A Center Brief

What Do "Teachers, Administrators, and Other School Leaders" Need to Learn about Transforming Student and Learning Supports?

(October, 2016)

Abstract

Planning related to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will soon turn to personnel preparation now that the U.S. Department of Education has issued the non regulatory guidance for Title II, Part A. Title II focuses on *Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-quality Teachers, Principals, or Other School Leaders*.

With personnel preparation and the transformation of student and learning supports in mind, this brief report highlights the importance of covering the following matters in training teachers, principals, and other leaders:

- broadening teacher collaboration to address barriers to learning and teaching and to re-engage disconnected students
- enhancing classroom-based student and learning supports
- improving essential school-wide student and learning supports
- developing major leadership roles for student/learning supports personnel
- rethinking the roles and functions of student/learning supports personnel

What Do "Teachers, Administrators, and Other School Leaders" Need to Learn about Transforming Student and Learning Supports?

> New teachers, however naive and idealistic, often know before they enter the profession that the salaries are paltry, the class sizes large, and the supplies scant. What they don't know is how little support . . . they can expect once the door is closed and the textbooks are opened.
>
> Former teacher Claudia Graziano (in an *Edutopia* article)

Planning related to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will soon turn to personnel preparation now that the U.S. Department of Education has issued the non regulatory guidance for Title II, Part A (http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essatitleiipartaguidance.pdf). Title II focuses on *Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-quality Teachers, Principals, or Other School Leaders*

Note that among the purposes listed for Title II are the provision of grants to state educational agencies and subgrants to local educational agencies to

- improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders

- increase the number of teachers, principals, and other school leaders who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools; and provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders.

In issuing the guidance, Secretary King stated: "With the enactment of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states and districts have the opportunity to reimagine the way Title II, Part A funds can be used through driving innovation and building on evidence to better support educators."

As with so much of the discussion about school improvement, the emphasis in the guidance is on improving instruction and management/governance. That's good, but insufficient.

An understanding of what more is needed can be readily garnered by asking teachers:

> *Most days, how many of students come to your class motivationally ready and able to learn what you have planned to teach them?*

Our experience is that the responses often are surprising and disturbing. In urban and rural schools serving economically disadvantaged families, teachers tell us they are lucky if 10 to 15% of their students fall into this group. In suburbia, teachers usually say 75% fit that profile. Even for students who have made a reasonably good adjustment to a new school and a new classroom, a month or two into a school year may see positive motivation subside. Many behavior, learning, and emotional problems become apparent at that time.

Whatever the numbers, teachers always need help in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and in re-engaging disconnected students. This requires adding a more potent focus in school improvement policy and practice on student and learning supports. And this is most likely to happen if the preparation and continuing education of teachers, principals, and other school leaders is expanded to recognize the nature and scope of the concerns and how to deal with them.

With all this mind, this brief report highlights the importance of covering the following matters in training teachers, principals, and other school leaders:
- broadening teacher collaboration to address barriers to learning and teaching and to re-engage disconnected students
- enhancing classroom-based student and learning supports
- improving essential school-wide student and learning supports
- developing major leadership roles for student/learning supports personnel
- rethinking the roles and functions of student/learning supports personnel

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Broadening Teacher Collaboration to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching and to Re-engage Disconnected Students

A widely perpetuated myth among the general public is that improving instruction is sufficient to close the achievement gap, end learning and behavior problems, increase graduate rates, and ensure students are career and college ready. But the reality is that *even the best teacher can't do the job alone.* And the supports teachers need involve much more than better preparation and continuing education, accountability for high standards, and traditional supervision and consultation.

In too many schools, it is evident that even highly qualified teachers cannot ensure every student will have an equal opportunity to succeed at school and beyond. Teachers need a system of student and learning supports *in the classroom and school-wide* to help when students are not responding effectively to instruction. Without such a system, schools cannot come close to every student succeeding.

When teachers encounter barriers that interfere with effective teaching, the first concern must be to provide them with a range of supports so they can enable the learning of students who are not doing well. School improvement must prioritize an emphasis on developing more effective and comprehensive systems for *directly* dealing with factors that keep too many students from benefitting from classroom instruction. Our analyses indicate that few school improvement policies and plans do so and that this situation is likely to continue as states transition to ESSA. (For example, see Arizona's ESSA draft plan http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/arizrep.pdf.)

Our extensive analyses underscore the value of developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of supports that enables teachers to teach and students to learn. Such a system involves transforming student and learning supports. Appendix 1 highlights prototype policy and intervention frameworks related to such a transformation.

As illustrated in Appendix 1, our work over many years stresses that essential supports cluster into six content arenas. (Think of them as the curriculum of learning supports.) The six arenas are designed to continuously enhance:

- Classroom-based learning supports to enable learning – working collaboratively with other teachers and student support staff to ensure learning is personalized for all students and especially those manifesting mild-moderate learning and behavior problems; re-engaging those who have become disengaged from learning at school; providing learning accommodations and supports as necessary; addressing external barriers

- Supports for transitions – interventions to assist students and families as they negotiate hurdles to enrollment, school and grade changes, daily transitions, program transitions, accessing supports, and so forth

- Home involvement and engagement – interventions to increase and strengthen home and school connections

- Community involvement and collaborative engagement – interventions to increase and strengthen outreach to develop greater community involvement and support from a wide range of entities, including enhanced use of volunteers and agency collaborations

- Crisis response and prevention – interventions for responding to, and where feasible, preventing school and personal crises and trauma, including creating a caring and safe learning environment and countering the impact of out-of-school traumatic events

- Student and family assistance – interventions to facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance on campus and in the community as needed

The following sections offer a brief discussion of and examples related to each of these arenas;

more extensive examples are available. For instance, see:
>the set of self-study surveys designed to map what a school has and what it
needs in order to address barriers to learning and teaching –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/surveys/set1.pdf
>the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds on topics related to each arena –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm

Enhancing Classroom-Based Student and Learning Supports

A key to stemming the tide of out-of-class referrals is to "open classroom doors" to bring in student/learning supports. Such supports are designed to enable learning by assisting, supporting, and enhancing the capability of teachers to (a) prevent problems, (b) intervene as soon after problems arise, (c) enhance intrinsic motivation for learning, and (d) re-engage students who have become disengaged from classroom learning.

The focus is not just on a few individual students who are not doing well, but on enabling teachers to personalize instruction for all students, add special assistance as necessary in the context of implementing "Response to Intervention," and provide a greater range of accommodations and learning options.

All this requires in-class collaboration with student and learning supports staff and other teachers, as well as training volunteers to assist with students-in-need. And clearly, the move to formally include student support staff part of the time as in-classroom collaborators represents a critical change in school improvement policy and practice. Accomplishing all this is one of the innovative opportunities to consider in redesigning student and learning supports and planning training for teachers, principals, and other school leaders.

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Examples of Classroom-Based Learning Supports
Essential to Personalizing Learning

• Redesigning classroom approaches to enhance teacher capability to prevent and
  handle problems and reduce the need for out-of-class referrals
  > 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
  > Creating a learning community for teachers
  > Ensuring opportunities to learn through co-teaching, team teaching, mentoring
  > Teaching intrinsic motivation concepts and their application to schooling

• Curricular enrichment and adjunct programs
  > 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 with a specific focus on enhancing feelings of competence, self-determination, and
  relatedness to others at school and reducing threats to such feelings

In addition to the self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, see the continuing
education modules on
  >*Personalizing Learning* at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/personalizeI.pdf
  >*Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families* at
      http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagei.pdf

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Improving Essential School-Wide Student and Learning Supports

The five other arenas of student and learning supports extend beyond the classroom to encompass the entire school. Each provides essential interventions to address barriers to learning and teaching; each warrants attention in training teachers, principals, and other leaders.

What follows is a brief introduction to each.

Supports for Transitions

Supporting transitions involves a range of interventions that address changes which can be disruptive to students, families, and teachers. In the classroom and school-wide (and sometimes at the district level), such supports are designed to (a) enhance successful transitions, (b) prevent transition problems, (c) use transitions to enhance acceptance and reduce alienation, and (d) use transitions to increase positive attitudes/motivation toward school and learning

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Examples of Supports for Transitions

- Welcoming and social support programs for newcomers
  > Welcoming signs, materials, and initial receptions
  > Peer buddy programs for students, families, staff, volunteers

- Daily transition programs for
  > Before school, breaks, lunch, afterschool

- Articulation programs
  > 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
  > Catch-up, recreation, and enrichment programs

- School-to-career/higher education
  > Counseling, pathway, and mentor programs

- Broad involvement of stakeholders in planning for transitions
  > Students, staff, home, police, faith groups, recreation, business, higher educ.

- Staff/stakeholder development for planning transition programs/activities

In addition to the self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, see

>*Transitions: Turning Risks into Opportunities for Student Support*
    http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/transitions/transitions.pdf

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Home Involvement and Engagement

While policy calls for *parent* involvement, the reality is that many students are cared for by grandparents, aunts, siblings, and foster families. Also, because of past experiences, many care-providers are not motivated to connect with the school, and some are so angry with schools that they are belligerent when contacted.

Student and learning supports aim to develop a full range of interventions designed to assist and then engage and re-engage key home stakeholders. In the classroom and school-wide (and sometimes at the district level), such supports are designed to (a) strengthen the home situation, (b) enhance home involvement in and capability for problem solving, (c) increase home support for student development and learning, and (d) enlist the home in strengthening school and community.

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Examples of Home Involvement and Engagement

- Addressing specific support and learning needs of family
    > Facilitating open-access to support programs for those in the home to assist them 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
    > 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 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
    > Families prepared for involvement in program planning and problem-solving

- Enhancing home support for learning and development
    > Family literacy, family homework projects, family field trips

- Recruiting families to strengthen school and community
    > Volunteers to welcome and support new families and help in various capacities
    > Families prepared for involvement in school governance

- Staff/stakeholder development to broaden awareness of and plan programs to enhance opportunities for home involvement

In addition to the self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, see

   >*Parent and Home Involvement in Schools –*
           http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/parenthome/parent1.pdf

   >*Enhancing Home Involvement to Address Barriers to Learning:*
     A Collaborative Process – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/homeinv.pdf

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Community Involvement and Engagement

Most schools are reaching out to a few community partners. Student and learning supports aim to fill critical systemic gaps by weaving in a wider range of community resources to work collaboratively on mutual concerns related to strengthening students, schools, families, and neighborhoods. For schools and the district, this requires programs and systems to increase and strengthen outreach to build linkages and collaborations to a wide range of entities, including enhanced use of volunteers and agencies.

Examples of Community Involvement and Collaborative Engagement

- Planning and implementing outreach to recruit a wide range of community resources
  > Community resources such as public and private agencies; colleges/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
  > Mechanisms to orient and welcome
  > Mechanisms to enhance the volunteer and mentor pools
  > Mechanisms to maintain current involvements; enhance 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
  > Policies/mechanisms to enhance & sustain school-community involvement
  > Staff/stakeholder development on the value of community involvement
  > Social marketing

In addition to the self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, see

>*Community Outreach:School-Community Resources to Address Barriers to Learning*
     http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/Commout_tt/communityfull.pdf

>*Fostering School, Family and Community Involvement*
    http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/44%20guide%207%20fostering%20school%20family%20and%20community%20involvement.pdf

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Crisis Response and Prevention

The broad category of crisis assistance and prevention stresses not only effective emergency response and aftermath help, but a major emphasis on prevention that fits nicely with concerns for creating a positive and supportive school climate. A general focus on crisis prevention encompasses bullying and violence prevention and other efforts to curtail problems and minimize the need for discipline and suspensions. The supports in this arena require integrated classroom, school-wide, and district programs and systems that (a) respond to crises, (b) minimize the impact of crises, (c) where feasible, prevent school and personal crises and trauma, (d) counter the impact of out-of-school traumatic events. and (e) create a caring and safe learning environment.

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<p align="center">**Examples of Crisis Response and Prevention**</p>

- Ensuring there is a well-trained school-focused Crisis Team that
  > Maintains an integrated response plan
  > Takes leadership for developing prevention programs

- Providing immediate assistance in emergencies so students can resume learning

- Providing follow-up care as necessary
  > Brief and longer-term monitoring

- Mobilizing staff, students, and families to anticipate response plans and recovery efforts

- Maintaining a focus on creating a caring and safe learning environment
  > Developing systems to promote healthy development and prevent problems
  > Developing general crisis prevention strategies that encompass bullying, harassment, violence prevention, and other efforts to curtail problems and minimize the need for discipline and suspensions

- Working with neighborhood schools and the local community to integrate planning for response and prevention

- Staff/stakeholder development focusing on the role and responsibility of all in promoting a caring and safe environment

In addition to the self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, see

>*Responding to Crisis at a School* at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/crisis/crisis.pdf

>*Resources for Responding to a Crisis* at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/crisisresp.htm

>*Moving Prevention From the Fringes into the Fabric of School Improvement*
    http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/24 moving prevention from the fringes into the fabric.pdf

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Student and Family Assistance

Finally, the focus is on what has been the traditional emphasis of student support services – helping students and families who are identified as needing personal and specialized assistance. Such supports usually require programs and systems to facilitate access of specific students and families to effective health and social services and special assistance on campus and in the community as needed, as well as for career and college planning.

Examples of Student and Family Assistance

- Providing support as soon as a need is recognized; doing so in the least disruptive way
  > "Prereferral" interventions in classrooms in the context of "Response to Intervention"
  > Problem solving conferences with parents
  > Open access to school, district, and community support programs

- Referral interventions for students and families with problems
  > Screening, referrals, and follow-up – school-based, school-linked

- Enhancing access to direct interventions for health, mental health, and economic assistance; counseling for career and college
  > School-based, school-linked, and community-based programs

- Follow-up assessment to check whether referrals and services are adequate and effective

- Mechanisms for resource coordination to avoid duplication of and fill gaps in services and enhance effectiveness
  > School-based and linked, feeder family of schools, community-based programs

- Enhancing stakeholder awareness of programs and services

- Involving community providers to fill gaps and augment school resources

- Staff/stakeholder development to enhance effectiveness of student and family assistance systems, programs, and services

In addition to the self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, see

>*Student & Family Assistance Programs and Services to Address Barriers to Learning*
     http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/student_tt/studentfamfull.pdf

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As outlined in Appendix 1, the six arenas intersect with a *full continuum of interventions*. The continuum encompasses three subsystems designed to (1) promote healthy development and prevent problems, (2) respond quickly when problems arise, and (3) contribute effectively to helping those with severe and chronic problems. At each subsystem level, student and learning supports are organized cohesively into the set of six intervention arenas that encompass concerns schools encounter each day.

Note that, while schools often portray the intervention continuum as three levels or tiers and designate it as a Multitiered System of Supports (MTSS), this is too limiting a way to frame student and learning supports. The intervention prototype outlined in Appendix 1 reframes the tiers as a multidimensional approach that (a) interconnects the overlapping levels of intervention, (b) weaves together school and community interventions and resources, and (c) delineates the arenas of supports. (See *Moving Beyond the Three Tier Intervention Pyramid Toward a Comprehensive Framework for Student and Learning Supports* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefs/threetier.pdf.)

The bottom line for Title II planning is that, if all students are to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school, teachers, principals, and other school leaders must learn what is involved in effectively addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. And planners need to ensure that the term "other school leaders" includes a cadre of leaders for developing an effective system of student and learning supports.

Developing Major Leadership Roles for Student/Learning Supports Personnel

Many personnel are involved in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. These include a wide-range of educators who directly provide student and learning supports (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, nurses, social workers; behavioral specialists; staff focused on attendance and dropout, safe and drug free schools, special education, after school programs; bilingual and Title I program coordinators; health educators). In addition, administrators (e.g., assistant principals, deans of discipline) are involved every day with students who are having problems at schools. And so are personnel who staff the front office and food services, custodians, bus drivers, and school resource officers. Also often involved with schools are staff from community entities concerned with physical and mental health, welfare and protective services, and juvenile justice, as well as volunteers and mentors.

The amount of time and resources expended dealing with learning, behavior, and emotional problems represents a considerable portion of the budget at many schools. From this perspective, it is surprising that the work remains so poorly conceived in discussions of school improvement.

Part of the reason that student and learning supports are given short shrift is that, as currently deployed, the interventions are seen as being effective with relatively few students. This is especially so in schools where a large proportion of students encounter major barriers to learning. As a result, teachers and principals tend to marginalize support personnel and what they do. This is clearly the case with respect to capacity building efforts (including in-service staff development). The reality is that student and learning supports staff and leadership seem almost invisible in school improvement plans and are rarely at school improvement planning tables.

Changing all this requires transforming student and learning supports. Transforming student and learning supports requires *leadership for new directions*. A small cadre of leaders can guide and facilitate essential system redesign and changes. To do so, new roles and functions must added to their job descriptions, and the jobs of all student and support staff and operational infrastructures must be redesigned to enable system development, change, implementation, and sustainability.

New roles and functions are outlined in the next section. A prototype for operational infrastructure redesign is offered in Appendix 2.

Rethinking the Roles and Functions of Student/Learning Supports Personnel

Many influences already are reshaping the work of student and learning supports personnel. With the growth of the knowledge base in various disciplines and fields of practice, there is a trend toward less emphasis on intervention ownership and more attention to accomplishing, desired outcomes through flexible and expanded staff roles and functions. This trend recognizes underlying commonalities among a variety of school concerns and intervention strategies and is fostering increased interest in cross-disciplinary training and interprofessional education.

Clearly, the need for specialists to provide targeted direct assistance and support will continue. At the same time, they must prepare to play a leadership role in improving how schools address barriers to learning and teaching, promote academic achievement, and enhance healthy development. This involves being advocates, catalysts, brokers, and facilitators of systemic change.

The framework on the next page outlines three basic dimensions that should guide preparation of student and learning support professionals as their work evolves. As illustrated, the following five major areas of function are involved.

> (1) direct interventions with students and families
>
> (2) organization development to enhance systems within schools
>
> (3) organization development to enhance school-community linkages and partnerships
>
> (4) leadership for school improvement to address barriers to learning and teaching
>
> (5) supervision/administration

Within each of these areas are sets of generic and specialized competencies. The many competencies are learned at various levels of professional development.

Although some new knowledge, skills, and attitudes are learned, *specialized* competence is seen as emerging primarily from increasing one's breadth and depth related to generic competencies. Such specialized learning, of course, is shaped by one's field of specialization (e.g., school counselor, psychologist, social worker), as well as by prevailing views of job demands.

Note that most competencies for supervision/administration are left for development at Level IV. Also note that cross-cutting all dimensions are foundational knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Concluding Comments

As planning proceeds to improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders, it is essential to address how schools can improve the way that barriers to learning and teaching are addressed. In doing so, the emphasis must be on ending the myth that teachers and principals can do without a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student and learning supports.

Clearly, all this has major implications for changing professional preparation, credentialing, and continuing education. Title II planning is a good place to start to apply such implications. Doing so will require ensuring that the term "other school leaders" is understood to include student and learning supports personnel.

Areas of Function, Levels of Professional Development, & Nature of Competencies

Level I
Preservice

Level II
Induction

LEVELS OF
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Level III
Inservice for
Mastery

Level IV
Professional
Development
for Supervision/
Administration

(1) *Direct*
interventions

(2) Organization
development to
enhance *Systems*
within Schools

MAJOR AREAS
OF FUNCTION

(3) Organization
development to
enhance *School-*
Community
Linkages&
Partnerships

(4) *Leadership for*
school improvement
to address barriers

(5) Supervision/
Administration

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

NATURE AND SCOPE OF COMPETENCIES

Notes:

Cross-cutting all dimensions are foundational knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to topics such as

- human growth, development, and learning
- interpersonal/group relationships, dynamics and problem solving
- group and institutional cultural competence
- group and individual differences
- intervention theory
- organizational and systemic operations and change
- evidence for practices
- legal, ethical, and professional concerns
- applications of advanced technology.

For examples of job descriptions, see the Center's System Development Toolkit –
Section B (5) INITIAL CAPACITY BUILDING – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkitb4.htm

Examples of Tasks in Each Area of Function

(1) *Direct interventions with students and families in and outside the classroom*

Student support – planning, implementing, and evaluating interventions that equitably address barriers to learning and promote healthy development among a diverse range of students (e.g., developmental and motivational assessments of students, regular and specialized assistance for individual students and groups, prereferral interventions, universal and targeted group interventions, safe and caring school interventions; academic and personal counseling; supports for transitions)

Family assistance – planning, implementing, and evaluating interventions for students' families whenever necessary to enhance student support (e.g., providing information, referrals, and support for referral follow-through; instruction; counseling; home involvement)

(2) *Organization development to enhance systems within schools*

Planning, implementing, and evaluating *mechanisms* for enhancing development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development and that ensure activities are carried out in the most equitable and cost-effective manner consistent with legal and ethical standards for practice – (e.g., mechanisms for resource mapping, for coordination of intervention subsystems and content arenas, for collaboration among colleagues, for capacity building, for sustainability; mechanisms examples include case-oriented teams; system development teams; consultation, coaching, and mentoring mechanisms; triage, referral, and care monitoring processes; crisis teams)

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

Weaving together school-community resources/subsystems – planning, implementing, and evaluating *mechanisms* for collaborating with community entities to weave together school and community resources and systems to enhance current activity and enhance development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development

(4) *Leadership for school improvement to address barriers to learning and teaching*

Guiding and facilitating redesign of student and learning supports and the ongoing development and sustainability of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student and learning supports (e.g., facilitating system changes through strategic and action planning, development of leadership mechanisms and incorporating them into the existing operational infrastructure, formative evaluation, accountability, and related capacity building (including personnel development)

(5) *Supervision/administration*

Supervision of professionals-in-training and induction of new staff – coaching, mentoring, and supervising professionals-in-training and newly hired pupil services personnel both with respect to generic and speciality functions

Administration of pupil services – designing, managing, and building capacity of personnel and programs with respect to specialized interventions and generic systemic approaches to equitably address barriers to learning and promote healthy development

Administrative leadership in the district – participating in district decision making to advance an equitable and cost-effective role for student and learning supports personnel in addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development

Appendix 1

## About Transforming School Improvement Policy

As John Maynard Keynes stressed: *The real difficulty in changing the course of any enterprise lies not in developing new ideas but in escaping old ones.* That certainly is the case with respect to policy for improving schools.

Education policy currently reflects a primary commitment to finding ways to improve (1) instruction and (2) management/governance. This two component framework works fine for schools where few students encounter barriers to success. And some significant strides have been made with respect to both components. However, the framework is grossly insufficient for addressing the complex array of factors interfering with equity of opportunity for student success at schools, especially schools enrolling large numbers from economically disadvantaged homes. Reformers need to escape the idea that the two component emphasis is sufficient to the challenge of addressing the many factors interfering with school improvement and student progress.

In response to the number of schools and students in trouble, the need is for fundamental system transformation. Critical in this respect is expanding the policy framework for school improvement to add a third primary and essential component. This component is devoted to unifying and developing a comprehensive and equitable intervention system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. That is, in place of ad hoc and piecemeal policies and practices, this third component provides a foundation for transforming student and learning supports. The transformation involves first unifying and weaving together all school resources currently expended for student and learning supports. *And then*, the focus is on discriminatively braiding school and relevant community resources together to fill gaps. The intent over time is to replace the current laundry-list of fragmented practices by developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system that can serve all students.

Systemic change of this magnitude involves social, political, and cultural commitment to:

(1) *Expanding the policy framework for school improvement* from a two- to a three-component framework so that all efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching are unified (e.g., as a Learning Support Component), with the third component prioritized and developed as primary and essential, and fully entwined with the Instructional and Management/governance Components.[1]
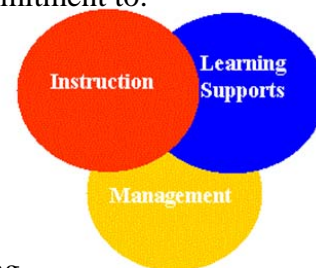
(2) *Operationalizing the third component* by reframing student and learning support interventions to create a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports in-classrooms and school-wide. As illustrated below, a prototype intervention framework has been developed that encompasses

>*a continuum of school-community interventions* consisting of subsystems for

- promoting effective schooling and whole child development
- preventing problems experienced by teachers and students
- addressing such problems as soon as feasible after they arise
- providing for students who have severe and chronic problems.

and

>*a cohesively organized and delimited set of "content" arenas* for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students in the classroom and school-wide. These arenas encompass the range of concerns a school copes with each day.[2]

Prototype Intervention Framework
   for the Third Component

Integrated Intervention *Continuum* (levels)

	Subsystem for Promoting Healthy Development & Preventing Problems	Subsystem for Early Intervention	Subsystem for Treatment ("System of Care")

Arenas of Intervention *Content*

Classroom-based learning supports

Supports for transitions

Crisis response/prevention

Home involvement & engagement

Community involvement & collaborative engagement

Student & family special assistance

Accommodations for differences & disabilities

Specialized assistance & other intensified interventions (e.g., Special Education & School-Based

Note: The prototype's continuum moves beyond current Multi-tier System of Support (MTSS) thinking by being one facet of an intervention framework that guides development of a total system designed to unify the resources a school devotes to student and learning supports and blending in community resources to fill critical gaps.

(3) Implementing the Third Component involves

- *reworking the operational infrastructure* to ensure effective daily implementation and ongoing development of a unified and comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching;[3]

- *enhancing mechanisms and strategic approaches for systemic change* in ways that ensure effective implementation, replication to scale, and sustainability;[4]

- *developing standards and expanding the accountability framework* to account for the third component and to do so in ways that encompass both formative and summative evaluation.[5]

As noted at the outset, successful transformation requires effective coping with the politics of enactment and implementation and building on lessons learned from previous and ongoing endeavors.[6] None of this is easy, but given the degree to which public education is under attack, all of it is essential.

Notes

[1] See Chapter 2 in *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* (2015). H.S. Adelman & L. Taylor. Los Angeles: Center for Mental Health in Schools. http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf

[2] A brief discussion of and examples related to each of the six content arenas is offered in Part II of *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive,*

and Equitable System (2015). H.S. Adelman & L. Taylor. Los Angeles: Center for Mental Health in Schools. http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf

[3] See *Key Leadership Infrastructure Mechanisms for Enhancing Student & Learning Supports* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/report/resource_oriented_teams.pdf

[4] See *Bringing New Prototypes into Practice: Dissemination, Implementation, and Facilitating Transformation* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/implrep3.pdf

[5] For an accountability prototype that focuses not only on achievement, but on personal and social development and on improvements that directly address barriers to learning and teaching, see"Expanding the Accountability Framework for Schools" Appendix A in *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* (2015). H.S. Adelman & L. Taylor. Los Angeles: Center for Mental Health in Schools. http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf
For a prototype of standards and indicators for a learning supports component, see *Standards & Quality Indicators for an Enabling or Learning Supports Component* (2014). Los Angeles: Center for Mental Health in Schools. http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/qualityindicators.pdf .

[6] See examples and lessons learned in *Where's it Happening?* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/nind7.htm

Other relevant references can be accessed through links provided in the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds – see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm .
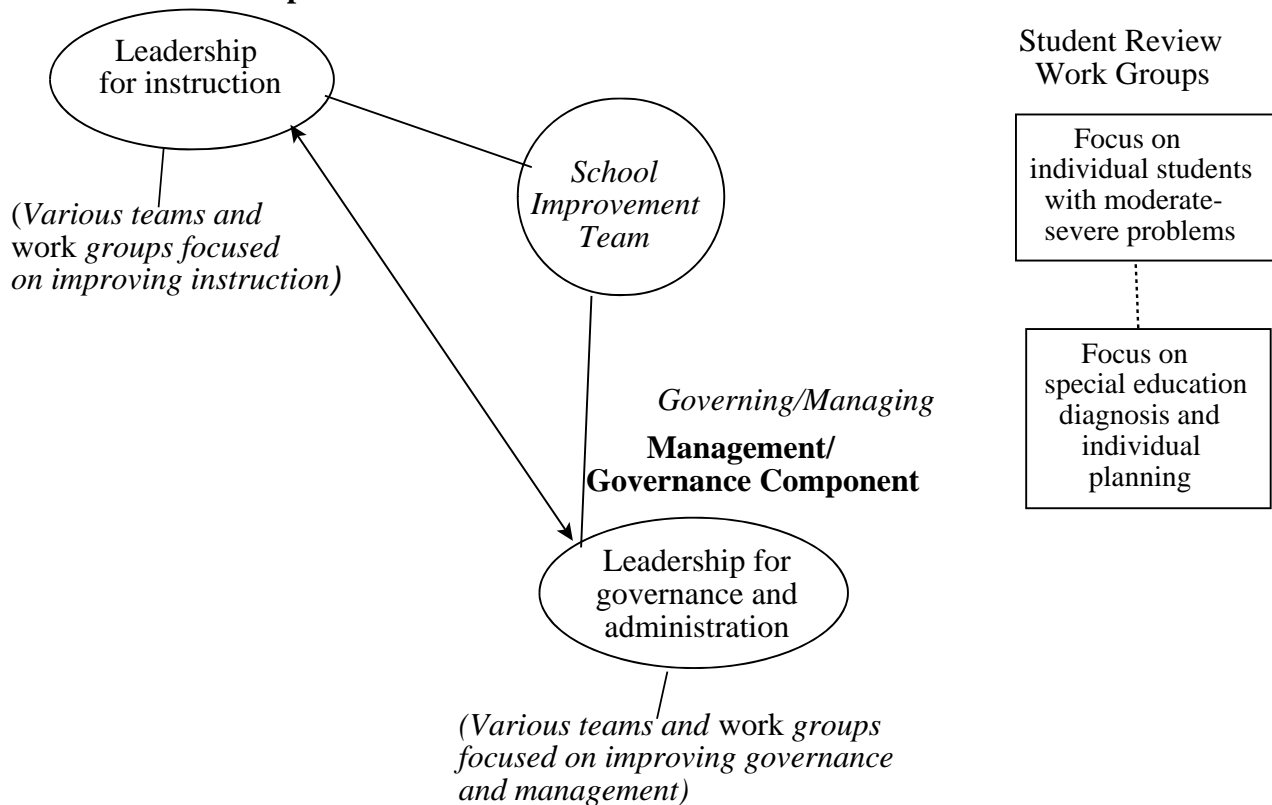
Appendix 2. *A Reworked Operational Infrastructure for Daily Implementation*

Changes to enhance equity of opportunity made at the district central office mean little if they do not play out at the school level

Because student and learning supports are so-marginalized, it is not surprising that the current operational infrastructure at schools reflects this state of affairs. It tends to look like this:

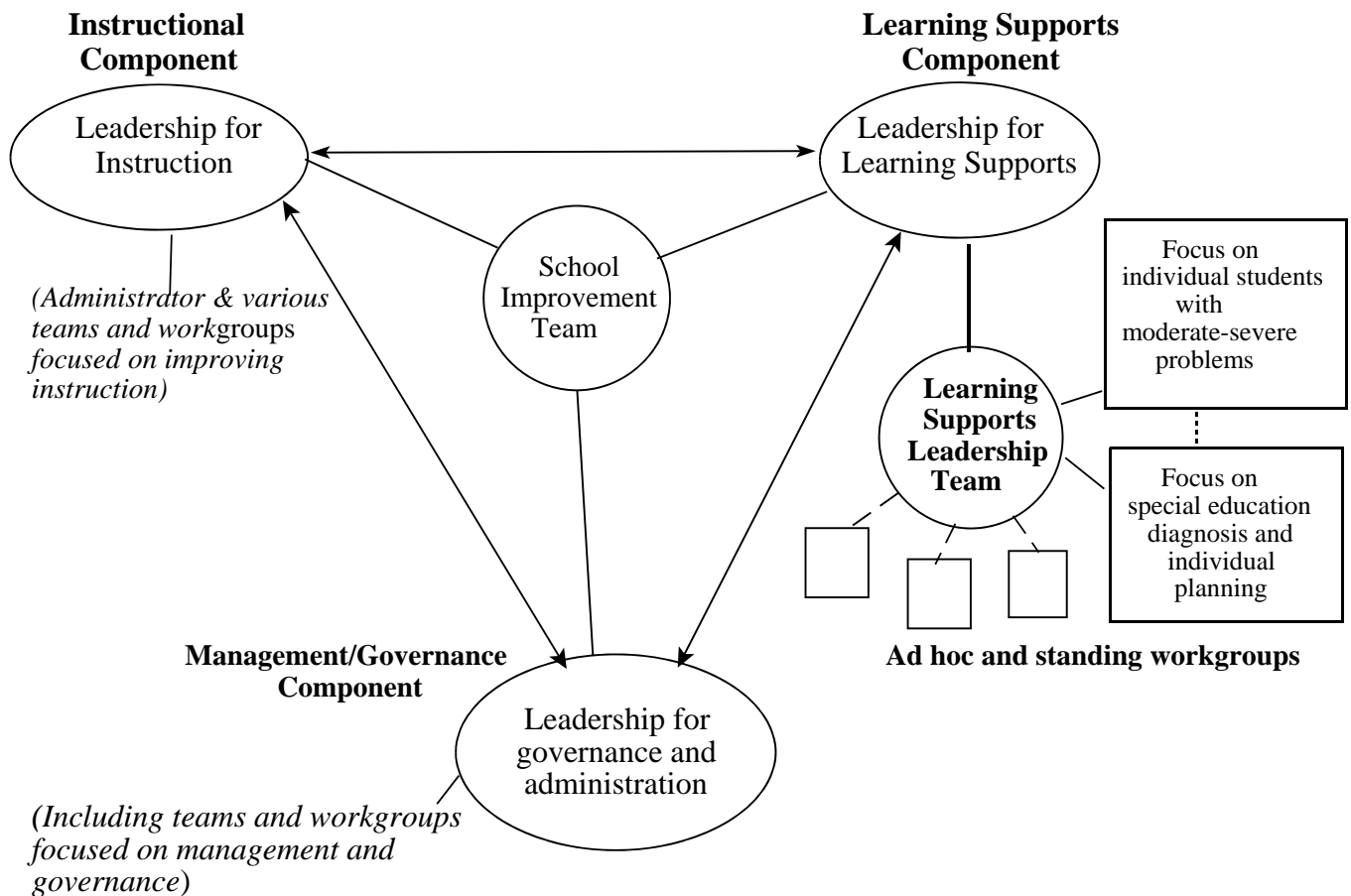*Facilitating Learning/Develop.*

Instructional Component

Student Review Work Groups

Leadership for instruction

(*Various teams and* work *groups focused on improving instruction*)

School Improvement Team

Focus on individual students with moderate-severe problems

Focus on special education diagnosis and individual planning

Governing/Managing

Management/ Governance Component

Leadership for governance and administration

(*Various teams and* work *groups focused on improving governance and management*)

Note that there is no designated leadership for student and learning supports. Note also the situation related to the work groups focused on individual students experiencing learning, behavior, and emotional problems. These work groups mainly meet to review and make decisions about special assistance needs and referrals. In the process, they usually develop a perspective on the type of systemic improvements that could prevent problems and stem the tide of referrals. However, addressing these concerns is not one of their formal functions. And, in general, these work groups have little or no connection to discussions and decisions about school improvement needs.

RETHINKING THE SCHOOL'S OPERATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Exhibit A illustrates the basic features of an operational infrastructure prototype that fully integrates an emphasis on student/learning supports. The prototype was designed with a view to the type of interconnected leadership and workgroups necessary for developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

This reworking of the operational infrastructure is a necessity for ending the marginalization of student and learning supports. Working with a system development leadership team (e.g., a *Learning Supports Leadership Team*), a learning supports' administrative lead can facilitate continuous development of a unified, comprehensive, equitable, and systemic approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching. As conceived, each component's administrative lead is responsible and accountable not only for improving his or her component's performance but for fully weaving it into the other two.

At the school level, the administrative lead and the leadership team meet weekly to guide and monitor daily implementation and ongoing component development. The initial focus is on mapping and analyzing all resources and related budget allocations for student and learning supports. As highlighted earlier, such resources include student support personnel (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses; compensatory and special education staff); specialized services; special initiatives; grants; programs for afterschool, wellness, dropout prevention, attendance, drug abuse prevention, violence prevention, pregnancy prevention; parent/family/health centers; volunteer assistance; community resources linked to schools, and more. Allocated funds come from the general budget, compensatory and special education, and special projects (including those supported by extramural sources).

Using the framework for a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports, resource analyses identify critical gaps, redundancies, and which resources can be redeployed to develop the system. Then, priorities are set for moving forward.

At the district level, the need is for administrative leadership and capacity building support that helps maximize component development at each school. Note: it is crucial to establish the district's leadership for this work at a high enough level to ensure the administrator is always an active participant at key planning and decision-making tables (e.g., a cabinet level administrative leader, such as an associate superintendent).

How Can Small Schools Staff a Three Component Infrastructure?

All schools are confronted with (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 a cohesive, equitable, and effective manner. The added challenge in a small school is how to do it with so few personnel.

In small schools, the key is to modestly convert existing personnel roles and functions to establish the type of operational infrastructure illustrated in Exhibit A. Usually, the principal and whoever else is part of a school leadership team will lead the way in improving instruction and management/governance. As constituted, however, such a team may not be prepared to advance development of the Learning Supports Componet. Thus, someone already on the leadership team must assume this role and be provided training to carry it out effectively.

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 component leadership training. The leader, however chosen, will benefit from eliciting the help of other advocates/champions at the school and from the community.

HOW DOES A *CASE-FOCUSED* WORK GROUP DIFFER FROM A *SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT* LEADERSHIP TEAM?

Every school that wants to improve student and learning supports needs a mechanism to enhance how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. As noted, most schools have work groups that focus on individual student and related family problems (e.g., a student assistance team, an IEP team). These teams pursue functions such as referral, triage, and care

monitoring or management. They are not, however, empowered or positioned to focus on systemic improvements that could prevent problems and stem the tide of referrals. Exhibit B contrasts their case-by-case focus, with the functions required for system development leadership.

Exhibit B
Contrasting Case-oriented and System Development Functions

A Case-oriented Work Group	*A System Development Leadership Team*
Focuses on specific individuals and discrete services to address barriers to learning	Focuses on all students and the resources, programs, and systems to address barriers to learning & promote healthy development
Sometimes called:	Possibly called:

Child Study Team
   Student Study Team
   Student Success Team
   Student Assistance Team
   Teacher Assistance Team
   IEP Team
	Learning Supports Leadership Team
	   Learning Supports Resource Team
	   Resource Coordinating Team
	   Resource Coordinating Council
	   School Support Team

EXAMPLES OF FUNCTIONS:	EXAMPLES OF FUNCTIONS:

>triage
   >referral
   >case monitoring/management
   >case progress review
   >case reassessment
	>aggregating data across students and from teachers to analyze school needs
	>mapping resources at school & in the community
	>analyzing resources & formulating priorities for system development (in keeping with the most pressing needs at the school)
	>recommending how resources should be deployed and redeployed
	>coordinating and integrating school resources & connecting with community resources
	>planning and facilitating ways to strengthen and develop new programs and subsystems
	>developing strategies for enhancing resources
	>establishing workgroups as needed
	>social "marketing"

Two metaphors help differentiate the two types of teams and the importance of both sets of functions. A case-orientation fits what is usually referred to as the starfish metaphor.

> The day after a great storm had washed up 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 metaphor, of course, reflects all the important clinical efforts undertaken by staff alone and when they meet together to work on specific cases.

The development leadership focus is captured by what can be called the bridge metaphor.

> In a small town, one weekend a group of school staff went fishing together down at the river. 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 in the group was diving in and dragging children to the shore, resuscitating them, and then jumping back.
>
> But, there were too many. All of a sudden, in the midst of all this frenzy, one of the group stopped jumping in and was seen walking away. Her colleagues were amazed and irate. How could she leave when there were so many children to save? About an hour later, 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 a team together, and we fixed 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.

Who's on a Learning Supports Leadership Team?

Where feasible, a Learning Supports Leadership Team is formed as an inclusive group of informed, willing, and able stakeholders. This might include the following:

- administrative lead for the component
- 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

Schools with few student and learning support staff will begin with only a few people.

Because schools have case-oriented work groups that group may be able to expand its focus to cover the functions of a system development leadership team. This can work if the members are trained and facilitated to divide their time and agenda effectively.

Once a Learning Supports Leadership Team is operational at a school, the organizational focus can turn to connecting it with other local schools, the district, and the community.

WHY CONNECT LEARNING SUPPORTS ACROSS A COMPLEX OR "FAMILY" OF SCHOOLS?

Schools in the same neighborhood experience and often share similar problems. Feeder schools commonly enroll students from the same family, and their children may all be experiencing problems. Some schools share student and learning support personnel. We think of those with such natural affiliations as a potential family of schools.

As illustrated in Exhibit C, the connecting mechanism is a multi-site body, or what in the prototype is designated as a Learning Supports Leadership *Council*. It brings together one-two representatives from each participating school's Learning Supports Leadership Team. The objectives are to

- identify and meet common needs with respect to mandates and other functions and personnel development

- create processes for communication, linkages, coordination, and collaboration among schools and with community resources (note: multi-school councils are especially attractive to community agencies lacking the time or personnel to link with each individual school)

- ensure cohesive and equitable deployment of student and learning support resources

- weave together human and financial resources from public and private sectors and encourage the pooling of resources to minimize redundancy, reduce costs, and achieve economies of scale

A multi-site council is particularly useful for unifying the efforts of high schools and their feeder middle and elementary schools. Think about supports for transitions. Think about shared crises. And think about working with families who have youngsters attending more than one level of schooling in the same cluster. (When such a family has several children in need of special attention, it is neither cost-effective nor good intervention for each school to work with the family separately.)

Natural starting points for councils include sharing each other's needs assessment, resource mapping, analyses, and recommendations about priorities for system improvement. Specific attention is paid to how each school can work together on common problems such as truancy, bullying, and community violence.
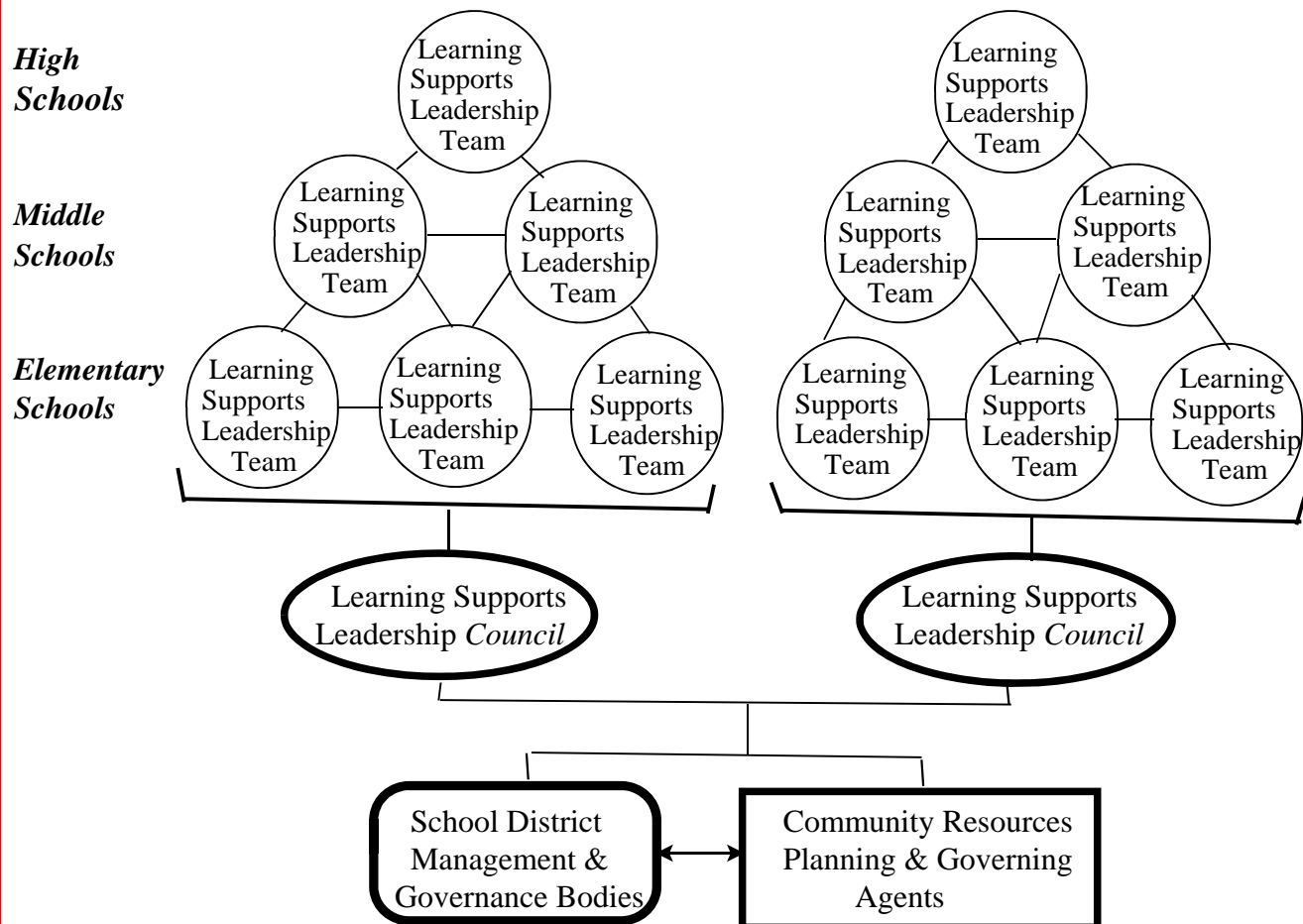
CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Transformation of student and learning supports clearly requires reworking the existing operational infrastructure at school and district levels. A learning supports component must have an administrative leader. The leader needs the support of a system development leadership team and workgroups. Together they ensure the component is (1) fully developed and integrated as a primary and essential facet of school improvement, (2) working with a family of schools, and (3) outreaching to the community to fill critical system gaps.

Exhibit C
Connecting Resources Across a Family of Schools, a District, and Community-Wide

High Schools

Middle Schools

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 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

For more on details on rethinking the *operational infrastructure*, see

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/infrastructure/anotherinitiative-exec.pdf
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentsupport/toolkit/aidk.pdf

For examples of job descriptions for administrative leader for learning supports, see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkitb4.htm

For an aid in mapping and analyzing resources, see
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20mapping%20current%20status.pdf