Excerpt From

A Center Report

Organization Facilitators:
A Change Agent for Systemic School and Community Changes

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Preface

Over the last 10-15 years, we have focused on how to make successful systemic change less than a miracle. Some of this work is published in the journals; other facets are reflected in the resource materials circulated by our Center at UCLA. One of the frequent inquiries we receive is for more information on this work and, in particular, for information about the school system change agent mechanism we have designated as an Organizational Facilitator. This report pulls together a discussion of the Organization Facilitator roles and functions.

For more on systemic changes related to schools and their interface with communities, search the Center’s resources through the Internet – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu or request that a resource list be sent to you.

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Organization Facilitators: 
A Change Agent for Systemic School and Community Changes

Currently, any school where a significant number of students are not performing well is under the gun to reform and restructure. This has led to many initiatives for major systemic school change and school-community linkages. Often, the complexity of the systemic changes involved requires knowledge and skills not currently part of the professional preparation of those called on to act as change agents. For example, few school professionals assigned to make major reforms have been taught how to create the necessary motivational readiness among a critical mass of stakeholders, nevermind knowing how to institutionalize and facilitate replication and scale-up of new approaches.

Substantive changes require guidance and support from professionals with mastery level competence for creating a climate for change, facilitating change processes, and establishing an institutional culture where key stakeholders continue to learn and evolve. For instance, a considerable amount of organizational research in schools, corporations, and community agencies outlines factors for creating a climate for institutional change. The literature supports the value of (a) a high level of policy commitment that is translated into appropriate resources (leadership, space, budget, time); (b) incentives for change, such as intrinsically valued outcomes, expectations for success, recognitions, and rewards; (c) procedural options from which those expected to implement change can select those they see as workable; (d) a willingness to establish mechanisms and processes that facilitate change efforts, such as a governance mechanism that adopts ways to improve organizational health; (e) use of change agents who are perceived as pragmatic -- maintaining ideals while embracing practical solutions; (f) accomplishing change in stages and with realistic timelines, (g) providing feedback on progress; and (h) institutionalizing support mechanisms to maintain and evolve changes and to generate periodic renewal. An understanding of concepts espoused by community psychologists such as empowering settings (Maton & Salem, 1995) and enhancing a sense of community also can make a critical difference (Rappaport, 1995; Trickett, Watts, & Birman, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995).

Building on what is known about organizational change, our Center staff for many years has been working on a change model for use in establishing, sustaining, and scaling-up school and community reforms. In this context, we have developed a position called an Organization Facilitator to aid with major restructuring (Adelman, 1993; Adelman & Taylor 1997; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 1999a; 1999b; Taylor & Adelman 1999). This specially trained change agent embodies the necessary expertise to help school sites and complexes implement and institutionalize substantively new approaches.
Organizational facilitators are one of several temporary mechanisms created to facilitate and guide systemic change. Once systemic changes have been accomplished effectively, all temporary mechanisms are phased out -- with any essential new roles and functions assimilated into regular structural mechanisms. To illustrate the infrastructure context in which an Organizational Facilitator works, it helps to think in terms of four key temporary mechanisms that we view as essential to successful systemic change. These are: (1) a site-based steering mechanism to guide and support replication, (2) a site-based change team (consisting of key site-stakeholders) that has responsibility for coalition building, implementing the strategic plan, and maintaining daily oversight (including problem solving, conflict resolution, and so forth), (3) a change agent (e.g., organization facilitator) who works with the change team and has full-time responsibility for the daily tasks involved in creating readiness and the initial implementation of desired changes, and (4) mentors and coaches who model and teach specific elements of new approaches.

**Steering.** When it comes to schools, systemic change requires shifts in policy and practice at several levels (e.g., a school, a "family" of schools, a school district). Each jurisdictional level needs to be involved in one or more steering mechanisms. A steering mechanism can be a designated individual or a small committee or team. The functions of such mechanisms include oversight, guidance, and support of the change process to ensure success. If a decision is made to have separate steering mechanisms at different jurisdictional levels, an interactive interface is needed between them. And, of course, a regular, interactive interface is essential between steering and organizational governance mechanisms. The steering mechanism is the guardian of the "big picture" vision.

**Change Agent and Change Team.** During replication, tasks and concerns must be addressed expeditiously. To this end, a full time agent for change plays a critical role. In our work with schools, we use an Organizational Facilitator as the change agent. One of this facilitator's first functions is to help form and train an on-site change team. Such a team (which includes various work groups) consists of personnel representing specific programs, administrators, union chapter chairs, and staff skilled in facilitating problem solving and mediating conflicts. This composition provides a blending of outside and internal agents for change who are responsible and able to address daily concerns.

With the change agent initially taking the lead, members of the change team (and its work groups) are catalysts and managers of change. As such, they must ensure the "big picture" is implemented in ways that are true to the vision and compatible with the local culture. Team members help develop linkages among resources, facilitate redesign of regular structural mechanisms, and establish other temporary mechanisms. They also are problem solvers -- not only responding as problems arise but taking a proactive stance by designing strategies to counter anticipated barriers to change, such as negative reactions and dynamics, common factors interfering with working relationships, and system deficiencies. They do all this in ways that enhance empowerment, a sense of community, and general readiness and commitment to new approaches. After the initial implementation stage, they focus on ensuring that
institutionalized mechanisms take on functions essential to maintenance and renewal. All this requires team members who are committed each day to ensuring effective replication and who have enough time and ability to attend to details.

- **Mentors and Coaches.** During initial implementation, the need for mentors and coaches is acute. Inevitably new ideas, roles, and functions require a variety of stakeholder development activities, including demonstrations of new infrastructure mechanisms and program elements. An Organization Facilitator is among the first providing mentorship. The change team must also identify mentors indigenous to a particular site and others in the system who have relevant expertise. To expand the local pool, other stakeholders can usually be identified and recruited as volunteers to offer peer support. A regularly accessible cadre of mentors and coaches is an indispensable resource in responding to stakeholders' daily calls for help. (Ultimately, every stakeholder is a potential mentor or coach for somebody.) In most cases, the pool will need to be augmented periodically with specially contracted coaches.

With the above as context, we turn to a more detailed look at an Organization Facilitator as an agent for school change. As suggested above, such an individual might be used as a change agent for one school or a group of schools. A cadre of such professionals might be used to facilitate change across an entire district. The focus might be on changes in a few key aspects or full-scale restructuring.

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

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

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

As can be seen in the Exhibit on the following page, the main work revolves around planning and facilitating:

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

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

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

- formative evaluation and rapid problem solving

- ongoing support
Exhibit

General Domains and Examples of Task Activity for an Organization Facilitator

1. Infrastructure tasks

(a) Works with governing agents to further clarify and negotiate agreements about
   • policy changes
   • participating personnel (including administrators authorized to take the lead for the systemic changes)
   • time, space, and budget commitments

(b) Identifies 1-2 staff (e.g., administrator and a line staff person) who agree to lead the change team/s)

(c) Helps leaders to identify members for the Change and Program Team(s) and prepare the members to carry out functions

2. Stakeholder development

(a) Provides general orientations for governing agents

(b) Provides leadership coaching for site leaders responsible for systemic change

(c) Coaches team members (about purposes, processes)

Examples: At a team's first meeting, the Organization Facilitator offers to provide a brief orientation presentation (including handouts) and any immediate coaching and specific task assistance that team facilitators or members may need. During the next few meetings, coaches might help with mapping and analyzing resources. They might also help teams establish processes for daily interaction and periodic meetings.

(d) Works with leaders to ensure presentations and written information about infrastructure and activity changes are provided to the entire staff and other stakeholders

3. Communication (visibility), coordination, and integration

(a) Determines if info on new directions (including leadership and team functions and membership) has been written-up and circulated. If not, Facilitator determines why and helps address systemic breakdowns; if necessary, effective processes are modeled.

(b) Determines if leaders and team members are effectively handling priority tasks. If not, the Facilitator determines why and helps address systemic breakdowns; if necessary, effective processes are modeled.

(cont.)
Exhibit (cont.)

General Domains and Examples of Task Activity for an Organization Facilitator

(c) Determines if change and program teams have done the following (and if not, takes appropriate steps)
- mapped out current activity and resources
- analyzed activity and resources to determine
  > how well they are meeting desired functions and how well coordinated/integrated they are (with special emphasis on maximizing cost-effectiveness and minimizing redundancy)
  > what needs to be improved (or eliminated)
  > what is missing, its level of priority, and how and when to develop it
- written-up and circulated information about all resources and plans for change

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

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

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

4. Formative Evaluation and rapid problem solving

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

(b) Checks regularly to be certain there is rapid problem solving. If not, helps address systemic breakdowns; if necessary, models processes.

5. Ongoing Support

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

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

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

(d) Helps participants identify sources for continuing development/education
For systemic changes across a school district, a cadre of Organization Facilitators provide a change agent mechanism that seems essential to system-wide adoption/adaptation of major reforms. They are in a unique position to create the trust, knowledge, skills, and the attitudes essential for the kind of working relationships required for effective systemic change. Through the training they provide, each stakeholder has the opportunity to clarify roles, activities, strengths, and accomplishments, and learn how to link with each other.

Two Districts Use of Organizational Facilitators to Restructure Education Support Programs

Los Angeles Unified School District

Our work in developing the concept of an Organization facilitator began around 1990 as part of efforts to develop school-based approaches to provide early assistance for students and their families in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). That work was concerned with the reality that many students experience significant factors (many of which are external barriers) that interfere with their doing well at school. Consequently, before a large proportion of students in many schools can benefit significantly from instruction, schools must enable learning by attending to as many of these barriers as is feasible. This means making fundamental changes in education support activity and finding ways to integrate these enabling activities with community resources. This requires moving away from fragmented and categorical services and toward comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches. In effect, it involves establishing an "enabling component" as a primary and essential part of every school reform and restructuring effort (see Appendix A).

Staff at all levels require assistance in establishing and maintaining an appropriate infrastructure for a component to address barriers to learning. Specially trained Organization Facilitators represent a mechanism that embodies the necessary expertise to help (a) develop essential school-based leadership, (b) establish program and coordinating teams and councils, and (c) clarify how to link up with community resources.

As initially piloted, the work of the Organization Facilitators involved helping schools and clusters of schools phase in an enabling component. In general, the Facilitator’s first step was to help policy makers understand the need to restructure the school's support programs and services. This led to adoption of the enabling component concept by the site's governance body and to an agreement about the role the Organization Facilitator would play in helping staff implement reforms.

1 As states and districts have adapted versions of an Enabling Component, they have adopted different names for it. For example, it is sometimes called a Learning Supports Component or a Supportive Learning Environment Component; the State of Hawaii calls it a Comprehensive Student Support System (CSSS).
The process of restructuring began with assignment of an assistant principal to function as the component's administrative leader and establishment of a coordinating team consisting of the school's pupil service personnel, the administrative leader, the staff lead, and several teachers. As a focal point for restructuring, the Organization Facilitator helped the team map and analyze all school resources being used to address barriers to student learning. The six interrelated areas described in Appendix A provided a template to organize mapping and analyses. A set of self-study surveys have been designed as resource aids for this activity. (These surveys are available from the Center and can be downloaded from the Center's website at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu).

By clustering existing activities into the six areas, the team was able to consider a new programmatic vision for the school's efforts to address barriers to learning and enhance healthy development. In essence, they now had a "curriculum." By analyzing activities from this perspective, the team identified essential activities, major programmatic gaps, redundant efforts, and several long-standing activities that were having little effect. Decisions were made to eliminate redundant and ineffective activity and redeploy the resources to strengthen essential programs and begin to fill gaps.

As one facet of the school's community outreach, the Organization Facilitator has trained staff how to bring community resources to the site in ways that do not displace essential school resources. This is accomplished by integrating the community as part of the enabling component -- linked each available community resource to one or more of the six areas either to fill a gap or enhance the school staffs' efforts by becoming part of an ongoing program. To ensure coordination and integration, all community agencies working at the site are asked to have a representative participate on the Resource Coordinating Team.

Appendix B describes how the Organization Facilitator work was designed to phase-in the reforms (including a benchmark checklist). Also in Appendix B are descriptions of resource coordinating teams and multi-locality councils.

By the mid 1990's, the District was further pioneering the use of Organization Facilitators as it undertook a system-wide restructuring of its education support programs and services based in considerable part on the frameworks described in Appendix A. The Exhibit on the next page represents our efforts to categorize and outline the major tasks involved in such an initiative.

The work in LAUSD suggested that one such professional can rotate within a group of schools to phase-in an appropriate infrastructure over a period of a year. Then, that facilitator can move on to another group of schools. After moving on, the facilitator can return periodically to assist with maintenance, share new ideas for program development, help with such development, and contribute to related inservice. Work to date suggests that a relatively small cadre of Organization Facilitators can phase-in desired mechanisms throughout a relatively large district over a period of several years. In general, evaluations have found that pupil service personnel who are redeployed and trained for these positions adapt quite easily to the functions and most report high levels of job satisfaction (LAUSD Research and Evaluation Unit, 1996).
Exhibit

**Key Steps in Restructuring Education Support Programs/Services to Establish a Comprehensive, Multifaceted Component for Addressing Barriers to Student Learning**

At any site, it is essential that the principal, staff, and community understand and commit to restructuring plans; commitment must be reflected in school decisions, use of resources, and involvement of all stakeholders.

**Orientation: Creating Readiness**

1) Build interest and consensus for enhancing efforts to address barriers to learning

2) Introduce basic ideas to relevant stakeholders within the school and community

3) Establish a school-wide commitment and framework -- the leadership group at a site should make a commitment that adopts a comprehensive, integrated approach to enabling learning as a primary and essential component of their work

4) Identify a site leader for the component (equivalent to the leader for the Instructional Component) to ensure policy commitments are carried out

**Getting Going: Start-up, Phase-in, Building Capacity, & Developing a Plan of Action**

5) Establish a steering group and other temporary mechanisms to guide component start-up and provide essential leadership training

6) Formulate specific start-up and phase-in plans

7) Ensure there is a team, such as a Resource Coordinating Team, at each school and train members to perform resource-oriented functions (e.g., mapping, analysis, coordinating, planning); establish a multi-locality council (e.g., a Resource Coordinating Council) for each family of schools as soon as feasible

8) Organize areas of enabling activity and establish a cross disciplinary infrastructure

9) Work to enhance component visibility, communication, sharing, and problem solving

10) Attempt to fill program/service gaps through outreach designed to establish formal collaborative linkages with district and community resources

11) Integrate this activity into the site’s quality school improvement planning/evaluation

**Sustaining and Evolving: Increasing Outcome Efficacy and Creative Renewal**

12) Plan for maintenance

13) Develop strategies for maintaining momentum and progress

14) Generate renewal
Detroit Public Schools

In the late 1990's, the Detroit Public Schools adopted the enabling component and the concept of a Resource Coordinating Team as their Framework for Change. They used versions of organization facilitators to establish the systemic changes.

Their stated rationale for their reforms are as follows:

Many of the contributing factors that limit a child's academic achievement are outside of the classroom. Family instability, health and nutritional problems, emotional well-being, and numerous other conditions play a role in determining whether or not a child is equipped to learn. For true reform standards to take place in urban schools, educators must tackle more than curriculum and testing issues. They must take a holistic approach that attempts to remove all barriers to student success. Such an approach requires that educators possess a compassionate concern for their students total welfare.

They viewed the concept of a Resource Coordinating Team “as an innovative support system to address the hurdles that can negatively impact a child's development.” What follows here is their description of the teams they are developing.

What is the Learning Supports Leadership Team?

It is an integrated learner support system that acts as a problem-solving team to promote the healthy development of the whole child.

The Goal of the Such a Team is to Strengthen a School’s Effectiveness by:

! Addressing the quality of life issues that impact a child's emotional, social and intellectual development from both a prevention and intervention perspective.

! Linking with community agencies that can provide needed services for children and their families.

! Structuring individual student and school-based intervention plans that respond to both student and school community needs supporting systems and strategies which enable teachers to teach more effectively and students to reach rigorous academic support standards.

The leadership team takes a village approach to educating our children by invoking the participation of various members of the school staff and community to ensure that each child receives the assistance he or she needs to reach their greatest potential.
Leadership Team Partners

- Principals
- Teachers
- Special Education Teachers / Teacher Consultants
- Teachers of the Speech and Language Impaired (TSLI)
- School Nurses and Health Professionals
- School Social Workers
- Psychologists
- Guidance Counselors
- Community Agency Representatives
- Bilingual Specialists
- Hearing and Vision Consultants
- Curriculum Specialists
- Attendance Agents

These professionals work as a team to support student achievement and total school development through the following six support areas:

**Crisis Prevention and Intervention**

RCTs facilitate immediate emergency care when there is a crisis as well as the appropriate follow-up care to students, families and community members.

**Home Involvement in Schooling**

RCTs help parents become effective at-home teachers, and assist them in supporting their child's overall educational experience.

**Student and Family Assistance**

Resource Coordinating Teams (RCTs) provide consultation services to families and students from within the school system or through community agencies.

**Support for Transitions**

RCTs play a key role in ensuring that stability and security exist during the points of transition for both the student and the family by creating a nonthreatening, welcoming school environment.

**Community Outreach**

RCTs aggressively seek partnerships with community and service organizations, public and private agencies, business and professional organizations, the faith community, universities and volunteers that support student growth and school development.

**Classroom Focused Enabling**

Programs to enhance classroom based efforts which address barriers to learning.
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