aspect involves enhancing daily on-the-job learning for teachers through strong mentoring and increased collegial teaming and assistance.)

**Support for Transitions*

(e.g., school-wide approaches for welcoming, orienting, and providing social supports for new students and families; articulation programs; enhanced home involvement in problem solving; ESL classes for students and those caretakers in the home who need them)

**School-Wide Programs Designed to Enhance Caring and Supportive School Environments*

(e.g., increasing curricular and extra-curricular enrichment and recreation programs; increasing the range of opportunities for students to assume positive roles)

Early-After-Onset Intervention

**Improving and Augmenting Regular Supports as Soon as a Student is Seen to Have a Problem*

(e.g., personalizing instruction; tutoring; using aides and volunteers to enhance student support and direction; mentoring for regular teachers regarding basic strategies for enhancing student support, introducing appropriate accommodations and compensatory strategies, and remedying mild-moderate learning problems; extended-day, after-school, Saturday, and summer school programs)

**Interventions for Mild-Moderate Physical and Mental Health and Psychosocial Problems*

(e.g., school-wide approaches and school-community partnerships to address these needs among the student body)

Provision for Severe and Chronic Problems

**Enhancing Availability and Access to Specialized Assistance for Persisting Problems*

(e.g., school-based and linked student and family assistance interventions, including special education)

**Alternative Placements*

(cont. on page 6)

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Prevention -- Eliminating the Need for Social Promotion or Retention

Eliminating the need for both social promotion and retention is certainly an area that requires the proverbial ounce of prevention. Better yet, given the pervasiveness of barriers to learning, we could use several pounds of the stuff. To these ends, there is much of relevance in any public health agenda.

From a school perspective, success is a function of what a student can and wants to do, what a teacher can and wants to do, and the context in which they meet together each day. With respect to the student part of the equation, enhancing school readiness is a top priority. Most parents with the means to do so ensure their children have a wide range of quality experiences prior to entering kindergarten. The sad fact is that the majority of students who do not meet standards for promotion come from economically impoverished families. Until the society is willing to assist all those families who cannot access essential readiness experiences, too many students will continue to appear at school unready for the challenges ahead.

With respect to the teacher part of the equation, enhancing teacher readiness must become a top priority. Despite long-standing and widespread criticism, teacher education at both the preservice and inservice levels remains a sad enterprise. Little of what goes on in the "training" prepares teachers for the difficulties so many encounter at the school site. And the problem is exacerbated by increasing teacher shortages that cause districts to hire individuals with little or no training. All teachers, and especially novices, would benefit greatly from effective mentoring on-the-job, in contrast to sitting in course-oriented programs during off duty hours. Indeed, creating true master practitioner-apprentice relationships is the key to personalizing inservice education. Despite increasing recognition of this matter, however, true mentoring is not in wide use.

In considering context, we must fully appreciate that learning and teaching takes place in several embedded environments: classroom, school, home, neighborhood. It seems self-evident that students and teachers need and deserve environments that are welcoming, supportive, caring, and that address barriers to learning. It is also clear that developing such environments requires effective home-school-community partnerships.

Early-After-Onset Interventions

Doing away with social promotion carries with it a responsibility to identify and provide added supports as soon as a student is seen as having problems. This is sometimes described as "just in time" intervention.

The process of identifying students who need extra assistance is not complicated. If asked, every teacher can easily point out those who are not performing up to existing standards. In some schools, the numbers already identified are quite large. The only thing accomplished by raising the standards is to increase the pool of youngsters who need extra assistance.

What is complicated is providing extra assistance -- especially in schools where large numbers are involved. Currently, in such situations, those with the least severe problems must wait until their problems become severe.

One key to improving early-after-onset responses is to provide teachers with mentors who can demonstrate how to design classrooms that match student motivational and developmental differences. Such mentoring focuses on strategies for personalizing classroom instruction, including creating small classes within big ones, using aides and volunteers to enhance student support and direction, and expanding ways to accommodate and compensate for diversity and disability.

With specific respect to accommodations, it is worth noting that Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 has been revitalized in the last few years. Along with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 is meant to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not discriminated against (see page 8 of this newsletter.) With the reauthorization of IDEA giving the inclusion movement a boost and with renewed interest in enforcing Section 504, there is enhanced emphasis on the topic of accommodations for those with disabilities. All this provides an invaluable window of opportunity not just to improve the ways school's accommodate individuals with disabilities, but how they accommodate *everyone*. To do so, would be in the spirit of Section 504, which after all is a piece of civil rights legislation.

By enabling the teacher to do more, it is reasonable to expect substantial reductions in the number of students who need a bit more support. Such reductions will make it more feasible to offer the remaining youngsters and families the specialized assistance they need. Such an approach also provides a functional strategy for identifying the small group of youngsters whose problems are severe and chronic and who thus require intensive interventions and may even need alternative placements.

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Concluding Comments

If moves toward higher standards and eliminating social promotion are to succeed, every school needs a comprehensive and multifaceted set of interventions to prevent and respond to problems early-after-onset. Without such programs, these initiatives can only have a detrimental effect on the many students already not connecting with literacy instruction. Unfortunately, establishing such approaches is excruciatingly hard. Efforts to do so are handicapped by inadequate funding, by the way interventions are conceived and organized, and by the way professionals understand their roles and functions. For many reasons, policy makers currently assign a low priority to underwriting efforts to address barriers to learning. Such efforts seldom are conceived in comprehensive ways and little thought or time is given to mechanisms for program development and collaboration. Organizationally and functionally, policy makers mandate, and planners and developers focus on, specific programs. Practitioners and researchers tend to spend most of their time working directly with specific interventions and samples. Not surprisingly, then, programs to address learning, behavior, and emotional problems rarely are comprehensive, multifaceted, or coordinated with each other. The current state of practice cannot be expected to change without a significant shift in prevailing policies.

Of particular importance is school district policy. School boards and superintendents need to revisit the many fragmented and marginalized policies that are reducing the impact of programs and services designed to enable learning. If we are to do more than simply retain students, reform and restructuring efforts must encompass a "learning supports" (or "enabling") component. Such a component must be treated as a high priority so that it is integrated as an essential facet of all initiatives to raise student achievement.

Because school boards play a critical role in all this, our Center has just produced a report entitled *Restructuring Boards of Education to Enhance Schools' Effectiveness in Addressing Barriers to Student Learning* (see page 9 of this newsletter). Over the coming year, we will make this report a centerpiece of our efforts to interface with school boards. We also will explore with organizations participating in the *Coalition for Cohesive Policy in Addressing Barriers to Development and Learning* how they can join in such an initiative.

We welcome your thoughts on any and all of this.

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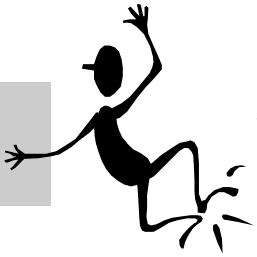
I suspect that many children would learn arithmetic, and learn it better, if it were illegal.

John Holt

Ideas into Practice

Asking for Accommodations



Primary health care providers, parents, and others who identify youngsters experiencing behavior, emotional, and learning problems need to know about Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act.

Section 504 is anti-discrimination, civil rights legislation (not a grant program). It provides a basis to seek accommodations at school not only for students who are eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) but for any who are identified as having some physical or mental impairment that affects a major life activity, such as learning at school. Accommodations to meet educational needs may focus on the curriculum, classroom and homework assignments, testing, grading, and so forth. Such accommodations are primarily offered in regular classrooms.

Below is a fact sheet developed by folks in New Mexico to provide a quick overview. (Thanks to Steve Adelsheim for sharing it!)

General Purpose

Section 504 is a broad civil rights law which protects the rights of individuals with "disabilities" in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education.

Who is protected?

Section 504 protects all school-age children who qualify as disabled, i.e., (1) has or (2) has had a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity or (3) is regarded as disabled by others. Major life activities include walking, seeing, breathing, teaming, working, caring for oneself and performing manual tasks. The disabling condition need only limit one major life activity in order for the student to be eligible. Children receiving special education services under the Individual's with Disabilities Act (IDEA) are also protected by Section 504.

Examples of potential 504 disabling conditions not typically covered under IDEA are:

*communicable diseases
*Tuberculosis
*HIV/AIDS
*medical condition (asthma, allergies, diabetes, heart disease)
*temporary conditions due to illness or accident
*Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
*behavioral difficulties
*drug/alcohol addiction (if the student is no longer using drugs/alcohol)

A 504 plan provides:

*an evaluation based on current levels of performance, teacher reports, and documentation of areas of concern
*the development/implementation of an accommodation plan which specifies "reasonable" modifications in order for the student to benefit from his/her educational program;
*procedural safeguards for students and parents including written notification of all District decisions concerning the student's evaluation or educational placement and due process:
*review and re-evaluation of modifications and placement on a regular basis and prior to any change in placement.

A 504 plan should be considered when:

*a student shows a pattern of not benefiting from the instruction being provided
*retention is being considered
*a student returns to school after a serious illness or injury
*long-tem suspension or expulsion is being considered
*a student is evaluated and found not eligible for Special Education services or is transitioning out of Special Education
*a student exhibits a chronic health or mental health condition
*substance abuse is an issue
*when a student is "at risk" for dropping out
*when a student is taking medication at school

For more information, contact your local school administration.

Also see L. Miller & C. Newbill (1998). *Section 504 in the classroom: How to design & implement accommodation plans.* Austin, TX: pro.ed.

Lessons Learned

Improving How School Board Policy Addresses Barriers to Learning

Editors' Note: At the local level, school boards need to revisit the many fragmented and marginalized policies that reduce the impact of programs and services designed to enable learning and promote healthy development. Our Center has just produced a report entitled *Restructuring Boards of Education to Enhance Schools' Effectiveness in Addressing Barriers to Student Learning*. The report incorporates lessons learned from a unique standing committee established by the Los Angeles Unified School District's Board of Education in the mid 1990s. The document stems from an initiative designed to expand the policy framework for school reform. In previous reports prepared by our Center (based on a series of regional meetings in 1996 and a national summit in 1997), policy concerns related to addressing barriers to student learning were highlighted. During the first part of 1998, a nation-wide coalition of organizations was established focused on the need to enhance policy cohesion in this arena. This *Coalition for Cohesive Policy in Addressing Barriers to Development and Learning* recognizes that efforts to deal with the lack of cohesive policy must occur at all systemic levels for schools and communities to be more effective in addressing factors that interfere with students benefiting from instructional reforms. Over the coming year, organizations participating in the Coalition will draw on this report as part of an initiative to encourage school board restructuring.

If the schools in your community have a significant number of students who are not learning and performing well, you will want to read the full report. And, we are encouraging all who read it to make copies and give them to members of school boards in their local communities.

The following is a brief excerpt from the report.

Rethinking a School Board's Current Committee Structure

Most school boards do not have a standing committee that gives full attention to the problem of how schools address barriers to learning and teaching. This is not to suggest that boards are ignoring such matters. Indeed, items related to these concerns appear regularly on every school board's agenda. The problem is that each item tends to be handled in an ad hoc manner, without sufficient attention to the "Big Picture." One result is that the administrative structure in most districts is not organized in ways that coalesce its various functions (programs, services) for addressing barriers. The piecemeal structure reflects the marginalized status of such functions and both creates and maintains the fragmented policies and practices that characterize efforts to address barriers to student learning.

Analyzing How the Committee Structure Handles Functions Related to Addressing Barriers

Given that every school endeavors to address barriers to learning/teaching, school boards should carefully analyze how their committee structure deals with these functions. Because boards already have a full agenda, such an analysis probably will require use of an ad hoc committee. This committee should be charged with clarifying whether the board's structure, time allotted at meetings, and the way the budget and central administration are organized allow for a thorough and cohesive overview of all functions schools pursue to enable learning and teaching. In carrying out this charge, committee members should consider the work of all pupil services staff (e.g., psychologists, counselors, nurses, social workers, attendance workers), compensatory and special education, safe and drug free schools programs, dropout prevention, aspects of school readiness and early intervention, district health and human service activities, initiatives to link with community services, and more. Most boards will find (1) they don't have a big picture perspective of how all these functions relate to each other, (2) the current board structure and processes for reviewing these functions do not engender a thorough, cohesive approach to policy, and (3) functions related to addressing barriers to learning are distributed among administrative staff in ways that foster fragmentation.

If this is the case, the board should consider establishing a standing committee to focus indepth and consistently on the topic of how schools in the district can enhance their efforts to improve instruction by addressing barriers in more cohesive and effective ways.

What a Standing Committee Can Do

The primary assignment for the committee is to develop a comprehensive policy framework to guide reforms and restructuring so that *every school* can make major improvements in how it addresses barriers interfering with the performance and learning of its students. Developing such a framework requires revisiting existing policy with a view to making it more cohesive and, as gaps are identified, taking steps to fill them.

Current policies, practices, and resources must be well-understood. This requires using the

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lens of addressing barriers to learning to completely map all district owned programs, services, personnel, space, cooperative ventures with community agencies, and so forth. The mapping process should differentiate between (a) regular, long-term programs and short-term projects, (b) those that have the potential to produce major results and those likely to produce superficial outcomes, and (c) those designed to benefit all or most students at every school site and those designed to serve a small segment of the district's students. In looking at income, in-kind contributions, and expenditures, it is essential to distinguish between "hard" and "soft" money (e.g., the general funds budget, categorical and special project funds, other sources that currently or potentially can help underwrite programs). It is also useful to differentiate between long- and short-term soft money. It has been speculated that when the various sources of support are totaled in certain schools as much as 30% of resources may be going to address barriers to learning. Reviewing the budget through this lens is essential in moving beyond speculation about such matters.

Because of the fragmented way policies and practices have been established, there is inefficiency and redundancy, as well as major gaps in efforts to address barriers. Thus, a logical focus for analysis is how to reduce fragmentation and fill gaps to increase effectiveness and efficiency. Another aspect of the analysis involves identifying activities that have little or no effects; these represent resources that can be redeployed to help underwrite the costs of filling major gaps.

A framework that clarifies the district's total approach for addressing barriers to learning should be formulated to guide long-term strategic planning. A well-developed framework is an essential tool for evaluating all proposals in ways that minimize fragmented and piecemeal approaches. It also provides guidance in outreaching to link with community resources in ways that fill gaps and complement school programs and services. That is, it helps avoid creating a new type of fragmentation by clarifying cohesive ways to weave school and community resources together.

The above tasks are not simple ones. And even when they are accomplished, they are insufficient. The committee must also develop policy and restructuring proposals that enable substantive systemic changes. These include capacity building strategies (e.g., administrative restructuring, leadership development, budget reorganization, creating stakeholder readiness for changes, well-trained change agents, strategies for dealing with resistance to change, initial and ongoing staff development, monitoring and accountability). To achieve economies of scale, proposals can capitalize on the natural connections between a high school and its feeders (or a "family" of schools). Centralized functions should be redefined and restructured to ensure that central offices/units support what each school and family of schools is trying to accomplish.

The nature of the work calls for a committee that includes

- one or more board members who chair the committee (all board members are welcome and specific ones are invited to particular sessions as relevant)
- district administrator(s) in charge of relevant programs (e.g., student support services, Title I, special education)
- several key district staff members who can represent the perspectives of principals, unions, and various other stakeholders
- nondistrict members whose jobs/expertise (e.g., in public and mental health, social services, recreation, juvenile justice, post secondary schools) make them invaluable contributors to the tasks at hand .

To be more specific:

It helps if more than one board member sits on the committee to minimize proposals being contested as the personal/political agenda of a particular board member.

Critical information about current activity can be readily elicited through active participation of a district administrator (e.g., a deputy or associate superintendent) responsible for student "support" programs or other district programs that address barriers to learning.

Similarly, a few other district staff usually are needed to clarify how efforts are playing out at schools across the district and to ensure that site administrators, line staff, and union concerns are discussed. Also, consideration should be given to including representatives of district parents and students.

Finally, the board should reach out to include members on the standing committee from outside the district who have special expertise and who represent agencies that are or might become partners with the district in addressing barriers to learning. For example, in the Los Angeles Unified School District, the committee included key professionals from post secondary institutions, county departments for health and social services, public and private youth development and recreation organizations, and the United Way. The organizations all saw the work as highly related to their mission and were pleased to donate staff time to the committee.

The committee's efforts will be for naught if their work is not a regular topic on the board's agenda and a coherent section of the budget. Moreover, the board's commitment must be to addressing barriers to learning in powerful ways that enable teachers to be more effective -- as contrasted to a more limited commitment to providing a few mandated services or increasing access to a few more services through developing coordinated/ integrated school-linked services.

"The meeting is called to order: the Board's problem for today is whether to hire 3 security guards or 2 teachers."

Ideas into Practice: Broadening the Concept of Cultural Competence

Because many young people experience biases and prejudices associated with one or more "cultural differences," the *Family and Youth Services Bureau** has taken pains to define cultural diversity. An African American lesbian, for example, is tied to, and sometimes torn between, communities of color, gender, and sexual orientation, and may have experienced different forms of racist, sexist, and homophobic attitudes in each. The following expanded definitions, therefore, are meant to foster appreciation of the need to develop cultural competence. Each factor, of course, must be considered in the context of individual experience.

- **Ethnic/Racial Background:** Any of the different varieties or populations of human beings distinguished by physical traits, blood types, genetic code patterns, or inherited characteristics unique to an isolated breeding population. People from different racial backgrounds have diverse perspectives, customs and social up-bringing. Because of the historically dominant nature of a majority culture, most people have little exposure to different racial cultures.

- **Gender Culturalization**: Societal influences, mess-ages, or "training" to behave in a certain ways based on one's gender. The majority culture in most parts of the world is the patriarchy, where male 'qualities' are more valued and men are provided access to greater oppor-tunity. Thus, in very insidious ways, young girls and boys are acculturated differently, which affects their sense of self-worth and ability to fulfill their potential.

- **Socioeconomic/Educational Status:** Involving both social and economic factors and/or access to educa-tional opportunities. A person's socioeconomic status can be a major factor in development as it relates to access to opportunity, social status, the ability to meet primary survival needs (food, clothing, shelter), and the messages received about what can be hoped for and attained. Closely related to socioeconomic status is access to educational opportunities that result in exposure to new ideas, the ability to think critically, and a willingness to consider different points of view.

- **Sexual Orientation:** A person's interest in, or innate desire to, develop emotional and physical relationships that are heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual. The majority culture sanctions heterosexual behavior as the norm. Homosexuals and bisexuals, therefore, have been forced to keep their sexual orientation private, often out of fear, and those struggling with gender identity issues face similar isolation. Homo-phobia remains a public acceptable discrimination.

- **Physical Capacity:** The ability to function or perform tasks based on one's physical capabilities or limit-ations. The majority culture has until recently created systems and structures primarily suited for those with full physical capacity, and has devalued people with-out such capacity. Passage of the Americans with Disab-ilities Act now requires local organizations to modify systems and structures to provide broader access to persons with disabilities.

- **Age/Generational:** The distinct phases of human development, both innate and socialized; the beliefs/attitudes/values of persons born during the same period of time. Each generation has its own distinct culture, and values, based on the time they were born, lived as children, and transitioned to adulthood. The division between youth, adults, and the elderly has become more pronounced due to family relocations and breakdowns in intergenerational activities.

- **Personality Type:** The patterns and qualities of personal behavior as expressed by physical, emo-tional, or intellectual activities or responses to situations and people. People have innate personality types that affect their interaction with others. Extroverts, for example, may be more comfortable in large group settings, while introverts, who can adapt to such settings, may draw strength from their private time. While personality type is affected by age, experience, and circumstance, key personality-related preferences and styles remain with most people throughout their lifetime.

- **Spirituality/Religious Beliefs:** Of the spirit or soul as distinguished from material matters; characterized by the adherence to a religion and its tenets or doctrines. There are numerous religions, both formal and informal, that guide people's lives. Each has its own distinct traditions and belief systems. Further, while some people do not belong to an organized religion, they believe in spiritual feelings and the connectedness between people with certain values.

- **Regional Perspectives:** The words, customs, etc., particular to a specific region of a country or the world. Each corner of the world, and even the regions within a country, has traditions, rites of passage, learning experiences, and customs that are unique. Working with people requires an understanding of the special perspectives/life experiences they acquired growing up in different parts of the world.

- **New Immigrant Socialization:** The adaptation process of those recently relocated to a new environment. Relocating to a new country or region of the world requires adapting to new sights, sounds, and customs. This process is typically different for each generation of a family, with young people often adapting more quickly to the new culture. These differential adaptation patterns can affect the family unit as much as the change in culture itself.

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*Adapted from *A Guide to Enhancing the Cultural Competence of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs* (1994). USDHHS, Admin. for Children and Families, Admin. on Children, Youth, and Families, Families & Youth Services Bureau. Washington, DC.

For more on this topic, see the Center's Introductory Packet entitled: *Cultural Concerns in Addressing Barriers to Learning.*

Welcoming & Social Support -- Essential Facets of Effective and Caring Schools and Basic Mental Health Interventions

Estimates suggest that 20-25 % of students change schools each year.

These figures are higher in poverty area schools and those with high immigrant populations. Although some youngsters and their families make the transition easily, many find themselves alienated or "out-of-touch." Those entering a new school are confronted with multiple transition challenges. The challenges are compounded when the transition also involves recent arrival in a new country and culture. Those entering late in a school year often find it especially hard to connect and adjust.

Welcoming new students and their families is part of the broader goal of creating schools where staff, students, and families interact positively with each other and identify with the school and its goals. The aim is to create an atmosphere that fosters smooth transitions, positive informal encounters, and social interactions; facilitates social support; provides opportunities for ready access to information and for learning how to function effectively in the school culture; and encourages involvement in decision-making.

A focus on *classroom and school-wide* strategies for welcoming and social support are critical elements both in creating a sense of community at a school and for successful school adjustment of newly entering students and their families. Done well, such strategies reduce problems and foster effective learning. Thus, they are basic mental health interventions.

Available from the Center: *What Schools Can Do to Welcome and Meet the Needs of All Students and Families.* A guidebook with program ideas and resource aids. For a description of this work, see our website: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

Please use the enclosed form to ask for what you need and to give us feedback. Also, send us information, ideas, and materials for the Clearinghouse.

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