At schools, obviously the administrative leadership is key to ending the marginalization of efforts to address learning, behavior, and emotional problems. The other key is establishment of a mechanism that focuses specifically on how resources for learning supports are used at the school.

For those concerned with school improvement, resource-oriented mechanisms are a key facet of efforts to transform and restructure daily operations. In some schools as much as 30 percent of the budget may be going to problem prevention and correction. Every school is expending resources to enable learning; few have a mechanism to ensure appropriate use of existing resources and enhance current efforts related to learning supports. Such a mechanism contributes to cost-efficacy of learner supports by ensuring all such activity is planned, implemented, and evaluated in a coordinated and increasingly integrated manner. It also provides another means for reducing marginalization. Creation of such a mechanism is essential for braiding together existing school and community resources and encouraging services and programs to function in an increasingly cohesive way. When this mechanism is created in the form of a "team," it also is a vehicle for building working relationships and can play an expanded role in solving turf and operational problems.

One of the primary and essential tasks a learning supports resource-oriented mechanism undertakes is that of enumerating school and community programs and services that are in place to support students, families, and staff. A comprehensive "gap" assessment is generated as resources are mapped and compared with surveys of the unmet needs of and desired outcomes for students, their families, and school staff. Analyses of what is available, effective, and needed provide a sound basis for formulating priorities and developing strategies to link with additional resources at other schools, district sites, and in the community and enhance resource use. Such analyses also can guide efforts to improve cost-effectiveness.

In a similar fashion, a learning supports resource-oriented mechanism for a complex or family of schools (e.g., a high school and its feeder schools) and one at the district level provide mechanisms for analyses on a larger scale. This can lead to strategies for cross-school, community-wide, and district-wide cooperation and integration to enhance intervention effectiveness and garner economies of scale.

**A Learning Supports Resource Team**

Early in our work, we called the school level resource-oriented mechanism a Resource Coordinating Team. However, coordination is too limited a descriptor of the teams role and functions. So, we now use the term Learning Supports Resource Team. Properly constituted, such a team works with the school’s administrators to expand on-site leadership for efforts to address barriers comprehensively and ensures the maintenance and improvement of a multifaceted and integrated approach.

When we mention a Learning Supports Resource Team, some school staff quickly respond: *We already have one!* When we explore this with them, we usually find what they have is a case-oriented team – that is, a team that focuses on individual students who are having problems. Such a team may be called a student study team, student success team, student assistance team, teacher assistance team, and so forth.

To help clarify the difference between resource and case-oriented teams, we contrast the functions of each as outlined below.
Contrasting Team Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Case-Oriented Team</th>
<th>A Resource-Oriented Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on specific <em>individuals</em> and discrete <em>services</em> to address barriers to learning</td>
<td>Focuses on all students and the <em>resources, programs, and systems</em> to address barriers to learning &amp; promote healthy development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes called:</td>
<td>Possibly called:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Child Study Team</td>
<td>- Learning Supports Resource Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Student Study Team</td>
<td>- Resource Coordinating Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Student Success Team</td>
<td>- Resource Coordinating Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Student Assistance Team</td>
<td>- School Support Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Teacher Assistance Team</td>
<td>EXAMPLES OF TASKS:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- IEP Team</td>
<td>- aggregating data across students and from teachers to analyze school needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXAMPLES OF TASKS:</td>
<td>- mapping resources in school and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;triage</td>
<td>- analyzing resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;referral</td>
<td>- identifying the most pressing program development needs at the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;case monitoring/management</td>
<td>- coordinating and integrating school resources &amp; connecting with community resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;case progress review</td>
<td>- establishing priorities for strengthening programs and developing new ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;case reassessment</td>
<td>- planning and facilitating ways to strengthen and develop new programs and systems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- recommending how resources should be deployed and redeployed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- developing strategies for enhancing resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- social &quot;marketing&quot;</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Two parables help differentiate the two types of mechanisms and the importance of both sets of functions. A *case-orientation* fits the starfish metaphor.

The day after a great storm had washed all sorts of sea life far up onto the beach, a youngster set out to throw back as many of the still-living starfish as he could. After watching him toss one after the other into the ocean, an old man approached him and said: *It’s no use your doing that, there are too many, You’re not going to make any difference.*

The boy looked at him in surprise, then bent over, picked up another starfish, threw it in, and then replied: *It made a difference to that one!*

This parable, of course, reflects all the important clinical efforts undertaken by staff alone and when they meet together to work on specific cases.
The resource-oriented focus is captured by what can be called the bridge parable.

In a small town, one weekend a group of school staff went to the river to go fishing. Not long after they got there, a child came floating down the rapids calling for help. One of the group on the shore quickly dived in and pulled the child out. Minutes later another, then another, and then many more children were coming down the river. Soon every one was diving in and dragging children to the shore and then jumping back in to save as many as they could.

In the midst of all this frenzy, one of the group was seen walking away. Her colleagues were irate. How could she leave when there were so many children to save? After long hours, to everyone’s relief, the flow of children stopped, and the group could finally catch their breath.

At that moment, their colleague came back. They turned on her and angrily shouted: How could you walk off when we needed everyone here to save the children?

She replied: It occurred to me that someone ought to go upstream and find out why so many kids were falling into the river. What I found is that the old wooden bridge had several planks missing, and when some children tried to jump over the gap, they couldn’t make it and fell through into the river. So I got someone to fix the bridge.

Fixing and building better bridges is a good way to think about prevention, and it helps underscore the importance of taking time to improve and enhance resources, programs, and systems.

A resource-oriented team exemplifies the type of mechanism needed for overall cohesion and ongoing development of school learning supports programs and systems. As indicated, its focus is not on specific individuals, but on how resources are used.

In pursuing its functions, the team provides what often is a missing link for managing and enhancing programs and systems in ways that integrate, strengthen, and stimulate new and improved interventions. For example, such a mechanism can be used to (a) map and analyze activities and resources to improve their use in preventing and ameliorating problems, (b) build effective referral, case management, and quality assurance systems, (c) enhance procedures for management of programs and information and for communication among school staff and with the home, and (d) explore ways to redeploy and enhance resources – such as clarifying which activities are nonproductive, suggesting better uses for resources, and establishing priorities for developing new interventions, as well as reaching out to connect with additional resources in the school district and community.

Minimally, a resource-oriented team can reduce fragmentation and enhance cost-efficacy by assisting in ways that encourage programs to function in a coordinated and increasingly integrated way. For example, the team can coordinate resources, enhance communication among school staff and with the home about available assistance and referral processes, and monitor programs to be certain they are functioning effectively and efficiently. More generally, this group can provide leadership in guiding school personnel and clientele in evolving the school’s vision, priorities, and practices for learning supports and enhancing resources.

Although a resource-oriented mechanism might be created solely around psychosocial programs, it is meant to focus on resources related to all major learning supports programs and services. Thus, it tries to bring together representatives of all these programs and services. This might include, for example, school counselors, psychologists, nurses, social workers, attendance and
dropout counselors, special education staff, physical educators and after school program staff, bilingual and Title I program coordinators, health educators, safe and drug free school staff, and union reps. It also should include representatives of any community agency that is significantly involved with the school. Beyond these "service" providers, such a team needs a leader from the school’s administration and is well-advised to add the energies and expertise of regular classroom teachers, non-certificated staff (e.g., front office, food service, custodian, bus driver) parents, and older students.

Properly constituted, trained, and supported, a resource-oriented team complements the work of the site's governance body through providing on-site overview, leadership, and advocacy for all activity aimed at addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Having at least one representative from the resource team on the school's governing and planning bodies ensures infrastructure connections for maintaining, improving, and increasingly integrating learning supports and classroom instruction. And, of course, having an administrator on the team provides the necessary link with the school’s administrative decision making about allocation of budget, space, staff development time, and other resources.

It is conceivable that one person could start the process of understanding the fundamental resource-oriented functions and delineating an infrastructure to carry them out. It is better, however, if several stakeholders put their heads together. Where creation of "another team" is seen as a burden, existing teams, such as student or teacher assistance teams, school crisis teams, and healthy school teams, have demonstrated the ability to do resource-oriented functions. In adding the resource-oriented functions to another team’s work, great care must be taken to structure the agenda so sufficient time is devoted to the additional tasks. For small schools, a large team often is not feasible, but a two person team can still do the job.

**School Steering Body for a Learning Supports Component**

All initiatives need a team of “champions” who agree to steer the process. Thus, at the school level, initially it helps not only to have a resource-oriented team, but also to establish an advisory/steering group. This leadership body ensures overall development of the component to address barriers to learning and guides and monitors the resource team. These advocates must be competent with respect to the work to be done and highly motivated not just to help get things underway, but to ensure the changes are sustained over time.

The group's first focus is on assuring that capacity is built to accomplish the desired systemic changes. This includes ensuring an adequate policy and leadership base. If such a base is not already in place, the group needs to focus on getting one in place. Capacity building, of course, also includes special training for change agents. Over time, the main functions of a steering group are to ensure that staff assigned to facilitate changes (a) maintain a big picture perspective and appropriate movement toward long-term goals and (b) have sufficient support and guidance.

The steering group should be fully connected with teams guiding the instructional and management components at the school. Each school steering body needs to be linked formally to the district mechanism designed to guide development of learning supports components at schools.

Steering groups should not be too large. For example, at a school level, membership might include key change agents, one or two other key school leaders, perhaps someone from a local institution of higher education, perhaps a key agency person or two, and a few well-connected “champions.” Such a group can meet monthly (more often if major problems arise) to review progress, problem solve, decide on mid-course corrections. To work against the perception that it is a closed, elite group, it can host "focus groups" to elicit input and feedback and provide information.
Ad Hoc and Standing Work Groups for a Resource Team

Work groups are formed as needed by a Learning Supports Resource Team to address specific concerns (e.g., mapping resources, planning for capacity building and social marketing, addressing problems related to case-oriented systems), develop new programs (e.g., welcoming and social support strategies for newcomers to the school), implement special initiatives (e.g., positive behavior support), and so forth. Such groups usually are facilitated by a member of the resource team who recruits a small group of others from the school and community who are willing and able to help. The group facilitator provides regular updates to the resource team on work group progress and brings back feedback from the Team.

*Ad hoc* work groups take on tasks that can be done over a relatively short time period, and the group disbands once the work is accomplished. *Standing* work groups focus on defined programs areas and pursue current priorities for enhancing intervention in a given arena. For example, a standing work group might be established for any of the six intervention arenas outlined in Chapter 6.

Integrating the Component into the School Infrastructure

The figure on the next page illustrates the type of infrastructure that needs to emerge at the school if it is to effectively develop a comprehensive component to address barriers to learning.

Note especially the links among the three components, and the connection within the various groups involved in planning, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining learning supports.

A Learning Supports Resource Mechanism for a Family of Schools

Schools in the same geographic or catchment area have a number of shared concerns, and schools in the feeder pattern often interact with students from the same family. Furthermore, some programs and personnel already are or can be shared in strategic ways by several neighboring schools, thereby reducing costs by minimizing redundancy and opening up ways to achieve economies of scale.

A multi-site council can provide a mechanism to help ensure cohesive and equitable deployment of resources and also can enhance the pooling of resources. Such a mechanism can be particularly useful for integrating the efforts of high schools and their feeder middle and elementary schools and connecting with neighborhood resources. This clearly is important in addressing barriers with those families who have youngsters attending more than one level of schooling in the same cluster. It is neither cost-effective nor good intervention for each school to contact a family separately in instances where several children from a family are in need of special attention. With respect to linking with community resources, multi-school teams are especially attractive to community agencies who often don't have the time or personnel to make independent arrangements with every school.
Example of an Integrated Infrastructure at a School Site

The following example illustrates the type of infrastructure that needs to emerge at the school if it is to effectively develop a comprehensive component to address barriers to learning. Note especially the links among the three components, and the connection within the various groups involved in planning, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining learning supports.

*Learning Supports or Enabling Component Leadership consists of an administrator and other advocates/champions with responsibility and accountability for ensuring the vision for the component is not lost. The administrator meets with and provides regular input to the Learning Supports Resource Team.

**A Learning Supports Resource Team ensures component cohesion, integrated implementation, and ongoing development. It meets weekly to guide and monitor daily implementation and development of all programs, services, initiatives, and systems at a school that are concerned with providing learning supports and specialized assistance.

***Ad hoc and standing work groups – Initially, these are the various “teams” that already exist related to various initiatives and programs (e.g., a crisis team) and for processing “cases” (e.g., a student assistance team, an IEP team). Where redundancy exists, work groups can be combined. Others are formed as needed by the Learning Supports Resource Team to address specific concerns. These groups are essential for accomplishing the many tasks associated with such a team’s functions.

For more on this, see

In general, a group of schools can benefit from a multi-site resource mechanism designed to provide leadership, facilitate communication and connection, and ensure quality improvement across sites. For example, a multi-site body, or what we call a Learning Supports Resource Council, might consist of a high school and its feeder middle and elementary schools. It brings together one-two representatives from each school's resource team (see figure below).

**Resource-oriented Mechanisms Across a Family of Schools**

The Council meets about once a month to help (a) coordinate and integrate programs serving multiple schools, (b) identify and meet common needs with respect to guidelines and staff development, and (c) create linkages and collaborations among schools and with community agencies. In this last regard, it can play a special role in community outreach both to create formal working relationships and ensure that all participating schools have access to such resources.

More generally, the Council provides a useful mechanism for leadership, communication, maintenance, quality improvement, and ongoing development of a comprehensive continuum of programs and services. Natural starting points for councils are the sharing of needs assessments, resource maps, analyses, and recommendations for reform and restructuring. Specific areas of initial focus would be on local, high priority concerns, such as addressing violence and developing prevention programs and safe school and neighborhood plans.

Representatives from Learning Supports Resource Councils would be invaluable members of planning groups (e.g., Service Planning Area Councils, Local Management Boards). They bring info about specific schools, clusters of schools, and local neighborhoods and do so in ways that reflect the importance of school-community partnerships.
About Leadership and Infrastructure

It is clear that building a learning supports or enabling component requires strong leadership and new positions to help steer systemic changes and construct the necessary infrastructure. Establishment and maintenance of the component requires continuous, proactive, effective teaming, organization, and accountability.

Administrative leadership at every level is key to the success of any systemic change initiative in schools. Given that an enabling or learning supports component is one of the primary and essential components of school improvement, it is imperative to have designated administrative and staff leadership for the component at school and district levels. Everyone at the school site should be aware of who in the school district provides leadership, promotes, and is accountable for the development of the component. It is imperative that such leadership be at a high enough level to be at key decision making tables when budget and other fundamental decisions are discussed.

At the school level, a administrative leader for the component may be created by redefining a percentage (e.g., 50%) of an assistant principal’s day. Or, in schools that only have one administrator, the principal might delegate some administrative responsibilities to a coordinator (e.g., Title I coordinator or a Center coordinator at schools with a Family or Parent Center). The designated administrative leader must sit on the resource team and represent and advocate team recommendations at administrative and governance body meetings.

Besides facilitating initial development of a potent component to address barriers to learning, the administrative lead must guide and be accountable for daily implementation, monitoring, and problem solving. This individual is the natural link to component leaders in the family of schools and at the district level and should be a vital force for community outreach and involvement.

There is also the need for a staff lead to address daily operational matters. This may be one of the learning supports staff (e.g., a school counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse) or a Title I coordinator, or a teacher with special interest in learning supports.

In general, these leaders, along with other key staff, embody the vision for the component. Their job descriptions should be reframed to delineate specific functions related to their new roles, responsibilities, and accountability.
Phasing-in Resource Teams and Councils

The system-wide group should include (a) representatives of multi-school councils, (b) key district administrative and line staff with relevant expertise and vision (including unit heads, coordinators, union reps), and (c) various other stakeholders such as nondistrict members whose job and expertise (e.g., public health, mental health, social services, recreation, juvenile justice, post secondary institutions) make them invaluable contributors to the tasks at hand.

As the above discussion stresses, well-redesigned organizational and operational mechanisms that enable schools to (a) arrive at wise decisions about resource allocation, (b) maximize systematic and integrated planning, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation of enabling activity, (c) outreach to create formal working relationships with community resources to bring some to a school and establish special linkages with others, and (d) upgrade and modernize interventions to reflect the best models and use of technology. Implied in all this are new roles and functions for some staff and greater involvement of parents, students, and other representatives from the community. Also implied is redeployment of existing resources as well as finding new ones.

Building on what is known about organizational change, our Center staff for many years has been working on a change model for use in establishing, sustaining, and scaling-up school and community reforms. In this context, we have developed a position called an Organization Facilitator to aid with major restructuring (Adelman, 1993; Adelman & Taylor 1997; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 1999a, 1999b, 2001; Taylor & Adelman 1999). This specially trained change agent embodies the necessary expertise to help school sites and complexes implement and institutionalize substantively new approaches, such as the establishment of Resource Coordinating Teams and Councils.

The exhibit on the following pages offers an outline of phases for establishing such mechanisms and summarizes some key facets of what has been discussed above.
Exhibit
Phasing in Learning Support Resource Teams and Councils

Phase 1. Organizing Learning Support Resource Teams at a School Site

Creation of a School-site Learning Support Resource Team provides a starting point in efforts to reform and restructure education support programs. Such a team not only can begin the process of transforming what already is available, it can help reach out to District and community resources to enhance education support activity. Such a resource-oriented team differs from case-oriented teams (e.g., Student Assistance/Guidance Teams). The focus of this team is not on individual students. Rather, it is oriented to clarifying resources and how they are best used.

Such a team can help

- improve coordination and efficacy by ensuring
  - basic systems (for referral, triage, case management) are in place and effective
  - programs/services are profiled, written up, and circulated
  - resources are shared equitably
- enhance resources through staff development and by facilitating creation of new resources via redeployment and outreach
- evolve a site's education support activity infrastructure by assisting in the creation of program teams and Family/Parent Centers as hubs for such activities.

Among its first functions, the Resource Team can help clarify

- the resources available to the school (who? what? when?) – For example, the team can map out and then circulate to staff, students, and parents a handout describing "Available Special Services, Programs, and Other Resources."
- how someone gains access to available resources – The team can clarify processes for referral, triage, follow-through, and case management, and circulate a description of procedures to the school staff and parents.
- how resources are coordinated – To ensure systems are in place and to enhance effectiveness, the team can help weave together resources, make analyses, coordinate activity, and so forth.
- what other resources the school needs and what steps should be taken to acquire them – The team can identify additional resources that might be acquired from the District or by establishing community linkages.

Toward the end of Phase 1, a Complex Learning Support Resource Council (a multi-locality council) can be organized. This group is designed to ensure sharing and enhancement of resources across schools in a given neighborhood. Of particular interest are ways to address common concerns related to crisis response and prevention, as well as dealing with the reality that community resources that might be linked to schools are extremely limited in many geographic areas and thus must be shared.

More info on the functions of a Learning Support Resource Team and the complex Council are provided in the body of this report.
Phase II. Organizing a Programmatic Focus and Infrastructure for Education Support Activity

All sites that indicate readiness for moving toward reconceptualizing education support (enabling) activity into a delimited set of program areas are assisted in organizing program teams and restructuring the site's Learning Support Resource Team.

This involves facilitating

- development of program teams
- analyses of education support activity (programs/services) by program area teams to determine
  - how well the various activities are coordinated/integrated (with a special emphasis on minimizing redundancy)
  - whether any activities need to be improved (or eliminated)
  - what is missing -- especially any activity that seems as important or even more important than those in operation.
- efforts by program area teams related to
  - profiling, writing up, circulating, and publicizing program/service information
  - setting priorities to improve activity in a programmatic area
  - setting steps into motion to accomplish their first priority for improvement
  - moving on to their next priorities.

Phase III. Facilitating the Maintenance and Evolution of Appropriate Changes

In general, this involves evaluating how well the infrastructure and related changes are working, including whether the changes are highly visible and understood. If there are problems, the focus is on clarifying what is structurally and systemically wrong and taking remedial steps. (It is important to avoid the trap of dealing with a symptom and ignoring ongoing factors that are producing problems; that is, the focus should be on addressing systemic flaws in ways that can prevent future problems.)

Examples of activity:

- Checking on maintenance of Ad Hoc Teams (keeping membership broad based and with a working core through processes for identifying, recruiting, and training new members when teams need bolstering).
- Holding individual meetings with school site leadership responsible for restructuring in this area and with team leaders to identify whether everyone is receiving adequate assistance and staff development.
- Determining if teams periodically make a new listing (mapping) of the current activity at the site and whether they update their analyses of the activity.
- Checking on efficacy of referral, triage, and case management systems.
- Checking on the effectiveness of mechanisms for daily coordination, communication, and problem solving.
- Evaluating progress in refining and enhancing program activity.

Phase IV. Facilitating the Institutionalization/Sustainability of Appropriate Changes

A critical aspect of institutionalization involves ensuring that school staff responsible for restructuring education support activity formulate a proposal for the next fiscal year. Such a proposal encompasses resource requests (budget, personnel, space, staff development time). It must be submitted and approved by the site's governance authority. Institutionalization requires a plan that is appropriately endorsed and empowered through appropriation of adequate resources.

Institutionalization is further supported by evaluating functioning and outcomes related to new infrastructure mechanisms and fundamental activities. With a view to improving quality and efficacy, the findings from such evaluations are used to revise activities and mechanisms as necessary.
A resource-oriented team exemplifies the type of mechanism needed for overall cohesion of school support programs and systems. As indicated, its focus is not on specific individuals, but on how resources are used.

In pursuing its functions, the team provides what often is a missing link for managing and enhancing programs and systems in ways that integrate and strengthen interventions. For example, such a mechanism can be used to (a) map and analyze activity and resources to improve their use in preventing and ameliorating problems, (b) build effective referral, case management, and quality assurance systems, (c) enhance procedures for management of programs and information and for communication among school staff and with the home, and (d) explore ways to redeploy and enhance resources – such as clarifying which activities are nonproductive and suggesting better uses for resources, as well as reaching out to connect with additional resources in the school district and community.

Minimally, a resource-oriented team can reduce fragmentation and enhance cost-efficacy by assisting in ways that encourage programs to function in a coordinated and increasingly integrated way. For example, the team can coordinate resources, enhance communication among school staff and with the home about available assistance and referral processes, and monitor programs to be certain they are functioning effectively and efficiently. More generally, this group can provide leadership in guiding school personnel in evolving the school’s vision for learning support.

Where creation of "another team" is seen as a burden, existing teams, such as student or teacher assistance teams and school crisis teams, have demonstrated the ability to do resource-oriented functions. In adding the resource-oriented functions to another team’s work, great care must be taken to structure the agenda so sufficient time is devoted to the new tasks. For small schools, a large team often is not feasible, but a two person team can still do the job.

It is conceivable that one person could start the process of understanding the fundamental resource-oriented functions and delineating an infrastructure to carry them out. It is better, however, if several stakeholders put their heads together.
**WHAT IS 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 tasks 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:**


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.

How to Start

Who will Facilitate the Process?

About Creating Readiness

Some Initial Steps in Establishing a Learning Supports Resource Team

Building Team Capacity
As you pursue the work, it will help you think about matters such as:

Who will facilitate the processes described?

What’s needed in terms of leadership and support?

What’s are the initial steps in establishing a Learning Supports Resource Team?

What should be the initial focus in building team capacity?

Establishing a resource-oriented team in schools represents a major systemic change. The danger in creating new mechanisms is that they can become just another task, another meeting – busy work. Infrastructure must be designed in keeping with the major functions to be carried out, and all functions must be carried out in the service of a vital vision for improving outcomes for all students. Resource-oriented mechanisms are valuable only if they are driven by and help advance an important vision. Leaders and facilitators must be able to instill that vision in team members and help them sustain it.

Successful systemic change requires considerable attention to creating readiness and building the capacity for initial implementation. After introducing the concept of a learning support or enabling component, it is easy to get lost in a morass of details when caught up in the daily tasks of making major systemic changes. This module covers topics and contains some tools that have been found helpful in efforts to provide guidance and support for those involved in establishing innovations at schools. As you use the material, you may find it helpful periodically to review the points covered below so that you can keep the big picture in perspective and maintain a sense of some of the most basic considerations.

**Who Will Facilitate the Process?**

Someone needs to be designated to facilitate the process of establishing a resource-oriented team at a school. Because the process involves significant organizational change, the individual chosen has to have the full support of the administration and the skills of a change agent. We characterize such an individual as an organization facilitator.*

An organization facilitator is a catalyst and manager of change. As such, s/he strives to ensure that changes are true to the design for improvement and adapted to fit the local culture. The facilitator also must be an effective problem solver – responding quickly as problems arise and designing proactive strategies to counter anticipated barriers to change, such as negative reactions and dynamics, common factors interfering with working relationships, and system deficiencies. All this must be accomplished in ways that enhance readiness and commitment to change, empowerment, a sense of community.

Our discussion here focuses on organization facilitators as a change agent for one school. However, such an individual might rotate among a group of schools. And, in large school districts, a cadre of such professionals might be used to facilitate change across an entire district.

Regardless of the nature and scope of the work, an organization facilitator's core functions require an individual whose background and training have prepared her/him to understand:

- the specific systemic changes (content and processes) to be accomplished (In this respect, a facilitator must have an assimilated understanding of the fundamental concerns underlying the need for change.)

- how to work with a site's stakeholders as they restructure their programs (e.g., how to be an effective agent of change).

The main work revolves around planning and facilitating:

- infrastructure development, maintenance, action, mechanism liaison and interface, and priority setting

- stakeholder development (coaching -- with an emphasis on creating readiness both in terms of motivation and skills; team building; providing technical assistance)

- communication (visibility), resource mapping, analyses, coordination, and integration

- formative evaluation and rapid problem solving

- ongoing support

Such personnel also can help organize basic "interdisciplinary and cross training" to create the trust, knowledge, skills, and the attitudes essential for the kind of working relationships required if the resource-oriented mechanism is to operate successfully.

For more see the Exhibit on the following pages.
Exhibit

Examples of Activity for an Organization Facilitator

1. Infrastructure tasks
   (a) Works with school governing bodies to further clarify and negotiate agreements about
       • policy changes
       • participating personnel (including administrators authorized to take the lead
         for the systemic changes)
       • time, space, and budget commitments
   (b) Helps leaders identify and prepare members for a group to steer the process
   (c) Helps leaders identify members for the resource-oriented team

2. Stakeholder development
   (a) Provides general orientations for governing and planning bodies
   (b) Provides basic capacity building for resource-oriented team
   (c) Ongoing coaching of team members (about purposes, processes)
       Examples: At a team's first meeting, the organization facilitator offers to provide a
       brief orientation presentation (including handouts) and helps teams establish
       processes for daily interaction and periodic meetings. During the next few meetings,
       coaching might help with mapping and analyzing resources.
   (d) Works with leaders to ensure presentations and written information about
       changes are provided to the entire staff and other stakeholders

3. Communication (visibility), coordination, and integration
   (a) Determines if info on new directions (including leadership and team functions and
       membership) and about resources has been written-up and circulated. If not, facilitator
       determines why and helps address systemic breakdowns; if necessary, effective
       processes are modeled.
   (b) Determines if leaders and team members are effectively handling priority tasks. If not,
       the facilitator determines why and helps address systemic breakdowns; if necessary,
       effective processes are modeled.
Exhibit (cont.)

Examples of Activity for an Organization Facilitator

(c) Determines if the following have been accomplished (and if not, takes appropriate steps)
   • mapping of current activity and resources related to learning supports
   • analyses of activity and resources to determine
     > how well they are meeting needs and how well coordinated/integrated they are
       (with special emphasis on maximizing cost-effectiveness and minimizing redundancy)
     > what learning supports need to be improved (or eliminated)
     > what is missing, its level of priority, and how and when to develop it
   • info has been written-up and circulated about all resources and plans for change

(d) Determines the adequacy of efforts made to enhance communication to and among stakeholders and, if more is needed, facilitates improvements

(e) Determines if systems are in place to identify problems related to functioning of the infrastructure and communication systems. If there are problems, determines why and helps address any systemic breakdowns

(f) Checks on visibility of reforms and if the efforts are not visible, determines why and helps rectify

4. Formative Evaluation and Rapid Problem Solving

(a) Works with leaders and team members to develop procedures for formative evaluation and processes that ensure rapid problem solving

(b) Checks regularly to be certain that learning supports are enabling student learning and that there is rapid problem solving. If the data are not promising, helps school leaders to make appropriate modifications.

5. Ongoing Support

(a) Offers ongoing coaching on an "on-call" basis
   
   For example: informs team members about ideas developed by others or provides expertise related to a specific topic they plan to discuss.

(b) At appropriate points in time, asks for part of a meeting to see how things are going and (if necessary) to explore ways to improve the process

(c) At appropriate times, asks whether participants have dealt with longer-range planning, and if they haven't, determines what help they need

(d) Helps participants identify sources for continuing development/education
Using an Organization Facilitator to Establish and Coach a Learning Supports Resource Team

The following example from one school may help clarify some of the above points.

At First Street School, the Organization Facilitator’s first step was to ensure the site leadership was sufficiently committed to restructuring learning support programs and services. The commitment was made public by the site's governance body adopting the enabling component concept and by formally agreeing to the role the Organization Facilitator would play in helping staff implement reforms.

The process of restructuring began with assignment of an assistant principal to function as the component's administrative leader and establishment of a Resource Team consisting of the school's pupil service personnel, the administrative leader, a staff lead, and several teachers. With the Organization Facilitator acting as coach, the team began by mapping and analyzing all school resources being used to address barriers to student learning.

By clustering existing activities into the six arenas of intervention designated for an enabling component, the team was able to consider a new programmatic vision for the school's efforts to address barriers to learning and enhance healthy development. By analyzing activities from this perspective, the team identified essential activities, major programmatic gaps, redundant efforts, and several long-standing activities that were having little effect. Decisions were made to eliminate redundant and ineffective activity and redeploy the resources to strengthen essential programs and begin to fill learning support gaps.

As one facet of the school's community outreach, the Organization Facilitator coached the Resource Team on how to bring community resources to the site in ways that do not displace essential school resources. This focus was on integrating community resources into the enabling component. That is, the team outreached specifically to those community resources that could either fill a significant gap or enhance the school staffs' efforts by becoming part of an ongoing program. To ensure coordination and integration, all community agencies working at the site are asked to have a representative participate on the Resource Team.
About Creating Readiness

If efforts to restructure schools are to result in substantive and sustainable changes, particular attention must be paid to ensuring effective leadership and ongoing support. Talking about change has rarely been a problem for educational leaders and change agents. Problems arise when they try to introduce change into specific locales and settings. It is then that they encounter the difficulties inherent in building consensus and mobilizing others to develop and maintain the substance of new prototypes.

In effect, leaders and change agents have a triple burden as they attempt to improve schools.

- They must ensure that substantive change is on the policy agenda.
- They must build consensus for change.
- They must facilitate effective implementation (e.g., establish, maintain, and enhance productive changes).

Creating readiness for systemic changes involves strategic interventions to ensure:

- strong policy support
- administrative and stakeholder buy-in and support
- long-range strategic and immediate action planning
- daily formal leadership from highly motivated administrative and supervisory staff and key union representatives
- daily informal leadership from highly motivated line staff
- ongoing involvement of leadership from outside the system
- establishment of change agent mechanisms to facilitate systemic changes
- careful development of mechanisms for planning, implementation, and improvement of new approaches
- mobilization of a critical mass of stakeholders
- capacity building designed to ensure all involved can perform effectively
- protection for those who are assuming new roles and new ways of working
- using all supportive data that can be gathered (e.g., benchmarks for all progress)
A thread running through all this is the need to stimulate increasing interest or *motivational readiness* among stakeholders.

To clarify the point:

In education a new idea or practice almost always finds a receptive audience among a small group. Many more, however, are politely unresponsive and reluctant to change things, and some are actively resistant. Successful change at any level of education restructuring requires the committed involvement of a critical mass of stakeholders. Thus, leaders often are confronted with the task of enhancing the motivational readiness for change of a significant proportion of those who appear reluctant and resistant.

This raises the question: What mobilizes individual initiative?

The answer requires an understanding of what is likely to affect a person's positive and negative motivation related to intended changes in process, content, and outcomes. Particular attention to the following ideas seems warranted:

- **Optimal functioning requires motivational readiness.** Readiness is not viewed in the old sense of waiting until a person is interested. Rather, it is understood in the contemporary sense of designing interventions to maximize the likelihood that processes, content, and outcomes are perceived as vivid, valued, and attainable.

- **Good strategies not only aim at increasing motivation but also avoid practices that decrease motivation.** Care must be taken, for example, not to overrely on extrinsics to entice and reward because to do so may decrease intrinsic motivation; excessive monitoring or pressure can produce avoidance motivation.

- **Motivation is a process and an outcome concern.** In terms of outcomes, for example, strategies should be designed to maintain, enhance, and expand intrinsic motivation so that individuals will come to "own" new practices.

- **Increasing intrinsic motivation involves affecting a person's thoughts, feelings, and decisions.** The intent is to use procedures that can reduce negative feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies and increase positive ones related to relevant outcomes, processes, and content. With respect to negative attitudes, this means identifying and minimizing experiences that maintain or may increase avoidance motivation.
Readiness is about . . . *Matching Motivation and Capabilities*

Success of efforts to establish effective use of learning support resources depends on stakeholders’ motivation and capability. Substantive change is most likely when high levels of positive energy can be mobilized and appropriately directed over extended periods of time. Among the most fundamental errors related to systemic change is the tendency to set actions into motion without taking sufficient time to lay the foundation. Thus, one of the first concerns is how to mobilize and direct the energy of a critical mass of participants to ensure readiness and commitment. This calls for strategies that establish and maintain an effective match with their motivation and capability.

The initial focus is on communicating essential information to key stakeholders using strategies that help them understand that the benefits of change will outweigh the costs and are more worthwhile than the status quo. The strategies used must be personalized and accessible to the subgroups of stakeholders (e.g., must be “enticing,” emphasize that costs are reasonable, and engage them in processes that build consensus and commitment). Sufficient time *must* be spent creating motivational readiness of key stakeholders and building their capacity and skills.

And readiness is an everyday concern.

All changes require constant care and feeding. Those who steer the process must be motivated and competent, not just initially but over time. The complexity of systemic change requires close monitoring of mechanisms and immediate follow up to address problems. In particular, it means providing continuous, personalized guidance and support to enhance knowledge and skills and counter anxiety, frustration, and other stressors. To these ends, adequate resource support must be provided (time, space, materials, equipment) and opportunities must be available for increasing ability and generating a sense of renewed mission. Personnel turnover must be addressed by welcoming and orienting new members.

*A note of caution.* In marketing new ideas, it is tempting to accentuate their promising attributes and minimize complications. For instance, in negotiating agreements, school policy makers frequently are asked simply to sign a memorandum of understanding, rather than involving them in processes that lead to a comprehensive, informed commitment. Sometimes they agree mainly to obtain extra resources; sometimes they are motivated by a desire to be seen by constituents as doing *something* to improve the school. This can lead to premature implementation, resulting in the form rather than the substance of change.
For motivated persons, readiness interventions focus on ways to maintain and possibly enhance intrinsic motivation. This involves ensuring their involvement continues to produce mostly positive feelings and a minimum of negative side effects.

At times, all that may be necessary is to help clear the way of external hurdles. At other times, maintaining motivation requires leading, guiding, stimulating, clarifying, and supporting. Efforts to maintain motivation build on processes used initially for mobilization. In both instances, activity is conceived in terms of nine comprehensive process objectives. These underscore that strategies to facilitate change should be designed to

- establish and maintain an appropriate working relationship (e.g., through creating a sense of trust, open communication, providing support and direction as required)

- clarify the purpose of activities and procedures, especially those intended to help correct specific problems

- clarify why procedures should be effective

- clarify the nature and purpose of evaluative measures

- build on previous capabilities and interests

- present outcomes, processes, and content in ways that structure attending to the most relevant features (e.g., modeling, cueing)

- guide motivated practice (e.g., suggesting and providing opportunities for meaningful applications and clarifying ways to organize practice)

- provide continuous information to ensure awareness of accomplishments

- provide opportunities for continued application and generalization (e.g., ending the process by addressing ways in which individuals can pursue additional, self-directed accomplishments in the area and/or can arrange for additional support and direction).
Some Initial Steps in Establishing a Learning Supports Resource Team

When the focus is on establishing teams throughout a district, it is wise to begin with sites that manifest the highest levels of motivational readiness.

After initial presentations have been made to potential school sites, elicit responses regarding possible interest (e.g., highly interested and ready to go, highly interested but with a few barriers that must be surmounted, moderately interested, not interested).

Follow-up on Initial Interest – Begin discussions with those sites that are highly interested in proceeding.

Clarify
- what process will be used to produce the desired changes
- what resources will be brought in to help make changes
- what the site must be willing to provide and do

At the end of the discussions, there should be a written mutual agreement covering matters such as

> long-term goals and immediate objectives (e.g., site policy commitment to developing and sustaining a comprehensive approach to addressing barriers to learning; willingness to assign an administrative leader; agreement to develop a resource team; readiness to map, analyze, and redeploy resources)

> times to be made available for working with the change agent and for staff to work together on the restructuring

> personnel who will assume leadership (e.g., site leader and key staff)

> access to other resources (e.g., space, phone, photocopier)

> access for staff development (e.g., agreement to devote a significant amount of staff development time to the process -- time with teachers, pupil personnel staff, program coordinators, noncredentialled staff)
Step 3  Meet with key individuals at the site to discuss their role and functions as leaders for the intended systemic changes (e.g., meet with the site administrative leader who has been designated for this role; meet with each person who will initially be part of a Resource Team)

Clarify roles and functions – discuss plans, how to most effectively use time and other resources effectively.

Before having the first team meeting, work with individuals to clarify specific roles and functions for making the group effective (e.g., Who will be the meeting facilitator? time keeper? record keeper?). Provide whatever training is needed to ensure that these groups are ready and able to work productively.

Step 4  Arrange first group meetings

It may take several meetings before a group functions well. The change agent's job is to help them coalesce into a working group. After this, the task is to help them expand the group gradually.

The group's first substantive tasks is to map learning support resources at the site (programs, services, "who's who," schedules – don't forget recreation and enrichment activities such as those brought to or linked with the school). The mapping should also clarify the systems used to ensure that staff, parents, and students learn about and gain access to these resources. The group should plan to update all of above as changes are made.

Mapping is followed by an analysis of what's worth maintaining and what should be shelved so that resources can be redeployed. Then, the focus shifts to planning to enhance and expand in ways that better address barriers to learning and promote healthy development. ("What don't we have that we need? Do we have people/programs that could be more effective if used in other ways? Do we have too much in one area, not enough in others? major gaps?")

(In doing mapping and analysis, the Center surveys focusing on six clusters of enabling activity can be a major aid -- see *Addressing Barriers to Learning: A Set of Surveys to Map What a School Has and What it Needs* – download at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu)
Step 5  Initial Focus in Enhancing New Activity at a School Site

In the first stages of restructuring, advise the site to begin by focusing on activities with a fast pay off.

As sites and their Resource Coordination Teams work to improve things, it helps if the focus initially is on doing some highly visible things that can payoff quickly. Such products generate a sense that system improvement is feasible and allows an early sense of accomplishment. It also can generate some excitement and increase the commitment and involvement of others.

Examples of such activities are:

• Establishment of a "Support for Transition" program for new students and families (e.g., welcoming and social support programs such as trained Student Peer Buddies to welcome and act as part of a social support system for new students in every classroom, trained Parent Peer Buddies to welcome and act as part of a social support system for new parents; training for volunteers who staff a welcoming table in the front office; training and support for office staff so that they can play a constructive role with newcomers; development of welcoming and orientation materials in all relevant languages)

• Development of a program for recruiting, screening, training, and nurturing volunteers to work with targeted students in classrooms or to become mentors and advocates for students in need

• Provide teachers with staff development not only with respect to requesting special services for a few but to enhance their capacity to use prereferral interventions effectively to address the needs of the many

Step 6  Help publicize and encourage appreciation for new approaches at the site

• Every means feasible (e.g., handouts, charts, newsletters, bulletin boards) should be used to make the activity visible and keep all stakeholders informed and involved. For example, as soon as resources are mapped, information about what is available and how to access it should be circulated to staff, parents, and students.

• Demonstrate Impact and Get Credit for All that is Accomplished – Specify process benchmarks and some outcome indicators
• Don't forget to gather some baseline data on attendance, tardies, suspensions, and timeouts. Also, survey teachers regarding the school's efforts to address barriers to learning and enhance healthy development (e.g., ratings of knowledge and satisfaction with programs and services).

In the short run, the task is to help the site staff organize their record keeping to ensure they get credit for progress. These data are important when it comes time to make the case with site based decision makers that the restructuring is worth the time, effort, and money. (Minimally, someone needs to keep a "log" to show all the activities carried out, all the changes and improvements that have been made, and to have a record of a representative set of anecdotes describing teacher/family/student success stories.)

Refining the team’s infrastructure (e.g., creating work groups) and connecting it with the schools infrastructure for instruction and governance.

We will focus on all this in Module IV.

The nice part about developing sites sequentially is that those already developed can serve as mentor sites.

Enhance and Celebrate!

Make every accomplishment highly visible; show people the progress.

Build a strong public perception of changes and their benefits.

What's New! What's Coming!

And celebrate the accomplishments. People work hard to improve outcomes for students, and they need to know that what they did was appreciated for its importance and value.
Resource Aids for Developing Learning Supports Resource Teams/Councils

- *Checklist for Establishing School-Site Teams*
- *Examples of Initial and Ongoing Tasks for Team/Council*
- *Planning and Facilitating Effective Meetings*
Exhibit

Checklist Related to Establishing Resource-Oriented Teams and Work Groups

1. ___ Job descriptions/evaluations reflect a policy for working in a coordinated and increasingly integrated way to maximize resource use and enhance effectiveness (this includes allocation of time and resources so that members can build capacity and work effectively together to maximize resource coordination and enhancement).

2. ___ Every staff member is encouraged to participate on some group to improve students' classroom functioning and can choose to work on matters of specific professional interest.

3. ___ Teams and work groups include key stakeholders (current resource staff, special project staff, teachers, site administrators, parents, older students, others from the community, including representatives of school-linked community services).

4. ___ The size of a team or work group reflects current needs, interests, and factors associated with efficient and effective functioning. (The larger the group, the harder it is to find a meeting time and the longer each meeting tends to run. Frequency of meetings depends on the group's functions, time availability, and ambitions. Properly designed and trained groups can accomplish a great deal through informal communication and short meetings).

5. ___ There is a core of members who have or will acquire the ability to carry out identified functions and make the mechanism work. All are committed to the group's mission. (Building team commitment and competence should be a major focus of school management policies and programs. Because several groups will require the expertise of the same personnel, some individuals necessarily will be part of more than one group.)

6. ___ Each team and work group has a dedicated leader/facilitator who is able to keep the group task-focused and productive.

7. ___ Each team and work group has someone who records decisions and plans and reminds members of planned activity and products.

8. ___ Teams and work groups should use advanced technology (management systems, electronic bulletin boards and E-mail, resource clearinghouses) to facilitate communication, networking, program planning and implementation, linking activity, and a variety of
Exhibit

Examples of Initial and Ongoing Tasks for Team/Council

» Orientation for representatives to introduce each to the other and provide further clarity of group’s purposes and processes

» Review membership to determine if any major stakeholder is not represented; take steps to assure proper representation

» Share and map information regarding what exists (programs, services, systems for triage, referral, case management, etc. – at a site; at each site; in the district and community)

» Analyze information on resources to identify important needs at specific sites and for the complex/family of schools as a whole

» Establish priorities for efforts to enhance resources and systems

» Formulate plans for pursuing priorities

» Each site discusses need for coordinating crisis response across the complex and for sharing complex resources for site specific crises and then explores conclusions and plans at Council meeting

» Discussion of staff (and other stakeholder) development activity with a view to combining certain training across sites

» Discussion of quality improvement and longer-term planning (e.g., efficacy, pooling of resources)

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General Meeting format

» Updating on and introduction of membership

» Reports from those who had between meeting assignments

» Current topic for discussion and planning

» Decision regarding between meeting assignments

» Ideas for next agenda
Planning and Facilitating Effective Meetings

Forming a Working Group

- There should be a clear statement about the group's mission.
- Be certain that members agree to pursue the stated mission and, for the most part, share a vision.
- Pick someone who the group will respect and who either already has good facilitation skills or will commit to learning those that are needed.
- Provide training for members so they understand their role in keeping a meeting on track and turning talk into effective action.
- Designate processes (a) for sending members information before a meeting regarding what is to be accomplished, specific agenda items, and individual assignments and (b) for maintaining and circulating record of decisions and planned actions (what, who, when).

Meeting Format

- Be certain there is a written agenda and that it clearly states the purpose of the meeting, specific topics, and desired outcomes for the session.
- Begin the meeting by reviewing purpose, topics, desired outcomes, etc. Until the group is functioning well, it may be necessary to review meeting ground rules.
- Facilitate the involvement of all members, and do so in ways that encourage them to focus specifically on the task. The facilitator remains neutral in discussion of issues.
- Try to maintain a comfortable pace (neither too rushed, nor too slow; try to start on time and end on time but don't be a slave to the clock).
- Periodically review what has been accomplished and move on the next item.
- Leave time to sum up and celebrate accomplishment of outcomes and end by enumerating specific follow up activity (what, who, when). End with a plan for the next meeting (date, time, tentative agenda). For a series of meetings, set the dates well in advance so members can plan their calendars.

Some Group Dynamics to Anticipate

- Hidden Agendas – All members should agree to help keep hidden agendas in check and, when such items cannot be avoided, facilitate the rapid presentation of a point and indicate where the concern needs to be redirected.
- A Need for Validation – When members make the same point over and over, it usually indicates they feel an important point is not being validated. To counter such disruptive repetition, account for the item in a visible way so that members feel their contributions have been acknowledged. When the item warrants discussion at a later time, assign it to a future agenda.
- Members are at an Impasse – Two major reasons groups get stuck are: (a) some new ideas are needed to "get out of a box" and (b) differences in perspective need to be aired and resolved. The former problem usually can be dealt with through brainstorming or by bringing in someone with new ideas to offer; to deal with conflicts that arise over process, content, and power relationships employ problem solving and conflict management strategies (e.g., accommodation, negotiation, mediation).
- Interpersonal Conflict and Inappropriate Competition – These problems may be corrected by repeatedly bringing the focus back to the goal – improving outcomes for students/families; when this doesn't work; restructuring group membership may be necessary.
- Ain’t It Awful! – Daily frustrations experienced by staff often lead them to turn meetings into gripe sessions. Outside team members (parents, agency staff, business and/or university partners) can influence school staff to exhibit their best behavior.