

An In-depth Analysis of Two Major School Districts' School Improvement Guides

To formulate a big picture overview of the focus of school improvement planning, an internet search was conducted to review guidance about such planning provided by state and local education agencies around the country and plans formulated by specific schools. Even a cursory analysis of what is online makes it clear that the focus of planning is determined by the interests, agenda, and beliefs of those who develop the frameworks or protocols used to structure planning.

Because major urban centers have been so prominently targeted in critiques of public education, they have devoted significant resources to developing school improvement planning guides and have been using them for a significant period of time. After surveying a range of urban centers, we concluded that the New York City guide was representative of lengthier guides and the Boston Public School guide was representative of more abbreviated guides.

Our Lens for Analysis: Addressing Barriers to Learning

The lens we use in analyzing the breadth and depth of planning guides is a three component model for school improvement. It stresses that any school where a significant number of students are not doing well academically must not only focus on enhancing its instruction and curriculum, but also must focus on enabling learning through a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. And, it must govern and manage its resources in ways that treat both these components as primary and essential in daily school practice. Eventually analyses need to be made with respect to each of the three components and the degree to which they are integrated with each other. The emphasis in the report is only on assessing how well school improvement planning guides focus on addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

Findings

Clearly, the call for enhancing continuous school improvement planning has a sound basis. Our analyses, however, suggest that the guidance for schools often does not adequately focus on the need for schools to play a significant role in addressing barriers to learning and teaching. This is not surprising given the narrow focus of prevailing accountability mandates stemming from the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

Current guides ignore the need for fundamentally restructuring school and community resources in ways that enable learning

The planning guides reviewed stress meeting the demand for standard-based and result-oriented school improvement mainly by elaborating on prevalent thinking about school practices, rather than considering fundamental systemic change. In doing so, they reflect adherence to the failed assumption that intensifying and narrowing the focus of school improvement to matters directly related to instruction and behavioral discipline are sufficient to the task of continuously raising test scores *over the long-run*. This assumption ignores the need for fundamentally restructuring school and community resources in ways that enable learning. It also maintains the *marginalization* of efforts to address major barriers to learning and teaching.

Toward Improving
School Improvement

Understand what's
missing . . .

and end the
marginalization
of learning
supports

As a result, prevailing approaches to school improvement do not encompass comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches for enabling learning through addressing barriers. This is especially unfortunate in schools where large proportions of students are not doing well. Thus, one of the poignant ironies of continuing to proceed in this way is that the aim of providing equity of opportunity for many students is undermined.

With a view to broadening the focus of planning, the report includes a set of guidelines for a comprehensive component to address barriers to learning and teaching. These guidelines provide a template for assessing what tends to be missing in school improvement planning guides.

The report also outlines major problems with the ways schools currently address learning, behavior, and emotional problems. For example, most programs, services, and special projects providing learning supports at a school and district-wide are treated as supplementary (often referred to as auxiliary services). The results of such marginalization are:

- Planning and implementation of a school's approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching usually are conducted on an ad hoc basis.
- Support staff tend to function in relative isolation of each other and other stakeholders, with a great deal of the work oriented to discrete problems and with an overreliance on specialized services for individuals and small groups.
- In some schools, the deficiencies of current policies give rise to such aberrant practices as assigning a student identified as at risk for grade retention, dropout, and substance abuse to three counseling programs operating independently of each other. Such fragmentation not only is costly, it works against maximizing results.

Unfortunately, the tendency among reformers has been to focus mainly on the symptom – fragmentation. The main prescription for improving student supports has been to enhance coordination. Better coordination is a good idea. But it doesn't really address the problem that school-owned student supports are marginalized in policy and practice.

And, note that the trend toward fragmentation is compounded by efforts to enhance community involvement through school-linked services' initiatives. This happens because such initiatives focus primarily on coordinating *community* services and *linking* them to schools using a collocation model, rather than braiding resources and integrating such services with the ongoing efforts of school staff.

The report stresses that the long-standing marginalized status and the associated fragmentation of efforts to address student problems are likely to go unchanged as long as educational reformers continue to ignore the need to restructure the work of student support professionals. Currently, most school improvement guides and plans do not focus on using such staff to develop the type of comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches necessary to address the many overlapping barriers to learning and development. At best, most reformers have offered the notion of integrated school-linked services. Much more fundamental changes are needed.

Also mediating against developing school-wide approaches to address factors interfering with learning and teaching is the marginalized, fragmented, and flawed way in which these matters are handled in providing on-the-job education. For example, little or none of a teacher's inservice training focuses on improving classroom and school-wide approaches for dealing effectively with mild-to-moderate behavior, learning, and emotional problems. And little or no attention is paid to inservice for student support staff.

Needed . . .

Systemic Change

With respect to changing all this, the report concludes that addressing barriers to learning and teaching must be made an essential and high level focus in every school improvement planning guide. The intent must be to develop a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach. This, of course, represents major systemic change and requires shifts in prevailing policy and new frameworks for practice and sufficient resources to develop an effective structural foundation and ongoing capacity building for such change.

Addressing barriers to learning and teaching must be made an essential and high level focus in every school improvement planning guide

For those concerned with school improvement, resource-oriented mechanisms are a particularly vital infrastructure consideration. Few schools have a mechanism related to learning supports to ensure appropriate use of existing resources and enhance supports. This is a major failing since such a mechanism could make major contributions to cost efficacy by ensuring that all learner supports are well planned, implemented, and evaluated. Such a mechanism also provides another means for reducing marginalization.

A comparable mechanism is needed to link feeder patterns and families of schools together to maximize use of limited resources. Such a mechanism can ensure that a group of schools in a geographic area collaborates and shares programs and personnel in many cost-effective ways related to addressing barriers. This includes achieving economies of scale by assigning learning support staff and implementing staff development across the group of schools. It encompasses streamlined processes to coordinate and integrate assistance to a family with children at several schools in a feeder pattern, all of whom require learning supports.

The report notes that to help in moving forward, districts can draw on the resources of both the No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Acts. Both acts call for coordination of programs and services and, in doing so, provide mechanisms for using federal dollars to move school improvement in new directions through supporting systemic changes.

Recommendations

- #1 *Every school improvement planning guide should have a focus on development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive learning supports system which is fully integrated with plans for improving instruction at the school.*

Of course, for such a recommendation to become a reality, policy makers will have to act. Policy at the district level (and at the state and federal levels, if feasible) should be formulated to guide and facilitate development of a potent component to address barriers to learning at every school. Such policy should specify that an enabling or learning supports component is to be pursued as a primary and essential facet of school improvement and in ways that complement, overlap, and fully integrate with initiatives to improve instruction and promote healthy development. It also should recognize that development of an enabling or learning supports component requires major systemic changes and must be phased-in building on existing practices and incorporating best practices as the component evolves.

- #2 *Guidelines for school improvement planning should delineate the content of an enabling or learning supports component.*

In keeping with pioneering efforts already underway across the country this would include six arenas of programmatic activity: programs to (a) enhance classroom based efforts to enable learning, including re-engaging students who have become disengaged from classroom learning and promoting healthy development, (b) support transitions, (c) increase home involvement, (d) respond to and prevent crises, (e) outreach to develop greater community involvement, and (f) provide prescribed student and family assistance.

- #3 *Guidelines for school improvement planning should incorporate standards and accountability indicators for each area of learning supports content.*

This would include standards and accountability indices directly related to addressing barriers to learning such as increases in attendance, reductions in tardiness, reductions in problem behaviors, reductions in suspensions and dropout rates, abatement of the large number of inappropriate referrals for special education, and so forth. And, if not already part of school improvement planning, there also should be a focus on expanding standards and accountability related to increasing personal and social functioning (e.g., goals for enhancing civility, teaching safe and healthy behavior, and character education). These accountability indices would be combined with those for instruction to yield data, over time, that evaluate the relationship between learning supports and academic achievement and enable cost-benefit analyses.

- #4 *Guidelines for school improvement planning should specify ways to weave school and community resources into a cohesive and integrated continuum of interventions over time.*

Such a continuum involves integrated systems to (a) promote healthy development, (b) prevent problems, (c) intervene early to address problems as soon after onset as feasible, and (d) assist those with chronic and severe problems.

#5 *Guidelines for school improvement planning should include an emphasis on redefining and reframing roles and functions and redesigning infrastructure to ensure learning supports are attended to as a primary and essential component of school improvement and to promote economies of scale.*

This would include (a) redefining administrative roles and functions to ensure there is dedicated and authorized administrative leadership; (b) reframing the roles and functions of pupil services personnel and other student support staff in keeping with the functions that are required to develop the component; (c) redesigning school infrastructures to enable the work at each school site and establish formal connections among feeder pattern schools to ensure each supports each other's efforts and achieves economies of scale (e.g., establish a learning supports resource-oriented mechanism, such as a team, at a school and for the schools with which it collaborates); and (d) enhancing related administrative and staff capabilities.

A final recommendation is for researchers. Given the need to build on an evolving research base and given the demand by decision makers for data showing that student support activity improves student achievement, it is recommended that a large scale initiative be developed to address these matters.

Current initiatives for program evaluation and research projects should be redesigned to include a focus on amassing and expanding the research-base for building and evaluating such an enabling or learning supports component, with a long-range emphasis on demonstrating the component's long-term impact on academic achievement.

Reforms in Hawai'i and Iowa are described to illustrate movement in the recommended direction. In reviewing school improvement planning guides, Hawai'i's is the only one found to date that includes a major focus on student support. Iowa has renewed its commitment to strengthening learning supports for all students by developing a design for a system of learning supports to facilitate learning by alleviating *barriers*, both external and internal, that can interfere with learning and teaching. These pioneering reforms provide particularly important examples of new directions for student support that can help enhance school improvement planning.

In concluding, it is emphasized that the growing body of resources and such pioneering efforts as those cited provide a solid base and ample precedents upon which to expand the focus of school improvement planning guides. The work recognizes the full implications of the statement issued by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development that stresses

*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.*

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING: WHAT'S MISSING?

No one can doubt that significant school improvement requires considerable planning. Few would argue against the idea of planning and implementing improvements. But, as too often has been the case with efforts to improve schools, school improvement planning processes have not been conceived in ways likely to produce desired learning outcomes for many students. The analyses presented in this report focus on one fundamental reason for this state of affairs, namely the lack of attention given to how schools do and do not address barriers to learning and teaching.

Institutionalization of School Improvement Planning

Responsible school professionals and a variety of other stakeholders have a long history of working to improve schools. The history of public education in this country and elsewhere is strewn with strategic plans – some good ones and some not so good ones. Some of this activity was in response to accreditation reviews. Others were motivated by administrative leaders who appreciated the potential of careful planning for enhancing outcomes.

Disaffection with progress in raising student achievement scores has resulted in institutionalization of school improvement planning

The increased formalization of school improvement planning stems from the emphases in the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act (PL 107-110 signed into law on January 8, 2002) on matters such as explication of standards, achievement test as the main accountability measure, disaggregated data to focus on the achievement gap, and consequences for not meeting annual progress goals. Schools that do not make average yearly progress for two consecutive years must be identified for school improvement. Section 1116 (3)(A) of the No Child Left Behind act requires schools identified for program improvement to develop or revise the current school plan. The revised plan must cover a two-year period and be developed in consultation with parents, the school staff, the local education agency (district), and an outside expert.

In January, 2004, the U.S. Department of Education issued: *LEA and School Improvement: Non-regulatory guidance*. The guidance stresses that the cornerstone of the law is accountability, and the accountability builds “upon rigorous academic content and achievement standards, and assessments based on those standards.” The document also notes that: “Every State Educational Agency (SEA) has developed an approved system for implementing the accountability provisions of NCLB . . . [including] annual targets for academic achievement, participation in assessments, graduation rates for high schools, and for at least one other academic indicator for elementary and middle schools.” And, the Department also emphasizes that “The law requires SEAs to conduct an annual review to ensure that they, too, are making adequate progress and fulfilling their responsibilities.”

What is the Focus of School Improvement Planning?

Policies and practices with the greatest likelihood of ensuring that all students achieve proficiency are those that affect the school's teaching and learning program, both directly and indirectly.

U.S. Dept. of Education

As delineated in the U.S. Department of Education guidance:

“The purpose of the school improvement plan is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school, so that greater numbers of students achieve proficiency in the core academic subjects of reading and mathematics. The school improvement plan provides a framework for analyzing problems and addressing instructional issues in a school that has not made sufficient progress in students' achievement.... Specifically, the plan's design must address: core academic subjects and the strategies used to teach them, professional development, technical assistance, parent involvement and must contain measurable goals.... Policies and practices with the greatest likelihood of ensuring that all students achieve proficiency are those that affect the school's teaching and learning program, both directly and indirectly. Policies and practices that have an impact on classrooms include those that build school infrastructures, such as regular data analysis, the involvement of teachers and parents in decision-making, and the allocation of resources to support core goals....”

A major perspective on school improvement planning also is found in the 2004 guide entitled *Making School Improvement Part of Daily Practice* produced by Frank Barnes at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.* The analysis in this work stresses the importance of

- (1) *Focus areas chosen* – defined as broad elements of school operation that influence the effectiveness of teaching and learning . . . (e.g., mission and vision, professional development, etc.).
- (2) *Standards of practice adopted*: defined as a model of good school practice to measure actual school practice against (e.g., effective instruction, equitable access and opportunity, etc.), chosen for each focus area.

Of particular significance related to these are:

- *performance indicators* (sometimes referred to as benchmarks) – defined as discrete descriptions of best practice that measure to what extent a standard of practice has been achieved. ... a concrete way to answer the question “How good is this school?”
- *rubrics* – defined as a scale that provides descriptions of performance in an area from strongest or most desired to weakest or unacceptable to guide the measurement of performance indicators.

*The document states it “is intended to help schools or school improvement teams develop the habits of collaboration, discussion, inquiry, and decision making that are necessary for ongoing improvement through a permanent cycle of inquiry and action.” It advocates a self-study cycle carried out by a School Improvement Team in pursuit of continuous improvement. To aid the process, it outlines specific practices, provides tools and guidance to other helpful resources, and includes examples of rubrics and standards of practice used in school districts.

Our Lens for Analysis: Addressing Barriers to Learning

The lens we use in analyzing the breadth and depth of planning guides is a three component model for school improvement. It stresses that any school where a significant number of students are not doing well academically must not only focus on enhancing its instruction and curriculum, but also must focus on enabling learning through a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. And, it must govern and manage its resources in ways that treat both these components as primary and essential in daily school practice. This three component model is illustrated in Figure 1.

Eventually analyses need to be made with respect to each of the three components and the degree to which they are integrated with each other. The emphasis in this report is only on how well school improvement planning guides focus on addressing barriers to learning and teaching. And, for purposes of the current analysis, the emphasis is on the scope (breadth and depth) of focus, not the quality of approach in planning. Our concern is with what major areas of focus are given priority and what is missing. To these ends, the analytic tool we use is the framework for a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive component formulated by Adelman and Taylor (e.g., see Adelman, 1996; Adelman & Taylor, 1994, 1997, 2006). Versions of this framework have been adopted in Hawai'i's Comprehensive Student Support System, the Urban Learning Center Comprehensive School Reform model, the Learning Supports design developed by the Iowa Department of Education, and others. The framework is illustrated in Figure 2 and the content outlined in Exhibit 1.

Figure 1. A three component model for school improvement

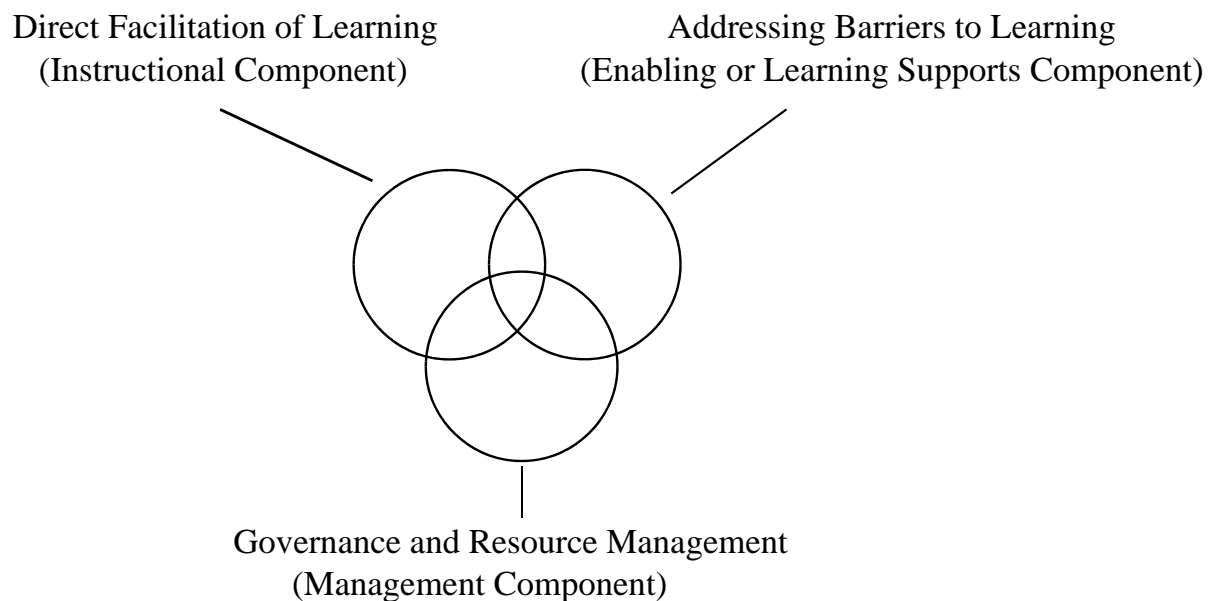


Figure 2. A School Site Component to Address Barriers to Learning

Range of Learners

(categorized in terms of their response to academic instruction)

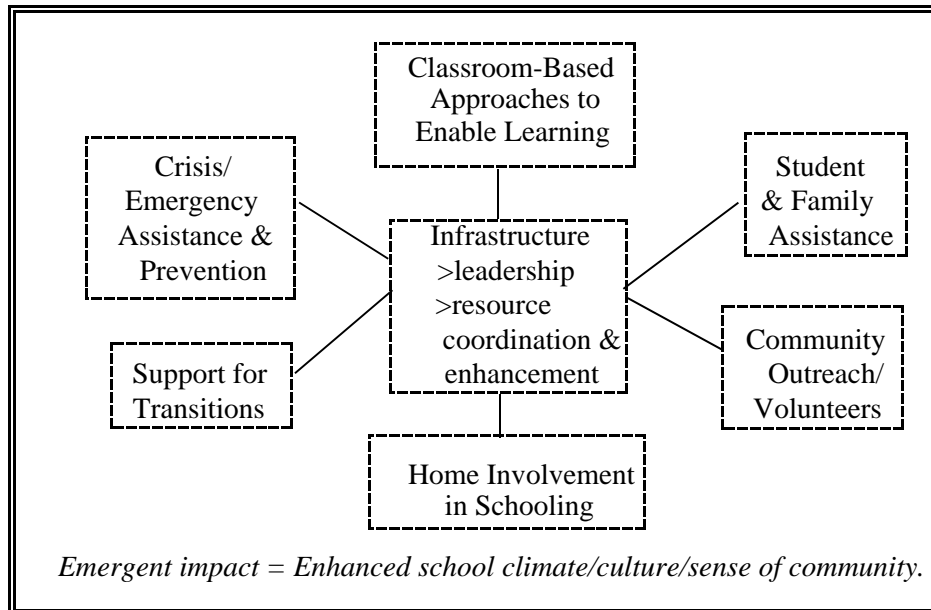
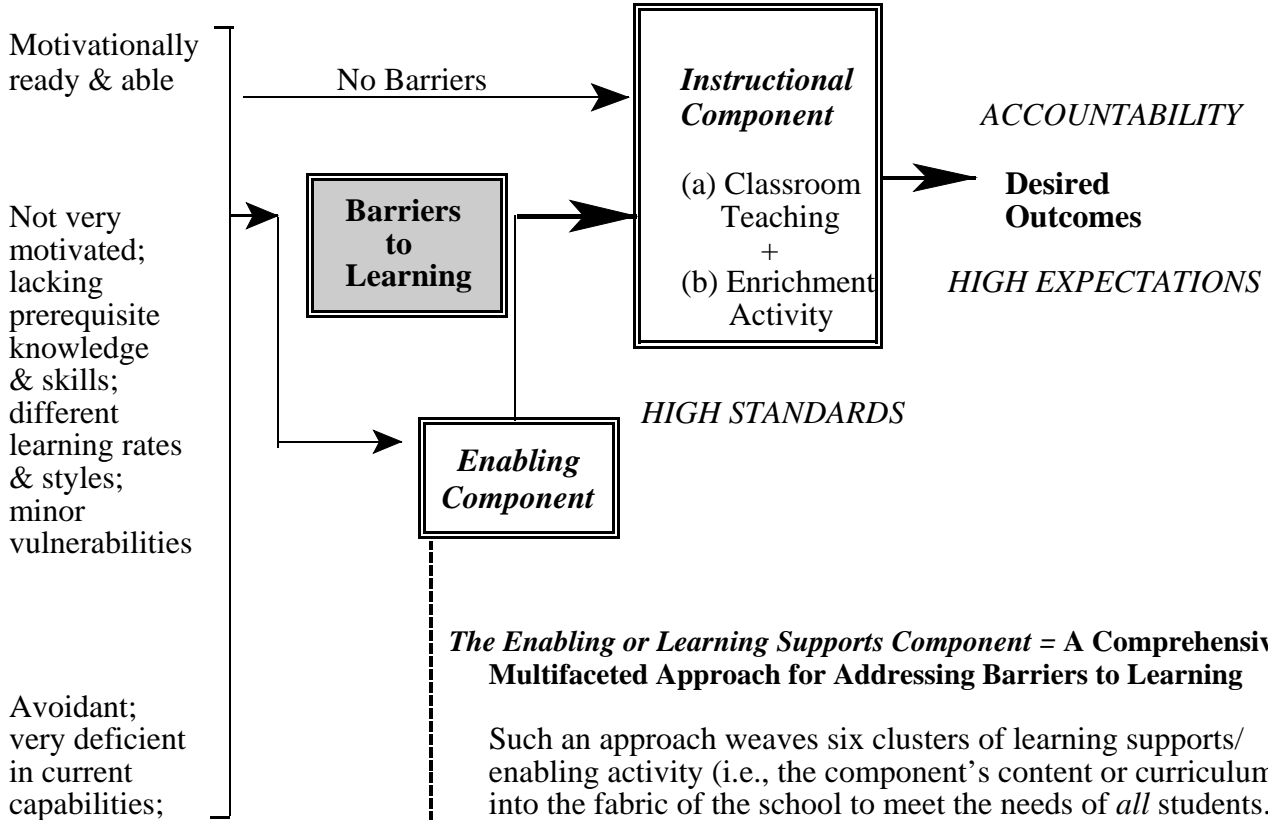


Exhibit 1

“Content” Areas for a Component to Address Barriers to Learning

(1) Classroom-Based Approaches encompass

- **Opening the classroom door to bring available supports in** (e.g., peer tutors, volunteers, aids trained to work with students-in-need; resource teachers and student support staff work in the classroom as part of the teaching team)
- **Redesigning classroom approaches to enhance teacher capability to prevent and handle problems and reduce need for out of class referrals** (e.g. personalized instruction; special assistance as necessary; developing small group and independent learning options; reducing negative interactions and over-reliance on social control; expanding the range of curricular and instructional options and choices; systematic use of prereferral interventions)
- **Enhancing and personalizing professional development** (e.g., creating a Learning Community for teachers; ensuring opportunities to learn through co-teaching, team teaching, and mentoring; teaching intrinsic motivation concepts and their application to schooling)
- **Curricular enrichment and adjunct programs** (e.g., varied enrichment activities that are not tied to reinforcement schedules; visiting scholars from the community)
- **Classroom and school-wide approaches used to create and maintain a caring and supportive climate**

Emphasis at all times is on enhancing feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to others at school and reducing threats to such feelings.

(2) Crisis Assistance and Prevention encompasses

- **Ensuring immediate assistance in emergencies so students can resume learning**
- **Providing Follow up care as necessary** (e.g., brief and longer-term monitoring)
- **Forming a school-focused Crisis Team to formulate a response plan and take leadership for developing prevention programs**
- **Mobilizing staff, students, and families to anticipate response plans and recovery efforts**
- **Creating a caring and safe learning environment** (e.g., developing systems to promote healthy development and prevent problems; bullying and harassment abatement programs)
- **Working with neighborhood schools and community to integrate planning for response and prevention**
- **Capacity building to enhance crisis response and prevention** (e.g., staff and stakeholder development, enhancing a caring and safe learning environment)

(3) Support for Transitions encompasses

- **Welcoming & social support programs for newcomers** (e.g., welcoming signs, materials, and initial receptions; peer buddy programs for students, families, staff, volunteers)
- **Daily transition programs for** (e.g., before school, breaks, lunch, afterschool)
- **Articulation programs** (e.g., grade to grade – new classrooms, new teachers; elementary to middle school; middle to high school; in and out of special education programs)
- **Summer or intersession programs** (e.g., catch-up, recreation, and enrichment programs)
- **School-to-career/higher education** (e.g., counseling, pathway, and mentor programs; Broad involvement of stakeholders in planning for transitions; students, staff, home, police, faith groups, recreation, business, higher education)
- **Broad involvement of stakeholders in planning for transitions** (e.g., students, staff, home, police, faith groups, recreation, business, higher education)
- **Capacity building to enhance transition programs and activities**

(cont.)

Exhibit 1 (cont.) “Content” Areas for a Component to Address Barriers to Learning

(4) Home Involvement in Schooling encompasses

- **Addressing specific support and learning needs of family** (e.g., support services for those in the home to assist in addressing basic survival needs and obligations to the children; adult education classes to enhance literacy, job skills, English-as-a-second language, citizenship preparation)
- **Improving mechanisms for communication and connecting school and home** (e.g., opportunities at school for family networking and mutual support, learning, recreation, enrichment, and for family members to receive special assistance and to volunteer to help; phone calls and/or e-mail from teacher and other staff with good news; frequent and balanced conferences – student-led when feasible; outreach to attract hard-to-reach families – including student dropouts)
- **Involving homes in student decision making** (e.g., families prepared for involvement in program planning and problem-solving)
- **Enhancing home support for learning and development** (e.g., family literacy; family homework projects; family field trips)
- **Recruiting families to strengthen school and community** (e.g., volunteers to welcome and support new families and help in various capacities; families prepared for involvement in school governance)
- **Capacity building to enhance home involvement**

(5) Community Outreach for Involvement and Support encompasses

- **Planning and Implementing Outreach to Recruit a Wide Range of Community Resources** (e.g., public and private agencies; colleges and universities; local residents; artists and cultural institutions, businesses and professional organizations; service, volunteer, and faith-based organizations; community policy and decision makers)
- **Systems to Recruit, Screen, Prepare, and Maintain Community Resource Involvement** (e.g., mechanisms to orient and welcome, enhance the volunteer pool, maintain current involvements, enhance a sense of community)
- **Reaching out to Students and Families Who Don't Come to School Regularly – Including Truants and Dropouts**
- **Connecting School and Community Efforts to Promote Child and Youth Development and a Sense of Community**
- **Capacity Building to Enhance Community Involvement and Support** (e.g., policies and mechanisms to enhance and sustain school-community involvement, staff/stakeholder development on the value of community involvement, “social marketing”)

(6) Student and Family Assistance encompasses

- **Providing extra support as soon as a need is recognized and doing so in the least disruptive ways** (e.g., prereferral interventions in classrooms; problem solving conferences with parents; open access to school, district, and community support programs)
 - **Timely referral interventions for students & families with problems based on response to extra support** (e.g., identification/screening processes, assessment, referrals, and follow-up – school-based, school-linked)
 - **Enhancing access to direct interventions for health, mental health, and economic assistance** (e.g., school-based, school-linked, and community-based programs and services)
 - **Care monitoring, management, information sharing, and follow-up assessment to coordinate individual interventions and check whether referrals and services are adequate and effective**
 - **Mechanisms for resource coordination and integration to avoid duplication, fill gaps, garner economies of scale, and enhance effectiveness** (e.g., braiding resources from school-based and linked interveners, feeder pattern/family of schools, community-based programs; linking with community providers to fill gaps)
 - **Enhancing stakeholder awareness of programs and services**
 - **Capacity building to enhance student and family assistance systems, programs, and services**
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Improvement matters. It affects the lives of children. It is vital to “get good at it.” Improvement must become a permanent part of school practice, not a one-time or occasional event.

Dennie Palmer Wolf
Annenberg Insitute for School Reform

And, it must focus on ways to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school

Review of Guides

To formulate a big picture overview of the focus of school improvement planning, an internet search was conducted to review guidance about such planning provided by state and local education agencies around the country and plans formulated by specific schools. Even a cursory analysis of what is online makes it clear that the focus of planning is determined by the interests, agenda, and beliefs of those who develop the frameworks or protocols used to structure discussion and data gathering. A few examples are highlighted in Exhibit 2.

Because major urban centers have been so prominently targeted in critiques of public education, they have devoted significant resources to developing school improvement planning guides and have been using them for a significant period of time. After surveying a range of urban centers, we concluded that the New York City guide was representative of the lengthier guides used for school improvement and the Boston Public School guide was representative of more abbreviated guides.

So, using the lens of addressing barriers to learning and teaching, we proceeded to analyze:

How well does the guide address barriers to learning and teaching?

- (1) New York City’s *Performance Assessment in Schools Systemwide (PASS)*
- (2) Boston’s *Essentials of Whole School Improvement*.

In each case, our focus was on:

How well does the guide address barriers to learning and teaching?

We did not review the adequacy of the standards or other features of the guides. And, while we did search out the districts’ progress reports, it seemed unnecessary to further highlight the continuing plight confronting these and, indeed, all large urban districts.*

It is important to emphasize at the outset that *we know that the development of school improvement guides is not a simple task. Our intent here is not to criticize or undermine the efforts of all those dedicated stakeholders who are working so hard to improve schools. Rather, our hope is that the analyses will lead to further improvement.*

*Nevertheless, we cannot ignore commenting on the irony that proposals to broaden the current focus of school improvement guides generally are turned away because decision makers demand efficacy data. At the same time, despite years of basing school improvement planning on existing guidance (e.g., the *Essentials of Whole School Improvement*), available data indicate that sustained progress remains an elusive goal (e.g., see Boston’s “Report Card” at <http://boston.k12.ma.us/bps/reportcd.doc>).

Exhibit 2

Examples of the Focus of School Improvement Planning

A not atypical example comes from Morgan County Schools, TN:

“Each school in Tennessee must create a comprehensive School Improvement Plan to submit to the State Board of Education annually. Currently the plan is comprised of six components: a school profile, beliefs and mission statements, student data analysis, organizational and instructional effectiveness analysis, action plan development, and the improvement plan and process evaluation.”
(<http://mcs.k12tn.net/sip/sip.htm>)

Because of concerns about safety, it is not uncommon for school improvement guides and plans to stress a focus on the school environment and climate. This often encompasses concern about support services to address special needs of students and parent involvement. For example:

>After addressing curriculum delivery in mathematics and language arts, the Island View School Improvement Plan goes on to include a positive school learning environment and a commitment to better involve parents and the community in children’s learning. (<Http://islandview.nbed.nb.ca/sip.htm>)

>Indiana’s State Department of Education (<http://www.doe.state.in.us>) includes in requirements for Strategic and Continuous School Improvement and Achievement Plan attendance rate (in addition to academics and graduation). In the professional development narrative it asks schools to look at “strategies, programs, and services to address student learning needs and activities to implement the strategies, programs, and services.” Conclusions from assessments are to include parental participation in the school and safe and disciplined learning environment.

>The Spencer Butte Middle School in Eugene, OR, has chosen three goals for the School Improvement Plan. One is to strengthen and implement curricula and instructional practice in order to close the achievement gap in reading and math, while maintaining a vibrant program of elective classes. The other two address context (develop a school culture of respect and responsibility across grade levels and a climate of pride in our school and greater community) and special needs (identify and meet the needs of students who are at risk academically, behaviorally, and/or socially). (<http://schools.4j.lane.edu/spencerbutte/>)

(cont.)

Exhibit 2 (cont.) Examples of the Focus of School Improvement Planning

>Washington State’s Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction provides guidance (<http://www.k12.wa.us/schoolImprovement/>) that stresses “9 characteristics of high-performing schools” with resource links for each:

1. Clear and shared focus
2. High standards and expectations
3. Effective school leadership
4. Supportive Learning environment*
5. High levels of community and parent involvement
6. High levels of collaboration and communication
7. Frequent monitoring of teaching and learning
8. Curriculum, instruction and assessment aligned with standards
9. Focused professional development

*Supportive Learning environment is defined as “The school has a safe, civil, healthy and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Students feel respected and connected with the staff and are engaged in learning. Instruction is personalized and small learning environments increase student contact with teachers.” Indicators related to such an environment are (a) increases in student's bonding to school (opportunities, recognition, skills), (b) a warm and friendly atmosphere, (c) reductions in discipline referrals (number, severity), (c) test scores are improving (norm and criterion-referenced), (d) low staff turnover. Examples include data showing that

- Students and teachers are listening to others; respectful and courteous.
- Students take personal responsibility for their learning and behavior.
- Each student is supported by an adult advocate.

>Dorchester MD County Public Schools (<http://www.mdk12.org>) School Improvement Resource Guide for Elementary Schools recommends School Improvement Teams (SITs)

“Analyze the root causes of gaps in student knowledge and skills. Once the gaps in student knowledge and skills have been identified, SITs should examine why the gaps exist. In this part of their planning, SITs should review a variety of evidence about factors that impact student learning. Input from major stakeholders (student, parents, community members) is particularly important at this stage as perceptions and attitudes among groups may vary considerably. Clarifying the problems and analyzing possible causes of learning gaps for students sets the stage for deciding on specific changes that are necessary to improve students’ learning.”

**New York City's
Performance
Assessment in
Schools Systemwide
(PASS)**

**The purpose of
Performance
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(PASS) is “to enable
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teams to develop,
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their school
Comprehensive
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(CEP). Its overriding
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New York City developed the Performance Assessment in Schools Systemwide (PASS) as a process “to enable school leadership teams to develop, review, and revise their school Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). Its overriding goal is to provide schools with a process for conducting independent self-assessments in order to help them plan more effectively for school improvement. By presenting a comprehensive set of standards of practice, the PASS Performance Review Guide enables members of a PASS review team (including school leaders and visitors) to determine how well a school is performing, how thoroughly its CEP has been implemented, and which sections of the CEP to revise.”

New York Focus Areas. The content (focus) is outlined in a “Review Guide;” the process is detailed in a “Handbook & Toolkit.”

The guide identifies the following eight focus areas (called key elements of exemplary schools):

- School Climate
 - >physical environment
 - >social environment
- Comprehensive Education Plan Development
 - >development and implementation
 - >school mission/philosophy
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
 - >instructional program implementation
 - >instructional program characteristics
 - >school assessment program
 - >instructional practice
 - >multiple instructional strategies/approaches
 - >library/multimedia center
 - >computers
 - >student assessment and evaluation
- Staff Development
 - >professional development
 - >development of staff
- Support Services
 - >pupil personnel services
- Parent Involvement
 - >parent involvement
 - >parent education
- Resources
 - >instructional equipment and supplies
 - >external resources
- School Self-Evaluation
 - >school effectiveness

Analyses Appendix A provides a table highlighting the 20 areas of the New York City school improvement planning guide and our analyses focusing on the question: *How well does each of the 20 areas address barriers to learning and teaching?* and the related matters: *What should be done when students are doing poorly?* and *What should be done to prevent students from experiencing learning and behavior problems?*

All 20 areas, of course, have relevance to learning, teaching, performance, and well-being at school. Some are especially important to addressing barriers to learning and teaching. A few are critical to the problem of re-engaging students who have become disengaged from classroom learning. However, our analyses find that too little attention is paid in any of the areas to such concerns or to the personnel most directly responsible for providing student learning supports. In this respect, it also should be noted that throughout the guide the term “staff” generally refers mainly to classroom teachers. Many essential student learning supports involve more than classroom teachers (e.g., require pupil personnel staff and others) and could benefit from the involvement of community resources (e.g., families, youth agencies, gang prevention units, and so forth).

Below we highlight and comment on what we found in each area. (See Appendix A for the detailed analyses.)

School Climate. In discussing school climate, the focus first is on *physical* factors (i.e., cleanliness, repair, use of space, and scheduling of facilities). It should be noted from the outset no specific mention is made of space used by staff whose primary roles and functions encompass addressing barriers to learning and teaching (e.g., space for providing learning supports that enable students to learn and teachers to teach). One item does refer to “services” (i.e., “The use of facilities and space are scheduled to accommodate all programs, services, and activities”); it is unclear, however, what the term “services” actually is meant to encompass.

While safety and conflict resolution are fundamental concerns, the ways in which a school pursues these matters are major determinants of the type of social environment that emerges.

While *social environment* is stressed, the primary focus is on a safe school plan. The other three items in this area focus on (a) handling conflicts, (b) creating a climate of mutual respect, discourse, and friendliness, and (c) dealing with noise levels and transitions so they do not interfere with teaching and learning. As the guide suggests, social environment and the concept of “sense of community” are part of the larger concepts of school and classroom climate. From the perspective of our analytic tools, climate is an emergent quality arising from the full range of transactions, especially the many interventions at school and how they are implemented. Thus, for example, while safety and conflict resolution are fundamental concerns, the ways in which a school pursues these matters are major determinants of the type of social environment that emerges. The same is true of interventions a school uses to develop mutual respect and discourse, control noise levels, and facilitate “transition to services.”

In effect, from the perspective of addressing barriers to learning and teaching, the way in which the guide outlines school climate, and especially the social environment, is much too narrow. For example:

- The roles and functions of student support staff need to be integrated and aligned with standards for enhancing the type of school climate that contributes to school safety, maintains student engagement in learning, and is instrumental in re-engaging and maintaining students who have disengaged from classroom learning.
- While training for conflict resolution is stressed, staff development is not emphasized related to the full range of interventions necessary for effective *emergency and crisis response and prevention*.
- Staff development also is not indicated with respect to minimizing an overemphasis on punishment and social control interventions and maximizing use of strategies that enhance positive social interactions, support, and guidance. Moreover, no attention is paid to the importance of capitalizing on *natural opportunities* to promote social and emotional development and well being during the school day and over the school year.
- And, the focus on *transitions* needs to go beyond transitions to services and between classes to include interventions designed to (a) improve what happens during recess and lunch and before and after school; (b) welcome and provide social support for newcomer students, families and staff and to address adjustment problems; (c) provide productive and enriching intersession and summer programs; and more.

Comprehensive Education Plan Development. The content of a school's plan and statements of mission/philosophy provide an indication of what the planners view as a comprehensive approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Analyses of who a guide indicates should be involved in planning is relevant to understanding why some matters are and are not emphasized in school improvement planning.

The content of a school's plan and statements of mission/philosophy provide an indication of what the planners view as a comprehensive approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

So who does this guide indicate should do the planning? The school leadership team, which is described as consisting of administrators, teachers, parents, (and secondary school students if applicable). Notably missing is a reference to pupil personnel staff and other staff who interact with teachers, parents, administrators, students, and each other and play significant roles in creating the climate at a school and in addressing problems. The lack of reference to such staff reflects their marginalized status at most schools. It also suggests that such personnel probably were not involved in a significant way in the development of this Performance Review Guide since the work they do is generally ignored.

A few specific examples to illustrate the deficiencies in the guide's focus on *comprehensive* education plan development:

- concern for measurable objectives that reflect high expectations only stresses the *curriculum*
- reference in the mission statement to the role of the home does not indicate the need for the school to assist those at home in overcoming barriers that interfere with students doing well at school
- reference in the mission statement is made to engaging students but no reference is made to the need to re-engage those who have disengaged
- the mission statement does not mention addressing barriers to learning and promoting health and well-being to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to learn and develop in ways that meet the school's high expectations.

In general:

>A planning group devoid of staff whose primary concern is addressing barriers to learning and teaching generally will generate insufficient plans for addressing such barriers.

That is, the plan is unlikely to be truly *comprehensive*, and while what is planned may be fully implemented, interventions needed to give many students an equal opportunity to succeed at school will be absent or ignored.

>Moreover, the deficiencies are unlikely to be corrected by reviews and revisions that focus only on measuring outcomes associated with what is in the plan.

>Under these conditions, one should expect a continued marginalization of the status and efforts of personnel whose job it is to provide supports to enable all students to learn and teachers to teach effectively.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. Areas 5 through 12 are grouped under this topic. As such, the focus is on teachers and directly facilitating teaching. From the perspective of addressing barriers to learning and teaching, the questions that arise are: Does the focus account for (a) what should be done when a teacher indicates some students are doing poorly? and (b) what should be done to prevent learning and behavior problems?

The answer to both questions is no. The focus essentially is on practices that are well-designed for students who currently are motivated and able to profit from rather broad-band (non-personalized approaches) to instruction. The guide does not specifically emphasize the need for instructional practices to address students who don't fit this picture or to prevent problems from arising.

The focus essentially is on practices that are well-designed for students who currently are motivated and able to profit from rather broad-band (non-personalized approaches) to instruction.

With respect to engaging and re-engaging students, the standard is “lessons [that] engage and challenge students at their appropriate *developmental/ cognitive levels.*” This reflects an assumption that matching developmental/cognitive levels is sufficient to engage students who are not motivated to learn in the classroom. Thus, it ignores the need for teachers also to match the motivational status of students who are not readily engaged, and it does not address the problem of students who are actively disengaged from classroom learning. Such motivational concerns, of course, are of particular relevance in classrooms and schools where a large number of students are doing poorly.

This area does address the need to focus on the full range of learners, but the emphasis is mainly on policies for the inclusion of students with “diverse learning styles and abilities” and “special needs.” Moreover, in doing even this, the guide only stresses teacher use of multiple “instructional” strategies. There is no reference to connecting instructional approaches with other strategies to address barriers to learning and teaching. There also is no reference to connecting teachers and support staff to ensure that students truly have an equal opportunity to succeed in the classroom.

With respect to *assessment*, clearly the focus is only on instruction. The guide does not specifically stress the role of assessment in meeting the needs of students who are doing poorly or on how to use assessment data in preventing learning and behavior problems. While it is feasible that the items calling for a *wide variety of assessments* and *review and revision* could address these matters (i.e., “revise the school assessment program to address current student needs”), the emphasis in the standards and the examples so strongly stresses direct efforts to facilitate teaching that plans to gather assessment data relevant to addressing barriers to learning and teaching are unlikely to be included. But, the reality is that every classroom has some interventions to address students who are doing poorly. Thus, it is reasonable to expect a planning guide’s focus related to assessing and evaluating students to offer standards and examples related to identifying problems early in order to ameliorate them before they become worse and assessment in the ongoing instruction of students who are doing poorly.

A few examples to illustrate the guide's deficiencies in the focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment:

- The guide does not specifically focus on how the instructional program characteristics should be designed to meet the needs of students who are doing poorly or on what should be done to prevent students from starting to manifest learning and behavior problems. Thus, for instance, planning related to each item is unlikely to address how the *grading policy* should be designed to minimize having a negative impact on a student's attitudes toward school and teachers (e.g., when students consistently receive poor grades, a downward spiral in such attitudes is likely). Relatedly, no attention is given to the dilemma of having to assign negative grades at the same time the teacher is trying to re-engage students who have become disengaged from classroom learning.
- A similar concern arises around *supportive texts and materials*. It is unclear whether the focus in matching resources to the instructional program goes beyond ensuring a match to designated grade levels (e.g., 6th grade texts for 6th grade math). In addressing the needs of students who are doing poorly, meeting the learner where they are requires not only fitting current *capabilities*, but also matching *motivation* (e.g., to *personalize*, not just individualize instruction).
- With respect to the item on *skills, values, and attitudes*, it is unclear what is meant by a *full range*. The guide does not relate these matters to success in school for students who are doing poorly and for those who already have disengaged from classroom learning. A related unaddressed concern is how the plan addresses instructional program characteristics that have a negative impact on skills, values, and attitudes.
- With respect to *real-world applications*, addressing the needs of students who are doing poorly and those who already have disengaged from classroom learning requires more than just focusing on *applying* learning in real-world settings. For such students, use of real-world settings must be geared to maximizing the likelihood that students will find the type of meaning and hope for the future that helps enhance their desire to re-engage in classroom learning. Neither the standard nor the examples cited in the guide focus on the desired outcomes of real-world applications.

In general, the items in this section of the guide do not focus on planning a cohesive set of interventions designed to address barriers to learning and teaching or for ensuring that any interventions designed for these purposes are aligned and integrated with planning and implementation related to *Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*. Moreover, the absence of standards for addressing barriers to learning and teaching results in a guide that does refer to the need to align with standards for ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

Why is professional staff development identified as *teacher* development?

Staff Development. Professional development is identified in this guide as *teacher* development. Thus, it is unlikely that a school improvement plan based on this guide will focus on staff development for student support staff and other professionals who have a daily role to play with students who are doing poorly or whose future problems could be prevented.

The complex arena of student/learning supports is reduced to Pupil Personnel Services.

Support Services. While the guide recognizes that school improvement planning should focus on *Support Services*, it reduces this complex arena to the topic of *Pupil Personnel Services*. Ironically, from this narrow perspective, it states that pupil personnel services should be “comprehensive to serve the needs of students,” but does not indicate what is meant by the term *comprehensive*. The emphasis is on pupil referral and support *services*, attendance oversight and outreach, and external collaboration. From the perspective of our analytic tools, this is not a comprehensive approach and, indeed, reflects a traditionally limited perspective of the work of student support staff.

Maintaining a view of student support as pupil personnel services results in a referral mentality among teachers and other school staff (and others). Thus, the primary answer to the question: *What should be done when a teacher indicates some students are doing poorly?* tends to remain: *Refer the student immediately for special services.* This bypasses the strategy of classroom-based approaches and other programmatic strategies (including personalized teacher inservice training) that might abrogate the need for so many individual student referrals.

In general, because of its narrow and limited definition of the role and functions of pupil services professionals, this guide leads school improvement planning away from fundamental rethinking of student learning supports. The limited perspective also works against strengthening ways to prevent and systematically intervene as soon as a problem is noted. By retaining a narrow, case-oriented, services approach, the guide perpetuates the prevailing “waiting for failure” climate that permeates schooling for too many students. And, it ends up flooding referral, triage, and support services because more students are referred than can be served.

Calls to rethink student learning supports stress systemic changes that can evolve a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approach encompassing ways to enhance classroom and school-wide programs to better address barriers to learning and teaching and promote healthy development. Such an approach encompasses, but is not limited to a focus on those students who need special services.

From the perspective of those students who are not doing well, research indicates the need for a more comprehensive approach to enabling and enhancing home involvement.

Parent Involvement. From the perspective of addressing barriers to school learning, the education of those in the home who are involved with a student's development and performance is only *one* facet of a comprehensive range of home involvement interventions. The guide highlights this one facet. The focus is on encouraging parents to come to scheduled events, be involved in ensuring homework is done, and to work with the school when their youngster is having behavior and/or learning problems. In addition, parent representation is expected on certain "leadership" teams/councils. All this is appropriate, but it still is an extremely limited approach to enhancing parent involvement. By narrowing the focus in this way, the guide makes it likely that other essential facets of an improved approach for enhancing the school involvement of those in the home will be given short shrift in the plan.

From the perspective of those students who are not doing well, research indicates the need for a more comprehensive approach to enabling and enhancing parent involvement. Such an approach begins by reframing the concern as *home* involvement. This ensures an emphasis on situations where students are raised by grandparents, aunts, older siblings, or in foster care. Such an approach also recognizes that in many schools the percentage of homes that are significantly involved is relatively small, especially in the upper grades. Thus, the need is for strategies that outreach to and connect with those who are not engaged with and may be actively disengaged from the school.

To these ends, a comprehensive approach requires school improvement planning that stresses school-wide and classroom-based systems and programs to strengthen the home situation, enhance family problem solving capabilities, and increase support for student well-being. This includes programs to (a) address the specific learning and support needs of adults in the home, such as offering them ESL, literacy, vocational and citizenship classes, enrichment and recreational opportunities, and mutual support groups, (b) help those in the home improve how basic student obligations are met, such as providing guidance related to parenting and how to help with schoolwork, (c) improve forms of basic communication that promote the well-being of student, family, and school, (d) enhance the home-school connection and sense of community, (e) foster participation in making decisions essential to a student's well-being, (f) facilitate home support of student learning and development, (g) mobilize those at home to problem solve related to student needs, and (h) elicit help (support, collaborations, and partnerships) from those at home with respect to meeting classroom, school, and community needs. The context for some of this activity may be a *parent or family center* if one has been established at the site.

The emphasis on external resources directs attention away from rethinking ways to improve use of internal resources.

Resources. This area addresses the matter of equity of opportunity with regard to available equipment, supplies, and external resources. However, the emphasis again is mainly on instruction. For example, there is no reference to the equipment and supplies needed to address barriers to learning and teaching and for re-engaging students who have become disengaged from classroom learning. There also is no reference to resources for enhancing home and community involvement, providing support for transitions, responding to and preventing crises, and providing special student and family assistance when needed.

Given the limited references to student supports in the guide, it is noteworthy that this section recognize the need for developing and expanding such supports. The focus, however, is on seeking grants, sharing resources, publicizing what is available in the community, and monitoring external resources to ensure there is equitable allocation. And, note that it is the administrative and teaching staff who are to seek “grants and in-kind services to develop and expand needed support services and resources.”

Th overemphasis on external resources directs attention away from rethinking ways to improve use of internal resources. Planners are guided primarily to think in terms of what can be acquired or used externally. In effect, the internal resources that the school already budgets for student support are not part of the discussion and should be. Improving student learning supports requires (a) reviewing all the *internal* resources used by the school as the basis for ensuring they are deployed effectively and (b) then working on ways to integrate external resources to fill gaps and strengthen practices.

School Self-Evaluation. The guide calls for a school to plan self-evaluation by focusing on *school effectiveness*. Data on school effectiveness are to be gathered and disaggregated and used to modify plans based on what has been included in the school improvement plan.

Because of the deficiencies noted in the guide, it should be evident by this point that critical data related to school effectiveness in addressing barriers to learning and teaching will not be gathered.

Boston’s Whole School Improvement – Six Essentials and Related Rubrics

When Thomas W. Payzant took the job of Superintendent of the 63,000-student district in October 1995, he outlined a long-term plan “Focusing on Children.” The first five years were spelled out in August 1996. As described on the district’s website: “He asked principals and teachers to concentrate attention first on literacy (and later, math), and the district began to offer, deliberately and incrementally, the staff development, support, and resources they needed to make instruction more effective. The specifics of reform were defined in a document, the *Plan for Whole-School Change* (later renamed *Whole-School Improvement*, or WSI), and incorporated six Essentials that all schools were expected to do.”

“At the center of the effort was a commitment to more effective staff development: regular, ongoing, school-based, teacher-designed, and based on students’ instructional needs. External funds (and increasingly, district monies) provide part-time staff developers – ‘coaches’ – in every school to assist teachers as they collectively identify what they need to learn in order to teach what their students need to know.”

“The reform work was done in a unusual partnership with the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE), a local education foundation. In the first five years, BPE drafted the Plan for Whole-School Change; piloted it in a small group of schools and later managed the work in as many as half of the city’s schools; co-developed with the district assessment and accountability systems; and raised more than \$60M for the reform effort.”

“At the end of the first five years, Superintendent Payzant updated his action plan in ‘Focus on Children II’ and committed to staying on the job through December 2005. The Plan for Whole-School Improvement has been updated as well, and its expectations are outlined in new ‘rubrics.’”

Essentials of Whole-School Improvement

Phase II: 2002 – 2007

Essential 1: Use Effective Instructional Practices and Create a Collaborative School Climate to Improve Student Learning

Essential 2: Examine Student Work and Data to Drive Instruction and Professional Development

Essential 3: Invest in Professional Development to Improve Instruction

Essential 4: Share Leadership to Sustain Instructional Improvement

Essential 5: Focus Resources to Support Instructional Improvement and Improved Student Learning

Essential 6: Partner with Families and Community to Support Student Learning

Stated Rationale and Guidance for School Improvement Planning by Boston Public Schools

“In Boston, we have learned that improved instruction results in increased student learning. We have worked together to make sure standards, curriculum, assessments, and professional development are all aligned. [Since 1996], our message to schools has been consistent: Focus on improving instruction in every classroom.

Our theory of action states that classroom instruction improves if instructional staff — teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals — are given ongoing support embedded in their classroom work and if their learning is collaborative and focused on what they need to know to meet students’ needs, which are continually measured throughout the year. Instructional staff also must be given the support they need to improve their school organizations and their use of people, time, and resources. Parents must be respected and welcomed as partners in students’ learning. Acted on together, these activities, the ‘Essentials’ of Whole-School Improvement, lead to better instruction and conditions that enable good teaching.

Finally, the central office must also improve, making sure its support is strong, clear, and aligned. All of these activities form the framework of Boston’s reform.

We have learned a great deal in the last six years. These refined rubrics for measuring the Essentials reflect those lessons, particularly the lesson that teachers helping each other analyze classroom instruction creates a culture of ongoing learning. These rubrics are also greatly streamlined to make them easier for schools to use and to help schools focus on the most important work.

Schools will be expected to implement at performance level three or better on these rubrics. In most cases, this represents a substantial raising of the bar from previous years — an action appropriate six years into the reform.

The rubrics are intended to do the following:

- **Described the BPS priorities for the next five years.** The district will use these rubrics to communicate key priorities and to plan allocation of resources in the coming years.
- **Guide schools in reflective planning and self-assessment.** Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) will use these rubrics as they complete their Whole-School Improvement Plan (WSIP) and place themselves on the Self-Assessment Summary (SAS) continuum. High schools will refer also to additional elements that clarify how the rubrics apply to high schools.
- **Serve as one component of the BPS accountability system.** Our theory of action maintains that if instruction is at a high level and if conditions in schools enable good instruction, students will learn. Therefore it is important to measure the improvement of instruction and school culture. The superintendent, deputy superintendents, chief operating officer, and In-Depth Review (IDR) teams will use these rubrics to evaluate the extent to which each school has, by implementing the Essentials, improved instruction and school culture.

Other components of the accountability system will measure each school’s progress on a range of quantitative outcomes, including formative and summative assessments, the achievement gap, student attendance and other school climate data, and placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Taken together, these components will ensure that virtually all students acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in life and in the workplace and that the BPS closes performance gaps among students.”

Components of the Boston Public School’s Whole-School Improvement Rubrics

Leading Indicators – These are seen as the “tipping point.” The district states: “If a school can get to a high level of implementation on this indicator, the school’s social and academic climate improves and students learn more.”

Reflective Questions – Probes for the extent to which a school has implemented the six “Essentials.”

Performance Levels – 1 = Beginning Implementation; 2 = Implementation; 3 = Accelerated Implementation; 4 = Exemplary Implementation. The system-wide standard is Level 3 or higher.

Analyses Appendix B provides a table highlighting the six essentials of Boston’s Whole School Improvement and our analyses. For purposes of our analyses, we reviewed the leading indicators and reflective questions for each of the six essentials. Again, our frame of reference was the question: *How well does each address barriers to learning and teaching?* and the related matters: *What should be done when students are doing poorly?* and *What should be done to prevent students from experiencing learning and behavior problems?*

We find the guide straight forward in articulating the assumption that improved instruction will meet the needs of the district’s students and close the achievement gap. All the discussion of aligning standards, curriculum, assessments, and professional development emphasizes teaching and the “instructional staff (specified as teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals). There is no significant attention paid to student support staff.

Interestingly, the “theory of action” does mention support. It states that “classroom instruction improves if instructional staff – teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals – are given ongoing support embedded in their classroom work and if their learning is collaborative and focused on what they need to know to meet students’ needs Instructional staff also must be given the support they need to improve their school organizations and their use of people, time, and resources.” However, neither the “theory” nor the rubrics tackle the critical problem of addressing factors interfering with teaching and learning or the chronically frustrating problem of re-engaging students who have become disengaged from classroom learning.

Below we highlight and comment on what we found related to each of Boston’s six essentials.

Essential 1: Use Effective Instructional Practices and Create a Collaborative School Climate to Improve Student Learning. The primary emphasis in this area is on teacher implementation of instructional practices and teacher collaborative learning about such practices. There is also mention of teacher and student internalization of classroom rules and instructional routines. Such an emphasis on improving instruction, of course, is fundamental and necessary. From the perspective of *enabling* student learning and addressing barriers to learning and teaching, however, such an emphasis is insufficient.

What's missing? Focusing on improving instruction in isolation of addressing barriers to learning and teaching tends to ignore essentials that enable students to learn and teachers to teach. This is particularly evident in the guide's *limited* reference to school climate.

Focusing on improving instruction in isolation of addressing barriers to learning and teaching tends to ignore essentials that enable students to learn and teachers to teach.

School and classroom climate have been identified as major determiners of classroom and school behavior and learning. Analyses of research suggest significant relationships between school and classroom climate and matters such as student engagement, behavior, self-efficacy, achievement, social and emotional development, principal leadership style, stages of educational reform, teacher burnout, and overall quality of school life. For example, studies report strong associations between achievement levels and classrooms that are perceived as having greater cohesion and goal direction and less disorganization and conflict. Research also suggests that the impact of classroom climate may be greater on students from low-income homes and groups that often are discriminated against.

Understanding the nature of school and classroom climate is a fundamental and complex element in improving schools. The climate at a school and in a classroom is an emergent quality arising from the full range of transactions, especially the many ways staff work with students and each other.

The concept of school and classroom climate implies the intent to establish and maintain a positive context that facilitates learning, but in practice, school and classroom climates range from hostile or toxic to welcoming and supportive and can fluctuate daily and over the school year.

A primary focus needs to be on addressing those factors that interfere with creating a supportive, caring, and nurturing climate. How instruction is planned, implemented, and evaluated is part of this, but an equally important facet is what is done to prevent learning, behavior, and emotional problems and how problems are responded to when they emerge.

What about data to drive efforts to prevent learning, behavior, and emotional problems and respond to problems when they emerge?

Essential 2: Examine Student Work and Data to Drive Instruction and Professional Development. Analyses of student work and data (especially accountability indicators) increasingly are seen as drivers for the work and professional development of school staff. The goal, of course, is to gather the most pertinent information and use it appropriately.

What's missing? The focus is limited to the instructional arena and professional development for teachers related to their instructional practices. What about data to drive efforts to prevent learning, behavior, and emotional problems and respond to problems when they emerge? Professional development for teachers and other school staff (e.g., student support staff) should be driven by data such as frequent absences and tardies, behavior problems, excessive difficulty adjusting to classroom rules and routines, lack of engagement in classroom learning, noncompletion of class and homework assignments, and so forth. These data indicate basic barriers to learning and teaching and call for forms of professional development *for teachers and support staff*, that go well beyond simplistic classroom management and social control strategies.

Essential 3: Invest in Prof. Development to Improve Instruction.
Essential 4: Share Leadership to Sustain Instructional Improvement. With respect to both of these, the guide clearly states that the focus is on teachers and administrators, with the intent of directly improving instruction.

What's missing? Student support personnel, other school staff, problem prevention, problem amelioration.

Essential 5: Focus Resources to Support Instructional Improvement and Improved Student Learning. “Resources to support” include “staff” assigned to “support targeted instruction.” Use of the term “staff” appears to open the door to others beside teachers, but the focus is still limited to “targeted instruction.” And, the reflective questions and other items keep the emphasis mainly on teachers and strategies such as individualized instruction, grouping, common planning time, and scheduling to maximize learning.

What's missing? No direct mention is made of resources for problem prevention and correction. Also, given concerns about student motivation, it is unclear whether “individualized” instruction encompasses personalization (e.g., meeting learners where they are in term of both motivation and capability).

Essential 6: Partner with Families and Community to Support Student Learning. The emphasis on working with families to support learning stresses communication and encouragement of involvement to support learning and academic performance. Also stressed is family involvement in school governance and ensuring respect for diversity. Community engagement is seen in terms of involvement in “whole school improvement” and bringing more adults into students’ lives.

The focus on the role of families and community in supporting student learning tends to ignore matters related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching as essentials that enable students to learn and teachers to teach.

What's missing? As can be seen in the reflective questions, the focus on the role of families and community in supporting student learning tends to ignore the wide range of interventions needed to “enable” students to learn and teachers to teach.

As we indicated in discussing the New York City guide, efforts to enhance the involvement of many families require providing a range of schoolwide and classroom interventions designed to strengthen the home situation, enhance family problem-solving capabilities, and increase support for student well-being. Examples include systems and programs to (a) address the specific learning and support needs of adults in the home, such as offering ESL, literacy, vocational, and citizenship classes, enrichment and recreational opportunities, and mutual support groups, (b) help those in the home improve how basic student obligations are met, such as providing guidance related to parenting and how to help with schoolwork, (c) improve forms of basic communication that promote the well-being of student, family, and school, (d) enhance the home-school connection and sense of community, (e) foster participation in making decisions essential to a student’s well-being, (f) facilitate home support of student learning and development, (g) mobilize those at home to problem solve related to student needs, and (h) elicit help (support, collaborations, and partnerships) from those at home with respect to meeting classroom, school, and community needs. The context for some of this activity may be a *parent or family center* if one has been established at the site.

Community involvement also requires a wider range of outreach interventions to build linkages and collaborations. Examples include (a) planning and implementing outreach to recruit a wide range of community resources (e.g., public and private agencies; colleges and universities; local residents; artists and cultural institutions, businesses and professional organizations; service, volunteer, and faith-based organizations; community policy and decision makers), (b) systems to recruit, screen, prepare, and maintain the involvement of community resources (e.g., mechanisms to orient and welcome, enhance the volunteer pool, maintain current involvements, enhance a sense of community), (c) reaching out to students and families who don’t come to school regularly—including truants and dropouts, (d) connecting school and community efforts to promote child and youth development and a sense of community, and (e) capacity building to enhance community involvement and support (e.g., policies and mechanisms to enhance and sustain school-community involvement, staff/stakeholder development to enhance the valuing of community involvement, “social marketing”).

Not mentioned at all is the essential partnership among school, family, and community when specialized assistance for students and their families is needed. While specialized assistance for students and family should be reserved for the relatively few problems that cannot be handled without adding special interventions, they need to be available when needed. Such assistance encompasses most of the services and related systems referred to in integrated service models.

A Note About Special Services and Specialized Assistance

Missing in many school improvement planning guides reviewed was items related to the school's role in providing special services and specialized assistance.

A programmatic approach to assisting individual students and their families requires a personalized way to assist with a broad range of needs. The focus for school improvement planning is on systems designed to provide special assistance in ways that increase the likelihood that a student will be more successful at school. Such systems also are designed to reduce the need for teachers to seek special programs and services for their students.

To begin with, a focus on this stresses use of social, physical and mental health assistance available in the school and community. As community outreach brings in other resources, these need to be linked to existing activity in an integrated manner. Additional attention must be paid to enhancing systems for triage, case and resource management, direct services for immediate needs, and referral for special services and special education as appropriate. Ongoing efforts must be made to expand and enhance resources. (While any office or room can be used, a valuable context for providing such services is a center facility, such as a family, community, health, or parent resource center.)

Planning also needs to delineate mechanisms for providing all stakeholders with information clarifying available assistance and how to access help, facilitating requests for assistance, handling referrals, providing direct service, implementing case and resource management, and interfacing with community outreach to assimilate additional resources into current service delivery. And, planning should ensure there is a mechanism for ongoing analyses of requests for services so that colleagues who make many referrals are provided with personalized staff development to reduce inappropriate reliance on seeking special assistance for students.

Discussion

Clearly, the call for enhancing continuous school improvement planning has a sound basis. Our analyses, however, suggest that the guidance for schools does not adequately focus on the need for schools to play a significant role in addressing barriers to learning and teaching. This is not surprising given the narrow focus of prevailing accountability mandates stemming from the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

Current School Improvement Guides are Fundamentally Flawed

Guides for planning attend most carefully to what is mandated and measured. The planning guides reviewed stress meeting the demand for standard-based and result-oriented school improvement mainly by elaborating on prevalent thinking about school practices, rather than considering fundamental systemic change. In doing so, they reflect adherence to the failed assumption that intensifying and narrowing the focus of school improvement to matters directly related to instruction and behavioral discipline are sufficient to the task of continuously raising test scores *over the long-run*. This assumption ignores the need for fundamentally restructuring school and community resources in ways that enable learning. It also maintains the *marginalization* of efforts to address major barriers to learning and teaching.

Our analyses suggest that guides for school improvement planning tend to reflect another instance of Tyack and Cuban's (1996) characterization of school reform as a process of "Tinkering Toward Utopia." Unfortunately, the history of using external mandates and prescribed guidelines to pressure systemic change in schools is strewn with superficial compliance to the letter of the law. The guides we analyzed underscore all this. Current mandates result in school improvement planning that is based primarily on an inadequate two component model, rather than the three component approach that enhances the focus on addressing barriers to learning, development, and teaching.

As a result, prevailing approaches to school improvement do not encompass comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches for enabling learning through addressing barriers. This is especially unfortunate in schools where large proportions of students are not doing well. Thus, one of the poignant ironies of continuing to proceed in this way is that the aim of providing equity of opportunity for many students is undermined.

Toward Improving School Improvement

While improved instruction is necessary, it is not sufficient in many instances. Students who arrive at school on any given day with diminished motivational readiness and/or abilities need something more. That something is best addressed when school improvement planning focuses on addressing barriers to learning and teaching in a comprehensive way. The three component model stresses such a focus by elevating the component for addressing barriers to the level of one of three fundamental facets of school improvement. From this perspective, Exhibit 2 highlights matters that tend to be missing in guides for school improvement planning, and Exhibit 3 delineates a set of guidelines for an enabling or learning support component.*

*See also *Addressing Barriers to Learning: A Set of Surveys to Map What a School Has and What It Needs* online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Surveys/Set1.pdf> This set of self study surveys delineates specifics to consider in planning related to an enabling or learning support component.

Exhibit 3

Guidelines for a Comprehensive Approach to Addressing Barriers to Learning*

1. Major Areas of Concern Related to Barriers to Student Learning

- 1.1 Addressing common educational and psychosocial problems (e.g., learning problems; language difficulties; attention problems; school adjustment and other life transition problems; attendance problems and dropouts; social, interpersonal, and familial problems; conduct and behavior problems; delinquency and gang-related problems; anxiety problems; affect and mood problems; sexual and/or physical abuse; neglect; substance abuse; psychological reactions to physical status and sexual activity; physical health problems)
- 1.2 Countering external stressors (e.g., reactions to objective or perceived stress/demands/ crises/deficits at home, school, and in the neighborhood; inadequate basic resources such as food, clothing, and a sense of security; inadequate support systems; hostile and violent conditions)
- 1.3 Teaching, serving, and accommodating disorders/disabilities (e.g., Learning Disabilities; Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; School Phobia; Conduct Disorder; Depression; Suicidal or Homicidal Ideation and Behavior; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; Anorexia and Bulimia; special education designated disorders such as Emotional Disturbance and Developmental Disabilities)

2. Timing and Nature of Problem-Oriented Interventions

- 2.1 Primary prevention
- 2.2 Intervening early after the onset of problems
- 2.3 Interventions for severe, pervasive, and/or chronic problems

3. General Domains for Intervention in Addressing Students' Needs and Problems

- 3.1 Ensuring academic success and also promoting healthy cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development and resilience (including promoting opportunities to enhance school performance and protective factors; fostering development of assets and general wellness; enhancing responsibility and integrity, self-efficacy, social and working relationships, self-evaluation and self-direction, personal safety and safe behavior, health maintenance, effective physical functioning, careers and life roles, creativity)
- 3.2 Addressing external and internal barriers to student learning and performance
- 3.3 Providing social/emotional support for students, families, and staff

4. Specialized Student and Family Assistance (Individual and Group)

- 4.1 Assessment for initial (first level) screening of problems, as well as for diagnosis and intervention planning (including a focus on needs and assets)
- 4.2 Referral, triage, and monitoring/management of care
- 4.3 Direct services and instruction (e.g., primary prevention programs, including enhancement of wellness through instruction, skills development, guidance counseling, advocacy, school-wide programs to foster safe and caring climates, and liaison connections between school and home; crisis intervention and assistance, including psychological and physical first-aid; prereferral interventions; accommodations to allow for differences and disabilities; transition and follow-up programs; short- and longer- term treatment, remediation, and rehabilitation)

(cont.)

Exhibit 3 (cont.) Guidelines for a Comprehensive Approach to Addressing Barriers

- 4.4 Coordination, development, and leadership related to school-owned programs, services, resources, and systems – toward evolving a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of programs and services
- 4.5 Consultation, supervision, and inservice instruction with a transdisciplinary focus
- 4.6 Enhancing connections with and involvement of home and community resources (including but not limited to community agencies)

5. *Assuring Quality of Intervention*

- 5.1 Systems and interventions are monitored and improved as necessary
- 5.2 Programs and services constitute a comprehensive, multifaceted continuum
- 5.3 Interveners have appropriate knowledge and skills for their roles and functions and provide guidance for continuing professional development
- 5.4 School-owned programs and services are coordinated and integrated
- 5.5 School-owned programs and services are connected to home & community resources
- 5.6 Programs and services are integrated with instructional and governance/management components at schools
- 5.7 Program/services are available, accessible, and attractive
- 5.8 Empirically-supported interventions are used when applicable
- 5.9 Differences among students/families are appropriately accounted for (e.g., diversity, disability, developmental levels, motivational levels, strengths, weaknesses)
- 5.10 Legal considerations are appropriately accounted for (e.g., mandated services; mandated reporting and its consequences)
- 5.11 Ethical issues are appropriately accounted for (e.g., privacy & confidentiality; coercion)
- 5.12 Contexts for intervention are appropriate (e.g., office; clinic; classroom; home)

6. *Outcome Evaluation and Accountability*

- 6.1 Short-term outcome data
- 6.2 Long-term outcome data
- 6.3 Reporting to key stakeholders and using outcome data to enhance intervention quality

* Adapted from: *Mental Health in Schools: Guidelines, Models, Resources, and Policy Considerations* a document developed by the Policy Leadership Cadre for Mental in Schools. This document is available from the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA; downloadable from the Center's website at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/policymakers/guidelinesexecsumm.pdf> A separate document providing the rationale and science-base for the version of the guidelines adapted for learning supports is available at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/guidelinessupportdoc.pdf>

Understand what's missing . . .

A basic question that needs to be asked if we are to improve schools is:

Why don't schools do a better job in addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems?

In answering the question, leaders must draw attention to the root of the problem:

Efforts to address such problems are marginalized in school policy and daily practice.

As a result, programs, services, and special projects providing learning supports at schools and district-wide are treated as supplementary (often referred to as auxiliary services). Examples of what such marginalization does include:

and end the marginalization of learning supports

- Planning and implementation of a school's approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching usually are conducted on an ad hoc basis.
- Support staff tend to function in relative isolation of each other and other stakeholders, with a great deal of the work oriented to discrete problems and with an overreliance on specialized services for individuals and small groups.
- In some schools, the deficiencies of current policies give rise to such aberrant practices as assigning a student identified as at risk for grade retention, dropout, and substance abuse to three counseling programs operating independently of each other. Such fragmentation not only is costly, it works against cohesiveness and maximizing results.

It also should be stressed that reformers of student/learning supports have tended to focus mainly on the symptom – fragmentation. As a result, the main prescription for improving student supports has been to enhance coordination. Better coordination is a good idea. But it doesn't really address the problem that school-owned student supports are marginalized in policy and practice.

But the situation is likely to go unchanged as long as school improvement plans continue to ignore the need to restructure the work of student support professionals

And, it should be noted that, for the most part, community involvement at schools also remains a token and marginal concern. Moreover, the trend toward fragmentation is compounded by most school-linked services' initiatives. This happens because such initiatives focus primarily on coordinating *community* services and *linking* them to schools using a collocation model, rather than braiding resources and integrating such services with the ongoing efforts of school staff.

The marginalized status and the associated fragmentation of efforts to address student problems are long-standing and ongoing. The situation is likely to go unchanged as long as school improvement plans continue to ignore the need to restructure the work of student support professionals. Currently, most school improvement plans do not focus on using such staff to develop the type of comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches necessary to address the many overlapping barriers to learning and development. At best, most reformers have offered the notions of *Family Resource Centers* and *Full Service Schools* to link community resources to schools (e.g., school-linked services) and enhance coordination of services. Much more

fundamental changes are needed.

Also mediating against developing school-wide approaches to address factors interfering with learning and teaching is the marginalized, fragmented, and flawed way in which these matters are handled in providing on-the-job education. Little or none of a teacher's inservice training focuses on improving classroom and school-wide approaches for dealing effectively with mild-to-moderate behavior, learning, and emotional problems. Paraprofessionals, aides, and volunteers working in classrooms or with special school projects and services receive little or no formal training/supervision before or after they are assigned duties. And little or no attention is paid to inservice for student support staff.

The time has come to change all this. Addressing barriers to learning and teaching must be made an essential and high level focus in every school improvement planning guide. To do less is to ensure too many children are left behind. To paraphrase a colleague of ours: *All children want to be successful – the challenge is to give them a fighting chance.*

Needed . . .

Systemic Change

Every school improvement plan must meet this challenge by ensuring it focuses on development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach to addressing barriers to learning, development, and teaching. Development of such an approach requires shifts in prevailing policy and new frameworks for practice. In addition, for significant systemic change to occur, policy and program commitments must be demonstrated through effective allocation and redeployment of resources. That is, finances, personnel, time, space, equipment, and other essential resources must be made available, organized, and used in ways that adequately operationalize policy and promising practices. This includes ensuring sufficient resources to develop an effective structural foundation for systemic changes, sustainability, and ongoing capacity building.

Addressing barriers to learning and teaching must be made an essential and high level focus in every school improvement planning guide.

Also, to these ends, existing infrastructure mechanisms must be modified to ensure that new policy directions are translated into appropriate daily operations. *Institutionalization* of a comprehensive learning supports component that is fully integrated into school improvement efforts requires restructuring mechanisms related to at least seven infrastructure concerns. These encompass daily (a) governance, (b) leadership, (c) planning and implementation of specific organizational and program objectives, (d) coordination and integration for cohesion, (e) management of communication and information, (f) capacity building, and (g) quality improvement and accountability.

For those concerned with school improvement, resource-oriented mechanisms are a particularly vital infrastructure consideration. Every school is expending resources to enable learning. In some schools as much as 25 to 30% of the budget may be going to problem prevention and correction. Few schools have a mechanism to ensure appropriate use of existing resources and enhance current efforts related to learning supports. This is a major failing since such a mechanism could make major contributions to cost efficacy of learner supports by ensuring that all the activity is planned, implemented, and evaluated in a coordinated and increasingly integrated manner. Such a mechanism also provides another means for reducing marginalization. Creation of a learning supports resource-oriented mechanism at a school is vital for braiding together existing school and community resources and encouraging services and programs to function in an increasingly cohesive way (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4

A LEARNING SUPPORTS RESOURCE TEAM

Every school that wants to improve its systems for providing student support needs a mechanism that focuses specifically on improving resource use and enhancement. A *Learning Support Resource Team* (previously called a Resource Coordinating Team) is a vital form of such a mechanism.

Most schools have teams that focus on individual student/family problems (e.g., a student support team, an IEP team). These teams focus on such functions as referral, triage, and care monitoring or management. In contrast to this case-by-case focus, a school's *Learning Support Resource Team* can take responsibility for enhancing use of all resources available to the school for addressing barriers to student learning and promoting healthy development. This includes analyzing how existing resources are deployed and clarifying how they can be used to build a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach. It also integrally involves the community with a view to integrating human and financial resources from public and private sectors to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

What are its functions?

A Resource Coordinating Team performs essential functions related to the implementation and ongoing development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach for addressing barriers to student learning and promoting healthy development.

Examples of key functions are:

- Aggregating data across students and from teachers to analyze school needs
- Mapping resources at school and in the community
- Analyzing resources
- Identifying the most pressing program development needs at the school
- Coordinating and integrating school resources & connecting with community resources
- Establishing priorities for strengthening programs and developing new ones
- Planning and facilitating ways to strengthen and develop new programs and systems
- Recommending how resources should be deployed and redeployed
- Developing strategies for enhancing resources
- "Social marketing"

Related to the concept of an Enabling (Learning Support) Component, these functions are pursued within frameworks that outline six curriculum content areas and the comprehensive continuum of interventions needed to develop a comprehensive, multifaceted approach to student support that is integrated fully into the fabric of the school.

Who's on Such a Team?

A Learning Support Resource Team might begin with only two people. Where feasible, it should expand into an inclusive group of informed stakeholders who are able and willing. This would include the following:

- Principal or assistant principal
- School Psychologist
- Counselor
- School Nurse
- School Social Worker
- Behavioral Specialist
- Special education teacher
- Representatives of community agencies involved regularly with the school
- Student representation (when appropriate and feasible)
- Others who have a particular interest and ability to help with the functions

It is important to integrate this team with the infrastructure mechanisms at the school focused on instruction and management/governance. For example, the school administrator on the team must represent the team at administrative meetings; there also should be a representative at governance meetings; and another should represent the team at a Learning Support Resource *Council* formed for a family of schools (e.g., the feeder pattern).

References:

- Adelman, H.S. (1993). School-linked mental health interventions: Toward mechanisms for service coordination and integration. *Journal of Community Psychology, 21*, 309-319.
- Center for Mental Health in Schools (2001). *Resource-Oriented Teams: Key Infrastructure Mechanisms for Enhancing Education Supports*. Los Angeles: Author at UCLA.
- Center for Mental Health in Schools (2002). *Creating the Infrastructure for an Enabling (Learning Support) Component to Address Barriers to Student Learning*. Los Angeles: Author at UCLA.
- Rosenblum, L., DiCecco, M.B., Taylor, L., & Adelman, H.S. (1995). Upgrading school support programs through collaboration: Resource Coordinating Teams. *Social Work in Education, 17*, 117-124.

A comparable mechanism is needed to link feeder patterns and families of schools together to maximize use of limited resources. Such a mechanism can ensure that a group of schools in a geographic area collaborates and shares programs and personnel in many cost-effective ways related to addressing barriers. This includes achieving economies of scale by assigning learning support staff and implementing staff development across the group of schools. It encompasses streamlined processes to coordinate and integrate assistance to a family with children at several schools in a feeder pattern, all of whom require learning supports. For example, the same family may have youngsters in the elementary and middle schools, and both students may need special counseling. This might be accomplished by assigning one counselor or case manager to work with the family. Also, in connecting with community resources, a group of schools can maximize distribution of limited resources in ways that are efficient, effective, and equitable.

To help in moving forward, districts can draw on the resources of both the No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Acts. Both acts call for coordination of programs and services and, in doing so, provide mechanisms for using federal dollars to move school improvement in new directions through supporting systemic changes (see Exhibit 5).

Expanding Standards and Accountability to Encompass an Enabling or Learning Supports Component

School improvement planning across the country is "standards-based" and accountability driven. Given these realities, efforts to reform student support in ways that move it from its current marginalized status must delineate a set of standards and integrate them with instructional standards. And, to whatever degree is feasible, efforts must be made to expand the accountability framework so that it supports the ongoing development of comprehensive, multifaceted approaches to addressing barriers and promoting healthy development.

School improvement planning across the country is "standards-based" and accountability driven and so we need to develop standards and expand school accountability to encompass indicators of the impact of learning support

Standards for a Component to Address Barriers to Learning. Establishing standards is another facet of ensuring high levels of attention and support for development of comprehensive, multifaceted approaches to address barriers to learning. To illustrate a starting point in developing such a set of standards, the material in Exhibit 6 and Appendix C was developed as a working draft by one school district to provide standards, guidelines, and related quality indicators for their work. (Unfortunately, the work was aborted as a result of a change in superintendents.)

After standards are formulated, they must be thoroughly incorporated in every school's improvement plan. This is a necessary step toward making the policy commitment visible at every school, and it establishes the framework for ensuring relevant accountability. An example of standards for student support that actually are incorporated into a school improvement guide is appended to this report.

Exhibit 5

Using Federal Education Legislation in Moving Toward a Comprehensive, Multifaceted, and Integrated Approach to Addressing Barriers to Learning (e.g., Creating a Cohesive System of Learning Supports)

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (PL 107-110)

This last reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act continues to enable making the case for using a percentage of the allocated federal funds for enhancing how student/learning supports are coalesced. For example, under Title I (Improving The Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged), the need for coordination and integration of student supports is highlighted in the statement of Purpose (Section 1001) # 11 which stresses “coordinating services under all parts of this title with each other, with other educational services, and, to the extent feasible, with other agencies providing services to youth, children, and families.” It is also underscored by the way school improvement is discussed (Section 1003) and in Part A, Section 1114 on schoolwide programs. Section 1114 (a) on use of funds for schoolwide programs indicates:

“(1) IN GENERAL- A local educational agency may consolidate and use funds under this part, together with other Federal, State, and local funds, in order to upgrade the entire educational program of a school that serves an eligible school attendance area in which not less than 40 percent of the children are from low income families, or not less than 40 percent of the children enrolled in the school are from such families

(J) Coordination and integration of Federal, State, and local services and programs, including programs supported under this Act, violence prevention programs, nutrition programs, housing programs, Head Start, adult education, vocational and technical education, and job training.”

www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg2.html#sec1114

The need is also implicit in Part C on migratory children, Part D on prevention and intervention programs for neglected, delinquent, or at-risk students, and Part F on comprehensive school reform, and Part H on dropout prevention, in Title IV 21st Century Schools, and so on.

Mechanisms for moving in this direction stem from the provisions for flexible use of funds, coordination of programs, and waivers detailed in Titles VI and IX.

www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 Public Law No: 108-446

Using IDEA funds to coalesce student/learning supports is emphasized in how Title I, Part B, Section 613 (Local Educational Agency Eligibility) discusses (f) Early Intervening Services:

“(1) IN GENERAL- A local educational agency may not use more than 15 percent of the amount such agency receives under this part for any fiscal year . . . , in combination with other amounts (which may include amounts other than education funds), to develop and implement coordinated, early intervening services, which may include interagency financing structures, for students in kindergarten through grade 12 (with a particular emphasis on students in kindergarten through grade 3) who have not been identified as needing special education or related services but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in a general education environment.

(2) ACTIVITIES- In implementing coordinated, early intervening services under this subsection, a local educational agency may carry out activities that include--

(A) professional development (which may be provided by entities other than local educational agencies) for teachers and other school staff to enable such personnel to deliver scientifically based academic instruction and behavioral interventions, including scientifically based literacy instruction, and, where appropriate, instruction on the use of adaptive and instructional software; and

(B) providing educational and behavioral evaluations, services, and supports, including scientifically based literacy instruction.” ...

“(5) COORDINATION WITH ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965- Funds made available to carry out this subsection may be used to carry out coordinated, early intervening services aligned with activities funded by, and carried out under, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 if such funds are used to supplement, and not supplant, funds made available under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 for the activities and services assisted under this subsection.”

www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html?src=mr

Exhibit 6

Example of Standards for an Enabling or Learning Supports Component*

An *Enabling or Learner Supports component* is an essential facet of a comprehensive school design. This component is intended to enable *all* students to benefit from instruction and achieve high and challenging academic standards. This is accomplished by providing a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of support programs and services at every school. The district is committed to supporting and guiding capacity building to develop and sustain such a comprehensive approach in keeping with these standards.

All personnel in the district and other stakeholders should use the standards to guide development of such a component as an essential facet of school improvement efforts. In particular, the standards should guide decisions about direction and priorities for redesigning the infrastructure, resource allocation, redefining personnel roles and functions, stakeholder development, and specifying accountability indicators and criteria.

The following are 5 major standards for an effective Enabling or Learner Support component:

- Standard 1. *The Enabling or Learner Support component encompasses an evolving range of research-based programs and services designed to enable student learning and well-being by addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development.*
- Standard 2. *The Enabling or Learner Support Component is developed, coordinated, and fully integrated with all other facets of each school's comprehensive school improvement plan.*
- Standard 3. *The Enabling or Learner Support Component draws on all relevant resources at a school, in a family of schools, district-wide, and in the home and community to ensure sufficient resources are mobilized for capacity building, implementation, filling gaps, and enhancing essential programs and services to enable student learning and well-being and strengthen families and neighborhoods.*
- Standard 4. *Learning supports are applied in ways that promote use of the least restrictive and nonintrusive forms of intervention required to address problems and accommodate diversity.*
- Standard 5. *The Enabling or Learner Support Component is evaluated with respect to its impact on enabling factors, as well as increased student achievement.*

Meeting these standards is a shared responsibility. District and school leaders, staff, and all other concerned stakeholders work together to identify learning support needs and how best to meet them. The district and schools provide necessary resources, implement policies and practices to encourage and support appropriate interventions, and continuously evaluate the quality and impact of the Enabling/Learner Support Component.

*See Appendix C for the accompanying guidelines and quality indicators for each of the above.

The current accountability framework is producing a growing disconnect between the realities of what it takes to improve academic performance and where current school improvement planning is leading us

Expanded Framework for School Accountability. As everyone involved in school improvement planning knows, the only data that really counts these days are achievement test scores. These tests drive school accountability, and what such tests measure dominates most school improvement planning. This produces a growing disconnect between the realities of what it takes to improve academic performance and where many policy makers and school reformers are leading the public.

This disconnect is especially evident in schools serving what are now being referred to as “low wealth” families. Such families and those who work in schools serving them have a clear appreciation of many barriers to learning that must be addressed so that the students can benefit from the teacher’s efforts to teach. They stress that, in many schools, major academic improvements are unlikely until comprehensive and multifaceted programs/services to address these barriers are developed and pursued effectively.

At the same time, it is evident to anyone who looks that schools have no direct accountability for whether these barriers are addressed. To the contrary, when achievement test scores do not reflect an immediate impact for the investment, efforts essential for addressing barriers to development and learning often are devalued and cut.

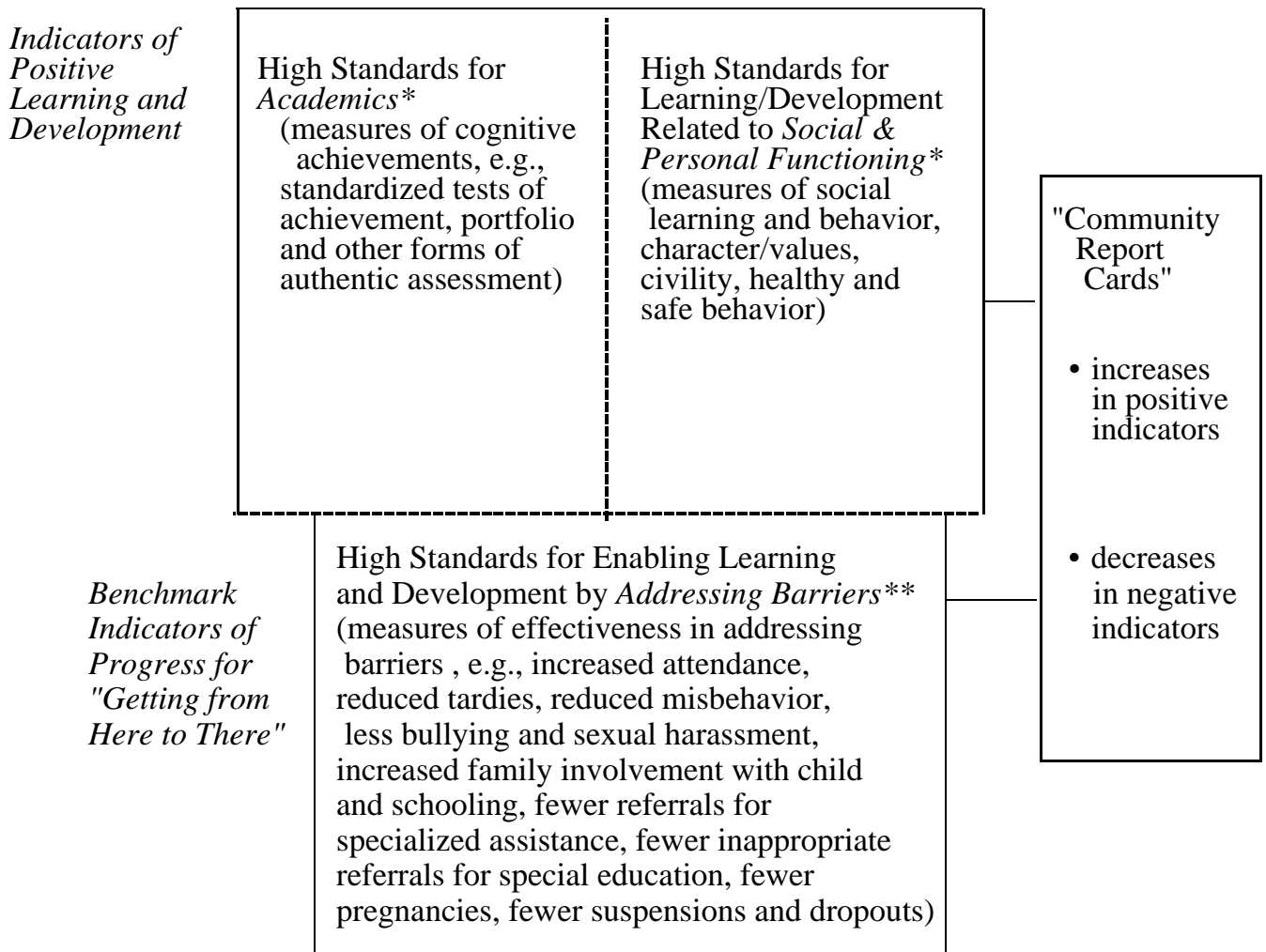
Thus, rather than building the type of comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approach that can produce improved academic performance, prevailing accountability measures are pressuring schools to maintain a narrow focus on strategies whose face validity suggests a direct route to improving instruction. The implicit underlying assumption of most of these teaching strategies is that students are motivationally ready and able each day to benefit from the teacher’s instructional efforts. The reality, of course, is that in too many schools the *majority* of youngsters are not motivationally ready and able and thus are not benefitting from the instructional improvements. For many students, the fact remains that there are a host of external interfering factors.

Logically, well designed, systematic efforts should be directed at addressing such factors. However, current accountability pressures override the logic and result in marginalization of almost every initiative not seen as directly (and quickly) leading to academic gains. Ironically, not only does the restricted emphasis on achievement measures work against the logic of what needs to be done, it works against gathering evidence on how essential and effective it is to address barriers to learning directly.

All this leads to an appreciation of the need for an expanded framework for school accountability. Such a framework must include direct measures of achievement and much more. Figure 3 highlights such an expanded framework.

For more on all this, see *New Directions for Student Support: Some Fundamentals* – online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newdirections/newdirections.pdf> .

Figure 3: Expanding the Framework for School Accountability



*Results of interventions for directly facilitating development and learning.

**Results of interventions for addressing barriers to learning and development.

Recommendations

The following recommendations build on those formulated as part of the work pursued by the *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support* which began in November, 2002.

Recommendation #1

Every school improvement planning guide should have a focus on development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive learning supports system which is fully integrated with plans for improving instruction at the school.

Of course, for such a recommendation to become a reality, policy makers will have to act. Policy at the district level (and at the state and federal levels, if feasible) should be formulated to guide and facilitate development of a potent component to address barriers to learning at every school (e.g., see Hawai'i legislation <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/wheresithappening/hawaii.pdf> and the proposed bill in California – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/ab171\(1-20-05\).pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/ab171(1-20-05).pdf)). Such policy should specify that an enabling or learning supports component is to be pursued as a primary and essential facet of school improvement and in ways that complement, overlap, and fully integrate with initiatives to improve instruction and promote healthy development. It also should recognize that development of an enabling or learning supports component requires major systemic changes and must be phased-in building on existing practices and incorporating best practices as the component evolves.

Recommendation #2

Guidelines for school improvement planning should delineate the content of an enabling or learning supports component.

In keeping with pioneering efforts already underway across the country this would include six arenas of programmatic activity: programs to (a) enhance classroom based efforts to enable learning, including re-engaging students who have become disengaged from classroom learning and promoting healthy development, (b) support transitions, (c) increase home involvement, (d) respond to and prevent crises, (e) outreach to develop greater community involvement, and (f) provide prescribed student and family assistance.

Recommendation #3

Guidelines for school improvement planning should incorporate standards and accountability indicators for each area of learning supports content.

This would include standards and accountability indices directly related to addressing barriers to learning such as increases in attendance, reductions in tardiness, reductions in problem behaviors, reductions in suspensions and dropout rates, abatement of the large number of inappropriate referrals for special education, and so forth. And, if necessary, there also should be a focus on expanding standards and accountability related to increasing personal and social functioning (e.g., goals for enhancing civility, teaching safe and healthy behavior, and character education). These accountability indices would be combined with those for instruction to yield data, over time, that evaluate the relationship between learning supports and academic achievement and enable cost-benefit analyses.

Recommendation #4

Guidelines for school improvement planning should specify ways to weave school and community resources into a cohesive and integrated continuum of interventions over time.

Such a continuum involves integrated systems to (a) promote healthy development, (b) prevent problems, (c) intervene early to address problems as soon after onset as feasible, and (d) assist those with chronic and severe problems.

Recommendation #5

Guidelines for school improvement planning should include an emphasis on redefining and reframing roles and functions and redesigning infrastructure to ensure learning supports are attended to as a primary and essential component of school improvement and to promote economies of scale.

This would include (a) redefining administrative roles and functions to ensure there is dedicated and authorized administrative leadership; (b) reframing the roles and functions of pupil services personnel and other student support staff in keeping with the functions that are required to develop the component; (c) redesigning school infrastructures to enable the work at each school site and establish formal connections among feeder pattern schools to ensure each supports each other's efforts and achieves economies of scale (e.g., establish a learning supports resource-oriented mechanism, such as a team, at a school and for the schools with which it collaborates); and (d) enhancing related administrative and staff capabilities.

A final recommendation is for researchers. Given the need to build on an evolving research base and given the demand by decision makers for data showing that student support activity improves student achievement, it is recommended that a large scale initiative be developed to address these matters.

Current initiatives for program evaluation and research projects should be redesigned to include a focus on amassing and expanding the research-base for building and evaluating such an enabling or learning supports component, with a long-range emphasis on demonstrating the component's long-term impact on academic achievement.

More recommendations?
I still haven't dealt with the last batch.



And that's the problem!

Exhibit 7

National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support

A major initiative is underway across the country to enhance comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approaches for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. The goal is to bring student support into the 21st century by revolutionizing what schools do to address barriers to learning and teaching.

The initiative stresses that new directions are an imperative for

- any school designated as low performing
- closing the achievement gap
- making schools safe

Most people hear the term *student support* and think mainly about pupil service personnel (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses) and the special services such staff provide. But, schools need and have many more resources they use to meet the challenge of ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

The initiative stresses that new directions means rethinking *all* support programs, resources, and personnel. Besides traditional support staff, learning support is provided by compensatory education personnel (e.g., Title I staff), resource teachers who focus on prereferral interventions, and personnel who provide a variety of school-wide programs (e.g., after school, safe and drug free school programs). New Directions stem from rethinking how *all* these resources are used.

In general, the national, regional, and state summits sponsored through the initiative since November 2002 have been a good stimulus and catalyst for the work. The early emphasis has been on encouraging advocacy for new directions, building a leadership network, and supporting those who are pioneering the way.

The initiatives growing impact is seen in the involvement of increasing numbers of states and localities and initiative co-sponsors. The trend has been to look to the National Initiative for support in mobilizing an active network across a state. The staff at the UCLA Center provides facilitative support and leadership. Each month the Center generates outreach mailings in all states and is receiving a steady flow of requests for more information and assistance from state and local education agencies and boards of education seeking to move in new directions. Listservs have been established to facilitate communications. Special meetings and trainings are being organized. Legislative action has been stimulated. Corwin Press is publishing two books in July that support the initiative, and these may be the beginning of a New Directions series.

Stakeholders in each state, of course, differ in how they relate to and support the National Initiative and pursue work in their own states and localities. Efforts to facilitate development of state initiatives generally have been promising. However, even without a state summit or a formal statewide initiative, pursuit of comprehensive approaches to and related systemic changes for new directions are a significant agenda item in a variety of states, school districts, and cities across the country.

Interested in learning more about this national initiative?

Go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> and click on the green button labeled "New Directions..."
Or contact: Howard Adelman or Linda Taylor, Co-Directors, Center for Mental Health in Schools,
Box 951563, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095- 1563 (866) 846-4843 – toll free;
Fax: (310) 206-8716; email: smhp@ucla.edu

Hawai`i and Iowa: Movement in the Recommended Direction

As indicated below, there are places where forward movement is underway.

Examples of a Few Major Signs of Forward Movement*

- the *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support* (see Exhibit 7)
- Legislation for a *Comprehensive Student Support System* has been enacted in Hawai`i (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/wheresithappening/hawaii.pdf>).
- Legislation for a *Comprehensive Pupil Learning Support System* has been proposed in California. (see [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/ab171\(1-20-05\).pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/ab171(1-20-05).pdf)).
- Iowa has developed a comprehensive new design for a learning support component (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/iowasystemofsupport.pdf>).
- A recent example of action by a school board comes from the Multnomah Education Service District (MESD) in Oregon. The board has established a Learning Supports policy that includes the following statements:
 - >The Board ... resolves that components to address barriers to student learning and enhance healthy development be fully integrated with efforts to improve instruction and management/governance . . . and be pursued as a primary and essential component of the MESD education reforms
 - >In keeping with the Oregon Quality Education Standards for best practices, the Board adopts the term learning supports as a unifying concept that encompasses all efforts related to addressing barriers to learning and enhancing healthy development....
 - >The Board will direct administrative efforts toward aligning, deploying and redeploying current funding and community resources related to learning support efforts in order to initiate development of comprehensive and systematic components of learning supports for schools.
 - >The Board directs the Superintendent to ensure those responsible for professional and other stakeholder development throughout the District to incorporate a substantial focus on learning support . . . into all such training and development activities.
 - >The Board will direct administrative efforts to allocate funds in ways that fill gaps related to fully developing comprehensive and systematic components of learning supports for schools.

*Our Center tries to follow and highlight this work in documents such *Where's it happening? New directions for student support and lessons learned* (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2004).

Hawai`i and Iowa provide particularly important examples of new directions for student support that can help enhance school improvement planning.

Hawai`i's School Improvement Design Guide

In reviewing school improvement planning guides, Hawai`i's is the only one we have found to date that includes a major focus on student support (see Appendix D). Because their work represents a pioneering effort, the standards and criteria are still evolving. Nevertheless, they are far ahead of anything else we have seen in action.

It is relevant to note that the catalyst for the student support reform in Hawai`i's schools was a court consent decree resulting from compliance difficulties in providing special education services. The reason that student support is such a major part of their school improvement planning guide is that the Department of Education decided not to focus only on changes to ensure special education compliance. Instead, the State enacted legislation to move forward in new directions that would provide meaningful learning supports for all students. The legislation established policy for developing a collaborative systemic reform called a Comprehensive Student Support System (CSSS).

In 1996, the Hawai`i State Department of Education initiated CSSS as its umbrella for ensuring a continuum of supports and services that provide the academic, social, emotional and physical environments necessary if all students are to have an equal opportunity to learn and attain the state's Content and Performance Standards. This continuum begins in the classroom, with differentiated classroom practices as the base of support for each student. It extends beyond the classroom to include school and community resources, and programs.

CSSS operates in all schools, linking students and families to the resources of the Department of Education (DOE), as well as those of their neighborhood, their community, the Department of Health (DOH) and other governmental and private agencies and groups. CSSS goals are:

- (1) Provide students with comprehensive, coordinated, integrated, and customized supports that are accessible, timely, and strength-based so that they can achieve in school.
- (2) Involve families, fellow students, educators, and community members as integral partners in the provision of a supportive, respectful learning environment.
- (3) Integrate the human and financial resources of appropriate public and private agencies to create caring communities at each school.

A key focus of CSSS is on prevention and early intervention. CSSS provides students, families, teachers, principals, and staff with the support they need to promote success for every student. The intent is to develop an array of student supports and provide them in a timely and effective manner so that fewer students require more complex or intense services. The array is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Matrix for reviewing nature and scope of CSSS implementation.

		LEVELS OF SUPPORT				
		(1) Basic Support	(2) Informal Additional Support	(3) Individualized Programs	(4) Specialized Services	(5) Intensive Services
42 CSSS (content/ “curriculum” for addressing barriers to learning & promoting healthy development)	Personalized classroom climate and differentiated classroom practices					
	Prevention/early intervention					
	Support for transitions					
	Family/home participation					
	Specialized assistance and crisis/emergency support					
	Community outreach and support					
		Accommodations for differences & disabilities			Specialized assistance & other intensified interventions (e.g., Special Education & School-Based Behavioral Health)	

*Specific school-wide and classroom-based activities related to positive behavior support, “prereferral” interventions, and the eight components of CDC’s Coordinated School Health Program are embedded into the above six CSSS “curriculum” areas.

Iowa's Design for a Learning Supports Component

As has occurred in so many states, Iowa has experienced growing accountability pressure as well as increasing demands from its citizens. At the same time, the population has grown more diverse, and there are unacceptable numbers of children living in poverty. As also has occurred in other states, Iowa has experience the “plateau effect” related to standardized achievement tests scores in reading and math.

This led the State Department of Education to renewed committed to strengthening learning supports for all students so that each has an equal opportunity to succeed at school. They recognize this means not only improving teaching, but also necessitates developing better ways for schools, families, and communities to facilitate learning by alleviating *barriers*, both external and internal, that can interfere with learning and teaching. The call is for a cohesive *system of learning supports* that wraps around the teacher and classroom and that is focused on achieving desired result for student success in school.

Recognizing the need for school-community collaboration, the Department is working with the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development* to move the process forward. In 2003, the Department of Education established a Design Team, engaged national consultants and a national advisory panel, and created a stakeholder group and several workgroups to develop guiding frameworks to enhance Iowa's *system* of learning supports. The guiding intervention and infrastructure frameworks are to ensure such a system is fully integrated with efforts to improve instruction. To these ends, the intent is to embed such a system into the Iowa school improvement process.

In the fall of 2004, the design for a *System of Learning Supports* was finalized. The design document is entitled: *Developing Our Youth: Fulfilling a Promise, Investing in Iowa's Future – Enhancing Iowa's Systems of Supports for Learning and Development*. It will be disseminated to policy makers and leaders at state, regional, and local levels within and outside the education system who have a compelling interest in the achievement of all students and are seeking effective ways to improve student learning. It introduces a set of new concepts for systems of supports that students need if they are to achieve at high levels (see Appendix E).

Among the tasks ahead will be to translate the design into a set of standards and quality indicators to guide school improvement planning.

* The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development is a state led interagency partnership designed to better align policies and programs for the purpose of facilitating cooperative efforts among multiple state and community agencies on youth-related issues. State level collaboration partners include the Governor's office, the Departments of Public Health, Education, Human Services, Workforce Development, and Economic Development (Commission on Volunteer Services), and the Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning of the Department of Human Rights. The Steering Committee of the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development serves as the state steering committee for this work.

In concluding, we emphasize that the growing body of resources and such pioneering efforts as those cited above provide a solid base and ample precedents upon which to expand the focus of school improvement planning guides.

The work recognizes the full implications of the statement issued by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development that stresses

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.

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- Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction <http://www.k12.wa.us/schoolImprovement/>

Additional Center Resources

Addressing What's Missing in School Improvement Planning: Expanding Standards and Accountability to Encompass an Enabling or Learning Supports Component

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

Data Related to the Need for New Directions for School Improvement

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

For Consideration in Reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act . . . Promoting a Systematic Focus on Learning Supports to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching

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

Frameworks for Systemic Transformation of Student and Learning Supports

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

Legislation in Need of Improvement: Reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act to Better Address Barriers to Learning

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

Moving Toward a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: The Next Evolutionary Stage in School Improvement Policy and Practice

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

Steps and Tools to Guide Planning and Implementation of a Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching

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

Talking Points – Five Frequently Asked Questions About: Why Address What's Missing in School Improvement Planning?

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/q&aschoolimprove.pdf>

Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

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

Transforming School Improvement to Develop a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: What District Superintendents Say They Need to Move Forward

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

Appendices

- A. Summary of Analysis of New York City's School Improvement Planning Guide (*Performance Assessment in Schools Systemwide – PASS*)
- B. Summary of Analysis of the Boston Public School's School improvement Planning Guide (*Essentials of Whole-School Improvement*)
- C. Guidelines and Quality Indicators for the Draft of Standards for an Enabling or Learning Supports Component
- D. Hawai'i's Quality Student Support Criteria and Rubrics
- E. Fulfilling a Promise, Investing in Iowa's Future: Enhancing Iowa's Systems of Supports for Learning and Development

Appendix A

Summary of Analysis of New York City's School Improvement Planning Guide (Performance Assessment in Schools Systemwide – PASS)

Arena

SCHOOL CLIMATE

1. Physical

1.1 Cleanliness

Observation of classrooms, cafeteria, playground, bathrooms, stairwells, hallways, wardrobe/storage areas, etc. Note condition changes between A.M./P.M.

Standard: The school's physical plant is clean.

1.2 Good repair

Observation of areas in 1.1 to determine conditions (e.g., falling plaster, broken glass panels, broken banisters, and non-working water fountains). Interviews of administrators and custodians regarding repair orders.

Standard: The school's physical plant is in good repair.

1.3 Appropriate space

Observation of all areas to determine the appropriateness of settings for activities (e.g. physical education and small group instruction).

Standard: Instructional and student activities occur in areas appropriate for their use.

1.4 Appropriate scheduling of facilities

Interviews of staff to ascertain use of space and overcrowding. Review of class schedules.

Standard: The use of facilities and space are scheduled to accommodate all programs, services, and activities.

Analysis: The overriding emphasis is on classrooms, cafeteria, playground, bathrooms, stairwells, hallways, wardrobe/storage areas. No specific mention is made of space used by staff whose primary roles and functions encompass addressing barriers to learning and teaching and providing learning supports that enable students to learn and teachers to teach. An emphasis on such matters would include a focus on space for meeting and working with students and their families to address problems.

The only item where the guide may be alluding to the presence of such personnel and their work is in the standard for 1.4 where the term “services” is used. “The use of facilities and space are scheduled to accommodate all programs, services, and activities.” However, it is unclear what the term “services” actually is meant to encompass.

2. Social environment

2.1 Effective safety plan

Observation of physical plant and interviews of staff and students to determine familiarity with safety procedures. Review incident reports to determine their use in revising plans.

Standard: School safety plan procedures are implemented throughout the school; the school is safe; procedures are reviewed and revised as needed.

2.2 Comprehensive conflict resolution training

Interviews of staff and students to determine extent of formal training.

Standard: Staff and students are trained to prevent, respond to, and resolve conflicts.

2.3 Sense of community

Observations of staff and student interactions to determine mutual respect and appropriate discourse. Interviews of staff and students to determine: the level of concern for children's well being.

Standard: Staff and students are respectful and friendly; there is a sense of community.

2.4 Appropriate noise levels

Observation of classrooms, hallways, and libraries, noting: student behavior, staff supervision, behavior management, use of passes, loudspeaker announcements, and transition to services.

Standard: Noise levels and transitions do not interfere with teaching and learning.

Analysis: While the guide here does cover aspects of concern about the social environment, the primary focus is on a safe school plan. The other three items in this arena limits the focus on social environment to (a) handling conflicts, (b) creating a climate of mutual respect, discourse, and friendliness, and (c) dealing with noise levels and transitions so they do not interfere with teaching and learning.

The guide indicates that social environment is part of the larger concepts of school (and classroom) climate. So, too is the concept of “sense of community.” However, the guide does not reflect an appreciation that these are emergent qualities arising from the full range of transactions, especially the many interventions at school and how they are implemented. Thus, for example, while safety and conflict resolution are fundamental concerns, the ways in which a school pursues these matters are major determinants of the type of social environment that emerges. The same is true for how the school tries to develop mutual respect and discourse and how it handles noise levels and “transition to services.” And much more.

In effect, from the perspective of addressing barriers to learning and teaching, the way in which this arena approaches social environment is much too narrow. For example:

- While training for conflict resolution is stressed, staff development is not emphasized related to the full range of interventions necessary for effective *emergency and crisis response and prevention*.
- Staff development also is not indicated with respect to minimizing an overemphasis on punishment and social control interventions and maximizing use of strategies that enhance positive social interactions, support, and guidance. Moreover, no attention is paid to the importance of capitalizing on *natural opportunities* to promote social and emotional development and well being during the school day and over the school year.
- And, the focus on *transitions* needs to go beyond transitions to services and between classes – including transition interventions designed to improve what happens during recess and lunch and before and after school; welcoming and social support interventions for newcomer students, families and staff and to address adjustment problems; intersession and summer programs; etc.

Moreover, the term “staff” is too ambiguous when it comes to the above matters. Many of the necessary interventions involve more than classroom teachers (e.g., pupil personnel staff, clerical staff), and could benefit from the involvement of community resources (e.g., families, youth agencies, gang prevention units, etc.). The roles and functions of such personnel need to be integrated and aligned with standards for enhancing the type of school climate that maintains student engagement in learning and is instrumental in re-engaging and maintaining students who have disengaged from classroom learning.

3. DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION PLAN

3.1 School Leadership Team-designed CEP

Interviews of administrators, teachers and parents to determine their involvement in the design process.

Standard: The school leadership team designs the CEP.

3.2 High expectations

Review all components of CEP to determine if measurable objectives in all subject areas reflect high standards, belief in excellence, and challenging curriculum.

Standard: The CEP reflects high expectations.

3.3 Full implementation

Observation of school activities and interviews of staff, students and parents to confirm that action plans are being carried out.

Standard: The CEP is being implemented.

3.4 Inclusive reviewing and Revising

Interviews of staff, students and parents to determine their role in modifying plans, and to review reasons for revisions (e.g., personnel changes and other changes in circumstances).

Standard: Administrative, teaching staff, parents, and secondary school students (if applicable) review and revise the CEP.

4. SCHOOL MISSION/PHILOSOPHY

4.1 Complete statement

Analyze content for inclusion of all three components.

Standard: The school mission statement contains the following characteristics: 1) a belief that students can meet standards of excellence; 2) an emphasis on the role of the school and home in ensuring children's cognitive, creative, and social growth; and 3) the responsibility of the school to engage students in productive activities.

4.2 Awareness and internalization

Interviews of administrators, teachers, parents and students, to determine if all members of the school community know and understand the school's mission. Review documents (e.g., memos, newsletters, postings, and handbooks) to determine that school mission is reflected throughout.

Standard: Members of the school community can express the belief and values of the mission statement.

Analysis: The content of a school's plan and statements of mission/philosophy provide an indication of what the planners view as a comprehensive approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Analyses of who is involved in planning usually helps to understand what is and isn't emphasized and included in the plan.

As indicated here, the school leadership team is described as consisting of administrators, teachers, parents, (and secondary school students if applicable). Notably missing is a reference to pupil personnel staff and other staff who interact with teachers, parents, administrators, students, and each other and play significant roles in creating the climate at a school and in addressing problems. (And, in some instances, fostering problems.) The absence of references to such staff reflects their marginalized status at most schools.

Such personnel probably were not involved in a significant way in the development of this Performance Review Guide, which means the work they do is unlikely to be attended to appropriately.

A planning group devoid of staff whose primary concern is addressing barriers to learning and teaching generally will lead to insufficient plans for addressing such barriers. That is, the plan is unlikely to be truly *comprehensive*, and while what is planned may be fully implemented, interventions needed to give many students an equal opportunity to succeed at school will be absent or ignored. Moreover, the deficiencies are unlikely to be corrected by reviews and revisions that focus only on measuring outcomes associated with what is in the plan. Under these conditions, one should expect a continued marginalization of the status and efforts of personnel whose job it is to provide supports to enable all students to learn and teachers to teach effectively.

A few examples from the guide illustrate the deficiencies:

- reference to measurable objectives that reflect high expectations only stress the *curriculum*
- reference in the mission statement to the role of the home does not indicate the need for the school to assist those at home in overcoming barriers that interfere with students doing well at school
- reference in the mission statement is made to engaging students but no reference to the need to re-engage those who have disengaged
- no reference is made in the mission statement to addressing barriers to learning and promoting health and well-being to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to learn and develop in ways that meet the school's high expectations.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT

Analysis: Areas 5 through 12 are grouped under the category *Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*. As such, the focus is on teachers and directly facilitating teaching. From the perspective of addressing barriers to learning and teaching, the questions that arise are: Does the focus account for (a) what should be done when a teacher indicates some students are doing poorly? and (b) what should be done to prevent students from starting to manifest learning and behavior problems?

In general, the items in areas 5 through 12 do not pull for planning a cohesive set of interventions designed to address barriers to learning and teaching or for ensuring that any interventions designed for these purposes are aligned and integrated with planning and implementation related to *Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*. Moreover, the absence of standards for addressing barriers to learning and teaching results in a guide that does refer to the need to align with standards for ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

5. INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Alignment of standards

Observation of pacing schedules, lessons and bulletin boards to confirm that instruction reflects current standards.

Standard: The school's instructional program is aligned with mandated standards.

5.2 Appropriate staff Assignments

Interviews of staff to determine assignments and certification.

Standard: Instructional program assignments match school staff's subject-area certification or their work and educational experience.

5.3 Continuity of Instruction

Interviews of staff to determine: knowledge of last year's and next year's curriculum, and if portfolios and other student work are passed from grade to grade.

Standard: The school has implemented an instructional program that ensures continuity of instruction.

5.4 Lesson alignment

Observation of lessons to determine if they are planned in relation to the school's specific programs.

Standard: Lessons are aligned with the instructional program.

5.5 Instructional review and revision

Interviews of staff to determine if data are used for instructional revision.

Standard: The administrative and teaching staff review and revise the *instructional program* to address current *student* needs.

Analysis: As noted above, the focus on instructional program planning does not address what is to be done when direct efforts to facilitate teaching are not effective other than to "revise the instructional program."

Consequently, alignment of standards is limited to standards for instruction, staff assignments refers to instructional staff, and so forth.

Thus, implementation of the instructional program is planned in isolation of efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching.

6. INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

6.1 Subject-specific schoolwide grading policy

Review of school handbooks, and interviews of staff, students, and parents to determine that there are specific grading criteria for each subject.

Standard: The instructional program includes a schoolwide grading policy that has specific criteria for each subject area.

6.2 Supportive texts and Materials

Interviews of staff and examination of classroom materials (e.g., texts, manipulatives, and software) to determine their match with instructional programs.

Standard: Textbooks and instructional materials support the school's instructional program.

6.3 Successful skills, values, and attitudes

Interviews of staff and students to determine that the school program includes student government, peer mediation, community service projects, and individual/group guidance.

Standard: The instructional program contains a full range of objectives in skills, values, and attitudes that promote success in and beyond school.

6.4 Real-world applications

Interviews of staff, students, and parents to determine that career day, community service projects, and trips are part of the school program.

Standard: The instructional program provides opportunities to apply learning in real-world settings.

Analysis: As noted above, the guide does not specifically focus on how the instructional program characteristics should be designed to meet the needs of students who are doing poorly or on what should be done to prevent students from starting to manifest learning and behavior problems. Thus, planning related to each item is unlikely to address matters such as how the *grading policy* should be designed to minimize having a negative impact on a student's attitudes toward school and teachers (e.g., when students consistently receive poor grades, a downward spiral in such attitudes is likely). Relatedly, no attention is given to the dilemma of having to assign negative grades at the same time the teacher is trying to re-engage students who have become disengaged from classroom learning.

A similar concern arises around *supportive texts and materials*. It is unclear whether the focus in matching resources to the instructional program goes beyond ensuring a match to designated grade levels (e.g., 6th grade texts for 6th grade math). The need in addressing the needs of students who are doing poorly is to match both the current *motivation and capabilities* of individual students (e.g., personalized instruction).

The questions that arise with respect to the item on *skills, values, and attitudes* is what is meant by a *full range* and how these relate to success in school for students who are doing poorly and for those who already have disengaged from classroom learning. A related question is how this item addresses instructional program characteristics that have a negative impact on skills, values, and attitudes.

With respect to *real-world applications*, addressing the needs of students who are doing poorly and for those who already have disengaged from classroom learning requires a focus not just on *applying* learning in real-world settings. For such students, the program must be designed to use real-world settings to maximize the likelihood that students will find the type of meaning and hope for the future that helps enhance their desire to re-engage in classroom learning. Neither the standard nor the examples cited in the guide focus on the desired outcomes of real-world applications.

7. SCHOOL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

7.1 Alignment with standards

Review of CEP. Interviews of test coordinators and teachers to determine the nature of the testing program.

Standard: The school assessment program is aligned with mandated standards.

7.2 Wide variety of assessments

Review testing schedule, projects, presentations, portfolios, writing rubrics, midterms, finals and unit tests and interviews of staff to determine the variety of assessments used.

Standard: The school assessment program includes authentic modes of assessment, school developed tests, and standardized tests.

7.3 Review and revision

Interview of administrators, staff developers, and teachers to determine how changes in the assessment program are made.

Standard: Administrative and teaching staff review and revise the school assessment program to address current student needs.

Analysis: What is measured, especially with respect to accountability demands, receives the most attention in schools. The guide's focus is on assessment related to direct efforts to facilitate teaching. And, as noted above, the guide does not specifically focus on how the assessment program should be designed to meet the needs of students who are doing poorly or on how to use assessment to provide data for preventing learning and behavior problems.

While it is feasible that the items calling for a *wide variety of assessments* and *review and revision* could address these matters (i.e., “revise the school assessment program to address current student needs”), the emphasis in the standards and the examples so strongly stresses direct efforts to facilitate teaching that plans to gather assessment data relevant to addressing barriers to learning and teaching will not be included.

8. INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

8.1 Planning reflected in lessons

Interviews of staff and students, observation of classes, and review of notebooks, folders, homework and bulletin boards to determine relationship of work to prior learning.

Standard: Lessons reflect planning to achieve clear objectives and build on prior knowledge.

8.2 Promotion of critical thinking

Observation of student and teacher interactions for distinguishing between how/why, fact/opinion, and for student-generated questions and problem solving activities.

Standard: Lessons include questioning techniques and problem solving activities that promote achievement of instructional goals and require critical thinking.

8.3 Variety of strategies for evaluation

Observation of teacher requests for explanations and other probes of students during lessons to determine how teachers evaluate student learning.

Standard: Instruction includes a variety of strategies to evaluate students' learning throughout the lesson.

8.4 Engaging and challenging lessons

Observation of lessons to determine the extent of student involvement. Interviews of teachers to determine how different abilities of students are identified and addressed.

Standard: Lessons engage and challenge students at their appropriate developmental/cognitive levels.

Analysis: The focus here essentially is on practices that are well-designed for students who currently are motivated and able to profit from rather broad-band (non-personalized approaches) to instruction. The guide does not specifically focus on the necessity for instructional practice to address students who are doing poorly and what should be done to prevent students from starting to manifest learning and behavior problems.

With respect to engaging and re-engaging students, the standard is “lessons [that] engage and challenge students at their appropriate *developmental/ cognitive levels.*” This reflects an assumption that matching developmental/ cognitive levels is sufficient to engage students who are not motivated to learn in the classroom. Thus, it ignores the need for teachers also to match the motivational status of students who are not readily engaged, and it does not address the problem of students who are actively disengaged from classroom learning. Such motivational concerns, of course, are of particular relevance in classrooms and schools where a large number of students are doing poorly.

9. MULTIPLE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES/APPROACHES

9.1 Strategies for diverse learning styles

Interviews of staff to determine how diverse learning styles are addressed. Observations of teaching strategies (e.g., use of multi-media and manipulatives, and cooperative learning)

Standard: Teachers use a variety of instructional approaches that are appropriate to students' diverse learning styles and abilities.

9.2 Varied instructional grouping

Interviews with staff and students and observation of classes regarding student projects, grouping strategies, and flexible room arrangements that encourage a variety of instructional approaches.

Standards: Teachers use whole class instruction, independent learning, and working together in small, mutually supportive groups.

9.3 Inclusive instruction

Observation of classes and interviews of staff and students to determine if instructional approaches help special needs students to meet high standards.

Standard: Instructional approaches help all students, including those with special needs, to achieve mandated standards.

9.4 Inclusive environment

Interviews of students and observation of classes to determine if special needs students are mainstreamed and have equal access to labs, computers, library, etc.

Standard: Students are educated in an inclusive environment.

Analysis: This arena does address the need to focus on the full range of learners. It especially focuses on policies for the inclusion of students with “diverse learning styles and abilities” and “special needs.”

In doing so, however, the emphasis is only on teachers use of multiple “instructional” strategies. There is no reference to connecting instructional approaches with other strategies to address barriers to learning and teaching. There also is no reference to connecting teachers and support staff to ensure that students truly have an equal opportunity to succeed in the classroom.

10. LIBRARY/MULTIMEDIA CENTER

10.1 Comprehensive materials and services

Observation of library/ multi media center and interviews of librarians, teachers, students, and parents to determine the presence of the characteristics.

Standard: The school library/multimedia center is characterized by the following: 1) sufficiently stocked with print, computer, and multimedia materials to support the school's instructional program; 2) materials address individual student interests and needs; 3) materials are up-to-date, in good condition, and attractively displayed; 4) instructional, electronic and reference services are provided to the entire school community.

10.2 Access

Review of library and class schedules and interviews of staff, parents, and students to determine active use of library/multi-media center.

Standard: Students, their parents, and school staff have access to the library throughout the school day, as well as before and after school.

10.3 Expanding skills

Examination of student work and interviews of staff and students to determine the use of library/multi-media center to enhance instruction.

Standard: Students use the library/multimedia center to practice and expand their research, critical thinking, writing, and subject area skills.

Analysis: The focus on library/multimedia center highlights the importance of such resources to enhancing instruction. Again, however, the guide does not include an emphasis on using library/multimedia center resources to address the needs of students who are doing poorly and ignores the potential value of such resources in preventing student problems. Note also that the interviews to determine whether such resources are being used well do not include student support staff.

11. COMPUTERS

11.1 Internet connection

Observation of technology center, library, and classrooms.

Standard: The building is wired for computer networking and Internet access via dedicated communications lines; hardware and software have been installed in technology centers, the library, and most classrooms.

11.2 Frequent student access

Interviews of staff and students, and review of schedules, to determine how and when students use computers.

Standard: Students have frequent access to computers in classrooms, the library, and technology centers

11.3 Well-trained teachers

Interviews of staff developers and teachers to determine who received training, and the level of proficiency.

Standard: Teachers are trained to be *proficient* in using computers as instructional tools.

11.4 Daily tech support

Interviews of teachers to determine the availability of technical support.

Standard: The school has daily access to a technology support system.

11.5 Expanding skills

Interviews of staff and students, and observations of classes and student work to determine how computers are used to develop skills.

Standard: Students use computers to practice and expand their research, critical thinking, writing, and subject area skills.

Analysis: The guide's focus on computers highlights the importance of such resources to enhancing instruction and "expanding skills." Computer technology can play a significant role in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and in preventing student problems. However, these concerns are not highlighted in the guide, and thus are unlikely to be articulated in a school improvement plan based on the guide. Note also the reference to well-trained teachers, but no reference to student support staff.

12. STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

12.1 Standards-driven assessment

Interviews to determine if teachers and students are aware of student performance in comparison to standards. Observe types of corrections in student notebooks and folders.

Standard: Teachers and students review student performance to determine if high standards are being met.

12.2 Instructional use of diagnostic information

Interviews of teachers to determine if item skills analyses and classroom assessments are being used to modify instruction.

Standard: Instruction is modified based on diagnostic information.

12.3 Display of student work

Observations of hallways and classrooms. Interviews of teachers and students to determine if they can provide criteria for 'exemplary work'.

Standard: Current and exemplary student work is displayed in hallways and classrooms.

12.4 Review of homework

Examination of notebooks/Homework folders for quality of comments, and nature of assignments. Interviews of students, teachers, and parents to describe homework policy.

Standard: Teachers assign and review homework that builds on lessons, which support high standards.

12.5 Disseminating diagnostic information

Interviews of teachers, parents, students to determine what opportunities exist to share and explain student progress.

Standard: The school provides diagnostic information from assessments of individual student progress to teachers, parents and students.

Analysis: Clearly, the focus here is only on instruction. Yet, the reality is that every school has some interventions to address students who are doing poorly. The guide does not focus on the need for student assessment and evaluation related to such interventions. Thus, it is unlikely that a school following this guide will plan improvements related to assessing and evaluating students in ways that can upgrade the full range of interventions in use with students who are doing poorly. And, the plan probably also will not focus on improving assessment and evaluation related to practices used to identify problems early in order to ameliorate them before they become worse.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Analysis: Arenas 13 and 14 divide staff development into (a) professional development and (b) development of staff. In both arenas, the emphasis is on the teaching staff. Note the references to “teacher-identified needs,” “knowledge and techniques that promote excellence in instructions,” “certification of teachers,” “teaching staff applies professional development to instruction.” Given the range of personnel at a school, one would expect a school improvement planning guide to cover all staff, especially with reference to staff development.

13. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

13.1 Setting priorities

Interviews of staff developers and teachers to determine if professional development activities have been implemented on the basis of the school’s needs analysis.

Standard: In addition to city/district mandates and instructional content, the school’s professional development priorities are based on teacher-identified needs, and analysis of student outcomes.

13.2 Excellent content

Review of plans, meeting agendas and content of professional library, as well as interviews of staff developers and teachers to determine if activities (e.g., courses, conferences, and workshops) reflect current instructional research findings.

Standard: Professional development introduces knowledge and techniques that promote excellence in instruction, and which are based on current school improvement research findings.

13.3 Wide variety of techniques

Interviews and observations of staff developers, programmers and teachers to determine extent of buddy system, common preps, mentoring, demonstration lessons and in-class support.

Standard: School-initiated professional development includes mentoring, modeling, coaching, and demonstration activities to support implementation of effective teaching and learning.

13.4 Ongoing mutual problem solving and experimentation

Interviews and observations of teachers, staff developers and programmers to determine extent of common preps, intervisitations, teaming, and grade, and subject area conferences.

Standard: Staff has ongoing opportunities for mutual problem solving and experimentation to improve their instruction.

Analysis: Because professional development is identified in this guide as *teacher* development, it is unlikely that a school improvement plan based on this guide will focus on staff development for student support staff and other professionals who have a daily role to play with students who are doing poorly or whose future problems could be prevented.

14. DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF

14.1 Feedback and Support

Interviews of staff to determine extent of support provided at pre and post observation conferences, workshops, and demonstration lessons.

Standard: Based on formal and informal observations of teaching/learning, administrators provide support and feedback to staff.

14.2 Timely certification

Interviews of staff to determine how teachers are encouraged to become certified.

Standard: Administrators ensure that all teachers in the school become certified in a timely fashion.

14.3 Ongoing self- development

Interviews of staff to determine extent of involvement in nonmandated professional development (e.g., courses, conferences, workshops, and professional journals).

Standard: Staff engage in ongoing professional self-development.

14.4 Direct impact on instruction

Observation of classes and interviews of staff and students to determine extent of application of professional development content.

Standard: As a result of participation, teaching staff applies professional development to instruction.

Analysis: Because this guide’s reference to “development of staff” focuses on *teachers*, it is unlikely that a school improvement plan based on this guide will generate an emphasis on development of student support staff and others who have a daily role to play with students who are doing poorly or whose future problems could be prevented.

15. PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES

15.1 Comprehensive services

Review of referral process and interviews of teachers, students, parents and service providers to determine range of students served and availability of intervention services.

Standard: Pupil personnel services are comprehensive to serve the needs of students.

15.2 Implementation and coordination

Interviews of administrators, teachers, providers, students and parents to determine how the referral process is implemented.

Standard: Review pupil personnel committee minutes, school organization chart and ladder of referral. The following processes for referring and supporting students are implemented: 1) A pupil personnel committee meets regularly to review referrals; 2) The roles of providers of pupil personnel services are delineated; 3) Providers follow up on referrals; 4) Providers regularly communicate with classroom teachers and each other.

15.3 Ongoing review

Interviews of administrators, service providers and teachers to determine changing student needs, the process for review of services, and changes made.

Standards: Pupil personnel services are reviewed to ensure that student needs are met.

15.4 Attendance oversight and outreach

Interviews of staff, parents & students to determine how families are notified and who provides services. Review of attendance plan and attendance- and cutting referrals.

Standard: Procedures are implemented for monitoring school and class attendance and providing outreach to students and their families.

15.5 Ongoing external collaboration

Interviews with staff, parents and students to determine the extent of linkages with outside agencies..

Standard: Providers of pupil personnel services collaborate with external groups to expand services that support the school's instructional program.

Analysis: The guide recognizes that school improvement planning should focus on *Support Services*. However, it reduces this complex arena to the topic of *Pupil Personnel Services*. It states that pupil personnel services should be “comprehensive to serve the needs of students.” However, the guide does not indicate what is meant by the term *comprehensive*. The emphasis on pupil referral and support *services*, attendance oversight and outreach, and external collaboration is not a comprehensive approach; rather the guide reflects a traditionally limited perspective of the work of student support staff.

The intent of the guide seems to be to focus on enhancing the quality of what has been the traditional role and functions of pupil services professionals. Such an approach to school improvement planning will not result in fundamental rethinking of student or learning supports interventions.

Maintaining a view of student support as pupil personnel services results in a referral mentality among teachers and other school staff (and others). Thus, the primary answer to the question: *What should be done when a teacher indicates some students are doing poorly?* tends to remain: *Refer the student immediately for special services*. This bypasses the strategy of classroom-based approaches and other programmatic strategies (including personalized teacher inservice training) that might abrogate the need for so many individual student referrals. The limited perspective of student or learning supports also works against strengthening ways to prevent and systematically intervene as soon as a problem is noted. By retaining a narrow, case-oriented, services approach, the guide perpetuates the prevailing “waiting for failure” climate that permeates schooling for too many students. And, it ends up flooding referral, triage, and support services because more students are referred than can be served.

Calls to rethink student or learning supports interventions stress systemic changes that can evolve a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approach encompassing ways to enhance classroom and school-wide programs to better address barriers to learning and teaching and promote healthy development. Such an approach encompasses, but is not limited to a focus on those students who need special services.

16. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

16.1 Planning considering parent needs

Interviews with staff and parents to determine how parent needs are assessed and programs are scheduled.

Standard: Planning of schoolwide, grade, and classroom activities takes into account the resources, needs, and availability of parents.

16.2 Frequent outreach

Interviews of parents and review of letters, calendars, and meeting minutes to determine the nature and frequency of communication with caretakers, noting use of home languages.

Standard: The school provides outreach to parents or other caretakers.

16.3 High level of parent participation

Interviews of school leadership team members and other parents to assess level of parent participation.

Standard: Many parents and other caretakers participate in classroom, schoolwide, and planning activities.

16.4 Ample opportunities to discuss student progress

Interviews of parents to determine opportunities for conferences with teachers.

Standard: In addition to mandated parent-teacher conferences, parents or other caretakers have ample opportunities to discuss student progress.

Analysis: Schools vary dramatically with respect to their perspectives about and commitment to enhancing parent involvement. The common approach is to encourage parents to come to scheduled events, be involved in ensuring homework is done, and to work with the school when their youngster is having behavior and/or learning problems. In addition, parent representation is expected on certain “leadership” teams/councils. This is an extremely limited approach to enhancing parent involvement, and it is the approach reflected in the guide.

From the perspective of those students who are not doing well, research indicates the need for a more comprehensive approach. First, the emphasis needs to be on *home* involvement. This ensures a focus on situations where students are being raised by grandparents, aunts, older siblings, or in foster care. Second, it must be recognized that in many schools the percentage of homes that are significantly involved is relatively small, especially in the upper grades. The need is not just for outreach to connect parents with the usual array of involvements in schooling. Rather, the need is to develop a comprehensive range of interventions designed to strengthen the home situation, enhance family problem solving capabilities, and increase support for student well-being.

A comprehensive approach requires school improvement planning that stresses school-wide and classroom-based systems and programs to (a) address the specific learning and support needs of adults in the home, such as offering them ESL, literacy, vocational and citizenship classes, enrichment and recreational opportunities, and mutual support groups, (b) help those in the home improve how basic student obligations are met, such as providing guidance related to parenting and how to help with schoolwork, (c) improve forms of basic communication that promote the well-being of student, family, and school, (d) enhance the home-school connection and sense of community, (e) foster participation in making decisions essential to a student's well-being, (f) facilitate home support of student learning and development, (g) mobilize those at home to problem solve related to student needs, and (h) elicit help (support, collaborations, and partnerships) from those at home with respect to meeting classroom, school, and community needs. The context for some of this activity may be a *parent or family center* if one has been established at the site. (As can be seen, the guides focus on *Parent Education* reflects only one aspect of such a comprehensive range of interventions.)

17. PARENT EDUCATION

17.1 Extensive school support

Interviews of staff and parents to determine how family education needs are assessed, and current educational opportunities available to parents (e.g., GED, ESL, and parenting skills workshops).

Standard: Parent education includes the following:
1) assessing the needs of students and their families; 2) providing adult education opportunities; 3) providing activities to help develop skills that facilitate students' education.

17.2 Appropriate external referrals

Interviews of staff and parents to determine linkages to educational resources. Examination of informational leaflets, etc. in the school.

Standard: The school recommends and refers family members to other institutions and professionals to help them develop education, career, parenting and life skills.

Analysis: As noted, from the perspective of addressing barriers to school learning the education of those in the home who are involved with a student's development and performance is one key facet of a comprehensive range of home involvement interventions. (See the range of interventions indicated above.) The guide highlights the one facet at the expense of others that are essential if a school is to develop a comprehensive approach to enhancing home involvement. Thus, it is likely that a school following the guide will not address other essential facets of an improved approach for enhancing the school involvement of those in the home.

18. INSTRUCTIONAL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

18.1 Adequate subject-specific consumables

Observation of classrooms and interviews of subject area supervisors, teachers, and students to determine the availability of consumables.

Standard: Throughout the school year, consumable supplies are adequate and available in all subject areas.

18.2 Adequate subject-specific equipment

Observation of classroom and staff interviews to determine adequacy of supplies in each subject area. Review of school inventory control.

Standard: Throughout the school year, the stock of equipment, manipulatives, and books is adequate and available in all subject areas.

18.3 Equality of opportunity

Review room-use schedule in special areas such as computer labs and library/multi-media center. Review class schedules

Standard: Students have equal opportunities to use up-to-date equipment and supplies.

Analysis: This arena does address the matter of equity of opportunity with regard to available instructional equipment and supplies. However, because the emphasis is on “instructional” resources, there is no reference to the equipment and supplies needed by teachers and student support staff to address barriers to learning and teaching, including resources for re-engaging students who have become disengaged from classroom learning. There also is no reference to resources for enhancing home and community involvement, providing support for transitions, responding to and preventing crises, and providing special student and family assistance when needed.

19. EXTERNAL RESOURCES

19.1 Grant seeking

Interviews of staff to determine the extent of grant development. Review current grants and applications.

Standard: The administrative and teaching staff seeks grants and in-kind services to develop and expand needed support services and resources.

19.2 Shared resources

Interviews with staff to determine the extent of collaboration.

Standard: The school cooperates with other schools and external organizations to share resources.

19.3 Frequent use of community resources

Interviews with staff and parents to determine how resources are utilized. Observations of bulletin board displays highlighting community resources within the school.

Standard: Community resources are identified, utilized, and integrated into school programs.

19.4 Equitable allocation

Interviews with staff, parents, and students to determine who participates in various programs.

Standard: The allocation of external resources for programs and students is equitable.

Analysis: In this section, the guide does recognize the need for developing and expanding student supports. The emphasis, however, is on seeking grants, sharing resources, publicizing what is available in the community, and monitoring external resources to ensure there is equitable allocation.

In terms of school improvement planning, the emphasis on external resources directs attention away from rethinking ways to improve use of internal resources. Planners are guided to think in terms of what can be acquired or used externally. And, note that it is the administrative and teaching staff who are to seek “grants and in-kind services to develop and expand needed support services and resources.” In effect, the internal resources that the school already budgets for student support are not part of the discussion.

Calls for improving student and learning supports stress that school improvement plans need to focus first on designing how best to address barriers to learning and teaching and, then, on reviewing all the internal resources the school already is deploying. This provide the basis for (a) redeploying such resources in keeping with an improved approach to student and learning supports and (b) working on ways to integrate external resources to fill gaps and strengthen practices.

20. SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

20.1 Setting clear criteria

Review of documents and interviews of school leadership team members and teachers to determine how criteria were established.

Standard: The school leadership team sets clearly defined criteria for judging the school's effectiveness.

20.2 Using data

Interviews with members of school leadership team to confirm their use of aggregate data.

Standard: The school leadership team uses aggregate schoolwide data to assess school effectiveness.

20.3 Sharing results

Interviews with members of each constituent group to determine how PASS results were shared.

Standard: The complete results of PASS or other school performance reviews are shared with **all** constituent groups in the school community.

20.4 Modifying school plans

Interviews with school leadership team members to determine how school plans were modified (e.g. CEP).

Standard: The results of PASS or other school performance reviews and schoolwide data are used in modifying school plans to ensure that high standards are met.

Analysis: The guide calls for a school to plan self-evaluation by focusing on *school effectiveness*. Data on school effectiveness are to be gathered and disaggregated and used to modify plans based on what has been included in the school improvement plan.

Because of the deficiencies noted in the guide, it should be evident by this point that critical data related to school effectiveness in addressing barriers to learning and teaching will not be gathered.

Appendix B

Summary of Analysis of the Boston Public School's School Improvement Planning Guide (Essentials of Whole-School Improvement)

Essential 1: Use Effective Instructional Practices and Create a Collaborative School Climate to Improve Student Learning

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Reflective Questions</i>	<i>Analysis:</i>
Literacy		
1.1 Literacy initiative is consistently implemented	<p>To what extent do teachers effectively implement standards-based literacy instruction and the workshop approach?</p> <p>To what extent does professional development support continued learning about literacy instruction and the workshop approach?</p>	<p>Analysis: The primary emphasis is on teacher implementation of instructional practices and teacher collaborative learning about such practices. There is also mention of teacher and student internalization of classroom rules and instructional routines.</p> <p>An emphasis on improving instruction, of course, is fundamental, necessary, and constant.</p> <p>From the perspective of <i>enabling</i> student learning and addressing barriers to learning and teaching, however, such an emphasis is insufficient. Focusing on improving instruction in isolation of addressing barriers to learning and teaching tends to ignore essentials that enable students to learn and teachers to teach. This is particularly evident here in the <i>limited</i> reference to school climate. School and classroom climate have been identified as major determiners of classroom and school behavior and learning. Analyses of research suggest significant relationships between school and classroom climate and matters such as student engagement, behavior, self-efficacy, achievement, social and emotional development, principal leadership style, stages of educational reform, teacher burnout, and overall quality of school life. For example, studies report strong associations between achievement levels and classrooms that are perceived as having greater cohesion and goal direction and less disorganization and conflict. Research also suggests that the impact of classroom climate may be greater on students from low-income homes and groups that often are discriminated against. Understanding the nature of school and classroom climate is a fundamental and complex element in improving schools. The climate at a school and in a classroom is an emergent quality arising from the full range of transactions, especially the many ways staff work with students and each other. The concept of school and classroom climate implies the intent to establish and maintain a positive context that facilitates learning, but in practice, school and classroom climates range from hostile or toxic to welcoming and supportive and can fluctuate daily and over the school year. A primary focus needs to be on addressing those factors that interfere with creating a supportive, caring, and nurturing climate. How instruction is planned, implemented, and evaluated is part of this, but an equally important facet is what is done to prevent learning, behavior, and emotional problems and how problems are responded to when they emerge.</p>
Math		
1.2 Mathematics initiative is consistently implemented	<p>To what extent do teachers implement the standards based mathematics curriculum?</p> <p>To what extent does professional development in mathematics support continued learning about the mathematics curriculum?</p>	
1.3 School reflects a collaborative learning climate	<p>To what extent is a collaborative culture that emphasizes accelerated learning shared across classrooms?</p> <p>To what extent have teachers and students internalized classroom rules and instructional routines?</p> <p>High Schools: How does each SLC or small school create a climate conducive to learning?</p>	

Essential 2: Examine Student Work and Data to Drive Instruction and Professional Development

Indicators

2.1 Instructional teams use student work and data to improve instruction

High Schools: Instructional teams are formed in SLC clusters

2.2 Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) uses student work and data to make school-wide instructional decisions

Reflective Questions

To what extent do instructional teams use student work and data? [The full range of student work and data includes written work, standardized tests, and classroom-based formative assessments.]

To what extent does the ILT manage and use student data?

To what extent does ILT guide and review looking at student work and data across instructional teams?

Analysis: As this “essential” highlights, analyses of student work and data (especially accountability indicators) increasingly are seen as drivers for the work and professional development of school staff. The goal, of course, is to gather the most pertinent information and use it appropriately. The focus here is limited to the instructional arena and professional development for teachers related to their instructional practices.

Concerns arise about data to drive efforts to prevent learning, behavior, and emotional problems and respond to problems when they emerge. Examples of what teachers experience related to student “work” or lack thereof and data that should drive professional development for teachers and other school staff (e.g., student support staff) include frequent absences and tardies, behavior problems, excessive difficulty adjusting to classroom rules and routines, lack of engagement in classroom learning and noncompletion of class and homework assignments, etc. These data call for much more professional development than typically is provided either for teachers or support staff. These are basic barriers to learning and teaching and are rarely responsive to simplistic classroom management and social control strategies.

Essential 3: Invest in Professional Development to Improve Instruction

Indicators

Reflective Questions

3.1 Collaborative coaching and learning builds adult knowledge

To what extent do teachers and administrators learn from coaches?

To what extent do teachers learn from each other?

3.2 Professional development plan* addresses needs and builds ownership

To what extent is the professional development plan implemented?

To what extent is there ownership of the professional development plan?

* one component of the BPS Whole-School Improvement Plan (WSIP)

Analysis: As noted, the guide presents professional development as focused on teachers and directly improving instruction.

Note again that the professional development of other school staff is not emphasized (e.g., student support staff), and there is not a focus on enhancing professional development related to what needs to be done to prevent learning, behavior, and emotional problems and how to respond effectively to problems when they emerge.

Essential 4: Share Leadership to Sustain Instructional Improvement

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Reflective Questions</i>	<i>Analysis:</i>
4.1 Leadership development is explicitly planned	To what extent does the principal-headmaster demonstrate instructional leadership?	As is clearly stated, the emphasis is on shared leadership related to instructional improvement.
High Schools: Attention is paid to the leadership development of small school and SLC leaders	To what extent do the principal-headmaster and ILT support and build teacher leadership?	Mentioned with respect to shared leadership are those in administrative positions and teachers. The focus again is primarily on instructional improvement.
4.2 Shared leadership develops through collaborative planning, review, and reflection	To what extent does the principal-headmaster support the development of a representative and strong ILT?	No mention is made of other school staff (e.g., student support staff) or of the importance of improving efforts to prevent learning, behavior, and emotional problems and respond effectively to problems when they emerge.
	To what extent does the principal-headmaster and ILT assess implementation of the literacy and mathematics curricula?	

Essential 5: Focus Resources to Support Instructional Improvement and Improved Student Learning

Indicators

Reflective Questions

5.1 Staff are hired and assigned to support targeted instruction

To what extent does the school assign staff to maximize individualized instruction for students?

To what extent are students grouped to maximize student learning?

5.2 School hires, inducts, supports, and retains high quality teachers

To what extent does the school hire, induct, support, and retain high-quality teachers?

5.3 School schedule maximizes time for instruction and planning

To what extent does the school develop a schedule to maximize instructional time?

To what extent does the schedule ensure common planning time for instructional staff?

Analysis: This essential states a focus on resources to support instructional improvement to improve student learning.

The use of the term “staff” appears to open the door to others beside teachers, but the focus is still limited to “targeted instruction.” Despite use of the term “staff,” the emphasis is mainly on teachers.

Strategies emphasized are individualized instruction, grouping, common planning time, and scheduling to maximize learning. (It is unclear whether “individualized” encompasses personalization.)

No mention is made of the importance of improving efforts to prevent learning, behavior, and emotional problems and respond effectively to problems when they emerge. As a result, the notion of resources to support improved student learning ignores matters related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching as essentials that enable students to learn and teachers to teach.

Essential 6: Partner with Families and Community to Support Student Learning

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Reflective Questions</i>	Analysis: The emphasis on working with families to support learning stresses communication and encouragement of involvement to support learning and academic performance. Also stressed is family involvement in school governance and ensuring respect for diversity. Community engagement is seen in terms of involvement in the “whole school improvement” effort and bringing more adults into students’ lives.
6.1 School welcomes and includes families as partners	To what extent does the school encourage families to support student learning at home?	As can be seen in the reflective questions, the focus on the role of families and community in supporting student learning tends to ignore matters related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching as essentials that enable students to learn and teachers to teach. In many schools, a small proportion of families are involved, and efforts to enhance their involvement requires providing a range of schoolwide and classroom-based interventions efforts designed to strengthen the home situation, enhance family problem-solving capabilities, and increase support for student well-being. Examples include systems and programs to (a) address the specific learning and support needs of adults in the home, such as offering ESL, literacy, vocational, and citizenship classes, enrichment and recreational opportunities, and mutual support groups, (b) help those in the home improve how basic student obligations are met, such as providing guidance related to parenting and how to help with schoolwork, (c) improve forms of basic communication that promote the well-being of student, family, and school, (d) enhance the home-school connection and sense of community, (e) foster participation in making decisions essential to a student’s well-being, (f) facilitate home support of student learning and development, (g) mobilize those at home to problem solve related to student needs, and (h) elicit help (support, collaborations, and partnerships) from those at home with respect to meeting classroom, school, and community needs. The context for some of this activity may be a <i>parent or family center</i> if one has been established at the site.
	To what extent does the school encourage families to support student learning at school?	
	To what extent does the school communicate to families expectations for student academic performance and results?	
	To what extent does the school communicate student progress to families through parent-teacher conferences?	
	To what extent do families participate in school governance?	
	To what extent does the school ensure that the diversity of its school community is respected?	
6.2 Community resources support student learning	To what extent does the school engage with the community to support whole school improvement?	Community involvement also requires a wider range of interventions designed to outreach to the community to build a wide range of linkages and collaborations. Examples include (a) planning and implementing outreach to recruit a wide range of community resources (e.g., public and private agencies; colleges and universities; local residents; artists and cultural institutions, businesses and professional organizations; service, volunteer, and faith-based organizations; community policy and decision makers), (b) systems to recruit, screen, prepare, and maintain community resource involvement (e.g., mechanisms to orient and welcome, enhance the volunteer pool, maintain
	High Schools: How do small learning communities and small schools use business, higher education, and community partners to bring more adults into students’ lives?	

current involvements, enhance a sense of community), (c) reaching out to students and families who don't come to school regularly—including truants and dropouts, (d) connecting school and community efforts to promote child and youth development and a sense of community, and (e) capacity building to enhance community involvement and support (e.g., policies and mechanisms to enhance and sustain school-community involvement, staff/stakeholder development on the value of community involvement, “social marketing”).

Not mentioned at all is the essential partnership among school, family, and community when specialized assistance for students and their families is needed. Specialized assistance for students and family should be reserved for the relatively few problems that cannot be handled without adding special interventions. In effect, this encompasses most of the services and related systems that are the focus of integrated service models.

A programmatic approach in this arena requires systems designed to provide special assistance in ways that increase the likelihood that a student will be more successful at school while also reducing the need for teachers to seek special programs and services. The emphasis in providing special services is on a personalized way to assist with a broad range of needs.

To begin with, social, physical and mental health assistance available in the school and community are used. As community outreach brings in other resources, these are linked to existing activity in an integrated manner. Additional attention is paid to enhancing systems for triage, case and resource management, direct services for immediate needs, and referral for special services and special education as appropriate. Ongoing efforts are made to expand and enhance resources. (While any office or room can be used, a valuable context for providing such services is a center facility, such as a family, community, health, or parent resource center.)

The work also encompasses providing all stakeholders with information clarifying available assistance and how to access help, facilitating requests for assistance, handling referrals, providing direct service, implementing case and resource management, and interfacing with community outreach to assimilate additional resources into current service delivery. And, it involves ongoing analyses of requests for services as a basis for working with school colleagues to design strategies that can reduce inappropriate reliance on special assistance.

Appendix C

Guidelines and Quality Indicators for the Draft of Standards for an Enabling or Learning Supports Component

Standard 1 encompasses a guideline emphasizing the necessity of having a full continuum of programs and services in order to ensure all students have an equal opportunity for success at school. Included are programs designed to promote and maintain safety, programs to promote and maintain physical and mental health, school readiness and early school-adjustment services, expansion of social and academic supports, interventions prior to referral for special services, and provisions to meet specialty needs.

Quality Indicators for Standard 1:

- All programs and services implemented are based on state of the art best practices for addressing barriers to learning and promoting positive development.
- The continuum of programs and services ranges from prevention and early-age intervention – through responding to problems soon after onset -- to partnerships with the home and other agencies in meeting the special needs of those with severe, pervasive, or chronic problems.
- Routine procedures are in place to review the progress of the component's development and the fidelity of its implementation.

Standard 2 encompasses a guideline that programs and services should be evolved within a framework of delineated areas of activity (e.g., 5 or 6 major areas) that reflect basic functions schools must carry out in addressing barriers to student learning and promoting healthy development. A second guideline stresses that a school-based lead staff member and team should be in place to steer development of these areas at each school and ensure that all activities are implemented in an interdisciplinary well coordinated manner which ensures full integration into the instructional and management plan.

Quality Indicators for Standard 2:

- All programs/services are established with a delineated framework of areas of activity that reflect basic functions a school must have in place for addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development.
- At the school level, a resource-oriented team is functioning effectively as part of the school's infrastructure with responsibility for ensuring resources are deployed appropriately and used in a coordinated way. In addition, the team is facilitating (a) capacity building, (b) development, implementation, and evaluation of activity, and (c) full integration with all facets of the instructional and governance/management components.
- Routine procedures are in place to ensure all activities are implemented in a manner that coordinates them with each other and integrates them fully into the instructional and governance/management components.
- Ongoing professional development is (a) provided for all personnel implementing any aspect of the Enabling/Learner Support Component and (b) is developed and implemented in ways that are consistent with the district's Professional Development Standards.

Guidelines and Quality Indicators for Draft Standards (cont.)

Standard 3 encompasses a guideline underscoring that necessary resources must be generated by redeploying current allocations and building collaborations that weave together, in common purpose, families of schools, centralized district assets, and various community entities.

Quality Indicators for Standard 3:

- Each school has mapped and analyzed the resources it allocates for learner support activity and routinely updates its mapping and analysis.
- All school resources for learner supports are allocated and redeployed based on careful analysis of cost effectiveness.
- Collaborative arrangements for each family of schools are in place to (a) enhance effectiveness of learner supports and (b) achieve economies of scale.
- Centralized district assets are allocated in ways that directly aid capacity building and effective implementation of learner support programs and services at school sites and by families of schools.
- Collaborative arrangements are in place with a variety of community entities to (a) fill gaps in the Enabling/Learner Support Component, (b) enhance effectiveness, and (c) achieve economies of scale.

Standard 4 encompasses guidelines highlighting that enabling or learner support activity should be applied in all instances where there is need and should be implemented in ways that ensure needs are addressed appropriately, with as little disruption as feasible of a student's normal involvement at school.

Quality Indicators for Standard 4:

- Procedures are in routine use for gathering and reviewing information on the need for specific types of learner support activities and for establishing priorities for developing/implementing such activity.
- Whenever a need is identified, learner support is implemented in ways that ensure needs are addressed appropriately and with as little disruption as feasible of a student's normal involvement at school.
- Procedures are in routine use for gathering and reviewing data on how well needs are met; such data are used to inform decisions about capacity building, including infrastructure changes and personnel development.

Guidelines and Quality Indicators for Draft Standards (cont.)

Standard 5 encompasses a guideline for accountability that emphasizes a focus on the progress of students with respect to the direct enabling outcomes each program and service is designed to accomplish, as well as by enhanced academic achievement.

Quality Indicators for Standard 5:

- Accountability for the learner support activity focuses on the progress of students at a school site with respect to both the direct enabling outcomes a program/service is designed to accomplish (measures of effectiveness in addressing barriers, such as increased attendance, reduced tardies, reduced misbehavior, less bullying and sexual harassment, increased family involvement with child and schooling, fewer referrals for specialized assistance, fewer referrals for special education, fewer pregnancies, fewer suspensions, and dropouts), as well as academic achievement.
- All data are disaggregated to clarify impact as related to critical subgroup differences (e.g., pervasiveness, severity, and chronicity of identified problems).
- All data gathered on learner support activity are reviewed as a basis for decisions about how to enhance and renew the Enabling/Learner Support Component.

Appendix D

Hawai`i's Quality Student Support Criteria and Rubrics

Excerpted from:

Hawai`i's Department of Education document:

Standards Implementation Design (SID) System

Available online at: <http://doe.k12.hi.us/standards/sid.pdf>

B. Quality Student Support

Criterion B1. Environment that Promotes High Expectations for Student Learning and Behavior

To what extent...

- does the school have a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school's purpose?
- is the school environment (culture) characterized by a respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support and high expectations for each student?

Reflective Questions

- To what extent does the school have a learning environment that is safe, clean, and orderly and where respect and concern for others can be observed in the classroom and other parts of the campus?
- What process is in place to gather input from students and parents on school rules, policies, and guidelines as they relate to high expectations for student learning and behavior?
- What strategies has the school employed to ensure that the resources such as the facilities, the campus, and the general environment are regularly inspected, maintained, and improved to ensure that it is conducive to student learning?
- What criterion-based decision-making and problem-solving models does the school use to balance diversity and equity issues and result in what's best for students, the school, and the community?
- What strategies do the school and the professional staff use to promote a culture of caring, trusting, and respectful relationships between and among students, teachers, administration, staff, and all other stakeholders in the classroom and on the campus that supports students' achievement of the HCPS and the schoolwide learner outcomes?

- What formal system is in place to share and build staff expertise and collegiality, encourage innovation and risk-taking, and celebrating success?

Possible Areas to Analyze

(Evidence to determine the extent to which this criterion is met)

- School profile data
- School and class size data
- Adequate and qualified staffing
- Surveys: School Quality Survey; surveys of students, parents, teachers, other staff, community
- Referrals and disciplinary action data
- School and state rules, policies, and codes (e.g., Administrative Rule Chapter 19, BOE Policies) School's discipline plan
- School's safety plan
- School Self-Inspection Safety Checklist
- Attendance policies
- Standards-based co-curricular activities
- Guidance program
- Peer mediation/conflict resolution programs
- Student profile
- Town, parent, student meeting notes
- Data on accidents and injuries due to physical environment
- Repair and Maintenance (R & M) requests, status
- Enrollment in AP, Honors, Gifted/Talented, and remedial classes by ethnicity, or other special population groupings
- Extent to which the school's computer lab and library are used and for what purposes

The SID Criteria

<p>Criterion B2. Array Of Student Support Services</p> <p>To what extent...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are students connected to a system of support services, activities, and opportunities at the school and within the community to help them achieve schoolwide learner outcomes through the curricular and co-curricular programs? • is there a system of support and array of support for students in and outside the school which includes: • personalized classroom climate and differentiated classroom practices, • prevention/early intervention, • family participation, • support for transition, • community outreach and support, and • specialized assistance and crisis/emergency support? <p>Reflective Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of evidence are available to support the effectiveness of support services offered to students? What types of extended learning opportunities are in place for all students? • Can the school and staff identify the array of support services available to students within the school setting? • How are students made aware of the array of support services available to them? • What strategies are used to ensure that students feel connected to the school? • How are co-curricular activities at the school used to support the achievement of the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes? • What is the relationship of the support services and activities to classroom instruction? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What process/strategies are in place to ensure that students have opportunities to be connected to a mentor or other significant, caring adult? • How are student support services evaluated to assess their impact on classroom instruction and learning? • How do students know they are making progress toward the achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes and the HCPS? • What support services are made available in the areas of health, career and guidance counseling, personal counseling, and academic assistance? • What prevention and intervention services, programs, or strategies are offered by the school to establish a proactive approach to support student learning? • What transition services and practices exist within the school to help students move from level to level, school to school, grade to grade, program to program, etc.? • How are parents involved in the school to promote children's achievement of the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes? • What processes are currently in place for intervention or referral for students needing additional assistance? • Is the entire staff aware of these services? • Is the school coordinating the system of support services for maximum results? Within the school? With outside agencies? With the community and parents? Is the community aware of the request for services and the services available? How are community support services, identified and obtained for students? • What exists within the school to provide for crises or emergency situations?
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Standards Implementation Design

Possible Areas to Analyze

(Evidence to determine the extent to which this criterion is met)

- School profile data
- School and class size data
- Adequate and qualified staffing
- Surveys, e.g., School Quality Survey, surveys of Students, parents, teachers, staff, community, service providers
- Referrals
- School's discipline plan
- School's safety plan
- Advisor/advisee programs
- Student profile
- Level and type of student involvement in school activities
- Array of Services Matrix
- Teacher feedback on student achievement
- Student/teacher conferences
- Guidance program and/or curriculum
- Career pathways
- School Support Group/Team
- Description (written or graphic) of the school's student support system
- Listing of parent involvement and training activities

Criterion B3. School-Based Services Review

To what extent...

- does the school do an annual review of the support services offered to students taking into account:
 - adequacy of the services offered,
 - number of students identified and serviced and type of service,
 - effectiveness of the service, and
 - number of students identified and not serviced and why?

Reflective Questions

- Is the protocol, process, or model which is used to identify students who need support services clear, fair, consistent and comprehensive, timely, and effective in identifying students and their needs? How would this model or process be described?

- How does the school ensure that the assessment and implementation strategies used match the needs of the child? What strategies are in place to conduct ongoing monitoring of student progress so adjustments are made to ensure that services are responsive to the child at any given time?
- Is there a system of support for teachers that will help them identify and provide the array of support for students with special needs? What are some of the structured opportunities that enable teachers to discuss individual students?
- Are all teachers aware of the process used to identify students and the procedures for follow-up?
- What strategies are in place to keep parents informed and actively involved in their child's education?

Possible Areas to Analyze

(Evidence to determine the extent to which this criterion is met)

- Complex Service Testing Review results
- School profile data
- CSSS assessment of student support services
- Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) state monitoring reports
- Documents at school showing array of student support services available
- Documents and other evidence that show that teachers are aware of the referral process/procedures (e.g., Faculty handbook, memos, bulletins, etc.)
- Norm- and criterion- referenced test scores, class quizzes, student work
- Surveys, interviews
- Disciplinary and other referrals
- Student/teacher conferences

Rubric III.B: Quality Student Support

Rubric III.B1. Environment that Promotes High Expectations for Student Learning and Behavior

To what extent...

- *does the school have a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school's purpose (mission)?*
- *is the school environment (culture) characterized by a respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student?*

Component	4	3	2	1
Physical Environment	The school is a safe, healthy, secure, clean, accessible, well-maintained, functional, and attractive place that reflects the school purpose and contributes to the student achievement of the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards and schoolwide learner outcomes. All state mandates, codes, and regulations are met, as reflected in the school's safety plan.	The school is a safe, healthy, secure, clean, accessible, well-maintained, functional, and attractive place that reflects the school purpose and contributes to the student achievement of the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards and schoolwide learner outcomes. All state mandates, codes, and regulations are met, as reflected in the school's safety plan.	The school is maintained in a safe, healthy, clean, and accessible place that contributes to the achievement of the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards. Maintenance and safety requirements are met, as reflected on the school inspection report.	The school works at ensuring a safe and accessible place for staff and students. The main goal of maintenance is to pass the safety inspection.
Emotional Environment	The school community has created an inviting, nurturing, trusting, and caring atmosphere reflecting the school purpose. Everyone feels welcomed and has a sense of belonging in a climate that promotes academic, physical, emotional, and social growth. The facilitates student attainment of the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards and schoolwide learner outcomes and success in the co-curricular programs and activities.	The school staff practices inviting and nurturing strategies to establish a caring atmosphere generally reflecting the school purpose. The staff promotes student growth and well-being, the development of self-esteem through the recognition of academic and personal achievement as reflected by the attainment of the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards and schoolwide learner outcomes and success in co-curricular programs and activities.	The principal, individual teachers, grade levels, teams, or departments provide an atmosphere that promotes student growth. Student self-esteem is fostered on a limited basis through the recognition of academic success.	The principal is primarily responsible for creating a safe, secure campus which is conducive to the academic growth and physical well-being of students. However, some students feel unsafe at school at times.

Rubric III: Assessing Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness
Rubric IIIB1. Environment that Promotes High Expectations for Student Learning and Behavior

Component	4	3	2	1
Learning Environment	The school community has created a caring, nurturing, safe, well-managed, accessible, functional, attractive, self-monitoring learning environment. Students are interactively involved in challenging, integrated, student-centered learning experiences. Individual differences, special needs, and/or cultural diversity are respected and accommodated.	The school staff has created a caring, nurturing, safe, functional, accessible, and well-managed learning environment. Students are involved in challenging learning experiences. Provisions are made to accommodate individual differences, special needs, and/or cultural diversity.	The principal, individual teachers, and some grade levels, teams, or departments provide a safe, caring, accessible, and well-managed learning environment. Accommodations for students with special needs and/or cultural diversity are provided.	The principal and individual teachers are working on creating a safe, caring, and well-managed learning environment. Accommodations for students with special needs and/or cultural diversity are limited.
Standards of Conduct	The school community, including students, participates actively in development of behavioral standards. A clearly defined, written code of student conduct, including Chapter 19 requirements, is understood by all stakeholders and applied fairly and consistently. Students work toward self-monitoring and self-discipline. Systems the School leadership team meets at least quarterly, manages implementation of a proactive, preventative systems plan and conducts annual evaluations. Practices A behavior support system continuum and teaching procedures are in place for all students. Data Data measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the behavior support continuum and teaching are utilized regularly for action planning.	The school community members are involved in development of behavioral standards. Students are aware of an abide by a written code of student conduct, including Chapter 19, that is fairly and consistently applied. Systems The school has a viable leadership team with a systems plan in place (schoolwide, classroom, non-classroom, and individual student systems). Proactive, preventative policies are established. Practices Procedures for teaching expected behaviors are implemented. Data A measurement system for tracking, monitoring, and evaluating schoolwide discipline systems is established and implemented.	The school leadership develops the school rules that are reviewed with students. The rules and sanctions are usually applied consistently. Chapter 19 is administered as mandated. Systems The school has a leadership team which agrees to a proactive, preventative purpose for schoolwide discipline. Practices Clearly stated rubrics of expected behaviors and rule violations for behavior/conduct are used. Data Evaluative questions and data measurement for schoolwide discipline are defined.	School rules and sanctions are imposed and often inconsistently applied. Chapter 19 is administered as mandated. Systems No school leadership team exists to address schoolwide discipline systematically. Practices Punitive practices to discipline exist. Data No data measurement system is in place to track and evaluate schoolwide discipline incidents.

Rubric III.B2: Array of Student Support Services

To what extent...

> are students connected to a system of support services, activities and opportunities at the school and within the community that meet the challenges of the curricular/co-curricular program that support the achievement of the standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes?

> is there a system of support and array of support for students in and outside the school which includes.- personalized classroom climate and differentiated classroom practices, prevention/early prevention, family participation, support for transition, community outreach and support and specialized assistance and crisis/emergency support?

Component	4	3	2	1
Physical and Emotional Safety	Everyone in the school community is responsible for the physical and emotional safety of each other. Caring and support of others is the norm and a comprehensive school safety plan is in place.	The school staff is responsible for the physical and emotional safety of the students. The school has a comprehensive school safety program in place.	The school faculty is responsible for the physical and emotional safety of the students. School rules are enforced. Faculty is involved in developing a school safety program.	The principal is primarily responsible for the physical and emotional safety of students. School rules are in place.
Support System	A comprehensive system of support within the school community is networked with the military and other agencies to service students with identified needs. The system ensures that <i>all</i> students are connected to the school in meaningful ways through academic programs, a career and/or counseling programs, and health services programs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum and instruction and support services are effectively address and focus on the whole child and the experiences within the home, school and community. 	Support services are coordinated within the school community and networks with the military and other agencies to service students with identified needs. Opportunities are available through the academic program, co-curricular activities, counseling, and/or health services for students to feel connected to and supported by the school. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can identify a school support group to which they belong (e.g., elementary homeroom team, adviser-advisee, career paths, core team). 	Support services are coordinated within the school community. Attempts are made to reach out and support students in a systematic way through counseling and health services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students have established meaningful relationships with more than one positive adult role model within the school. 	Support services are available at the school. Students and parents are responsible for students' attendance, participation in school-sponsored activities, and accessing support services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The classroom conveys caring, respect, fairness, and a sense of belonging.
Role of Staff	All school staff are aware and systematically utilize all support services available to students on site and in the community.	Faculty are aware of and utilize support services available to students on site and in the community as needed.	Faculty are aware of and utilize support services available to students on site as needed.	Administrators and counselors are aware of support services available to students within the school.

Rubric III: Assessing Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness

Rubric IIIB2. Array of Student Support Services

Component	4	3	2	1
Staff Involvement	All school staff routinely initiate formal and informal discussions or procedures aimed at seeking support and solutions for students who need assistance in achieving the HCPS and schoolwide learner outcomes.	Teachers consult with colleagues and administrators and counselors for problem resolution. Teachers have identified students who excel and who have special needs and provide encouragement and support.	Teachers consult with colleagues to resolve problems in the classroom. Teachers have identified students who have special needs and provide support whenever possible.	Teachers resolve problems in the classroom to the best of their ability.
Guidance and Counseling	The approach to guidance and counseling is systematic, schoolwide, and comprehensive and includes the participation of all role groups. The approach focuses on students' personal and academic interests and goals and utilizes all resources available to the school. The guidance and counseling process provides support to students in the following areas: >Appropriate communication skills >Collaborative skills >Valuing of diverse abilities and cultural differences >Critical thinking skills >Responsibility for their own behavior and caring for others >Internal locus of control >Self-discipline >Goal setting >Motivation to achieve	A systematic, comprehensive, schoolwide guidance and counseling program is in place to meet academic and social/emotional needs of students (e.g., scheduling, course selection, providing information on graduation and college entrance requirements). Counselors and teachers provide guidance on a regular basis for students.	The school's focus for guidance and counseling is primarily on academics and/or discipline. Counselors work with teachers to access selected students' needs and provide guidance on a regular basis.	In the absence of a formal system of identification of effective intervention, staff discussions of students at risk occur only on an anecdotal basis. Counselors provide guidance on an as-needed basis, for example, when a crisis occurs.
Resources	Students and their families can easily access appropriate social, psychological, and health services through a school-based coordinated network of school and community organizations. These organizations may be housed on campus and work together to problem-solve and share resources.	The school staff develops collaborative partnerships with community agencies. Services are provided to address preventative and crisis-oriented concerns on a regular basis.	The school staff develops relationships with outside agencies. Services are utilized to address problems.	The school staff is aware of outside agencies. Services are utilized as needed, for example, when a crisis occurs.

Rubric III: Assessing Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness

Rubric III B2. Array of Student Support Services

Component	4	3	2	1
Academic Expectations	<p>Classes at all levels are characterized by diverse student groups, and all students - whatever their abilities - are continually encouraged to meet the challenges of a thinking, meaning-centered curriculum. Teachers are knowledgeable about their students' needs and personalize approaches to maximize each student's achievement and ability to attain the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards and schoolwide learner outcomes.</p>	<p>Classes at all levels are characterized by diverse student groups, and most students - whatever their abilities - are encouraged to meet the challenges of a thinking, meaning-centered curriculum. Teachers are knowledgeable about their students' needs and modify approaches to maximize the learning potential of most students to attain the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards and schoolwide learner outcomes.</p>	<p>Classes tend to be grouped homogeneously. Teachers generally know the levels of their students and provide appropriate work at each level. Course requirements generally vary greatly according to "level" (e.g., college preparatory, general, basic).</p>	<p>The distribution of students in classes does not reflect the diversity of the school. Teachers accept less rigorous work from students who they perceive as being at "lower levels."</p>
Academic Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who need support or enrichment in achieving can rely on a network of integrated and fully articulated services, such as Chapters 36 and 53, Title I Program, after-school instruction, Gifted/Talented program, military partnerships, tutors and the ESLL program. • Curriculum and instruction strategies accommodate the learning styles and needs of all students. • All stakeholders are committed and demonstrate the principles of equity for all students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who need support have a variety of options available. These include tutoring, remedial courses, and Chapters 36 and 53 accommodations. • A variety of instructional strategies are used to ensure that all students meet standards. • Trained, caring, and committed staff engage the child in the teaching and learning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who need support in meeting curricular requirements are encouraged to get tutoring and make use of available school or community library facilities and services. • The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies to implement the curriculum. • The school develops clear expectations which are communicated to students and most parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who need support in meeting curricular requirements are encouraged to take courses that are less demanding or provided with less challenging work. Tutoring is provided only when students or families pursue it.

Rubric III: Assessing Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness Rubric

III.B: Quality Student Support

Rubric IIIB2. Array of Student Support Services

Component	4	3	2	1
Academic Support <i>Continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained, caring, and committed staff engage the child in the teaching and learning process. Clear expectations are shared with all students and parents. There is ongoing monitoring with timely feedback. Students self-access to monitor with own progress. Assessment data is used to modify instruction to support student learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear expectations are shared with all students and parents. There is ongoing monitoring with timely feedback. Students self-access to monitor with own progress. Assessment data is used to modify instruction to support student learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers provide ongoing feedback at the end of each test and at the end of the quarter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher uses the same classroom instructional strategies that appear to have been successful in getting the curriculum across to most students. Teachers provide feedback to students at the end of each grading period.
Climate for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school climate encourages all students to take risks and feel comfortable about seeking support. The school climate plays an important role in providing all students with a foundation from which to achieve the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards and schoolwide learner outcomes. Most students and families feel safe and welcomed at the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school climate encourages students to take risks and feel comfortable about seeking support and has a positive influence on student achievement of the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards and schoolwide learner outcomes. Most students and families feel safe and welcomed at the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school climate has positive effects on achievement of the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards for some students. Most students and families feel safe and welcomed at the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some teachers provide students with learning environments that promote achievement in their classrooms. The classroom teacher establishes class rules and is responsible for maintaining a safe classroom environment. The principal establishes and administers school rules.

Note: School plans, programs, and rules should address the federal, state, city, and county laws, standards, mandates and codes, BOE/DOE policies, regulations and other program requirements.

Appendix E

Brief Summary*

Fulfilling a Promise, Investing in Iowa's Future: Enhancing Iowa's Systems of Supports for Learning and Development

Iowa has a proud history of leading the nation in education, strong community support for schools, and high expectations of parents for their children's success in school. While Iowans are proud of their schools, no community ought to be satisfied until *all* its young people are healthy and socially competent, successful in school, and have an equitable opportunity to grow into productive and contributing citizens.

The Challenge

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 Council on Adolescent Development (1989)

At no time in our history has the educational imperative for the academic achievement of all students been so crucial. Not every student comes to school motivationally ready and able to learn. Some experience barriers that interfere with their ability to profit from classroom instruction. If every student in every school and community in Iowa is to achieve at high levels, we must rethink how student supports are organized and delivered to address barriers to learning.

Meeting the Challenge

Meeting the challenge requires that schools and school districts, in collaboration with their community partners, develop a comprehensive, cohesive approach to delivery of learning supports as an integral part of their school improvement efforts. To guide the education system's role in providing learning supports, a three component model is used to expand future school improvement. The three components are:

- *Academic Instruction:* This component represents the people and functions directly related to delivery of academic instruction.
- *Leadership:* This component encompasses those people and functions responsible for the governance and management of the human, material, and financial resources in the education system.
- *Learning Supports:* This component includes the wide array of education personnel who work with families and community partners to ensure that students succeed in school. Their efforts support classroom teachers and instruction by promoting healthy development and working to alleviate barriers that interfere with learning and teaching.

Collaboration Among Partners at All Levels

As was learned with IBI and *Success4*, collaboration among school and community organizations is required at all levels in order to create a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system that supports student learning and eliminates barriers that impede it. Such collaboration is essential to reduce current fragmentation, counterproductive competition for sparse resources, and marginalization of efforts to provide learning supports.

*Focus on Outcomes
for Systems,
Children, and Youth*

Systems at all levels have shared responsibility for achieving the desired “Results for Iowa Children and Youth”. The outcomes identified below define the nature and scope of the changes needed if systems of learning supports are to be developed and the results are to be realized:

- quality leadership;
- safe, supportive, healthy, caring and inclusive environments;
- integrated family, school and community efforts;
- a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive school-community continuum of quality programs and services;
- aligned and supportive policies and resources;
- coordinated systems of data management and evaluation;
- inclusive policies, programs, and services responsive to human diversity.

With a fully implemented and sustained system of learning supports, five important intermediate milestones for children and youth will be achieved :

- Mastery of academic and social skill competencies.
- Increased attachment to, and engagement in, school and community.
- Increased personal and interpersonal assets.
- Health promoting, less risky behavior.
- Increased competence to value, work with, and benefit from human diversity.

***The Designed
Prototype***

The prototype for a system of learning supports addresses the following:

- *Long term results and measures* based on available data serve as leading indicators of student success in school.
- *Cohesive intervention frameworks*, grounded in the agreed upon results for all children and youth in Iowa, facilitate organization of school and community resources, programs, and services into a comprehensive continuum that supports student learning and healthy development and addresses barriers.
- *An infrastructure framework* organizes the functions and processes needed to implement a system of learning supports and connect the various system levels (local, regional, and state). The infrastructure focus is on mechanisms that permit schools and communities to make optimal use of their resources, reframe the roles of personnel, and integrate the instruction, management, and learning supports components of the educational system.
- *Supportive policies* at all levels are identified or developed to facilitate the implementation of a system of learning supports in ways that complement and are fully integrated into school-community efforts to improve teaching and learning and manage resources.
- *Capacity building* at all system levels (state, regional, and local) will (a) ensure use of definitions and guidelines that create a common language for improved communication within the educational system and with other child-serving systems and (b) enhance the knowledge, skills, and resources/tools needed to successfully implement a system of learning supports.

*A Framework of
Six Content Areas*

The six content areas for the Learning Supports component are:

- Supplements to Instruction
- Family Supports and Involvement
- Community Partnerships
- Safe, Healthy, and Caring Environments
- Transitions
- Child/Youth Engagement

By defining the content that makes up the Learning Supports component in terms of six areas, a broad unifying framework is created within which a school-community continuum of learning supports programs can be organized.

*A Continuum of
Interventions to
Meet the Needs
of All Children
and Youth*

Schools and communities are already implementing some programs and services that address the six content areas. Currently, many of these operate in isolation of one another and do not provide a cohesive, comprehensive approach. By viewing the programs along a continuum of student needs, schools and communities are more likely to provide the right services for the right students at the right time. Such a continuum encompasses efforts to positively affect a full spectrum of learning, physical, social-emotional, and behavioral problems in every school and community in Iowa by

- promoting healthy development and preventing problems;
- intervening as early after the onset of problems as is feasible; and
- providing special assistance for severe and chronic problems.

The continuum provides a guide for mapping resources and identifying gaps and redundancies, thus increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the supports to learning. When complete, the interventions identified will encompass the full continuum of student needs and address developmental levels and the entire age span served in the K-12 educational system.

**Rethinking
Infrastructure to
Integrate
Learning
Supports Fully
into School
Improvement**

Given limited resources, a Learning Supports component is established by deploying, redeploying, and weaving all existing learning support resources together. This requires rethinking infrastructure at each level of the system (local, regional, and state) where decisions are made about such matters

Enhancing a system of learning supports requires strong leadership to steer systemic changes and construct the necessary infrastructure. Establishment and maintenance of a potent learning support component requires continuous, proactive, effective teaming, organization, and accountability.

At each level of the system, Learning Supports component leaders and resource management teams carry out specific *core functions* and processes that fall within two major categories – those intended to **build the capacity of systems** to provide learning supports and those related to the actual **development and implementation of a continuum of learning supports**. In general, the functions of a learning supports system are no different than any continuous improvement planning cycle (e.g., the Iowa Comprehensive School Improvement Planning process); however, in implementation, specific functions related to learning supports will emerge that require rethinking infrastructure at all levels.

*About Learning
Support Resource
Management Teams*

Resource-oriented teams are crucial elements of any infrastructure for implementing a cohesive system of learning supports. Some across the country call such mechanisms *Learning Supports Resource Management Teams* or *Councils*. Properly constituted, a learning supports resource team provides on-site leadership for efforts to comprehensively address programs and practices that facilitate learning and ensure the maintenance and improvement of a multifaceted and integrated approach.

Learning supports resource teams can reduce fragmentation and increase cost-effectiveness by determining and supporting ways that programs and practices can function cohesively. For example, a team can coordinate resources, increase communication among school staff, families, and community partners about available services, and monitor programs to be certain they are functioning effectively and efficiently. More generally, this group can provide leadership in planning and the acquisition, organization, and deployment of resources to guide school and community personnel in evolving their vision for the children and youth that they serve.

**Policy Support
and Alignment**

A review of existing state policies across systems indicates that (1) sufficient policy exists for moving forward, (2) application for a waiver from a given written policy may be sought, and (3) over time, the situation can be improved markedly by in-depth policy review, analysis, and realignment.

**Getting from
Here to There --
Capacity Building,
Getting to Scale,
Sustaining, and
Institutionalizing**

The next challenge is the initial implementation and ultimate scale-up of systems of learning supports in schools and communities across the state. The question is, “*How do we get from here to there?*” The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development will shepherd this effort with the Department of Education taking the lead and other collaborating agencies making essential contributions to the work.

*Steps to
Implementation –
What Needs
to be Done*

To move the prototype described in this document from the drawing board to implementation will require those wishing to replicate it to concentrate on the actions listed below. Each facet and task requires careful planning based on sound intervention fundamentals. This means paying special attention to the problem of the match between changes needed and those who are to change.

Planning

- 1) articulating a *clear, shared vision* for their system of learning supports;
- 2) establishing/adopting *long term results and measures*;
- 3) negotiating formal and informal *partnership agreements*;
- 4) *mapping and analyzing* existing resources for availability, content, and effectiveness;

5) reframing student supports into an *infrastructure* for learning supports by

- dedicating administrative time to learning supports,
- redefining leadership roles and functions to facilitate, guide, and support the systemic changes for *ongoing* development of learning supports systems at every level (state, regional, and local),
- realigning support staff/pupil services personnel roles and functions, and
- creating or enhancing teams to plan, implement, and evaluate how learning supports resources are used for a Learning Supports component.

Implementing

- 1) phasing in the six *programmatic content areas* (intervention framework);
- 2) reviewing and revising *policies* to ensure that they are supportive and facilitative of all aspects of a learning supports system;
- 3) integrating resources into a *cohesive and integrated continuum* of school and community interventions;
- 4) providing *ongoing professional development* to equip learning supports personnel with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement a Learning Supports component

Overlapping Phases of Implementation

- 1) *creating readiness* – by enhancing a climate/culture for change,
- 2) *initial implementation* – whereby change is carried out in stages using a well-designed guidance and support infrastructure,
- 3) *sustaining and institutionalization* – accomplished by ensuring there is an infrastructure to maintain and enhance productive changes, and
- 4) *ongoing evolution* – through use of mechanisms to improve quality and provide continuing support.

The above actions should lead to a) more effective deployment of existing resources to reduce fragmentation of services, b) a more cohesive, comprehensive and effective array of interventions to promote healthy development and alleviate barriers to learning, and c) an approach to delivering learning supports to increase student achievement and success in school that are an integral part of the overall improvement efforts of schools and communities.

Capacity Building to Implement, Sustain, and Institutionalize Learning Supports

Prototypes often are developed and initially implemented as pilot demonstrations at one or more sites. Efforts to create systems of learning supports, however, will require much more than implementing demonstrations at a few sites. Improved approaches will only be as good as the ability of schools and communities to develop, sustain, and institutionalize them in all their schools. This process often is called diffusion, replication, roll-out, or scale-up. Such a process requires support of policy and pursuit of strategies for creating motivational readiness among a critical mass of stakeholders, especially those most directly responsible for implementation, and for accommodating changes in roles and functions.

*Change Functions
Require Change
Mechanisms*

One way for state and regional agencies to assist local schools implement a process for turning existing student support programs and practices into a system of learning supports is to form a change *mechanism*, i.e., a designated team of change agents. Such staff can provide a temporary, but necessary, organizational base and skilled personnel for disseminating a prototype, negotiating decisions about replication, and dispensing the expertise to facilitate implementation of a prototype and eventual scale-up.

In Iowa, in many instances, school improvement action committees (SIACs) perform change agent functions for various aspects of school reform. Guiding the process of creating efficient and effective systems of learning supports, in all likelihood, will require re-thinking and expanding the scope of work they are currently doing and the way that the team interacts with community as part of the decision-making process. Some SIACs already may be performing these functions with respect to Learning Supports. On the other hand, assuming additional responsibilities to oversee another aspect of the school reform change process may be too much for some teams, requiring them to look to others to carry out these functions. A valuable source for such assistance in guiding the change process can lie with community coalitions or existing community planning groups. At the state level, the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development has undertaken this responsibility.

Concluding Comments

As steps now are taken to move the prototype from design to action in school districts and communities across Iowa, the challenges are clear, but the intended results are unarguable. Schools, in collaboration with their communities, must wrap supports around students and their teachers. Iowans are up to the challenge; they know that an investment in Iowa's children and youth is an investment in Iowa's future.

*NOTE: This summary was prepared by the Center for Mental Health at UCLA as a resource aid. Iowa is in the process of developing an Executive Summary and other brief documents highlighting the design and implementation plans.



Feedback Form

School Improvement Policy Report

(1) Thoughts about ways to improve the report: (don't be limited by the space below)

(2) Ideas about how to use the report to stimulate discussion and change: (don't be limited by the space below)

(3) Other thoughts about and examples of school planning (don't be limited by the space below)

Send me a hard copy of the revisions of the Executive Summary _____ the entire report_____.

Your Name _____ Title _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Fax (____) _____ E-Mail _____

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

The Center for Mental Health in Schools is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project in the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA.

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