



*Improving Schools,
Engaging Students*

A Center Report

Preparing *All* Education Personnel to Address Barriers to Learning & Teaching

Summer, 2008

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Preface

The next decade must mark a turning point for how schools and communities address the many barriers to learning experienced by children and youth. Needed in particular are initiatives to transform how schools work to prevent and ameliorate these barriers which lead to so many students being designated as learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Such a transformation is essential to enhancing achievement for all, closing the achievement gap, reducing dropouts, and increasing the opportunity for schools to be valued as treasures in their neighborhood. An end product must be schools where everyone – staff, students, families, and community stakeholders – feels supported. To this end, schools, districts, and state departments around the country will have to reshape the functions of *all* school personnel and enhance capacity for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Accomplishing all this will require transforming policy and practice related to school improvement and personnel development.

With a view to clarifying implications for policy and practice, this report represents our Center's first efforts to explore the frequently asked question:

How are pre-service preparation programs for teachers, support staff, and administrators focusing on addressing barriers to learning and teaching?

We begin by reiterating the case for why it is essential to fundamentally and systemically *transform* how schools (working with families and communities) address barriers to learning and teaching. This is followed by a discussion of the general challenges confronting personnel development for education.

Then, to anchor the discussion in the reality of current personnel preparation programs, we synthesize findings gleaned from a Leadership Institute our Center conducted in June 2008 for representatives from university departments of education. Participants at the Institute were presented an overview of the need to enhance personnel preparation for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, and then they discussed and provided input on (1) implications for school improvement and thus for pre- and inservice personnel preparation programs and (2) how personnel preparation programs can deal with such implications.

Throughout, the report offers major implications for transforming personnel preparation for teachers, student support staff, administrators, and other stakeholders involved in addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

Our intent is to use this report as the beginning of a higher education initiative across the country designed to stimulate discussion, sharing, learning, and systemic changes related to how personnel preparation focuses on addressing barriers to learning and teaching. To this end, we have attached a brief response form. Please take a few minutes to return it to us.

As always, we owe many folks for their contributions to this report, and as always, we take full responsibility for its contents and especially any misinterpretations and errors.

Finally, we want to acknowledge that portions of the work were done as part of a cooperative agreement funded by the Office of Adolescent Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau (Title V, Social Security Act), Health Resources and Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services. At the same time, it should be noted that the report is an independent work.

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Preparing All Education Personnel to Address Barriers to Learning & Teaching

Professional development, including pre-service preparation and leadership training, is drawing increased attention as practitioners, policymakers, and researchers seek to support and strengthen education reform initiatives and help students succeed academically.

The Finance Project

Concerns about personnel development for education are long-standing. For the most part, however, the emphasis in reports over the last decade mainly has been on *teacher* preparation. For example:

In 1999, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), using its Fast Response Survey System (FRSS), developed a report on the preparation and qualifications of public school teachers. Among the findings: “While 54 percent of the teachers taught limited English proficient or culturally diverse students, and 71 percent taught students with disabilities, relatively few teachers who taught these students (about 20 percent) felt very well prepared to meet the needs of these students. Their feelings of preparedness did not differ by teaching experience.”

In 2007, the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality compiled an inaugural biennial report on preparing effective teachers for at-risk schools and students. In the introduction, Carol Dwyer stresses: “Even when teachers in these schools have the experience, credentials, and content expertise comparable to their counterparts in more successful schools, they often have not had the preparation or the ongoing support that is needed to handle the enormous instructional challenges and learning environments presented by at-risk schools. These challenges directly affect states’ and districts’ abilities to recruit and retain teachers to staff the nation’s neediest schools and students.”

The widespread emphasis on teacher preparation to improve academic instruction, while essential, is insufficient. Major concerns exist related to the development of personnel who provide student/learning supports, administrators at all levels, and those involved in training, research, and policy formulation (e.g., see Hale & Moorman, 2003; Levine, 2005). In particular, concerns about ensuring equity and social justice in public education require paying greater attention to enhancing what *all* education personnel learn about addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

At this critical juncture for the future of public education, it is especially important to focus on improving every facet of personnel development (i.e., recruitment, preservice preparation, site induction, initial on-the-job support, continuing professional education, and retention). And in doing so, we need to broaden the focus to ensure that all education personnel are motivated and can effectively address barriers to learning and teaching as an essential facet of ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school (Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2001).

Before tackling the topic of personnel development in education, it is well to reiterate briefly why *fully* addressing barriers to learning and teaching is essential and has fundamental implications for school improvement and personnel development.

**Addressing
Barriers to
Learning
and Teaching:
A Marginalized
Facet of School
Improvement &
Personnel
Development**

What the best and wisest parent wants for his [or her] own child,
that must the community want for all of its children.
Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely;
acted upon, it destroys our democracy.

John Dewey in *The School and Society* (1907)

Our Center is flooded each week with new reports analyzing public education and what needs to be done. Most contain good ideas that are worth pursuing. But, too often, the list of recommendations pays too little attention to the many well-known external and internal barriers to learning and teaching that stem from various societal, neighborhood, familial, school, and personal conditions. Such factors clearly interfere with school success – contributing to active disengagement from classroom learning and leading to major achievement gaps and high dropout rates.

Given the data on how many students are not doing well, it is imperative and urgent for schools to place a high priority on *directly* addressing as many barriers to learning and teaching as feasible. And, relatedly, it is essential to enhance all facets of personnel development for education.

*Why Aren't
Current
Approaches
Sufficient?*

Most school improvement and personnel development efforts *primarily* focus on enhancing instruction and management/governance (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2005; National Governor's Association, 2000). Because of concerns for school safety and greater family and community involvement, schools also embed a few scattered programs and services to address these matters.

No one argues against the necessity of good instruction and system/school management. The problem is that improved instruction alone does little to address barriers to learning and teaching. And, analyses indicate that the student “support” programs and services schools and districts offer to address such barriers are too limited, fragmented, and marginalized. It is commonplace for those staffing such interventions to be organized and function in relative isolation of each other and other stakeholders. Furthermore, a great proportion of existing student support is oriented to discrete problems and over-relies on specialized services for individuals and small groups. All this not only is expensive in terms of direct costs, it produces inappropriate redundancy and counter-productive competition and works against developing cohesive approaches to maximize results. Continued limited efficacy and cost effectiveness seem inevitable in the absence of significant systemic change.

*Addressing Barriers
to Learning and
Teaching is
Imperative*

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

Learning supports as they currently operate can't meet the needs of the many who are not succeeding at school. The realities are the problems are complex and complex problems require comprehensive solutions. Most school improvement plans do not effectively focus on enhancing student outcomes by *comprehensively* addressing barriers to learning and teaching. For many students, such a focus is essential to (re)engaging them in classroom instruction and enabling classroom learning. And, the straight forward 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 barriers are effectively addressed. So, school policy makers, administrators, and personnel development programs must respond to the imperative for rebuilding supports for learning as an essential component in enabling *all* students to have an equal opportunity to learn at school.

School improvement and capacity building efforts (including pre and in service professional development) have yet to deal effectively with these matters. The time is long overdue for escaping old ways of thinking about learning supports. Leaders at all levels need to move school improvement and personnel development efforts in substantively new directions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching (e.g., see Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008).

Learning supports
must be fully
integrated into
school improvement
policy and practice

Ultimately, all school interventions to address barriers to learning and teaching are about supporting learning. As defined for policy purposes, *learning supports* are the resources, strategies, and practices that provide physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports intended to address barriers to learning and teaching in ways that enable all pupils to have an equal opportunity for success at school. To be most effective, learning supports should be woven into a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of classroom and school-wide interventions and should be fully integrated with instructional efforts.

*How Does this Fit
with Current Efforts
to Improve Schools?*

Most policy makers and administrators know that good instruction delivered by highly qualified teachers alone cannot ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. As a result, most schools already are concerned about improving how a variety of barriers to learning and teaching are addressed.

Now is the time for schools to plan and develop more effective and comprehensive systems for directly dealing with factors that keep too many students from doing well at school. Such efforts can draw on pioneering work from across the country that is moving learning supports to a prominent place in improving schools and student outcomes. Personnel development programs must take a leadership role in preparing educators for the revolution in how learning supports are conceived and practiced.

*What's the Specific
Focus in Moving
in New Directions
to Enhance
Learning Supports?*

Moving in new directions means fully integrating into school improvement and personnel development a systematic focus on how to:

- reframe current learning support programs and services and redeploy the resources to develop a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive component to enable learning
- develop both in-classroom and school-wide approaches – including interventions to support transitions, increase home and community connections, enhance teachers' ability to respond to common learning and behavior problems, and respond to and prevent crises
- revamp district, school, and school-community infrastructures to weave resources together to enhance and evolve the learning supports system
- pursue school improvement and systemic change from the perspective of learning supports and the need to engage and re-engage students in classroom learning

*About a Focus on
Addressing Barriers
to Learning and
Teaching in
Personnel
Development*

In keeping with prevailing demands for higher standards and achievement, the focus of school improvement and personnel development is mainly on curriculum content and instruction and management concerns (e.g., governance, resource use). Analyses indicate that implicit in most of this is a presumption that lessons are being taught to students who are motivationally ready and able to absorb the content and carry out the processes. It is recognized that teachers may have to deal with some behavior and learning problems. But these matters tend to be treated as separate concerns to be dealt with through classroom management and individualized instruction. That is, there is a widespread tendency not to appreciate how often presumptions of student readiness are in error.

As a result, too little attention has been paid to what to do when students are not motivationally ready and able to respond appropriately to a lesson as taught. Even less attention has been paid to the problem of re-engaging students who have become chronically disengaged from classroom instruction.

All personnel need to learn more not only about engaging students but about re-engaging those who have become disengaged from classroom instruction

These lapses usually are manageable in schools where few students are doing poorly. In settings where large proportions of students are not doing well, however, and especially where many students are “acting out,” the need to address barriers to learning and teaching can be overwhelming. In such settings, one of the overriding inservice concerns is to enhance whatever a teacher has previously been taught about “classroom management.” Typically, schools offer a few, relatively brief sessions on various social control techniques. (Examples include use of eye contact, physical proximity, being alert and responding quickly before a behavior escalates, using rewards as a preventive strategy, assertive discipline, threats and other forms of punishment). All this, of course, skirts right by the matter of what is causing student misbehavior and ignores the reality that social control practices can be incompatible with enhancing student engagement with learning at school. Indeed, such practices can lead to greater disengagement.

There also is a great gap between what schools as a whole do and what they need to do school-wide to address factors interfering with learning and teaching (and, again, too little usually is done to fill the gap).

In general, then, there remains a major disconnect between what school staff need to learn and what they are taught about addressing student problems – and too little is being done about it. And, as long as this is the case, focusing mainly on curriculum and instructional concerns and school-wide discipline and classroom management techniques is unlikely to be sufficient in meaningfully raising achievement test score averages.

We hasten to stress that, in highlighting this state of affairs, we do not mean to minimize the importance of thorough and ongoing training related to curriculum and instruction. Every teacher must have the ability and resources to bring a sound curriculum to life and apply strategies that make learning meaningful. At the same time, however, every teacher and all others responsible for learning supports must learn how to *enable* learning in the classroom by addressing barriers to learning and teaching – especially factors leading to low or negative motivation for schooling. All students need instruction that is a good match for both their motivation and capabilities. Such teaching accounts for interests, strengths, weaknesses, and limitations; approaches that overcome avoidance motivation, structure that provides personalized support and guidance, and instruction designed to enhance and expand intrinsic motivation for learning and problem solving. Some students also require added support, guidance, and special accommodations. For practices such as *Response to Intervention* to be effective, all professional personnel working to improve schools must be grounded in such matters.

At some time or another, most students bring problems with them to school that affect their learning and perhaps interfere with the teacher's efforts to teach. In some geographic areas, many youngsters bring a wide range of problems stemming from restricted opportunities associated with poverty and low income, difficult and diverse family circumstances, high rates of mobility, lack of English language skills, violent neighborhoods, problems related to substance abuse, inadequate health care, and lack of enrichment opportunities. Such problems are exacerbated as youngsters internalize the frustrations of confronting barriers and the debilitating effects of performing poorly at school. In some locales, the reality often is that over 50% of students are not succeeding. And, in most schools in these locales, teachers are ill-prepared to address the problems in a potent manner. Thus, when a student is not doing well, the trend increasingly is to refer them directly for counseling or for assessment in hopes of referral for special help – perhaps even special education.

As the move toward using *response to intervention* strategies stresses, when a teacher encounters difficulty in working with a youngster, the first step should be to see whether there are ways to address the problem within the classroom and perhaps with added home involvement. To this end, it is essential to equip teachers and student support staff with practices for responding to mild-to-moderate behavior, learning, and emotional problems. All education professionals need to learn a range of ways to enable the learning of such students, and schools must develop school-wide approaches that can assist teachers in doing this fundamental work.

Challenges Confronting Personnel Development for Education

It is especially challenging to improve personnel development at a time when school budgets are dwindling. The current reality is that many staff and administrative positions are being cutback, recent recruits are being laid off, and personnel are being pushed into positions that are a poor fit for their interests and training. All this undermines efforts to recruit and retain the best and the brightest and negatively effects many schools and students. At the same time, there is much that can be done to enhance the development of the pool of school, district, state, and federal education professionals and faculty who prepare such personnel.

There is widespread debate about all facets of how to enhance the capacity of personnel working in education. This is particularly evident when the focus is on improving how schools address barriers to learning and teaching.

There are those who seem to think anyone can walk into any setting and be a good teacher, student support professional, or administrator. Others suggest that all the field needs to do is recruit bright, talented individuals and provide them with a brief orientation and the right toolkit.

Most education leaders, however, advocate for supporting extensive preservice preparation, followed by carefully designed opportunities for continuous learning (Neville, & Robinson, 2003). But, there is disagreement among such advocates about the content and design of preservice preparation, and for the most part, continuing professional development is narrowly focused on direct strategies for improving achievement scores.

Job situations and demands vary greatly and so must personnel development

Whatever one's view of personnel preparation, it is clear that the general expectation is that all education professionals must produce high level results. And, this expectation is held regardless of the newness of a professional to a given position, major variations among populations served, and negative contextual factors (e.g., schools and districts with inadequate resources and support). In effect, the presumption seems to be that, from day one on the job, new professionals will be highly knowledgeable about and able to implement effective practices in carrying out their assigned responsibilities.

Other professions (e.g., medicine, law) recognize that job situations and demands vary greatly (Neville, Sherman, & Cohen, 2005). Differences stem from (a) who chooses to pursue the profession, (b) the nature and scope of a person's education and socialization into the profession, and (c) whether there is a

good fit between the person and the setting in which they work (including ongoing professional and personal support and in-depth learning opportunities). Differences require specific attention in planning professional development.

Programs must not counter the idealism and commitment to improving schools that is the hallmark of a new generation of education professionals

With the above matters in mind, concerns about professional development for education begin with the problem of *recruiting* cadres of the best and brightest into a *career commitment* related to improving public education. Then, such professionals must be provided a *preservice program* that ensures that as newcomers to a job they have the level of competence to do more than cope and survive each day.

As newcomers arrive at a workplace, they must be provided with a well-designed *induction* program. The intent is to ensure they are welcomed and provided professional and personal transition supports to enable them to function effectively in the culture of that particular site. Guidance about entering into the infrastructure for decision making also is desirable. And, given that induction influences professional socialization, such programs must not counter the idealism and commitment to improving schools that is the hallmark of a new generation of education professionals.

Overlapping the induction program is the need for several mechanisms to provide *personalized on-the-job* learning so that the professional is able to experience higher levels of effectiveness. The aims, over time, are to (a) facilitate development to a level of mastery and (b) promote consistent feelings of job competence, self-determination, and accord with those with whom one works.

And, in keeping with efforts to *retain* good professionals, opportunities must be available for career advancement, and programs must be available to facilitate progress up a career ladder.

Each of the facets of professional development is highlighted below.

Recruitment: Can We Do Better?

Because of the prediction that the nation's schools will need to employ over two million teachers in the coming decade, there has been great concern about recruitment. In addition, in some locales, finding certain categories of student support professionals and well-qualified administrators also has been difficult.

It is clear that the recruitment problem can be ameliorated by increasing personnel retention. However, several factors make both retention and recruitment difficult. These include:

Education as a field is often demeaned. The constant drone of criticism aimed at public schools makes a long-term career in education a hard sell to a large segment of the “best and brightest” college graduates across the country. The problem is compounded by the higher status placed on other career choices open to them. Beyond concerns about professional status, the instability and sparse nature of public education financing also makes the field less than attractive to many when they are deciding on a career.

Concerted policy initiatives are needed to counter factors that make both retention and recruitment difficult

Concern about working in low performing schools. Federal law sets dates and consequences for schools and their professional personnel in situations where student performance continues not to meet specified standards. As more and more consequences are administered, recruitment to schools designated as “failing” can be expected to be more difficult.

Concern about working with the most difficult students and families. It is clear that entrants into the field are likely to be assigned to schools in economically distressed locales. The image of working in such schools is that they are unsafe, with the majority of students not only being hard to handle but also unmotivated to learn what the school wants to teach. And, a common impression is that families not only are unsupportive but are angry at the schools.

Given the widespread negatives generated about public education, it is not surprising that recruiting a higher proportion of college graduates is difficult. It has been suggested that programs such as *Teach for America* demonstrate how to attract high quality university students to the field. That a specific program can recruit a relatively small cadre of such individuals is not in question. As with so many concerns in public education, the problem is how to replicate on a large scale what a small demonstration program can do. And, as increasingly is noted, the focus cannot just be on recruitment, programs also must attend to retaining those who turn out to be good at their job. Clearly, the number needed could be significantly reduced if fewer personnel left for reasons other than retirement.

One set of prominent policy recommendations for redressing the recruitment problem is to offer financial incentives. These include pay differentials and signing bonuses; scholarships, tuition reimbursement, and loan forgiveness; housing assistance, moving expenses, and free utility hook-ups; state income tax

credits; multi-year bonuses; tuition for pursuing continuing education and advanced degrees; college tuition for their children. In addition, a variety of non-financial incentives have been proposed such as alternative credentialing pathways and initial reductions in job demands, and mentoring and other job supports. Also, recommended are marketing campaigns, recruitment fairs, “priming the pipeline” by reaching into middle and high schools to “groom” future recruits for education, and ensuring certification/credentialing reciprocity across states.

However, as with so many recommendations for improving the development of education professionals, adoption in policy and practice of the most promising recruitment ideas has been sparse, piecemeal, and marginalized. And, the focus mainly has been on *teacher* recruitment (Southwest Center for Teacher Quality, n.d.).

Many Begin and Many Leave

Predictions of shortages in many categories of education personnel are widespread. The problem of recruitment is exacerbated by the rate of early departures. For example, data for the U.S.A. indicate that about 15% of new teachers leave within the first year; 30% within three years; and 40-50% within five years (Smith and Ingersoll, 2003).

As has been widely stressed, it is rare to find comprehensive incentive packages that can attract and retain outstanding young people to the field. The few examples around the country focus specifically on teachers and their recruitment to hard-to-reach schools.

An approach taken in Chattanooga, Tennessee is prominently cited as an example. The district has offered a menu of recruitment incentives and improved working conditions to attract both novices and veterans. Incentives included:

- Free tuition toward a master's degree.
- A \$10,000 loan toward a down payment on a house near eligible schools, forgivable if the individual remains in the school for a minimum of five years.
- \$2,000 for every teacher who boosts overall test scores by a significant degree.
- A \$5,000 annual bonus for all participants.

It should be noted that the incentives came from a multimillion-dollar grant from several local foundations.

According to the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality: “The program design also places incoming teachers at these schools with cohort groups of highly accomplished teachers within the same school to ensure effective teacher support. As a result of these recruiting efforts, staffing vacancies in these schools have decreased dramatically, the applicant pool of teachers is noticeably stronger and student achievement rates are improving.”

*Preservice
Preparation and
Initial Socialization:
Can We Broaden
the Focus?*

There is considerable disagreement about what preparation individuals need before they go to work in a public education worksite. Debate arises about what knowledge, skills, and attitudes are needed for every teaching, support, and administrative position.

It is a given that teachers must be proficient with respect to specific academic subject matter. Beyond that, they and all other education professionals need grounding in the following matters:

(1) *Facilitating learning in schools in keeping with diversity and social justice*, including a focus on

- development and learning
- interpersonal/group relationships, dynamics, and problem solving
- cultural competence
- group and individual differences
- intervention theory; legal, ethical, and professional concerns,
- applications of advanced technology

Debate arises about what knowledge, skills, and attitudes are needed for every teaching, support, and administrative position

(2) *Learning supports*

- classroom and school-wide processes for facilitating the learning for those who are willing and able to engage in the planned curriculum
- classroom and school-wide processes for enabling and facilitating the learning of those manifesting common learning, behavior, and emotional problems
- classroom and school-wide processes for re-engaging those who have become actively disengaged from classroom instruction

(3) *Organizational and operational considerations*

(4) *How to advance the field of education.*

There is little agreement on the best ways to facilitate preservice preparation. For the most part, the field seems to have adopted a limited apprenticeship model with too few opportunities to see master professionals at work. Preservice programs generally have not used school sites well, especially in preparing personnel to work in economically distressed locales and with a broad range of colleagues.

Add to this how little preservice attention is given to the socialization facets of professional development. Every program shapes and reshapes how the next generation of professionals understands and feels about (a) the societal functions of public education, (b) what must be done to advance the field, and (c) the leadership role professional educators need to play. Defining this socialization agenda remains more a footnote than a central focus.

Enhancing Capacity to Engage and Re-engage Students

Teachers, student support staff, and administrators tell us that their preservice programs did provide a brief introduction to the topic of engaging students in learning. However, apparently no one discussed the reality of how many students they would encounter who have actively disengaged from classroom instruction.

Given the failure of preparation programs to make disengagement a significant focus, it is not surprising that most school staff feel poorly prepared to re-engage disengaged students. This situation is extremely perplexing since disengagement is highly associated with behavior problems and dropout rates.

Re-engagement, of course, represents a substantially more difficult motivational problem that requires moving beyond thinking about motivation only in terms of rewards and punishments. And, so the question arises:

How well have preparation programs integrated what is known about *intrinsic* motivation?

*Site Induction,
Initial Support,
and Continuing
Socialization:
Do We Teach
About All This?*

Good induction programs “extend beyond the friendly hellos, room key and badge pick-ups and buddy programs. While these are necessary ..., high-quality induction programs ... help [newcomers] survive and thrive in their new environments.”

American Federation of Teachers

Few entering a new worksite are not at least a bit anxious about how they will be received and how they will do. For years, at too many sites, little thought was given to induction beyond cursory introductions and orientation. As a result, many newcomers were frustrated and even traumatized, especially those assigned to schools housing a great many “hard-to-reach and teach” students.

Currently, various forms and degrees of mentoring, coaching, collaboration, and teaming are in operation at many locales.

However, such practices still are not commonplace, and their scope mostly is determined idiosyncratically and by available time.

Minimally, a good induction program requires infrastructure mechanisms for planning and implementation of

- welcoming
- *professional* (and as feasible *personal*) support and guidance from colleagues and administrators to enable new staff to function effectively over the initial months of employment
- initial inservice education (which hopefully is targeted and personalized to meet the individual needs of the newcomer)
- ready access to learning/student supports (personnel, resources, strategies, and practices specifically designed to *enable* all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school) .

Optimally, a good induction program is designed to ensure that socialization of education personnel includes participation in decision making and doesn't undermine idealism and new ideas and practices that can advance the field. The reality is that socialization at a site often subverts budding positive beliefs and attitudes.

*Continuing
Professional
Education and
Ongoing
Socialization*

“Proper placement and sound supports for [newcomers] need to be in place as they continue to hone their knowledge and skills. If they continue to work without a net, they will likely turn away from the profession or be less effective than we need them to be, regardless of the quality of their preparation.”

Sabrina Laine (in Rochkind, et al, 2008)

Given that preservice education generally is designed with beginning levels of functioning in mind, systematically designed programs to enhance job-related knowledge, skills, *and attitudes* are essential. This requires infrastructure mechanisms for planning and implementation of continuous learning programs, both at worksites and in other appropriate venues.

With a view to maximizing the value of job-related learning, targeted and personalized inservice education are ideals. In this respect, mentoring, coaching, collaboration, and teaming can provide an important foundation for daily on-the-job learning that goes beyond trial and error. In a personalized inservice program, personnel should perceive the content as relevant and experience the process as one that (a) maximizes feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness to significant others and (b) minimizes threats to such feelings.

In describing five high schools serving low-income families, Darling-Hammond and Friedlaender (2008) note considerable commitment to continuing learning.

“Overall, the schools allocate 7 to 15 days to shared learning time throughout the year. In addition, they organize substantial time during the week – usually several hours – for teachers to plan and problem solve together. With teachers meeting regularly in grade-level teams, the schools have venues for examining student progress, creating a more coherent curriculum, and enabling teachers to learn from one another. ... Mentoring and coaching systems for new and veteran teachers also augment professional learning. In staff meetings, teachers engage in focused inquiry about problems of practice....”

All the attention to teachers’ continuing education is essential and highly commendable. At the same time, we again emphasize that the ongoing learning needs of student support staff and many others working in education requires greater attention.

In stressing personalized and targeted continuing professional development, we recognize that there are also a variety of general school and district concerns requiring inservice time. Staff meetings provide one vehicle for addressing such concerns, and, increasingly, technology provides several types of delivery mechanisms.

As is the case with the hidden curriculum related to classrooms instruction, all forms of continuing education affect ongoing professional socialization. And, undoubtedly, this has a significant impact on decisions about staying in the field.

Remembering It’s About All Personnel

In preparing personnel and supporting capacity building:

- **teachers** need to learn more about how to address interfering factors and to work with others in doing so
- **support staff** need to learn more about how to work with teachers and other staff (and to do so in classrooms as much as is feasible), as well as learning how to work more productively with district and community resources to enhance practices for prevention and for responding quickly when common problems arise
- **administrators** need to learn more about leading the way by expanding policy, enhancing operational infrastructure, and redeploying resources to ensure development of a comprehensive system of learning supports for addressing barriers to learning, development, and teaching

*Retention: Can
We Hold onto
Personnel?*

Each of the facets of personnel development discussed above are relevant to ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. Each is relevant to enhancing personnel effectiveness and work satisfaction. And, all this is essential to retaining a quality workforce (Guarino, et al., 2004; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2001).

In addition, considerations related to career ladders are important. Retention efforts can benefit from well-defined opportunities for career advancement and from programs that facilitate access to such opportunities. Also, widely discussed is the need for additional incentives to retain personnel in economically distressed urban and rural locales.

As part of a series of reports on retention of teachers, Quartz and colleagues (2003) summarize the following in describing “leavers.” They state:

“We know that math, science, and special education teachers leave at higher rates than those in other academic fields. We also know that those who leave teaching permanently tend to be men seeking increased opportunities in other fields (Murnane, 1996). Women have high attrition rates earlier in their careers due to family lifestyle issues related to marriage and child rearing. Age is also related to retention; younger teachers have a much higher turnover rate than their mid-career colleagues (Education Week, 2000). Several studies also find the majority of early leavers include individuals with higher IQs, GPAs and standardized test scores and those with academic majors or minors along with an education degree (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Murnane, 1991;1996; Sclan, 1993). Moreover, teachers who have earned advanced degrees within the prior two years leave at the highest rates (Boe, et al., 1997). In short, early career teachers considered to be ‘the best and the brightest’ are the ones most likely to leave.”

The above information probably can be generalized to student support staff who leave early, with the added reality that when budgets are tight they are among the first laid off.

Those who leave education point to a lack of planning time, heavy workloads, low salaries, and difficult students, among other undesirable workplace conditions.

National Center for Educational Statistics 2005

What Do Personnel Preparation Programs Say About All This?

As this report suggests, our long range aim in focusing on personnel development in education is to promote systemic transformations related to schools and schooling. In particular, we want such transformations to expand school improvement policy and practices to encompass development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of classroom and school-wide interventions (e.g., fully integrating a *Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* with instructional efforts). Clearly, this will require enhancing pre- and in-service personnel preparation and continuing professional education.

To anchor the discussion of these matters in the reality of current personnel preparation programs, we decided to initiate a series of Leadership Institutes for representatives from university departments of education. The first of these was held on Friday, June 27, 2008. (The Appendix to this report includes the invitation letter, agenda, and participant list.)

The specific objectives for the institute were to

- highlight new direction frameworks for enhancing systems for addressing barriers to learning and teaching in the context of school improvement
- explore with university department of education representatives implications of new directions frameworks and initiatives for pre- and in-service personnel preparation and continuing professional education.

At the Institute, participants were presented a brief overview framing intervention, infrastructure, policy, and systemic change concerns related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Then, they discussed and provided input on (1) implications for school improvement and thus for pre- and inservice personnel preparation programs and (2) how personnel preparation programs might address such implications. The following is a synthesis of what was gleaned from the discussion.

About Expanding the Content of Personnel Programs

Overall, there was considerable agreement among Institute participants about the need to enhance the focus of preparation programs on big picture thinking for school improvement. In this context, it was stressed as imperative that school improvement policy and practice enhance its focus on addressing barriers to learning and teaching and fully integrate this emphasis with efforts to improve instruction, governance, and management.

From this perspective, significant content gaps in personnel preparation programs were identified. Prominently cited as basic for improving classroom and school-wide practices and school-home-community collaboration was teaching more about the following:

Significant content gaps in personnel preparation programs were identified

- Intrinsic motivation and its relationship to extrinsic motivation and to student and staff engagement and re-engagement
- Personalizing instruction and doing so with increasing understanding of diversity concerns related to students and their families
- Classroom and school-wide approaches to address barriers to learning and teaching
- Classroom and school-wide approaches to promote personal and social development
- The relationship of each of the above matters to classroom management and a safe and caring school environment
- The why and how of teaming, collaborating, and networking among teachers, between teachers and student/learning support staff, with administrators, across levels of schooling, with family/community stakeholders and resources
- How to deploy/redeploy resources (with special emphasis on time for ongoing learning, thinking, discussion, and planning; minimizing categorical (silo) activity)
- Gathering and using data to enhance appropriate intervention
- The why and how of community outreach (e.g., to connect with homes, volunteers, businesses; to weave together school and community resources related to learning, health, social, recreation)
- The why and how of empowering the professional educator's role in developing new approaches, reculturing schools, and facilitating transformational system change in ways that fully integrate the components for instruction, addressing barriers to learning and teaching, and governance and management

The major implication of the above list of topics is that there is a clear need to *expand the content focus* of personnel pre- and inservice programs to prepare and socialize the next generation of education professionals. Implicit in all this is the goal of transforming public education in ways that ensure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

*About Factors
Shaping Processes
Used in Personnel
Preparation*

Participants at the Leadership Institute were pleased to share some highlights of the processes they use in preparing personnel. They also expressed some concerns about factors shaping processes and shared ideas for dealing with these concerns.

A key concern stems from the well-known tendency for preparation programs in departments of education to work in isolation of each other. One result is the lack of integrative core and thematic courses and interactive experiences across programs (e.g., common school and community field experiences and problem based projects, collaboration, cross-training, networking, and so forth among programs preparing teachers, student support personnel, and administrative leaders). The impact across programs is that participants develop a fragmented perspective about public education and generally do not assimilate an appreciation of the value of working together and have not learned how to do so effectively.

Another basic concern is the sense of work overload. (“So much to do, so little time.”) With several programs going on simultaneously, common communication and planning needs often receive short shrift, and there is sparse discussion about shared content and process issues.

With respect to the use of data to improve personnel preparation, it appears that program data gathering tends to focus on a sparse set of indicators related to the preparation programs and pays little or no attention to the impact on public schools. This results in insufficient formative evaluation data for improving programs (including too little analysis of feasibility constraints, such as time, money, and staff limitations), and inadequate accountability for specific preparation programs with respect to the efficacy of their graduates.

Additional views expressed by participants are synthesized in the Exhibit on the following page.

Institute Participants' Views About Key Program Needs (edited and synthesized)

- >Need to change the culture in higher education in order to begin to change the culture in K-12. In particular, there is a need to cross traditional boundaries between programs and divisions in schools of education and work on ways to help students analyze their assumptions and beliefs about schools and schooling in organization terms;
- >Need a systems approach in higher education preparation programs – emphasizing the nature of transformational systemic change and exploring the concrete realities found in examples of current and alternative systems and institutions that are challenging the status quo;
- >Need to do a better job coordinating all the different professional preparation programs;
- >Need to ensure that those in preparation programs are socialized in ways that encourage them to redefine their roles in keeping with new directions for improving schools;
- >Need to help candidates redefine roles in terms of a broad perspective and not see their job from the narrow perspective of traditional roles and responsibilities;
- >Redefine the role of “teacher” away from being just a subject matter expert and ensure a focus on personalizing teaching and learning for students (much like a kindergarten teacher who is expected to know and support the whole child in the context of his/her family). With this redefinition must come formal training in student and learning supports and how to facilitate cognitive and social-emotional development;
- >Need all personnel development programs to stress that being successful takes more than what one person/role can do and teach how to develop effective networks and collaborations with home and community stakeholders and resources;
- >Need interwoven strands of thematic courses (e.g., on classroom climate, safe schools, social-emotional development, addressing barriers to learning, systemic change);
- >Need to build service learning and other opportunities for early application into pre-service courses so that students/candidates begin working in the schools and with parent/students/staff in order to create a collective and collaborative vision about how to develop and be change agents for a “systems approach” in the schools;
- >Need to infuse “evidence-based” approaches and data analysis into each course with emphasis on assignments that glean from student and parent voice as well as from school staff;
- >Need a professional career ladder for teachers to provide a motivation for them to enroll in more advanced graduate programs and become active in collaborative leadership outside the classroom. As things stand, expert teachers have few opportunities to engage in formal leadership outside the classroom;
- >Need a shared vocabulary of terms and concepts;
- >Some questions raised for follow-up discussions:
 - >>In preparation programs are the clients k-12 students or the college students?
 - >>What is the best way to screen and select candidates?
 - >>Do preparation programs offer adequate remediation for those who need it?
 - >>Do the programs and services effectively distinguish between teacher support and student support?

*Toward
Transforming
Personnel
Preparation
Programs*

It was recognized that efforts to transform preparation programs would benefit from any pioneering work that is underway. However, participants knew of no comprehensive examples of programs that are enhancing the effectiveness of education personnel for improving how schools address barriers to learning and teaching. (They did share, however, a smattering of examples of efforts focused on improving specific facets of personnel preparation.)

Participants indicated that current credentialing requirements and accreditation standards reflect narrow job descriptions that interfere with transforming preparation programs. This suggests that analyses are due with respect to personnel preparation requirements and standards at the state and national levels.

In general, it seems evident that any transformation of education personnel preparation programs must be done within the full context of personnel development. Thus, institutions of higher education need to take a leadership role in clarifying overlapping considerations related to the various pre-service programs (e.g., for regular and special education teachers, student/learning support staff, administrators) and delineating connections with induction, inservice, and continuing professional education. They also need to play a role in facilitating articulation, priority setting, resource analysis, and coordination among the major facets of personnel development and among the different groups of personnel being developed.

Ultimately, successful transformation of personnel preparation programs depends on the willingness of university departments of education to establish infrastructure mechanisms that can appropriately and effectively address the concerns discussed in this report. Policy makers need to encourage movement in this direction through the use of positive incentives and rational accountability.¹

¹ For a more detailed appreciation of some of the policy implications related to matters discussed in this report, see our Center's specific recommendations formulated in legislative language for consideration by Congress as they explore reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (e.g., No Child Left Behind) – see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/nclbra.pdf> and <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/congress%20letter.pdf>

See also the legislation that was proposed in California
>[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/sb288\(2-15-07\).pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/sb288(2-15-07).pdf)

Concluding Comments

It is easy to say that schools must ensure that *all* students succeed. If all students came ready and able to profit from “high standards” curricula, then there would be little problem. But *all* encompasses those who are experiencing *external* and *internal* barriers that interfere with benefitting from what the teacher is offering. Thus, providing all students an equal opportunity to succeed requires *more than* higher standards and greater accountability for instruction, better teaching, increased discipline, reduced school violence, and an end to social promotion. It also requires a comprehensive approach to countering factors that interfere with learning and teaching.

And so, personnel development for education must encompass a focus on enhancing the effectiveness of *all* personnel for improving how schools counter interfering factors. From this perspective, the Exhibit on the next page outlines some questions about each of the five facets of personnel development outlined in this report. As answers to these questions are generated, they will help delineate additional policy and practice implications.

At a time when public education is under concerted attack, the field must align demands for high expectations and high standards with a commitment to enhancing all five facets of professional development (i.e., recruitment, preservice preparation and initial socialization, site induction and continuing socialization, continuing professional education and ongoing socialization, and retention). And, the need is to do so not only with respect to direct instructional concerns but also with respect to learning supports that enable students to benefit from good instruction.

To do less is to ensure that many students will continue to be left behind.

Exhibit

Some Questions About Enhancing the Effectiveness of Education Personnel for Improving How Schools Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching

Research indicates that prevailing approaches to school improvement do not effectively address barriers to learning and teaching. While institutions of higher education cannot alone change this state of affairs, they are critical players through their research, prototype development, and personnel development efforts. The following questions have implications for each of these matters. The questions are organized in terms five facets involved in developing a highly effective pool of education professionals at school, district, state, and federal levels: (1) recruitment, (2) preservice preparation, (3) site induction, (4) continuing professional education, and (5) retention.*

Recruitment

- How can education compete better with other career options in recruiting the “best and the brightest”?
- How can a higher proportion of personnel with the greatest promise and those with proven effectiveness be attracted to the challenge of working in economically distressed locales?

Preservice Preparation and Initial Socialization

- What knowledge, skills, and attitudes need to be taught to future education personnel in keeping with diversity and social justice (e.g., about human growth, development, and learning; interpersonal/group relationships, dynamics, and problem solving; cultural competence; group and individual differences; intervention theory; legal, ethical, and professional concerns, and applications of advanced technology)?
- What else needs to be taught to future education personnel about
 - >maintaining and enhancing engagement for classroom learning?
 - >re-engaging students who have become disengaged from school and classroom learning?
- What are the best ways to facilitate such preservice preparation?

Site Induction, Initial Support, and Continuing Socialization

- What structural mechanisms and programs are needed at work sites to appropriately
 - >welcome new staff? (students? families? others?)
 - >provide *professional* support and guidance to enable new staff to function effectively?
 - >provide *personal* support and guidance to enable new staff to function effectively?
 - >ensure that socialization of education personnel includes participation in decision making and doesn't undermine idealism and new ideas and practices that can advance the field?

Continuing Professional Education and Ongoing Socialization

- What structural mechanisms and programs are needed at work sites to enhance job-related knowledge, skills, *and* attitudes
 - >in a systematic manner?
 - >in a personalized manner (e.g., so that personnel perceive the content as relevant and experience the process as maximizing feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness to significant others and as minimizing threats to such feelings)?

Retention

All of the above are relevant to retaining education personnel. In addition questions arise about

- What can be done to ensure and facilitate opportunities for career advancement?
- What else needs to be done to retain good personnel in general and especially those working in economically distressed urban and rural locales?

*It seems rather poignant to explore matters such as recruitment and retention at a time when school budgets are dwindling. The reality at such times is that many positions are cutback and recent recruits are laid off and various personnel are pushed toward positions that are a poor fit for their interests and training. This seriously undermines recruitment and makes a mockery of discussions about retention.

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Education personnel deserve more credit.



Sure, but they wouldn't need it if we paid them more!

Appendix

Leadership Institute June 2008

- Invitation Letter
- Agenda
- Participant List

Department of Psychology
School Mental Health Project/
Center for Mental Health in Schools
Box 951563
Los Angeles, California 90095-1563

March 27, 2008

Dear

On Friday, June 27, 2008, a half day invitational leadership institute will be held at UCLA for leadership teams who are responsible for program development in university schools/departments of education.

As part of two national initiatives, this institute is the first in a series to be offered across the country.* The focus is on the need to strengthen understanding and skills related to *substantive* new directions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching in the preparation and continuing education of teachers, support staff, and administrators.

The institute's long range aims reflect two growing imperatives: (1) expanding school improvement initiatives to encompass development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of classroom and school-wide interventions (e.g., fully integrating a *Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* with instructional efforts) and (2) moving forward in enhancing pre- and in-service personnel preparation and continuing education.

The agenda for the half day session in June is designed to:

- highlight new direction frameworks for enhancing systems for addressing barriers to learning and teaching in the context of school improvement
- explore with school and department of education leadership teams implications of the new directions frameworks and national initiatives for future pre- and in-service personnel preparation and continuing education.

As most policy makers and administrators well know, good instruction delivered by highly qualified teachers alone cannot ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. Indeed, in schools where a large proportion of students encounter major barriers to learning, test score averages are unlikely to increase adequately until barriers are effectively addressed. As a result, most schools already are concerned that current approaches to addressing barriers to learning and teaching do too little with respect to

- reducing student (and teacher) dropout rates
- re-engaging students in classroom learning
- narrowing the achievement gap
- eliminating the plateau effect related to efforts to improve achievement test performance
- reducing the growing list of schools designated as low performing
- minimizing the degree to which high stakes testing is taking a toll on students.

As most leaders responsible for the personnel preparation acknowledge, these are all matters that

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need enhanced attention in their programs (and in research agenda).

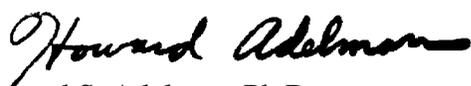
The agenda for the Institute and the RSVP form are enclosed, as is a brief article entitled: "So You Want Higher Achievement Scores? It's Time to Rethink Learning Supports" (published in the *Journal of the National Association of State Boards of Education*) and a Center brief entitled: "School Improvement? . . . fully addressing barriers to learning and teaching is the next step!."

As with all activity related to the *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support*, the Center provides the space and other costs related to organizing Leadership Institutes, attendees cover their own travel costs. Based on experience, we find that interchange is facilitated by limiting attendance to about 60-70 leaders. At this time, this invitation is being extended solely to Deans and Chairs at local universities, and we are asking you to identify the team you will bring (up to five key leaders in your school/department).

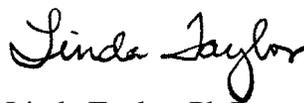
Because of the limitation on the number of participants in this institute, it is important that you return the RSVP form (attached) in the next few days. Your response is needed even if you cannot attend, since we can then extend the invitation to others. Also, if you plan to attend, please indicate who else you will bring or at least the number. This will help us to avoid exceeding the intended 60-70 participant limitation. (Specific information about where on the UCLA campus the Institute will be conducted will be sent out later.)

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at any time. (Howard's email is: adelman@psych.ucla.edu or phone 310/825-1225 or ; Linda's email is: ltaylor@ucla.edu or phone 310/825-3634.)

Sincerely,



Howard S. Adelman, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology & Co-director
School Mental Health Project/
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Linda Taylor, Ph.D.
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*Since 2002, our national Center at UCLA has facilitated the *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support*. This has included conducting summits and leadership institutes for education leaders across the country. For information and an update on this national initiative, see the Center's website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> and click on the green circle indicating "New Directions."

In the coming year, we will expand this work through a new collaboration with the non-profit Community Affairs unit of *Scholastic, Inc.* A major strand of the upcoming work involves hosting Leadership Institutes for education leaders in institutions of higher education that prepare education personnel.



Enhancing Preparation Programs for School Personnel in Keeping with New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

Leadership Institute at UCLA

(June 27, 2008)

The institute's long-range aims reflect two growing imperatives: (1) expanding school improvement initiatives to encompass development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of classroom and school-wide interventions (e.g., fully integrating a *Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* with instructional efforts) and (2) moving forward in enhancing pre- and in-service personnel preparation and continuing education.

Today is designed to:

- highlight new direction frameworks for enhancing systems for addressing barriers to learning and teaching in the context of school improvement
- explore with university school and department of education leadership teams implications of the new directions frameworks and national initiatives for future pre- and in-service personnel preparation and continuing education.

Agenda

8:30 Continental Breakfast & Registration

9:30-9:45 Welcome; Introductions; What today is about; What will follow

9:45-11:15 Presentation

- >About the Initiative for *New Directions*
- >About Scholastic. Inc's *Rebuilding for Learning* Initiative
- >About the Frameworks that have been developed for
Systemic Transformation of Student and Learning Supports

11:15-11:45 Small Group Discussion – With respect to Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching: *What are some major implications for school improvement and, thus, for pre- and inservice personnel preparation programs?* (Notes for Synthesis)

11:45-12:00 Sharing of Major Insights from Discussion

12:00-12:30 Lunch

12:30-1:15 Group Discussion (cont.) – *How might personnel preparation programs address the implications outlined in the morning discussion in ways that promote a shared understanding among teachers, administrators, support staff, etc. about how to develop a comprehensive system of learning supports?* (Notes for Synthesis)

1:15-1:40 Ideas/Recommendations from Discussion Groups

1:40-1:55 Group Discussion – *What Relevant Current Efforts Can You Share?* (Notes)

1:55-2:15 Next Steps

- >Did today stimulate any ideas/plans for your programs?
- >Center's plans for summarizing Institute Proceedings and national distribution
- >Possibilities for continuing to share and learn from each other

Enhancing Preparation Programs for School Personnel
in Keeping with New Directions for
Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching
UCLA, June 27, 2008

Participants

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Interested in Networking/Sharing/Learning More About the Matters Covered?

Check off any of the following that are a good match with your interests:

- receiving regular information about the matters discussed in the report
- being part of a national listserv connecting professionals concerned with these matters
- convening a leadership institute focused on these matters
- having a further in-depth interchange with our Center about these or other matters of mutual interest and concern.

Other ideas:

Also, if you know of any personnel preparation programs that are already focusing on addressing barriers to learning and teaching in a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated way, please let us know so that we can contact them and let others know about them.

It is important to get the report into the hands of decision makers. You are free to share the report yourself. And, if there are others to whom you would like us to send the report, indicate their names and contact information below:

Finally, if you take any strategic local action related to these matters, please share it with us so we can use it as a catalyst for change.

Your Name _____ Title _____

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Thanks for completing this form. Return by FAX to (310) 206-8716.

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