REFRAMING THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS
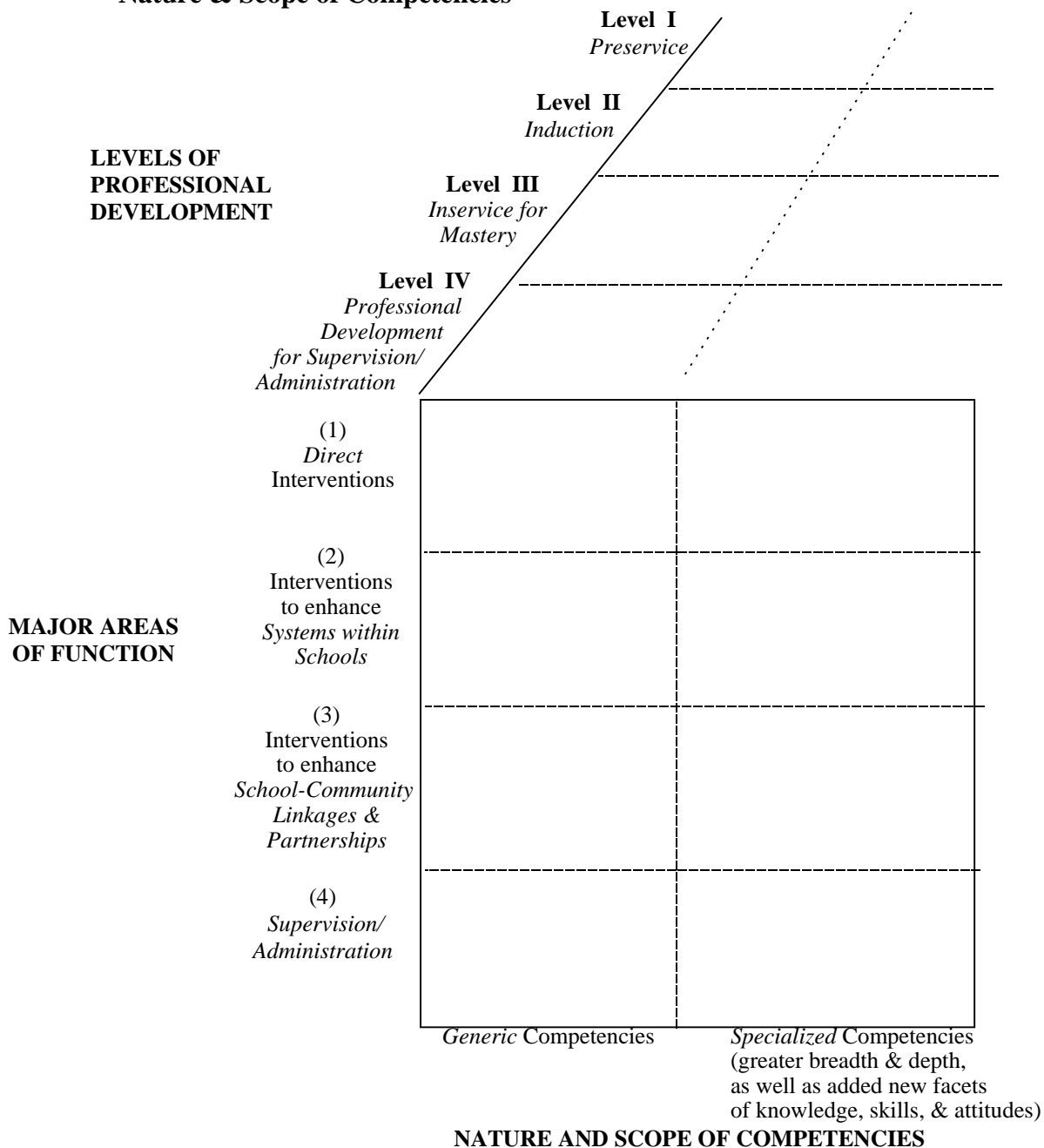# OF STUDENT SUPPORT STAFF

*M*any influences are reshaping the work of pupil services personnel. Besides changes called for by the growing knowledge based in various disciplines and fields of practice, initiatives to restructure education and community health and human services are creating new roles and functions. Clearly, pupil service personnel will continue to be needed to provide targeted direct assistance and support. At the same time, their roles as advocates, catalysts, brokers, and facilitators of systemic reform will expand. As a result, they will engage in an increasingly wide array of activity to promote academic achievement and healthy development and address barriers to student learning. In doing so, they must be prepared to improve intervention outcomes by enhancing coordination and collaboration within a school and with community agencies in order to provide the type of cohesive approaches necessary to deal with the complex concerns confronting schools.

Consistent with the systemic changes that have been unleashed is a trend toward less emphasis on intervention ownership and more attention to accomplishing, desired outcomes through flexible and expanded roles and functions for staff. This trend recognizes underlying commonalities among a variety of school concerns and intervention strategies and is fostering increased interest in cross-disciplinary training and interprofessional education.

Clearly, all this has major implications for changing professional preparation and credentialing.

Efforts to capture key implications are illustrated in the following framework. This framework was sketched out by an expert panel convened by one state's credentialing commission to provide guidelines for revision of the state's standards for developing and evaluating pupil services personnel credential programs.

Framework. Areas of Function, Levels of Professional Development, &
Nature & Scope of Competencies

Level I
Preservice

Level II
Induction

LEVELS OF
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Level III
Inservice for
Mastery

Level IV
Professional
Development
for Supervision/
Administration

(1)
Direct
Interventions

(2)
Interventions
to enhance
Systems within
Schools

MAJOR AREAS
OF FUNCTION

(3)
Interventions
to enhance
School-Community
Linkages &
Partnerships

(4)
Supervision/
Administration

Generic Competencies   *Specialized* Competencies
(greater breadth & depth,
as well as added new facets
of knowledge, skills, & attitudes)

NATURE AND SCOPE OF COMPETENCIES

Notes:
  Cross-cutting all dimensions are foundational knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to such topics as
  (a) human growth, development, and learning, (b) interpersonal/group relationships, dynamics and problem
  solving, (c) cultural competence, (d) group and individual differences, (e) intervention theory, (f) legal, ethical,
  and professional concerns, and (g) applications of advanced technology.

(a) *Direct* interventions = implementing one-to-one, group, or classroom programs and services

(b) Interventions to enhance *systems within schools* = coordination, development, & leadership related to
      programs, services, resources, and systems

(c) Interventions to enhance *school-community linkages & partnerships* = connecting with community resources

(d) *Supervision/Administration* = responsibility for training pupil personnel and directing pupil personnel services
      and programs

About the Framework

Areas of function, levels of professional development, and nature & scope of competencies. The first framework outlines three basic dimensions that should guide development of programs to prepare pupil personnel professionals. As highlighted in the Exhibit on the next page, the following four major areas of function are conceived.

(1) direct interventions with students and families

(2) interventions to enhance systems within schools

(3) interventions to enhance *school-community linkages & partnerships*

(4) supervision/administration

Within each of these areas are sets of generic and specialized competencies. The many competencies are learned at various levels of professional development. There is a need to develop criteria with respect to each of these areas. (See examples in the exhibit following the framework.) Of course, the number of criteria and the standards used to judge performance should vary with the specific job assignment and level of professional development.

Although some new knowledge, skills, and attitudes are learned, *specialized* competence is seen as emerging primarily from increasing one's breadth and depth related to generic competencies. Such specialized learning, of course, is shaped by one's field of specialization (e.g., school counselor, psychologist, social worker), as well as by prevailing views of job demands (e.g., who the primary clientele are likely to be, the specific types of tasks one will likely perform, the settings in which one will likely serve).

Note that most competencies for supervision/administration are left for development at Level IV. Also note that cross-cutting all dimensions are foundational knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to areas such as (a) human growth, development, and learning, (b) interpersonal/ group relationships, dynamics, and problem solving, (c) cultural competence, (d) group and individual differences, (e) intervention theory, (f) legal, ethical, and professional concerns, (g) applications of advanced technology.

Exhibit: Examples of Generic Criteria for Staff Performance in Each Area of Function

(1) Direct interventions with students and families

    Student support – demonstrates the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate programs and services that equitably address barriers to learning and promote healthy development among a diverse range of students (e.g., developmental and motivational assessments of students, regular and specialized assistance for students in and outside the classroom, prereferral interventions, universal and targeted group interventions, safe and caring school interventions; academic and personal counseling; support for transitions)

    Family assistance – demonstrates the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate programs and services for students' families whenever necessary to enhance student support (e.g., providing information, referrals, and support for referral follow-through; instruction; counseling; home involvement)

(2) interventions to enhance *systems within schools*

    Coordination and integration of programs/services/systems – demonstrates the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate *mechanisms* for collaborating with colleagues to ensure activities are carried out in the most equitable and cost-effective manner consistent with legal and ethical standards for practice (examples of mechanisms include case-oriented teams; resource-oriented teams; consultation, coaching, and mentoring mechanisms; triage, referral, and care monitoring systems; crisis teams)

    Development of program/service/systems – demonstrates the ability to enhance development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of interventions for equitably addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development among a diverse range of students and their families (e.g., collaborates in improving existing interventions; collaborates to develop ways to fill gaps related to needed prevention programs, early-after-onset interventions, and assistance for students with severe and/or chronic problems; incorporates an understanding of legal and ethical standards for practice)

(3) interventions to enhance *school-community linkages & partnerships*

    Coordination and integration of school-community resources/systems – demonstrates the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate *mechanisms* for collaborating with community entities to weave together school and community resources and systems to enhance current activity and enhance development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of interventions for equitably addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development

(4) supervision/administration

    Supervision of professionals-in-training and induction of new staff -- demonstrates the ability to coach, mentor, and supervise professionals-in-training and newly hired pupil services personnel both with respect to generic and speciality functions

    Administration of pupil services -- demonstrates the ability to design, manage, and build capacity of personnel and programs with respect to specialized pupil services activities and generic systemic approaches to equitably addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development

    Administrative leadership in the district -- demonstrates the ability to participate effectively in District decision making to advance an equitable and cost-effective role for pupil services personnel in addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development

In addition to the above, each field (e.g., school psychology, counseling, social work) will want to add several specialized competencies.