Templates for Preparing a Design Document

Here are four "templates" to help the design and writing team in preparing the design document. Separate the following into the four sections:

> **(1) Aid in Preparing *Intro and Imperative Section* of Design Document**
>
> **(2) Aid in Preparing *Intervention Framework Section* of Design Document**
>
> **(3) Aid in Preparing *Operational Infrastructure Section* of Design Document**
>
> **(4) About Two Key *Policy Considerations* to be Noted in Design Document**

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(1) Aid in Preparing *Intro and Imperative Section* of Design Document

Outline:

First: Do a brief intro paragraph that indicates the design team has reflected on the history of state efforts and is building on lessons learned."

Then: Do section on:

I. Why a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports Is *Imperative* for School Improvement

    A. Indicators that More than Enhanced Instruction and Better School Management is Needed

    B. Problems Associated with the Prevailing Approach to Student and Learning Supports

    C. What Needs to be Developed to Meet the Imperative

Attached is a template for such a write-up.

Why a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports is *Imperative* for School Improvement

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 Education Task Force

The *good* news is that there are schools in districts across the state where students are performing well, academically and socially. The bad news is that in all schools there are youngsters who are failing for a host of complex reasons. There are too many schools, particularly those serving lower income families, where large numbers of students and their teachers are in trouble.

Indicators that More than Enhanced Instruction and Better School Management is Needed

Most schools tend to be ill-prepared to address factors that are seriously interfering with students' abilities to fully benefit from instruction. And, of course, schools that have suffered through major crises and natural disasters have special challenges that are not covered in emergency preparedness plans. Here are some poignant statistics that underscore these points.

- The dropout rate for our state remains unacceptably high (indicate data)

- Students are not the only ones dropping out of school. We are losing teachers at a rate of almost xxxx a day. Many are not retiring; they are leaving the profession to find "better working conditions." (Alliance for Excellence in Education, 2005)

- Student achievement in core academic subjects for far too many students ranges from mediocre to abysmal. Take reading levels as an example. About XX percent of high school students read proficiently and more than XXX read below grade level.

- There are almost XXX children in the state whose primary home language is not English.

- School leaders acknowledge that the amount of student suspensions and retention underscore the degree to which behavior problems are placing students at greater risk for dropping out. The latest data show that almost XX percent of public school students in kindergarten through grade 12 had been retained (i.e., repeated a grade since starting school), while XX percent had been suspended and X percent had been expelled (i.e., permanently removed from school with no services).

- Schools deal daily with the effects that poverty has on learning. It is widely acknowledged that growing up in poverty can negatively impact children's mental and behavioral development as well as their overall health, making it more difficult for them to learn.

- And, years after the storms and the resulting aftermath of the hurricanes, many children in the state are still struggling in less than adequate learning environments.

None of this comes as news to educational leaders. The data, however, highlight the imperative for developing a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching. In aggregate, education leaders across the state know that without significant systemic changes, districts will continue struggling to

>reduce student dropout rates
>reduce teacher dropout rates

>re-engage students in classroom learning
>narrow the achievement gap
>eliminate the plateau effect related to student achievement
>reduce the growing list of schools designated as low performing
>support schools in crisis

Problems Associated with the Prevailing Approach to Student and Learning Supports

Most districts and schools have resources that can be used to initiate development towards a comprehensive *system* of learning supports for all students experiencing barriers to learning and teaching. Currently though, the majority of these resources are expended on interventions that address discrete, categorical problems, often with specialized services for a relatively small number of students. The result is that existing student and learning supports are highly marginalized and fragmented in policy and practice (see Exhibit 1).

The marginalization and fragmentation has resulted in poor cost-effectiveness. For example, in some schools, principals have reported that up to 25% of a school budget is used to address barriers to learning and teaching, and it is clear that the resources are used in too limited and often redundant ways. And, budget cuts are contributing to the long-standing counterproductive competition for sparse resources among support staff and with community-based professionals who link with schools. All this is preventing schools from stemming the tide with respect to low achievement, delinquency, student and teacher dropouts, and a host of other serious problems.

Schools, districts, regional units, and the state department need to redeploy existing funds allocated for addressing barriers to learning and must weave these together with the invaluable resources that can be gained by collaboration with students, family members, and community stakeholders. It is time for schools to move forward in establishing a comprehensive *system* for addressing barriers to learning and teaching that can enable them to be more effective in ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed at school and in life.

What Needs to be Developed to Meet the Imperative

Moving forward means fully integrating into school improvement a systematic focus on how to:

- reframe current student/learning support programs and services and redeploy the resources to develop a comprehensive*,* multifaceted, and cohesive system to *enable* learning

- develop both in-classroom and school-wide approaches – including interventions to support transitions, increase home and community connections, enhance teachers' ability to respond to common learning and behavior problems, and respond to and prevent crises

- revamp school, district, school-community, and SEA infrastructures to weave resources together to enhance and evolve the learning supports system

- pursue school improvement implementation with a strategic plan for systemic change that fully integrates a comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engages disconnected students

Student supports as they currently operate can't meet the needs of the many whose problems are affecting their learning at school. So, school policy makers and administrators must respond to the imperative by rebuilding supports for learning as an essential component in enabling *all* students to have an equal opportunity to learn at school.

The realities are the problems are complex and complex problems require comprehensive solutions. School improvement and capacity building efforts (including pre and in service staff development) have yet to deal effectively with these matters. Most school improvement plans do not effectively focus on enhancing student outcomes by *comprehensively* addressing barriers to learning and teaching. For many students, such a focus is essential to (re)engaging them in classroom instruction and enabling classroom learning. And, the straight forward psychometric reality is that in schools where a large proportion of students encounter major barriers to learning, test score averages are unlikely to increase adequately until barriers are effectively addressed.

Exhibit 2 emphasizes that many students are encountering factors that interfere with their benefitting from improved instruction. Exhibit 3 graphically illustrates that ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school requires developing a comprehensive, cohesive, and systemic approach for (1) addressing barriers to learning and teaching and (2) re-engaging disconnected students. Such an approach has been designated as a *Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* and as an *Enabling* or *Learning Supports Component*.

As indicated in Exhibit 3, such an approach involves both addressing interfering factors *and* re-engaging students in classroom instruction. The reality is that interventions that do not include an emphasis on ensuring students are engaged meaningfully in classroom learning generally are insufficient in sustaining, over time, student involvement, good behavior, and effective learning at school.

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

Now is the time to plan and develop more effective and comprehensive systems for directly dealing with factors that keep too many students from doing well at school. Such efforts can draw on pioneering work from across the country that is moving learning supports to a prominent place in improving schools and student outcomes.

What are learning supports?

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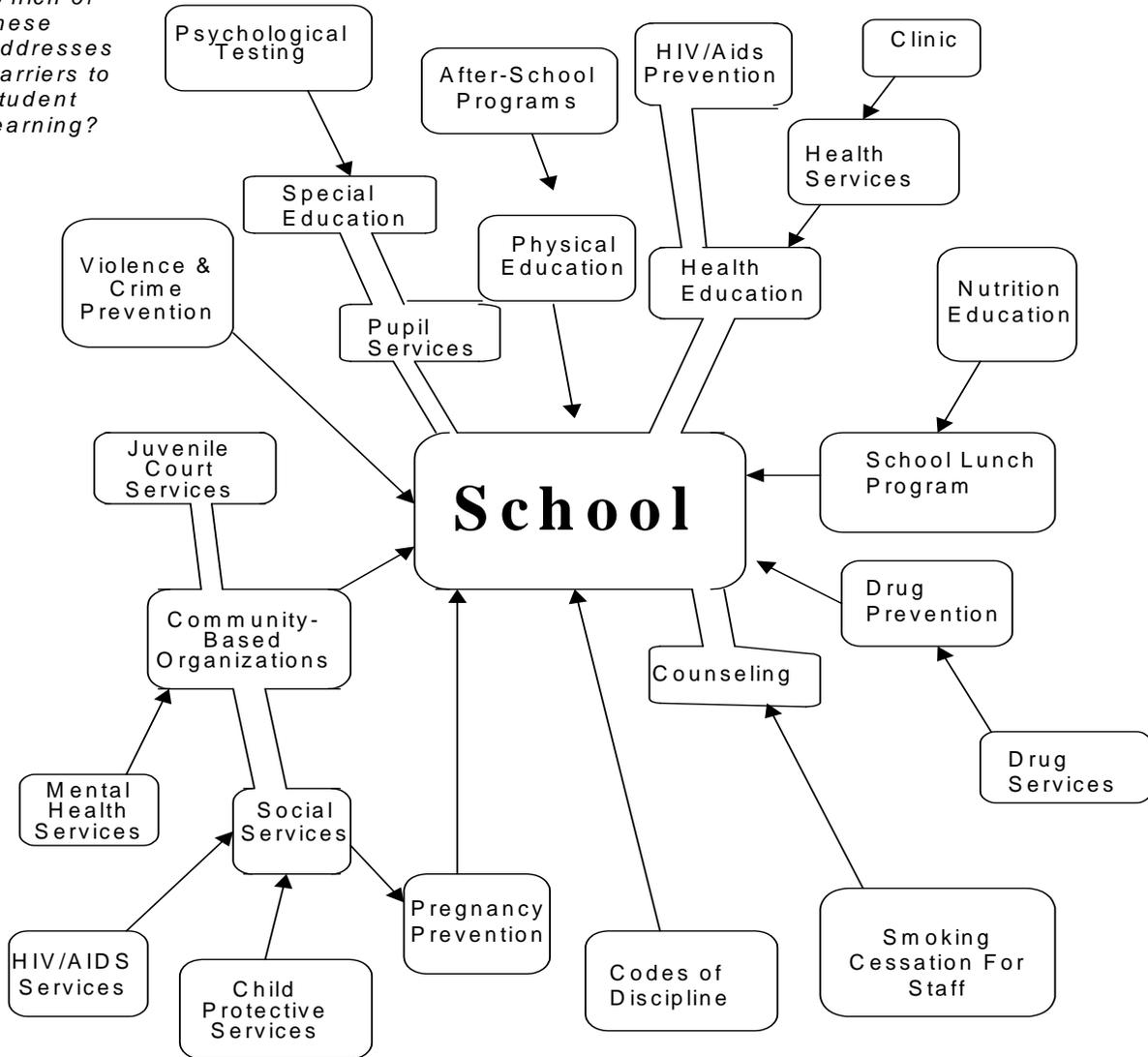

We turn now to framing the levels and content of such a system.

Exhibit 1

How is the district/school *addressing barriers to learning* & teaching?

Talk about fragmented!!!

Which of these addresses barriers to student learning?

Psychological Testing

After-School Programs

HIV/Aids Prevention

Clinic

Special Education

Physical Education

Health Services

Violence & Crime Prevention

Pupil Services

Health Education

Nutrition Education

Juvenile Court Services

School

School Lunch Program

Community-Based Organizations

Counseling

Drug Prevention

Mental Health Services

Social Services

Drug Services

HIV/AIDS Services

Child Protective Services

Pregnancy Prevention

Codes of Discipline

Smoking Cessation For Staff

Fragmented policy ←——→ Fragmented practices

Exhibit 2

Barriers to Learning and School Improvement

Range of Learners
(categorized in terms of their
 response to academic instruction
 at any given point in time)

I = Motivationally
       ready & able

        Not very
        motivated/
        lacking
        prerequisite
        knowledge
II = & skills/
        different
        learning rates
        & styles/
        minor
        vulnerabilities

III = Avoidant/
         very deficient
         in current
         capabilities/
         has a disability/
         major health
         problems

No barriers

Barriers
to
learning,
develop.,
teaching

*Instructional
Component*

Classroom
Teaching
+
Enrichment
Activity

(High Standards)

Desired
Outcomes
(High Expect.
&
Accountability)

- -
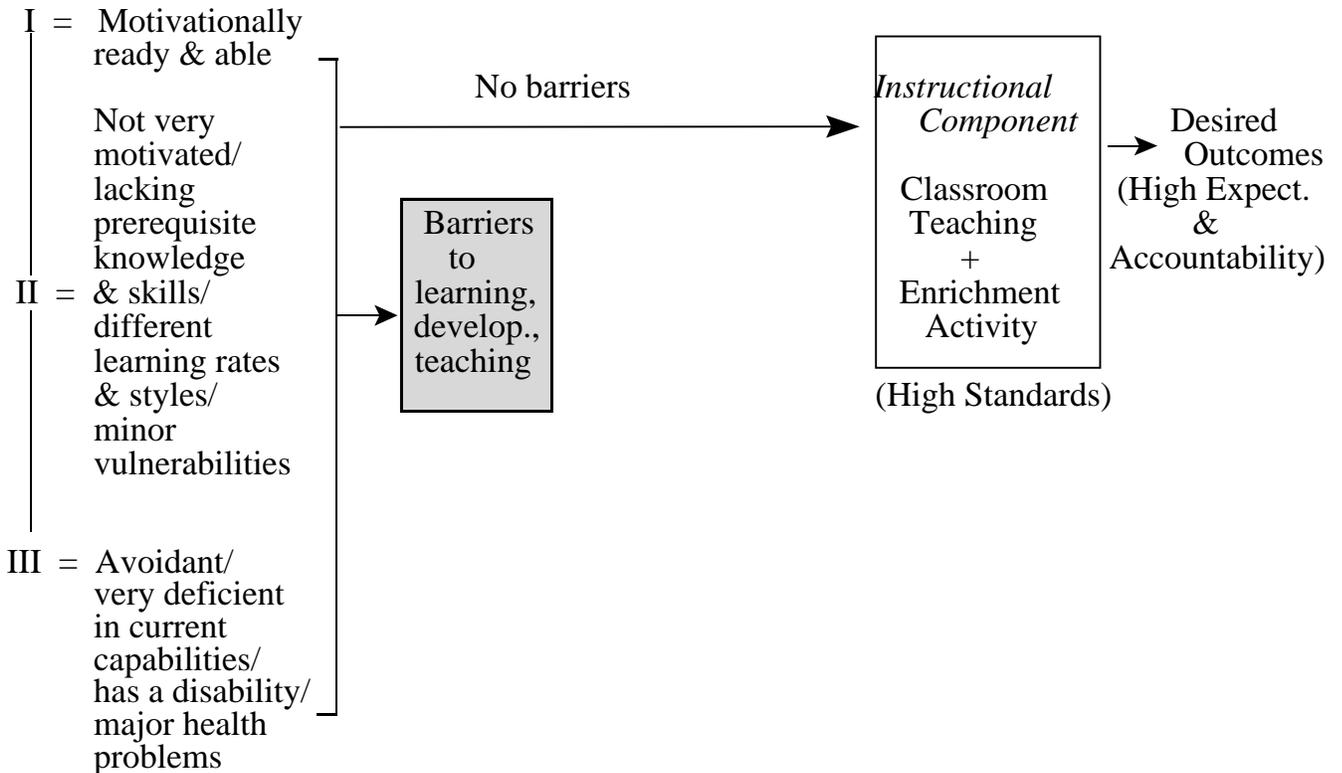
*Examples of Risk-Producing Conditions that Can be Barriers to Learning

E n v i r o n m e n t a l   C o n d i t i o n s**

Person Factors**

Neighborhood	*Family*	*School and Peers*	*Individual*

>extreme economic deprivation
>community disorganization,
  including high levels of
  mobility
>violence, drugs, etc.
>minority and/or immigrant
  status
	>chronic poverty
	>conflict/disruptions/violence
	>substance abuse
	>models problem behavior
	>abusive caretaking
	>inadequate provision for
	  quality child care
		>poor quality school
		>negative encounters with
		  teachers
		>negative encounters with
		  peers &/or inappropriate
		  peer models
			>medical problems
			>low birth weight/
			  neurodevelopmental delay
			>psychophysiological
			  problems
			>difficult temperament &
			  adjustment problems
			>inadequate nutrition

A reciprocal determinist view of behavior recognizes the interplay of environment and person variables.**
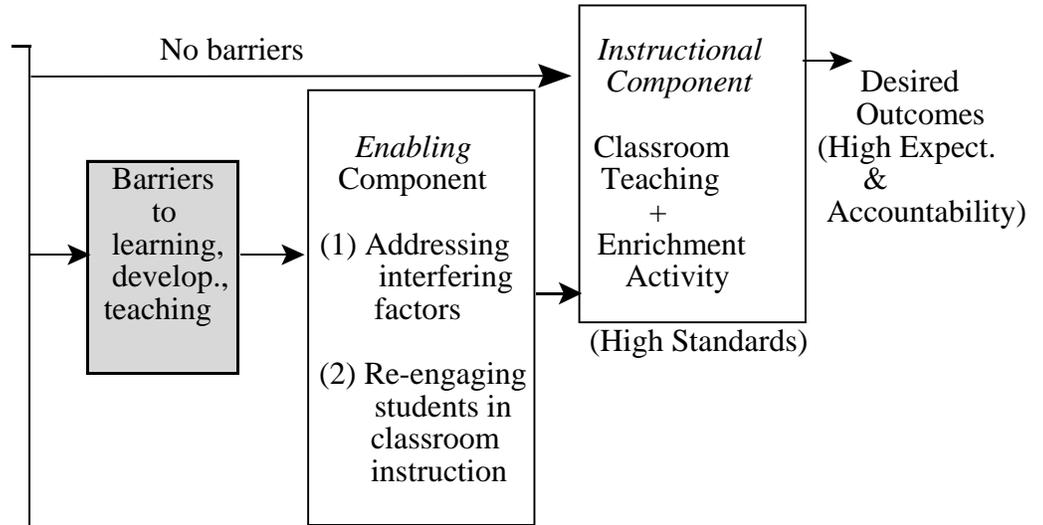
Exhibit 3

**An Enabling Component to Address Barriers and
Re-engage Students in Classroom Instruction***

Range of Learners
(categorized in terms of their
response to academic instruction
at any given point in time)

I = Motivationally
ready & able

Not very
motivated/
lacking
prerequisite
knowledge
II = & skills/
different
learning rates
& styles/
minor
vulnerabilities

III = Avoidant/
very deficient
in current
capabilities/
has a disability/
major health
problems

No barriers

Barriers
to
learning,
develop.,
teaching

Enabling
Component

(1) Addressing
interfering
factors

(2) Re-engaging
students in
classroom
instruction

*Instructional
Component*

Classroom
Teaching
+
Enrichment
Activity

(High Standards)

Desired
Outcomes
(High Expect.
&
Accountability)

*In some places, an Enabling Component is called a Learning Supports Component. Whatever it is
called, the component is to be developed as a comprehensive system of learning supports at the
school site.

(2) Aid in Preparing *Intervention Framework Section* of Design Document

First: Use the mapping matrix to get a feel for the prototype framework. There is no need at this time to fully map and analyze resources. That comes later. The point at this time is mainly to use the framework to determine how well it fits what *schools* need.

Then: Decide whether to adopt the matrix as is or work out an adaptation.

Then: Write up a description. Here is a possible outline:

A Framework for the Levels and Content of a Comprehensive and Cohesive System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching and Re-engaging Students

A Unifying Concept

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

Content Arenas for Learning Support

Continuum + Content = A Comprehensive and Cohesive Approach

Attached is a template for such a write-up.

A Framework for the Levels and Content of a Comprehensive and Cohesive System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching and Re-engaging Students

Most school improvement efforts *primarily* focus on enhancing instruction and school management/governance. Because of concerns for school safety and greater family and community involvement, schools also embed a few scattered programs and services to address these matters.

No one argues against the necessity of good instruction or good school management. The problem with the current state of affairs is that improved instruction alone does not address many barriers to learning and teaching. And, analyses indicate that the ways schools currently address such barriers are too limited, fragmented, and marginalized.

It is commonplace for those staffing such interventions to be organized and function in relative isolation of each other and other stakeholders. Furthermore, a great proportion of existing student support is oriented to discrete problems and over-relies on specialized services for individuals and small groups.

All this not only is expensive in terms of direct costs, it produces inappropriate redundancy and counter-productive competition and works against developing cohesive approaches to maximize results. Continued limited efficacy and cost effectiveness seem inevitable in the absence of significant systemic change.

In sum, every school needs to proactively plan ways to address barriers to learning and teaching. While most schools have some programs designed to help, the need is to develop, over time, a comprehensive and cohesive system that is fully integrated into school improvement efforts.

The needed system must be built around a unifying concept, involves a continuum and content, and requires weaving school and community resources together.

A Unifying Concept

The time is long overdue for escaping old ways of thinking about student supports. Leaders at all levels need to move school improvement efforts in substantively new directions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. The foundation for doing so involves adopting a three component conceptual framework to guide development of a comprehensive system at every school for enabling/supporting learning. Such a framework is illustrated in Exhibit 4.

The third component provides a unifying umbrella concept that conveys the primary role a comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching can play in school improvement so that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

The unifying concept

- coalesces all student and learning supports under an umbrella term such as *addressing barriers to student learning*

- configures the work into a *primary and essential component* of school improvement.

Moreover, the component is framed in policy and practice as fully integrated with the instructional and management components at a school and district-wide.

Exhibit 4

An Unifying Concept for School Improvement Planning Related to Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching and Re-engaging Disconnected Students

Direct Facilitation of Learning
(*Instructional Component*)

Addressing Barriers to Learning/Teaching
(*Enabling* or *Learning Supports Component* –
an umbrella for ending marginalization by unifying the many fragmented efforts and evolving a comprehensive approach)
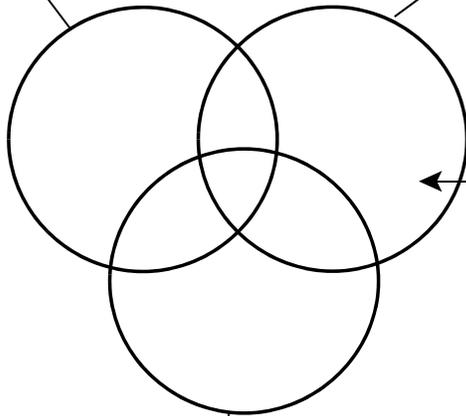
Examples of Initiatives, programs and services

> positive behavioral supports
> programs for safe and drug free schools
> full service community schools & Family Resource Centers
> *Safe Schools/Healthy Students*
> *School Based Health Center* movement
> Coordinated School Health Program
> bi-lingual, cultural, and other diversity programs
> re-engaging disengaged students
> compensatory education programs
> special education programs
> mandates stemming from the No Child Left Behind Act
> And many more activities by student support staff

Governance and Resource Management
(*Management Component*)

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

As can be seen in Exhibit 5, a continuum is one facet of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach that strives to

- promote healthy development and prevent problems
- intervene early to address problems as soon after onset as is feasible
- assist with chronic and severe problems.

As graphically illustrated, (a) each level of the continuum represents a subsystem, (b) the three subsystems overlap, and (c) all three require integration into an overall system. In keeping with public education and public health perspectives, such a continuum encompasses efforts to enable academic, social, emotional, and physical development and to address behavior, learning, and emotional problems.

The school and community examples listed in the exhibit highlight programs focused on individuals, families, and the contexts in which they live, work, and play. There is a focus on mental and physical health, education, and social services. Some of the examples reflect categorical thinking about problems that has contributed to fragmentation, redundancy, and counterproductive competition for sparse resources. Moving away from fragmented approaches requires weaving together school and community efforts at each level of the continuum in ways consistent with institutionalized missions and sparse resources. And system building requires concurrent intra- and inter-program integration over extended periods of time.

The tapering of the three levels in the exhibit is meant to denote that development of a fully integrated set of interventions will reduce the number of individuals who require specialized supports. That is, the aim is to prevent the majority of problems, deal with another significant segment as soon after problem onset as is feasible, and end up with relatively few students needing specialized assistance and other intensive and costly interventions. For individual students, this means preventing and minimizing as many problems as feasible and doing so in ways that maximize engagement in productive learning. For the school and community as a whole, the intent is to produce a safe, healthy, nurturing environment/culture characterized by respect for differences, trust, caring, support, and high expectations.

Most schools have some programs and services that fit along the entire continuum. However, interventions at each level usually are not integrated and are not well connected. Moreover, the tendency is to focus mostly on the most severe problems. This has skewed the process so that too little is done to prevent and intervene early after the onset of a problem. One result of this is that public education has been characterized as an institution that "waits for failure" before intervening.

With respect to comprehensiveness, the school and community examples highlight that many problems must be addressed holistically and developmentally and with a range of programs. With respect to concerns about integrating programs, the systemic emphasis underscores the need for concurrent intra- and inter-program linkages and for linkages over extended periods of time. The continuum also provides a basis for adhering to the principle of using the least restrictive and nonintrusive forms of intervention required to appropriately respond to problems and accommodate diversity. And given the likelihood that many problems are not discrete, it also provides a basis for addressing root causes thereby minimizing tendencies to develop separate programs for each observed problem. In turn, this enables increased coordination and integration of resources which can increase impact and cost-effectiveness.

Exhibit 5

Levels of Intervention:*
Connected Systems for Meeting the Needs of All Students

School **Resources**
(facilities, stakeholders,
programs, services)

Examples:

- General health education
- Social and emotional
  learning programs
- Recreation programs
- Enrichment programs
- Support for transitions
- Conflict resolution
- Home involvement
- Drug and alcohol education

- Drug counseling
- Pregnancy prevention
- Violence prevention
- Gang intervention
- Dropout prevention
- Suicide prevention
- Learning/behavior
  accommodations &
  response to intervention
- Work programs

- Special education for
  learning disabilities,
  emotional disturbance,
  and other health
  impairments
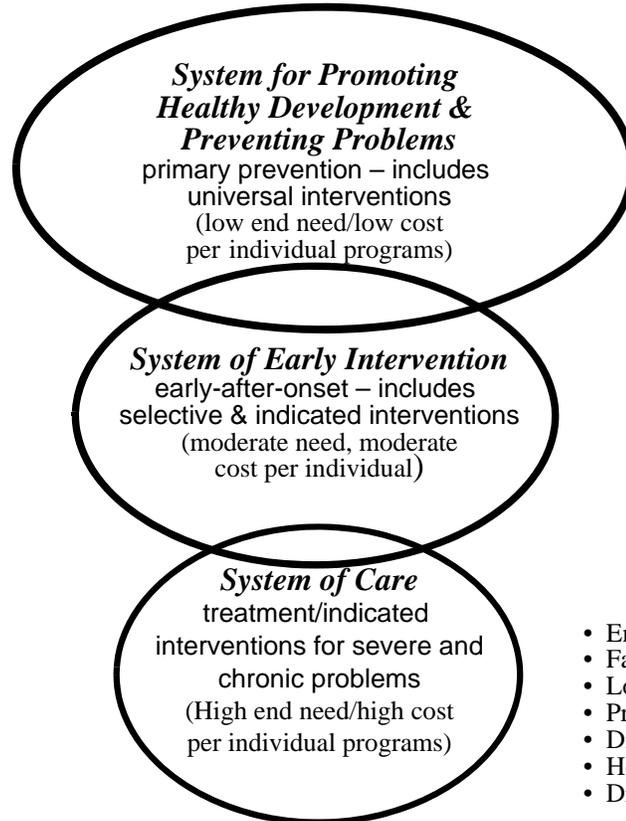
Community **Resources**
(facilities, stakeholders,
programs, services)

Examples:

- Recreation & Enrichment
- Public health &
  safety programs
- Prenatal care
- Home visiting programs
- Immunizations
- Child abuse education
- Internships & community
  service programs
- Economic development

- Early identification to treat
  health problems
- Monitoring health problems
- Short-term counseling
- Foster placement/group homes
- Family support
- Shelter, food, clothing
- Job programs

- Emergency/crisis treatment
- Family preservation
- Long-term therapy
- Probation/incarceration
- Disabilities programs
- Hospitalization
- Drug treatment

*System for Promoting
Healthy Development &
Preventing Problems*
primary prevention – includes
universal interventions
(low end need/low cost
per individual programs)

System of Early Intervention
early-after-onset – includes
selective & indicated interventions
(moderate need, moderate
cost per individual)

System of Care
treatment/indicated
interventions for severe and
chronic problems
(High end need/high cost
per individual programs)

Systemic collaboration is essential to establish interprogram connections on a daily basis and over time to ensure seamless intervention within each system and among *system for promoting healthy development and preventing problems, system* of *early intervention*, and *system of care.*

Such collaboration involves horizontal and vertical restructuring of programs and services
(a) within jurisdictions, school districts, and community agencies (e.g., among departments, divisions, units, schools, clusters of schools)
(b) between jurisdictions, school and community agencies, public and private sectors; among schools; among community agencies

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*Various venues, concepts, and initiatives permeate this continuum of intervention *systems.* For example, venues such as day care and preschools, concepts such as social and emotional learning and development, and initiatives such as positive behavior support, response to intervention, and coordinated school health. Also, a considerable variety of staff are involved. Finally, *note that this illustration of an essential continuum of intervention systems differs in significant ways from the three tier pyramid that is widely referred to in discussing universal, selective, and indicated interventions.*
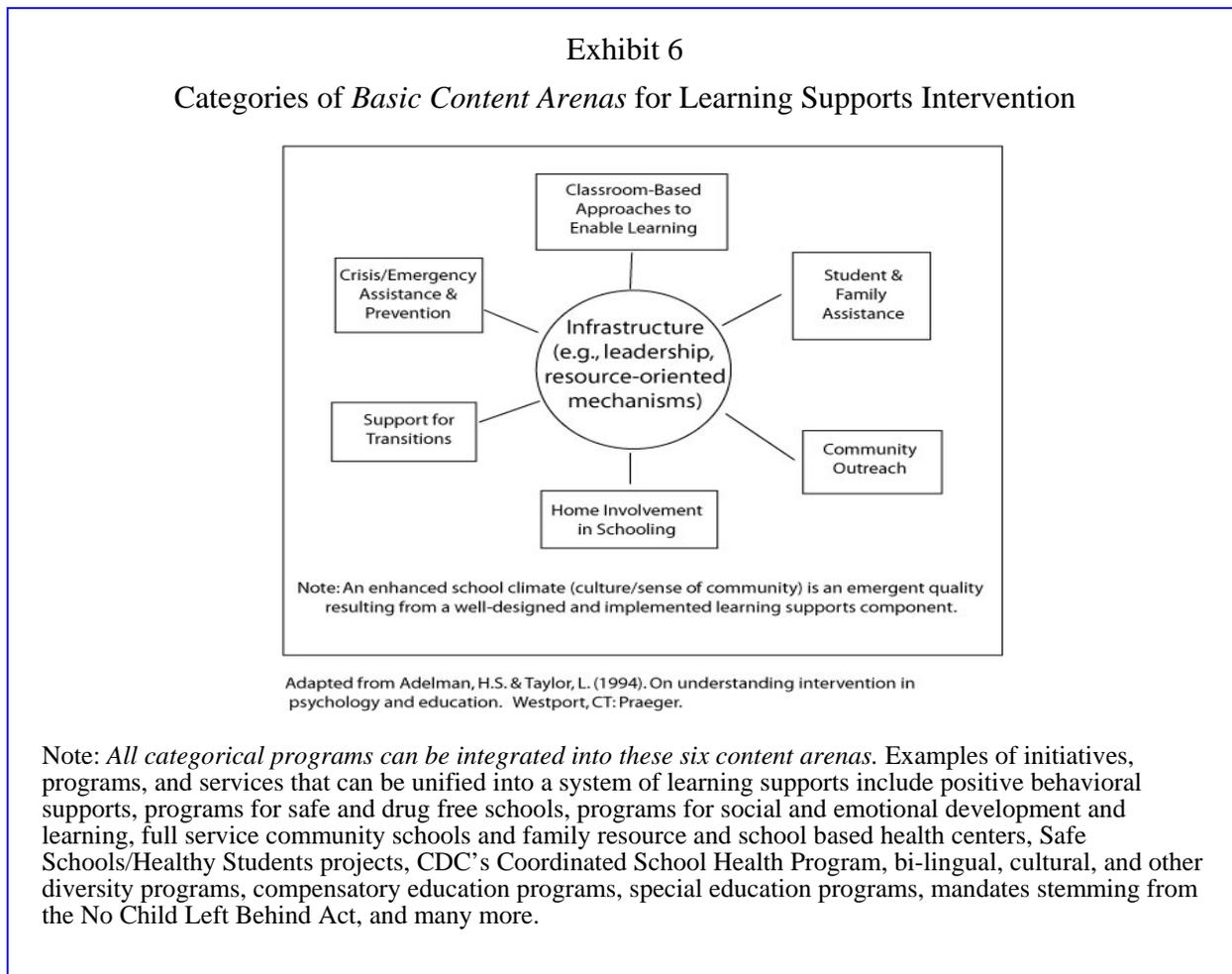
Content Arenas for Learning Support

A conceptualization of intervention that only focuses on a continuum is incomplete. For example, "mapping" and analyses done with respect to three levels of intervention does not do enough to escape the tendency to generate laundry lists of programs/services at each level.

As illustrated in Exhibit 6, pioneering efforts around the country have moved from a "laundry list" of programs, services, and activities to a defined set of content or "curriculum" arenas that captures the essence of the multifaceted ways schools must address barriers to learning. The prototype for the six arenas delineates programs to

- *enhance regular classroom strategies to enable learning* (i.e., improving instruction for students who have become disengaged from learning at school and for those with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems)

- *support transitions* (i.e., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions)

- *increase home and school connections*

- *respond to, and where feasible, prevent crises*

- *increase community involvement and support* (outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers)

- *facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed*.

See Appendix A for a table outlining specific examples related to each arena.

Exhibit 6

Categories of *Basic Content Arenas* for Learning Supports Intervention

Note: An enhanced school climate (culture/sense of community) is an emergent quality resulting from a well-designed and implemented learning supports component.

Adapted from Adelman, H.S. & Taylor, L. (1994). On understanding intervention in psychology and education. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Note: *All categorical programs can be integrated into these six content arenas.* Examples of initiatives, programs, and services that can be unified into a system of learning supports include positive behavioral supports, programs for safe and drug free schools, programs for social and emotional development and learning, full service community schools and family resource and school based health centers, Safe Schools/Healthy Students projects, CDC's Coordinated School Health Program, bi-lingual, cultural, and other diversity programs, compensatory education programs, special education programs, mandates stemming from the No Child Left Behind Act, and many more.

Continuum + Content = A Comprehensive and Cohesive Approach

By combining the three system levels with the *content* focus of interventions, a matrix framework is generated to provide a prototype for a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students (see Exhibit 7). The matrix provides a unifying framework for mapping what is in place and analyzing gaps. Overtime, such mapping and analyses are needed at the school level, for a family of schools (e.g., a feeder pattern of schools), at the district level, and community-wide. A critical matter is defining what the entire school must do to enable *all* students to learn and *all* teachers to teach effectively. School-wide approaches are especially important where large numbers of students are affected and at any school that is not yet paying adequate attention to equity and diversity concerns.

In essence, beginning in the classroom with differentiated classroom practices and by ensuring school-wide learning supports, an *Enabling* or *Learning Supports Component*

- addresses barriers through a broader view of "basics" and through effective accommodation of individual differences and disabilities

- enhances the focus on motivational considerations with a special emphasis on intrinsic motivation as it relates to individual readiness and ongoing involvement and with the intent of fostering intrinsic motivation as a basic outcome

- adds remediation, treatment, and rehabilitation as necessary, but only as necessary.

Clearly, these are important matters for the future of students, their families, schools, and neighborhoods. If the current marginalization of student and learning supports is to end, a framework that presents a coherent picture of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive set of interventions must be formulated and operationalized. Minimally, such a framework must delineate the essential scope and content focus of the enterprise.

Exhibit 7

Matrix for Reviewing Scope and Content of a Component to Address Barriers to Learning*

Scope of Intervention

	System for Promoting Healthy Development & Preventing Problems	System for Early Intervention (Early after problem onset)	System of Care
Classroom-Focused Enabling			
Crisis/ Emergency Assistance & Prevention			
Support for transitions			
Home Involvement in Schooling			
Community Outreach/ Volunteers			
Student and Family Assistance			

Organizing around the

Content/ "curriculum"

(for addressing barriers to learning & promoting healthy development)

Accommodations for differences & disabilities   Specialized assistance & other intensified interventions (e.g., Special Education & School-Based Behavioral Health)

*Note that specific school-wide and classroom-based activities related to positive behavior support, "prereferral" interventions, and the eight components of Center for Prevention and Disease Control's Coordinated School Health Program are embedded into the six content ("curriculum") areas.

Appendix A

Examples of "Content" Arenas for a Component to Address Barriers to Learning*

(1) Classroom-Based Approaches

- 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

(2) Support for Transitions

- 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

(3) Home Involvement and Engagement in Schooling

- 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

Exhibit (cont.) *"Content" Arenas for a Component to Address Barriers to Learning*

(4) Community Outreach for Involvement and Collaborative Support

- 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")

(5) Crisis Assistance and Prevention

- 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)

(6) Student and Family Assistance

- 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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*In each arena, there is broad involvement of stakeholders in planning the system and building capacity. Emphasis at all times in the classroom and schoolwide is on enhancing feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to others at school and reducing threats to such feelings because this is essential to engagement and reengagement and creating and maintaining a caring supportive climate.

(3) Aid in Preparing *Operational Infrastructure Section* of Design Document

Framing the Operational Infrastructure from the School to the State Department

First: Use the infrastructure activity to get a feel for the prototype frameworks. The point at this time is mainly to use the frameworks to determine what changes are needed to support a school's efforts to develop and fully integrate a comprehensive system of learning supports into school improvement.

Then: Decide whether to adopt the prototypes as is or work out adaptations.

Then: Write up a description. Here is a possible outline:

Reworking Infrastructure from the School to the State Department to Integrate a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports Fully into School Improvement

Rethinking Infrastructure For Schools and Districts

Connecting Families of Schools/Feeder Patterns

Reorganization at Regional Units and at the State Department

Attached is a template for such a write-up.

Reworking Infrastructure from the School to the State Department to Integrate a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

Well-designed, compatible, and interconnected infrastructures from the school to the state department are essential for developing a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching. Operational infrastructure at each level plays a key role in weaving together existing school and community resources and developing a full continuum of interventions over time. Moreover, content and resource-oriented infrastructure mechanisms enable programs and services to function in an increasingly cohesive, cost-efficient, and equitable way.

Rethinking Infrastructure for Schools and Districts

The fundamental principle in developing an organizational and operational infrastructure is that *structure follows function.* That is, the focus should be on establishing an infrastructure that enables accomplishment of major functions and related tasks in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

For vision for school districts, includes enabling all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. Pursuing such a vision requires effectively operationalizing three core functions: (1) facilitating learning and development, (2) addressing barriers to learning and teaching in ways that enable learning and development, and (3) governing and managing the district. In pursuing each of these, the major processes involve *systemic* planning, implementation, and evaluation and accountability.

Structure follows function

Carrying out these fundamental functions and processes on a regular basis requires a connected set of operational infrastructure mechanisms. Such an infrastructure enables leaders to steer together and to empower and work productively with staff on major tasks related to policy and practice (e.g., designing and directing activity, planning and implementing specific organizational and program objectives, allocating and monitoring resources with a clear content and outcome focus, facilitating coordination and integration to ensure cohesive implementation, managing communication and information, providing support for capacity building and quality improvement, ensuring accountability, and promoting self-renewal). Developing and institutionalizing a comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching requires infrastructure mechanisms that are integrated with each other and are fully integrated into school improvement efforts.

A component to address barriers to learning requires integrated infrastructure mechanisms that are fully integrated into school improvement efforts

Along with unifying various initiatives, projects, programs, and services, the need *at a school* is to rework infrastructure to support efforts to address barriers to learning in a cohesive manner and to integrate the work with efforts to facilitate instruction and promote healthy development. *At the district, regional, and state levels*, the need is for administrative leadership and capacity building support that helps maximize development of a comprehensive system of learning supports to address barriers to learning and teaching at each school. And, it is crucial to establish district, regional, and state leadership for this work at a high enough level to ensure the administrators are always active participants at key planning and decision-making tables.

Because the intent is to improve schools, infrastructure should be designed from the school outward. That is, conceptually, the emphasis is first on what an integrated infrastructure should look like at the school level. Then, the focus expands to include the mechanisms needed to connect a family or complex (e.g., feeder pattern) of schools and establish collaborations with surrounding community resources. Ultimately, central district (and community agency) units need to be restructured in ways that best support

the work at the school and school complex levels. Indeed, a key guideline in designing district, regional, and state operational infrastructure is that the mechanism must provide leadership and build capacity for (a) establishing and maintaining an effective learning supports infrastructure at every school and (b) connecting a family of schools.

Infrastructure should be designed from the school outward

All this involves reframing the work of personnel responsible for student/learning supports, establishing new collaborative arrangements, and redistributing authority (power). With this in mind, those who do such restructuring must have appropriate incentives, safeguards, and adequate resources and support for making major systemic changes. (It is recognized that all this is easy to say and is extremely hard to do.)

At School and School Complex Levels

Every school is expending significant resources on student and learning supports to enable learning. Yet, few have mechanisms to ensure appropriate use of these resources and to work on enhancing current efforts. Content and resource-oriented mechanisms contribute to cost-efficacy by ensuring student and learning support activity is planned implemented, and evaluated in a coordinated and increasingly integrated manner. Creation of such mechanisms is essential for braiding together existing school and community resources and, encouraging services and programs to perform in an increasingly cohesive way.

Needed: an administrative leader for the school's component to address barriers

Exhibit 8 illustrates a school infrastructure prototype. Obviously, a small school has less staff and other resources than most larger schools. Nevertheless, the three major functions necessary for school improvement remain the same in all schools, namely (1) improving instruction, (2) providing learning supports to address barriers to learning and teaching, and (3) enhancing management and governance. The challenge in any school is to pursue all three functions in an integrated and effective manner.

The added challenge in a small school is how to do it with so few personnel. The key is to use and, to the degree feasible, modestly expand existing infrastructure mechanisms. In a small school, however, rather than stressing the involvement of several administrative leaders and numerous staff members, the emphasis is on the role a *School Leadership Team* can play in establishing essential infrastructure mechanisms.

With less personnel, a principal must use who and what is available to pursue all three functions. Usually, the principal and whoever else is part of a school leadership team will lead the way in improving instruction and management/governance. As presently constituted, however, such a team may not be prepared to advance development of a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning. Thus, someone already on the leadership team will need to perform this role and be provided training to carry it out.

Alternatively, someone in the school who is involved with student supports (e.g. a pupil services professional, a Title I Coordinator, a special education resource specialist) can be invited to join the leadership team, assigned responsibility and accountability for ensuring the vision for the component is not lost, and provided additional training for the tasks involved in being a Learning Supports or Enabling Component Lead. The lead, however chosen, will benefit from eliciting the help of other advocates/champions at the school and from the community. These all can help ensure development, over time, of a comprehensive system of learning supports.

Exhibit 8

Example of an Integrated Infrastructure at the School Level

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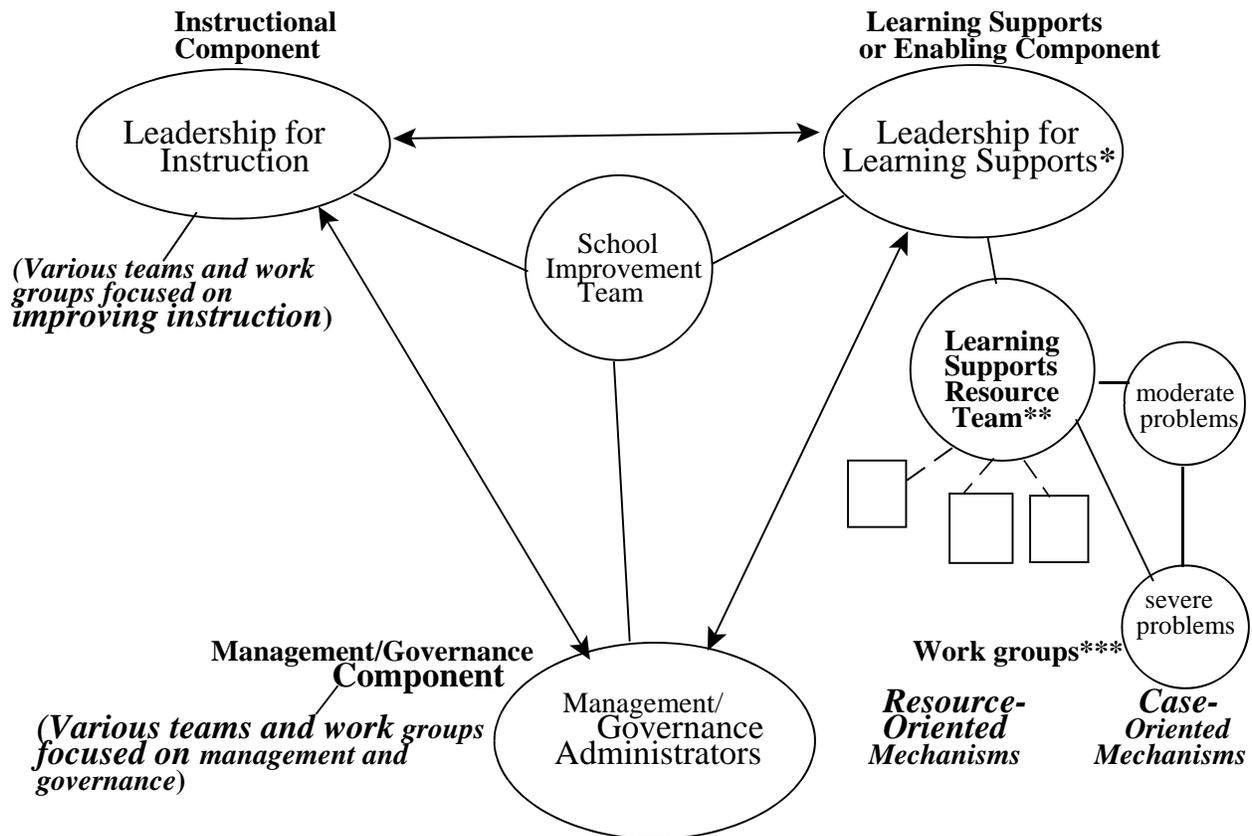
*Learning Supports or Enabling Component Leadership consists of an administrator and
other advocates/champions with responsibility and accountability for ensuring
the vision for the component is not lost. The administrator meets with and
provides regular input to the Learning Supports Resource Team.

**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.

About Resource-Oriented Teams

In addition to administrative leadership, it is essential to establish a mechanism that focuses specifically on how learning support *resources* are used. Such a mechanism is meant to focus on *all major resources* associated with student and learning supports (not just psychosocial programs and services).

Content and resource-oriented mechanisms contribute to cost-efficacy

When a resource-oriented "team" is created, a new means is established for pursuing overall cohesion and ongoing development of support programs and systems. Minimally, such a mechanism can reduce fragmentation and enhance cost-efficacy by guiding programs to perform in a coordinated and increasingly integrated way. More generally, the group can provide leadership in guiding school personnel and clientele in evolving the school's vision, priorities, and practices for student and learning support. And it can enhance working relationships and solve turf and operational problems.

In pursuing its work, 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 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, 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.

At a school, one of the primary and essential tasks a resource-oriented mechanism undertakes is that of delineating school and community resources (e.g., programs, services, personnel, facilities) that are in place to support students, families, and staff. A comprehensive "gap" assessment is generated as resource mapping is aligned with unmet needs and desired outcomes.

Resource-oriented teams focus on how resources are used, not on specific individuals

Analyses of what is available, effective, and needed provide a sound basis for formulating priorities, redeploying resources, and developing strategies to link with additional resources at other schools, district sites, and in the community. Such analyses guide efforts to improve cost-effectiveness and enhance resources.

Note that resource-oriented teams do not focus on specific individuals, but on how resources are used (see Exhibit 9). Such a team has been designated by a variety of names including "Resource Coordinating Team," "Resource Management Team," and "Learning Supports Resource Team."

Exhibit 9

Contrasting Team Tasks

A Case-Oriented Team

Focuses on specific *individuals* and discrete services to address barriers to learning

Sometimes called:

- Child Study Team
- Student Study Team
- Student Success Team
- Student Assistance Team
- Teacher Assistance Team
- IEP Team

EXAMPLES OF MAJOR TASKS:

>triage
>referral
>case monitoring/management
>case progress review
>case reassessment

A Resource-Oriented Team

Focuses on *all* students and the *resources, programs, and systems* to address barriers to learning & promote healthy development

Possibly called:

- Learning Supports Resource Team
- Learning Supports Component Leadership Team
- Learning Supports Component Development Team

EXAMPLES OF MAJOR TASKS:

>aggregating data across students and from teachers to analyze school needs
>mapping resources
>analyzing resources
>enhancing resources
>program and system planning/development – including emphasis on establishing a full continuum of intervention
>redeploying resources
>coordinating and integrating resources
>social "marketing"

In establishing a resource-orienetd team, the intent is to bring together representatives of all relevant programs and services. This might include, for example, school counselors, psychologists, nurses, social workers, attendance and dropout counselors, health educators, special education staff, after school program staff, bilingual and Title I program coordinators, safe and drug free school staff, and union reps. Such a team also should include representatives of any community agency that is significantly involved with a school. Beyond these stakeholders, it is advisable to add the energies and expertise of classroom teachers, non-certificated staff, parents, and older students. Properly constituted at the school level, such a team provides on-site leadership for enhancing efforts to address barriers comprehensively.

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 perform resource-oriented tasks. In adding the resource-oriented tasks 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.

Needed:
a cabinet level
administrative
leader for learning
supports system
development

Exhibit 10 lays out a framework to consider in reworking district infrastructure in ways that promote development of a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching. As indicated, it is essential to have a cabinet level administrative leader who is responsible and accountable for all resources related to addressing barriers to learning. The resources of concern come from the general fund, compensatory education, special education, and special projects (e.g., student support personnel such as school psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses; compensatory and special education staff; special initiatives, grants, and programs for afterschool, wellness, dropout prevention, attendance, drug abuse prevention, violence prevention, pregnancy prevention, parent/family/health centers, volunteer assistance, community resource linkages to schools).

As stressed, it is important to coalesce all this activity into a comprehensive system (e.g., an enabling or learning supports component) that encompasses an integrated and refined set of major content arenas for helping students around barriers and re-engaging them in classroom learning.

As Exhibit 10 illustrates, once a learning supports' administrator is appointed, that leader should establish mechanisms for accomplishing the component's work. These should be comparable to content and process mechanisms established for the instructional component. It might, for example, include a "cabinet" for learning supports consisting of leaders for major content arenas. Organizing in this way moves student/learning supports away from the marginalization, fragmentation, unnecessary redundancy, and counterproductive competition that has resulted from organizing around traditional programs and/or in terms of specific disciplines. The intent is for personnel to have accountability for advancing a specific arena *and* for ensuring a systemic and integrated approach to all learning supports. This, of course, requires cross-content and cross-disciplinary training so that all personnel are prepared to pursue new directions.

A formal infrastructure link also is needed to ensure the learning supports system is fully integrated with school improvement efforts (e.g., in the classroom and school-wide). This means the leader and some of the cabinet for learning supports must be included at district planning and decision making tables with their counterparts working on improving instruction and management/governance. (In Exhibit 10, the district mechanism for this is designated as the "School Improvement *Planning* Team;" most such teams, of course, also establish guidelines, monitor progress, and so forth.)

Exhibit 10

Prototype for an Integrated Infrastructure at the District Level with Mechanisms for Learning Supports That Are Comparable to Those for Instruction
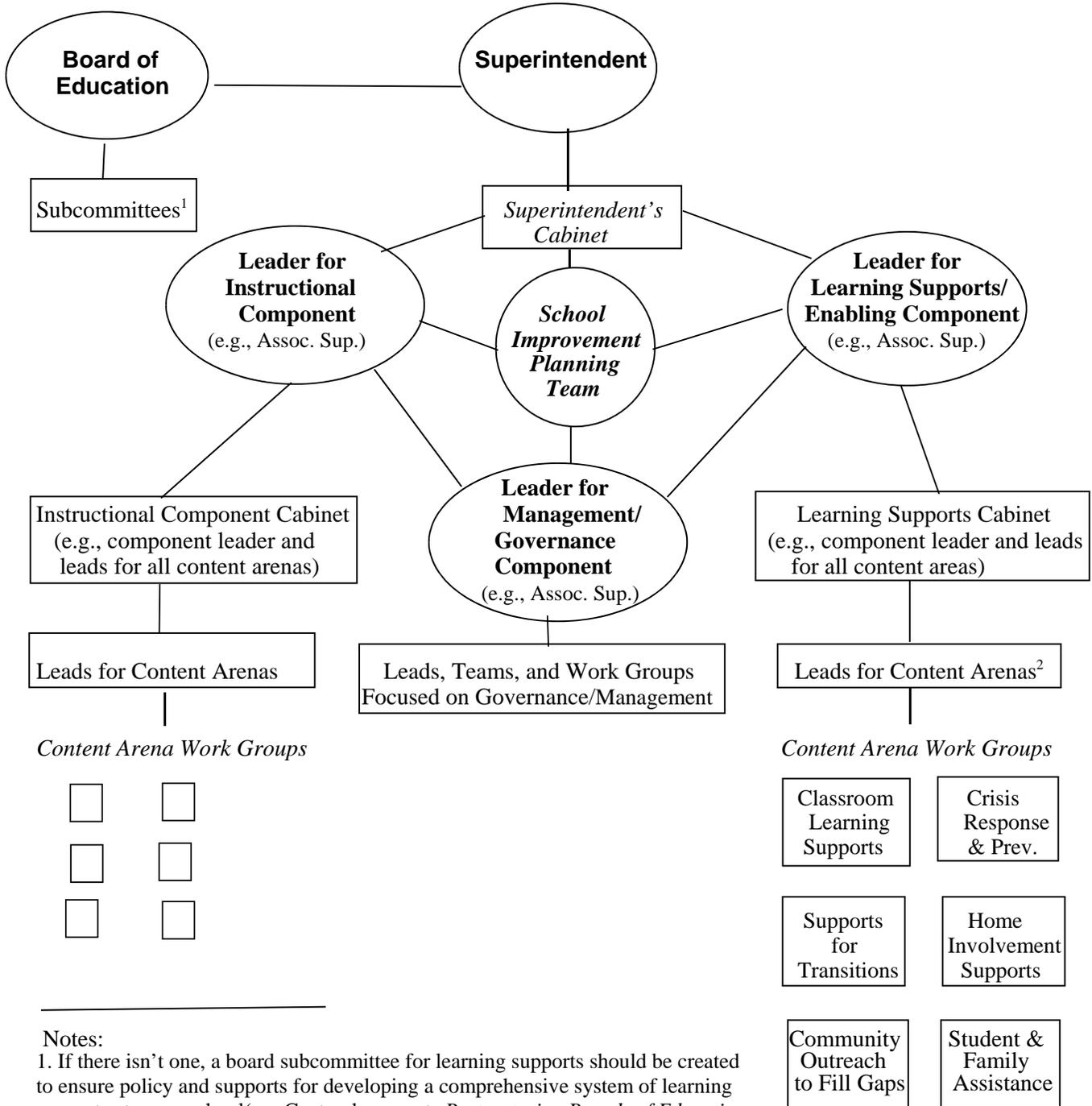
Notes:
1. If there isn't one, a board subcommittee for learning supports should be created to ensure policy and supports for developing a comprehensive system of learning supports at every school(see Center documents *Restructuring Boards of Education to Enhance Schools' Effectiveness in Addressing Barriers to Student Learning* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/boardrep.pdf and *Example of a Formal Proposal for Moving in New Directions for Student Support* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newdirections/exampleproposal.pdf)

2. All resources related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching (e.g., student support personnel, compensatory and special education staff and interventions, special initiatives, grants, and programs) are integrated into a refined set of major content arenas such as those indicated here. Leads are assigned for each arena and work groups are established.

Connecting
Families
of Schools

At this point, it is important to stress the value of linking a family of schools to maximize use of limited resources and achieve economies of scale. Schools in the same geographic or catchment area have a number of shared concerns. Furthermore, some programs and personnel already are or can be shared by several neighboring schools, thereby minimizing redundancy, reducing costs, and enhancing equity. Exhibit 11 outlines a mechanism connecting schools in a feeder pattern with each other and with the district and the community.

A multi-site team can provide a mechanism to help ensure cohesive and equitable deployment of resources and also can enhance the pooling of resources to reduce costs. Such a mechanism can be particularly useful for integrating the efforts of high schools and their feeder middle and elementary schools. 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.

A well-designed infrastructure helps minimize redundancy, reduce costs, achieve economies of scale, and enhance equity

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 (e.g., 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 Exhibit 11).

The multi-site body 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 multi-site body 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.

Exhibit 11

Connecting Leadership Teams to Enhance Development of a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports by Linking a Family of Schools Together and with the Community

High Schools

Learning Supports Leadership Team

Learning Supports Leadership Team

Middle Schools

Learning Supports Leadership Team

Learning Supports Leadership Team

Learning Supports Leadership Team

Learning Supports Leadership Team

Elementary Schools

Learning Supports Leadership Team

Learning Supports Leadership Team

Learning Supports Leadership Team

Learning Supports Leadership Team

Learning Supports Leadership Team

Learning Supports Leadership Team

Learning Supports Leadership *Council*

Learning Supports Leadership *Council*

School District Management & Governance Bodies

Community Resources Planning & Governing Agents

Note: Council facilitation involves responsibility for convening regular monthly (and other ad hoc) meetings, building the agenda, assuring that meetings stay task focused and that between meeting assignments will be carried out, and ensuring meeting summaries are circulated. With a view to shared leadership and effective advocacy, an administrative leader and a council member elected by the group can co-facilitate meetings. Meetings can be rotated among schools to enhance understanding of each site in the council.

Resource-oriented mechanisms at schools, for families of schools, and at the district level are essential for weaving together existing school and community resources and developing a full continuum of interventions over time. Such mechanisms enable programs and services to function in an increasingly cohesive, cost-efficient, and equitable way. By doing so, they contribute to reducing marginalization and fragmentation of learning supports.

Reorganization at
Regional Units and
at the State
Department

A key guideline in reworking operational infrastructure at these levels
is that the mechanisms must provide leadership and build capacity for
districts to establish and maintain (a) an effective operational
infrastructure at every school, (b) a mechanism for connecting a family
or complex (e.g., feeder pattern) of schools, and (c) a mechanism for
schools to collaborate with surrounding community resources. Well-
designed, compatible, and interconnected operational infrastructures at
schools, for school complexes, and at the district level are essential for
developing a comprehensive system of learning supports to address
barriers to learning and teaching. Each level plays a key role in
weaving together existing school and community resources and
developing a full continuum of interventions over time. Moreover,
content and resource-oriented infrastructure mechanisms enable
programs and services to function in an increasingly cohesive, cost-
efficient, and equitable way.

All this calls for reframing the organizational and operational
infrastructure at regional units and the SEA. Indeed, for regional units
and SEAs to play a more potent role in providing capacity building
support for school improvement and transformation, the agency's
operational infrastructure must be fundamentally reworked. Exhibit 12
lays out a framework to consider in reworking infrastructure in ways
that promote development and full integration of a comprehensive
system of learning supports to address barriers to learning and
teaching. As indicated, it is essential to have a cabinet level
administrative leader (e.g., an associate superintendent) who is
responsible and accountable for all resources related to addressing
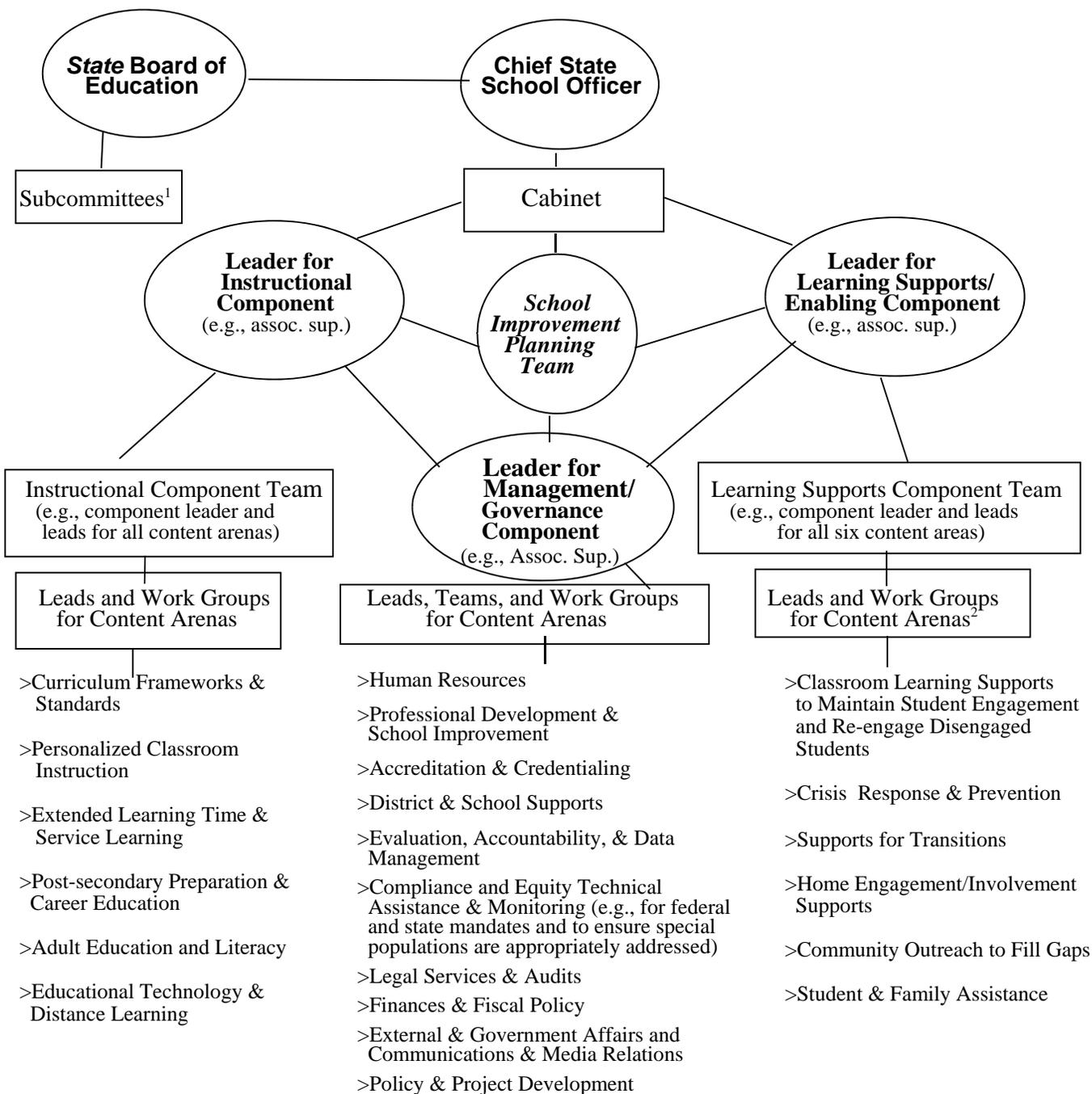barriers to learning.

As the figure in Exhibit 12 illustrates, once a learning supports'
administrator is appointed, that leader should establish mechanisms for
accomplishing the unit's work. These should be comparable to content
and process mechanisms established for the instructional component.
Specifically, we suggest establishing a team for learning supports
consisting of leaders for major content arenas. (Exhibit 12 delineates
the six arenas cited.) Organizing in this way moves student/learning
supports away from the marginalization, fragmentation, unnecessary
redundancy, and counterproductive competition that has resulted from
organizing around traditional programs and/or in terms of specific
disciplines. The intent is for personnel to have accountability for
advancing a specific arena *and* for ensuring a systemic and integrated
approach to all learning supports. This, of course, requires cross-
content and cross-disciplinary training so that all personnel are
prepared to pursue new directions.

**SEAs need to
dedicate and
integrate
operational
mechanisms
in ways that
model a cohesive,
comprehensive,
and fully
integrated
system of
learning supports**

A formal infrastructure link also is needed to ensure the learning
supports system is fully integrated with school improvement efforts
(e.g., in the classroom and school-wide). This means the leader and
some of the learning supports team must be included at planning and
decision making tables with their counterparts concerned with
improving instruction and management/governance.

Exhibit 12

Prototype for an Integrated Infrastructure at the SEA Level with Mechanisms for Learning Supports That Are Comparable to Those for Instruction

State **Board of Education**

Chief State School Officer

Subcommittees[1]

Cabinet

Leader for Instructional Component
(e.g., assoc. sup.)

School Improvement Planning Team

Leader for Learning Supports/ Enabling Component
(e.g., assoc. sup.)

Leader for Management/ Governance Component
(e.g., Assoc. Sup.)

Instructional Component Team
(e.g., component leader and leads for all content arenas)

Learning Supports Component Team
(e.g., component leader and leads for all six content areas)

Leads and Work Groups for Content Arenas

Leads, Teams, and Work Groups for Content Arenas

Leads and Work Groups for Content Arenas[2]

>Curriculum Frameworks & Standards

>Personalized Classroom Instruction

>Extended Learning Time & Service Learning

>Post-secondary Preparation & Career Education

>Adult Education and Literacy

>Educational Technology & Distance Learning

>Human Resources

>Professional Development & School Improvement

>Accreditation & Credentialing

>District & School Supports

>Evaluation, Accountability, & Data Management

>Compliance and Equity Technical Assistance & Monitoring (e.g., for federal and state mandates and to ensure special populations are appropriately addressed)

>Legal Services & Audits

>Finances & Fiscal Policy

>External & Government Affairs and Communications & Media Relations

>Policy & Project Development

>Classroom Learning Supports to Maintain Student Engagement and Re-engage Disengaged Students

>Crisis Response & Prevention

>Supports for Transitions

>Home Engagement/Involvement Supports

>Community Outreach to Fill Gaps

>Student & Family Assistance

1. If there isn't one, a board subcommittee for learning supports should be created to ensure policy and supports directly related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

2. All resources related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching (e.g., student support personnel, compensatory and special education staff and interventions, special initiatives, grants, and programs) are integrated into a refined set of major content arenas such as those indicated here. Leads are assigned for each arena and work groups are established. If the department has used a 3 tier intervention framework, this would be enhanced by developing each of the six content arenas into a comprehensive system of learning supports along an intervention continuum conceived as encompassing systems for promoting development and preventing problems, responding as early after onset as feasible, and providing treatment for students with chronic, severe, and pervasive problems.

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

John Dewey, The School and Society, 1907

Needed: Expanded Policy and Expanded Accountability

School improvement policy must be expanded in order to come to grips with the underlying *marginalization* that leads to piecemeal approaches and maintains fragmentation of efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching. Current reforms are based on a two component model. For the proposed design to work, school improvement policy must expand by adopting a three component framework (see Exhibit 13).

Expanding the Accountability Framework for Schools

Exhibit 14 highlights an expanded framework to reflect the expanded policy framework. As illustrated, there is no intent to deflect from the laser-like focus on meeting high academic standards. Clearly schools must demonstrate they effectively teach academics.
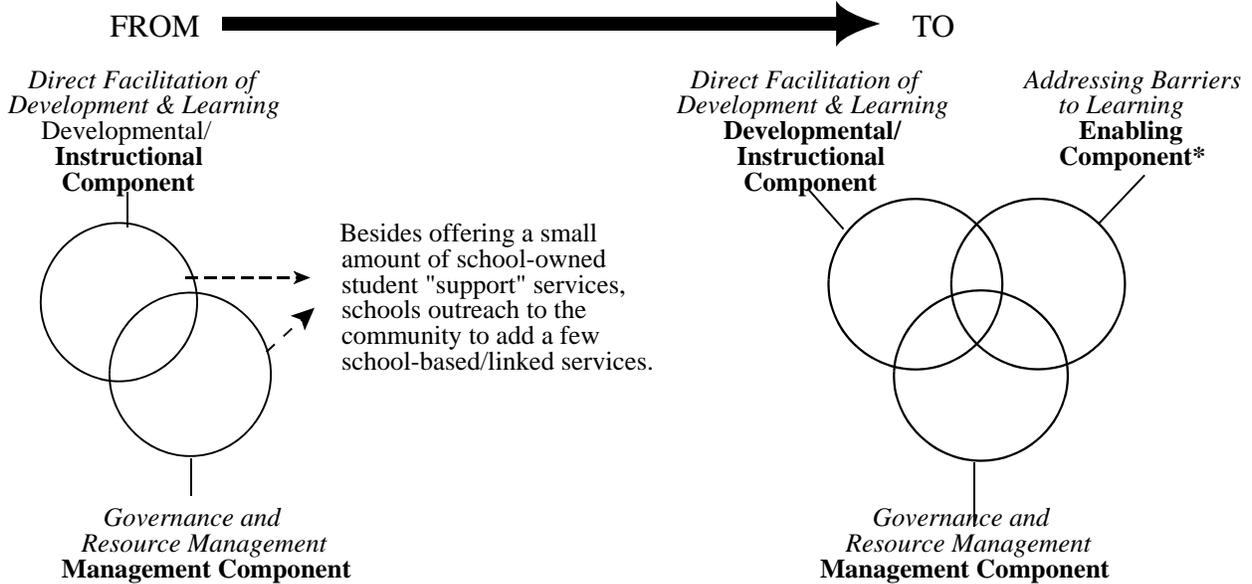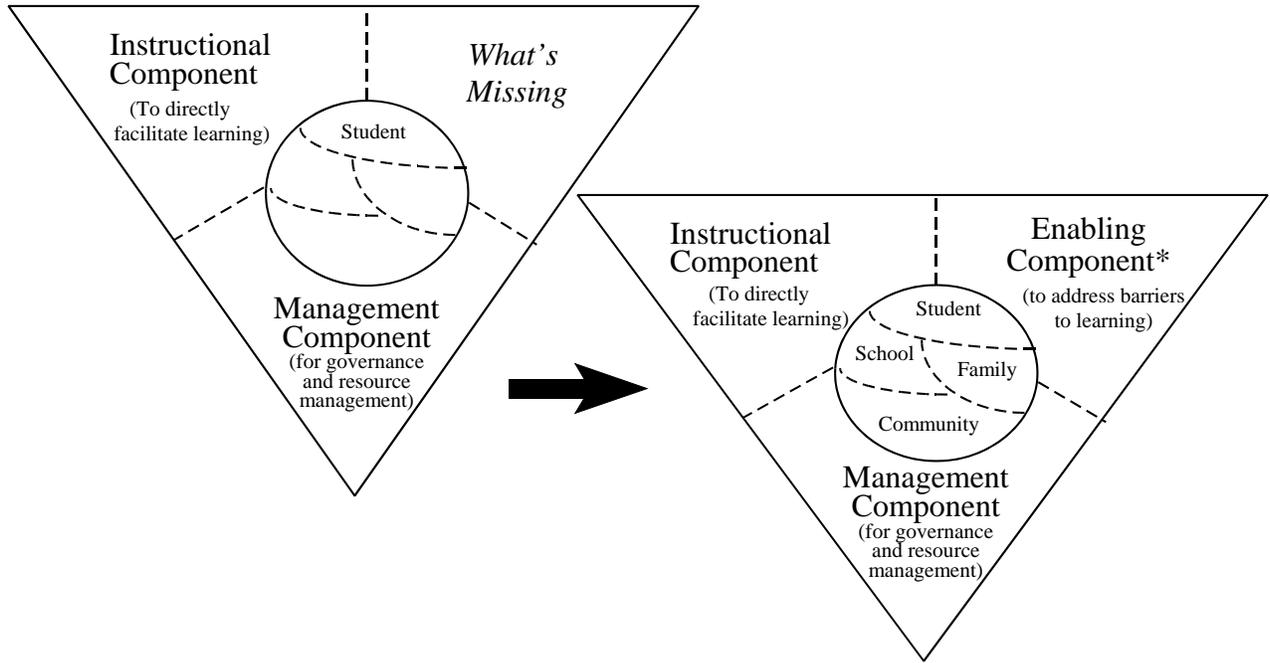
At the same time, policy must acknowledge that schools also are expected to pursue high standards in promoting positive social and personal functioning, including enhancing civility, teaching safe and healthy behavior, and some form of "character education." Every school has specific goals related to this facet of student development and learning. Yet, it is evident that there is no systematic evaluation or reporting of the work. As would be expected, then, schools direct few resources and too little attention to these unmeasured concerns. Yet, society wants schools to attend to these matters, and most professionals understand that personal and social functioning are integrally tied to academic performance. From this perspective, it seem self-defeating not to hold schools accountable for improving students' social and personal functioning.

For schools where a large proportion of students are not doing well, it is also self-defeating not to attend to benchmark indicators of progress in addressing barriers to learning. Schools cannot teach children who are not in class. Therefore, increasing attendance always is an expectation (and an important budget consideration). Other basic indicators of school improvement and precursors of enhanced academic performance are reducing tardiness and problem behaviors, lessening suspension and dropout rates, and abating the large number of inappropriate referrals for special education. Given this, the progress of school staff related to such matters should be measured and treated as a significant aspect of school accountability.

School outcomes, of course, are influenced by the well-being of the families and the neighborhoods in which they operate. Therefore, performance of any school should be judged within the context of the current status of indicators of community well-being, such as economic, social, and health measures. If those indicators are not improving or are declining, it is patently unfair to ignore these contextual conditions in judging school performance.

Exhibit 13

**Expanding School Improvement Policy:
Moving from a Two- to a Three-component Framework**

Instructional
Component

(To directly
facilitate learning)

*What's
Missing*

Student

Management
Component

(for governance
and resource
management)

Instructional
Component

(To directly
facilitate learning)

Enabling
Component*

(to address barriers
to learning)

Student

School

Family

Community

Management
Component

(for governance
and resource
management)

FROM   TO

*Direct Facilitation of
Development & Learning*
Developmental/
**Instructional
Component**

*Direct Facilitation of
Development & Learning*
**Developmental/
Instructional
Component**

*Addressing Barriers
to Learning*
**Enabling
Component***

Besides offering a small
amount of school-owned
student "support" services,
schools outreach to the
community to add a few
school-based/linked services.

*Governance and
Resource Management*
Management Component

*Governance and
Resource Management*
Management Component

---

*The third component (an enabling or learning supports component) is established in
policy and practice as primary and essential and is developed into a comprehensive
approach by weaving together school and community resources.

Exhibit 14

Expanding the Framework for School Accountability

Indicators of Positive Learning and Development

| High Standards for *Academics** (measures of cognitive achievements, e.g., standardized tests of achievement, portfolio and other forms of authentic assessment) | High Standards for Learning/ Development Related to *Social & Personal Functioning** (measures of social learning and behavior, character/ values, civility, healthy and safe behavior) |

"Community Report Cards"

>increases in positive indicators

>decreases in negative indicators

Benchmark Indicators of Progress in Addressing Barriers & (Re-)engaging Students in Classroom Learning

High Standards for *Enabling Learning and Development*** (measures of effectiveness in addressing barriers , e.g.,
>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)

*Results of interventions for directly facilitating development and learning.

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