Addressing Barriers
New ways to think . . .
to Learning
Better ways to link

Easing the Impact of Student Mobility: Welcoming & Social Support

> Youngsters entering a new school and neighborhood are confronted with multiple transition challenges. The challenges are compounded when the transition also involves recent arrival to a new country and culture. In the short run, failure to cope effectively with these challenges can result in major learning and behavior problems; in the long run, the psychological and social impacts may be devastating.
>
> Cárdenas, Taylor, Adelman, 1993

From the perspective of addressing barriers to learning, welcoming and social support are essential facets of every school's transition programs. Estimates suggest 20-25% of students change schools each year. The figures are greater in school districts with large immigrant populations. While some make the transition easily, many find themselves alienated or "out-of-touch" in new surroundings. Youngsters entering a new school and neighborhood are confronted with multiple transition challenges. The challenges are compounded when the transition also involves recent arrival in a new country and culture.

Youngsters vary in capability and motivation with respect to dealing with psychological transition into new settings. Students entering late in a school year often find it especially hard to connect and adjust. Making friends means finding ways to be accepted into a complex social milieu. School-

Contents

wide strategies to ensure school adjustment of newly entering students and their families can reduce adjustment problems, ease bicultural development, enhance student performance, and establish a psychological sense of community throughout the school.

Welcoming and Social Support as Indicators of School Reform

Welcoming new students and their families is part of the broader reform goal of creating schools where staff, students and families interact positively and identify with the school and its goals. Programs and related mechanisms and processes are needed to

C foster smooth transitions and positive social interactions;
C facilitate social support;
C provide opportunities for ready access to information and for learning how to function effectively in the school culture;
C encourage involvement in decision-making.

How well a school welcomes and involves new students and families are basic signs of program quality and staff attitudes. As such, these indicators probably are good predictors of a school's overall impact.

Of course, for efforts to make welcoming and social support at schools more than another desired but unachieved set of reform aims, policy makers at all levels must take action. It is patently unfair to hold specific schools accountable for yet another major systemic change if they are not given the backing necessary to accomplish it. In an era when new sources of funding are unlikely, it is clear that such programs must be assigned a high priority, and funds must be *reallocated* in keeping with the level of priority. To do less is to guarantee the status quo.

Phases of Intervention

Interventions for welcoming and involving new students and families are as complex as any other psychological and educational intervention. This is especially so since the focus must not only be on those entering at the beginning of a term but on all who enter throughout the year. Clearly, the activity requires considerable time, space, materials, and competence. Specific strategies evolve over three overlapping phases:

(1) The first phase is broadly focused -- using general procedures to welcome and facilitate adjustment and participation of all who are ready, willing, and able.

(2) Some people need just a bit more personalized assistance. Such assistance may include personal invitations, ongoing support for interacting with others and becoming involved in activities, aid in overcoming minor barriers to successful adjustment, a few more options to enable effective functioning and make participation more attractive, and so forth.

(3) More is needed for those who have not made an effective adjustment or who remain uninvolved (e.g., due to major barriers, an intense lack of interest, or negative attitudes). This phase requires continued use of personalized contacts, as well as addition of cost intensive outreach procedures as feasible.

In pursuing each phase, a major concern is overcoming barriers that make it hard for newcomers to function in the new community and school. Research points to a variety of familial, cultural, job, social class, communication, and school personnel attitude factors that hinder transitions. Barriers can be categorized as *institutional*, *personal*, or *impersonal*. Each type includes negative attitudes, lack of mechanisms and skills, or practical deterrents. For instance, *institutional* barriers encompass a lack of policy commitment to welcoming, inadequate resources (money, space, time), lack of interest or hostile attitudes on the part of staff, administration, and community, and failure to establish and maintain necessary mechanisms and skills to ensure program success.

Key Intervention Tasks

In pursuing each intervention phase, there are four major intervention tasks:

1. Establishing a mechanism for planning, implementing, and evolving programmatic activity

2. Creating welcoming and initial home involvement strategies (e.g., information and outreach to new students and families; a school-wide welcoming atmosphere; a series of specific "New Student/New Parent Orientation" processes)

3. Providing social supports and facilitating involvement (e.g., peer buddies; personal invitations to join relevant ongoing activities)

4. Maintaining support and involvement--including provision of special help for an extended period of time if necessary

Task 1: A Program Mechanism

Like any other progam, efforts to welcome and involve new students and families require institutional commitment, organization, and ongoing involvement. That is, the program must be school-owned, and there must be a mechanism dedicated to effective program planning, implementation, and long-term evolution.

One useful mechanism is a *Welcoming Steering Committee*. Such a committee is designed to (a) adopt new strategies that fit in with what a school already is doing and (b) provide leadership for evolving and maintaining a welcoming program. The group usually consists of a school administrator (e.g., principal or AP), a support service person (e.g., a dropout counselor, Title I coordinator, school psychologist), one or more interested teachers, the staff member who coordinates volunteers, an office staff representative, and hopefully a few dedicated parents.

Some First Activities for the Committee

I. Define group's role and identify additional members

II. Clarify activities already in place for student and family welcoming and social support

III.
Find out about welcoming and social support activities carried out at other schools

IV. Plan ways to enhance welcoming/social support

A Increase visibility of the activities (e.g., make presentations to the rest of the staff, put up welcoming posters, establish locations for new students and families and staff to access welcoming and social support materials)

B Do a needs assessment "walk through" (What do new students and families experience?)

1. Are there appropriate Front Office welcoming messages and procedures? (e.g., Are more materials needed? other languages needed to communicate with families?)

2. Are there tour procedures for new families?

3. Are there procedures to welcome a student into the classroom and introduce parents to teacher? (e.g., Are there peer greeters and buddies? Materials to welcome newcomers to the class?)

V. Next Steps (plan specific ideas to be pursued over the next few months)

Center News

It looks as if access to the Internet is expanding quickly, so lets start with our Website.

http://www.lifesci.ucla.edu/psych/mh/

New on Our Website

As quickly as feasible, we are putting Center developed materials on the web. Just added: the second unit of a continuing education module on: *Addressing Barriers to Learning: New Directions for Mental Health in Schools*. This unit is entitled: "Mental Health Services & Instruction: What a School Can Do." Look for the third unit soon.

Also on-line is: *Working Together: From School-Based Collaborative Teams to School-Community-Higher Education Connections.* This Introductory Packet discusses (a) processes and problems related to working together at school sites and in school-based centers and (b) outlines models of collaborative school-based teams and inter-professional education programs.

As a service to a public interest organization that fits into our mission, our site is hosting a website for the *School Intervention Interest Group* of the American Psychological Association's *Society for Community Research and Action* (Division 27). This group focuses on enhancing the quality of school prevention and health promotion programs.

Request from a Colleague

Joy Dryfoos (author of "Full Service Schools"among other works) **is amassing information on current evaluations of community schools.** These include schools that are (a) open after regular school hours and often into the evening, (b) involved in educational reforms, (c) provide space for health and human services, (d) integrate quality education with support services, (e) interact with parents and community.

We are interested in expanding Joy's request to include information about the results of all school-community collaborations. *If you have evaluative findings or if you can suggest who we should contact, please let us know, and we will put together a summary for Joy and highlight the information in our next ENEWS and on our website.*

New from Our Clearinghouse

The following are now available for the cost of copying and mailing:

Guiding Parents in Helping Children Learn -- a Technical Aid Packet for working with parents and other non-professionals. It contains three types of resources:

O a "booklet" written for non-professionals to help them understand what is involved in helping children learn. In some cases, this can be offered directly as material to read -- in sections or as a total package; in other cases, the material can be used as a resource and guide in preparing presentations.

O information about basic resources professionals can draw on to learn more about helping parents and other non-professionals enhance children's learning and performance.

O additional guides and basic information to share with parents as resources they can use to enhance a child's learning and performance.

What Schools Can Do to Welcome and Meet the Needs of All Students and Families -- a guidebook that includes the following:

C Schools as Caring, Learning Environments
C Welcoming and Social Support: Toward a Sense of Community Throughout the School
C Using Volunteers to assist in Addressing School Adjustment Needs and Other Barriers to Learning
C Home Involvement in Schooling
C Connecting a Student with the Right Help
C Understanding and Responding to Learning Problems and Learning Disabilities
C Response to Students' Ongoing Psychosocial and Mental Health Needs
C Program Reporting: Getting Credit for All You Do
C Toward a Comprehensive, Integrated Enabling Component

A child's life is like a piece of paper on which every passerby leaves a mark.
Chinese proverb

Center Staff:
Howard Adelman, Co-Director
Linda Taylor, Co-Director
Perry Nelson, Coordinator
Judy Onghai, Asst. Coordinator
. . . and a host of graduate and undergraduate students

Continuing Education:
 School Nurses Move Forward
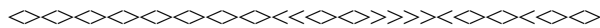 **with Mental Health in Schools**

Last year, the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) asked our Center to develop a continuing education package for school nurses related to mental health in schools. We introduced the three unit module in two workshops at the association's national conference last June. From over a hundred school nurses who participated, a small group was identified for further preparation as trainers for their colleagues. This cadre will offer workshops on mental health in school for all interested school nurses at the June 1998 NASN conference. Subsequently, they will be available for local continuing education venues.

Given the success of this venture, our Center is interested in working with other associations concerned with enhancing their membership's learning and roles related to mental health in schools.
Let us know if you want to explore possibilities.

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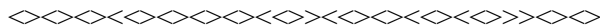
Father: *Do these low grades indicate*
           your lack of ability or your
           lack of effort?

Youngster: *I don't know and I don't care!*

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What Can You Tell us About . . .

State Legislation Related to
Mental Health Programs in Schools?

Nicole Kendell who works for the National Conference of State Legislators needs the latest information on state legislation-- passed or pending -- dealing with mental health programs in schools. In responding to her, we are preparing a fact sheet/protocol. We want to make certain it is as up-to-date as possible. Please get us any information you can. We will put whatever we compile on our website and in our next newsletter.

Mental Health Activity in School-Based Health Centers?

Among the many comments and queries we get, a common request is for more information on how School-Based Health Center's are addressing mental health and psychosocial problems. Specific questions are: How non-mental health staff are being trained to address such problems? How centers in rural areas are getting mental health consultation? How to stretch limited center resources to address more students with mental health and psychosocial problems? Share your experiences and thoughts on these matters, and we'll circulate them.

Center For Mental Health In Schools at UCLA

For those of you who have not yet visited our website, please take a look:
          http://www.lifesci.ucla.edu/psych/mh/

Also, if you aren't receiving our electronic newsletter, add yourself to the list --
send an email request to:
          maiser@bulletin.psych.ucla.edu

leave subject line blank, and in the body of the message
          type: **subscribe mentalhealth**

To contribute to ENEWS or the website, you can
 send us an Email at: **smhp@ucla.edu**

 or send us a FAX (310) 206-8716
 or phone (310) 825-3634
 or write c/o the return address on this newsletter.

Don't hesitate to request technical assistance.
          And please tell others about us.

Schools could do more than perhaps any other single institution in society to help young people and the adults they will become, to live healthier, longer, more satisfying, and more productive lives.
Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development

Do you Know About . . .?

Cost-Outcome Methods for Mental Health
     By W.A. Hargreaves, M. Shumway,
     T. Hu & B. Cuffel (1998)
               Academic Press

This is a basic text that covers a nice range of topics on this fundamental evaluation concern.

     * Cost-Outcome Research in Mental Health
     * Special Design in Cost-Outcome Research
     * Concepts of Economic Cost
     * Measuring Utilization
     * Estimating Economic Cost
     * Measuring Service Practice
     * Measuring Mental Health Outcomes
     * Aggregating Outcome Measures
     * Analyzing Cost-Effectiveness
     * Using Cost-Outcome Data to Guide
        Policy and Practice

Task 2: Creating Welcoming and Initial Home Involvement Strategies

It is not uncommon for students and parents to feel unwelcome at school. The problem may begin with their first contacts. Efforts to enhance welcoming and facilitate involvement must counter factors that make the setting uninviting and develop ways to make it attractive. This can be viewed as the welcoming or invitation problem.

From a psychological perspective, welcoming is enmeshed with attitudes school staff, students, and parents hold about involving new students and families. Welcoming is facilitated when attitudes are positive. And, positive attitudes seem most likely when those concerned perceive personal benefits as outweighing potential costs (e.g., psychological and tangible).

A prime focus in addressing welcoming is on ensuring that most communications and interactions between the school and students and families convey a welcoming tone. This is conveyed through formal communications to students and families, procedures for reaching out to individuals, and informal interactions.

An early emphasis in addressing the welcoming problem should be on establishing formal processes that:

   (1)   convey a general sense of welcome to all

   (2)   extend a personalized invitation to those who appear to need something more.

Communications and invitations to students and their families can be done in two forms:

   (1)   general communications (e.g., oral and written communications when a new student registers, classroom announcements, mass distribution of flyers, newsletters)

   (2)   special, personalized contacts (e.g., personal conferences and notes from the teacher).

For those who are not responsive to general invitations, the next logical step is to extend special invitations and increase personalized contact. Special invitations are directed at designated individuals and are intended to overcome personal attitudinal barriers and can be used to elicit information about other persisting barriers.

Task 3: Providing Social Supports and Facilitating Involvement

Social supports and specific processes to facilitate involvement are necessary to:
   (a)   address barriers
   (b)   sanction participation of new students/families in any option and to the degree each finds feasible (e.g., initially legitimizing minimal involvement and frequent changes in area of involvement)

   (c)   account for cultural and individual diversity
   (d)   enable those with minimal skills to participate
   (e)   provide social and academic supports to improve participation skills.

In all these facilitative efforts, established peers (students and parents) can play a major role as peer welcomers and mentors.

If a new student or family is extremely negative, exceptional efforts may be required. In cases where the negative attitude stems from skill deficits (e.g., doesn't speak English, lacks social or functional skills), providing special assistance with skills is a logical and relatively direct approach. However, all such interventions must be pursued in ways that minimize stigma and maximize positive attitudes.

Some reluctant new arrivals may be reached, initially, by offering them an activity designed to give them additional personal support. For example, newcomers can be offered a mutual interest group composed of others with the same cultural background or a mutual support group (e.g., a bicultural transition group for students or parents -- Cárdenas, Taylor, & Adelman, 1993; a parent self-help group -- Simoni & Adelman, 1990). Parent groups might even meet away from the school at a time when working parents can participate. (The school's role would be to help initiate the groups and provide consultation as needed.) Relatedly, it is important to provide regular opportunities for students, families, and staff to share their heritage and interests and celebrate the cultural and individual diversity of the school community.

Task 4: Maintaining Involvement

As difficult as it is to involve some newcomers initially, maintaining their involvement may be even a more difficult matter. Maintaining involvement can be seen as a problem of:

   (a)   providing continuous support for learning, growth, and success (including feedback about how involvement is personally beneficial)

   (b)   minimizing feelings of incompetence and being blamed, censured, or coerced.

A critical element in establishing a positive sense of community at a school and of facilitating students school adjustment and performance is involvement of families in schooling. This is why parent involvement in schools is a prominent item on the education reform agenda. It is, of course, not a new concern. As Davies (1987) reminds us, the "questions and conflict about parent and community relationships to schools began in this country when schools began" (p. 147). Reviews of the literature on parents and schooling indicates wide endorsement of parent involvement.

As Epstein (1987) notes,

> the recent acknowledgments of the importance of parent involvement are built on research findings accumulated over two decades that show that children have an advantage in school when their parents encourage and support their school activities. . . . The evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home and participation in schools and classrooms affect children's achievements, attitudes, and aspirations, even after student ability and family socio-economic status are taken into account . . . .

With respect to students with school problems, parent involvement has been mostly discussed in legal terms (e.g., participation in the IEP process). There has been little systematic attention paid to the value of and ways to involve the *home* in the efforts to improve student achievement. (The term, parent involvement, and even family involvement is too limiting. Given extended families, the variety of child caretakers, and the influence of older siblings, the concern would seem minimally one of involving the *home.)*

To involve the home, a staff must reach out to parents and others in the home and encourage them to drop in, be volunteers, go on field trips, participate in creating a community newsletter, organize social events, plan and attend learning workshops, meet with the teacher to learn more about their child's curriculum and interests, and establish family social networks. It is imperative that the only contact not be when they are called in to discuss their child's learning and/or behavior problems. When those in the home feel unwelcome or "called on the carpet," they cannot be expected to view the school as an inviting setting.

Steps in Welcoming: Key Elements and Activities

In pursuing strategies for enhancing welcoming and home involvement a first concern is to ensure a positive welcome at the various initial encounters school staff have with a new student and family.

Each point of contact represents an opportunity and a challenge with respect to welcoming new students and families, linking them with social supports, assisting them to make a successful transition, and identifying those who do not so that individual school adjustment needs can be addressed.

On the following page is a Table outlining steps that can be taken at various points of contact.

Examples of general welcoming strategies are outlined on pages 8 & 9 in the *Ideas into Practice* column. For more details and resources, the Center has an Introductory Packet entitled *Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families*. Also, see p. 3 for a description of a new guidebook we have developed which covers this topic and much more.

Cárdenas, J., Taylor, L., & Adelman, H. S. (1993). Transition support for immigrant students. *J. of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 21*, 203-210.

Davies, D. (1987). Parent involvement in the public schools: Opportunities for administrators. *Education and Urban Society, 19*, 147-163.

Epstein, J. L. (1987). Parent involvement: What research says to administrators. *Education and Urban Society, 19*, 119-136.

Simoni, J., & Adelman, H. S. (1993). School-based mutual support groups for low income parents. *The Urban Review, 25*, 335-350.

Transition Programs to Get Newly Arrived Immigrants Off to a Good Start

From a mental health perspective, good transition programs fall into the category of primary prevention. Two good examples are (1) assessment and guidance programs and (2) newcomer schools.

(1) *Assessment and Guidance Programs* can be established by a school district as first contact points to receive and provide for special needs of newly arrived immigrant students and their families. Such centers are especially invaluable for those whose primary language is not English. The program can assist with enrollment, provide immunizations, assess health needs and academic and language proficiency, identify eligibility for special programs, and provide initial orientations to the district and its programs.

(2) *Newcomer Schools* add to the curriculum an orientation to American schooling and culture. The first objectives are to provide newcomers with a warm welcome, social supports, and familiarity with their new physical and social environments. There is a strong emphasis on building positive attitudes toward the new culture while maintaining their pride in their own culture. Facilitating acculturation in a comfortable manner is seen as essential to subsequent academic success. So is providing opportunities to apply what they are learning in a low-anxiety setting.

Table 1. Outline of Welcoming Steps and Activities

1. Family Comes to Register

Staff/volunteer designated to welcome and provide information to all family members

Provides information (in primary languages) about:
  (a) needed documents (e.g., Information card)
  (b) how to get help related to getting documents
  (c) directions for newcomers
  (d) making a registration appointment

2. Registration Appointment

Ensure that the registrar has time to welcome, register, and begin orientation

Orientation staff and peers take over and
  >Do a *Welcome Interview* that can clarify newcomer interests and other information they desire
  >Provide information about:
  (a) How the school runs each day
  (b) Special activities for parents and students
  (c) Community services they may find helpful
  (d) Parents who are ready to help them join in
  (e) Students ready to meet with new students to help them join in
  (f) How parents can help their child learn and do well at school
  > Conduct a tour
  > Make initial introductions to teacher/principal/others

Based primarily on teacher preference (but also taking into consideration parent and student interests), student might stay for rest of school day or start the next day.

3a. Student Begins Transition-in Phase

Teacher introduces student to classmates and program

Peer "buddy" is identified (to work with in class, go to recess and lunch with -- at least for first 5 days)

Teacher or peer buddy gives student welcoming "gift" (e.g., notebook with school name, pencils); teacher gives peer buddy "thank you gift" (e.g. notebook with school name, certificate, etc)

Designated students introduce and invite new student to out of class school activities

3b. Parent Begins Transition-in Phase

Designated staff or volunteer (e.g., a parent) either meets with parents on registration day or contacts parent during next few days to discuss activities in which they might be interested

Designated parent invites and introduces new parent to an activity in which the new parent has expressed interest or may find useful

At first meeting attended, new parent is given a welcoming "gift" (e.g., calendar with school name; coupons donated by neighborhood merchants)

4a. Student Becomes Involved in School Activities

Over first 3 weeks staff monitors student's involvement and acceptance if necessary, designated students are asked to make additional efforts to help the student enter in and feel accepted by peers.

4b. Parent Becomes Involved in School Activities

Over the first 1-2 months, staff monitors involvement and acceptance.

If necessary, designated parents are asked to make additional efforts to help the parents enter in and feel accepted

5. Assessment at End of Transition Period

Three weeks after the student enrolls, interview:

(a) the teacher to determine if the student has made a good or poor adjustment to the school (Poor school adjusters are provided with additional support in the form of volunteer help, consultation for teacher to analyze the problem and explore options, etc.)

(b) the student to determine his or her perception of how well the transition-in has gone and to offer encouragement and resources if needed

(c) the parents to check their perception of how well the transition-in has gone for the student and for themselves and to offer encouragement and resources if needed

6. Follow-up Intervention

A. *Problem analysis*: This step involves going back to the person or persons who indicated dissatisfaction and asking for more specifics (e.g., what the specific problem is and what the person(s) think needs to be changed). It may also be appropriate and necessary to check with others (e.g., teacher, parent, student).

B. *Intervention plan*: Based on the information gathered, plans can be made about what to do and who will do it. What to do may range from connecting the student/family with others for social support to helping to identify specific activities and ways to facilitate student/family involvement. Who will do it may be project staff, a volunteer, a teacher, an outreach coordinator, etc.

C. *Intervention written summary*: Once such an intervention is carried out the Extended Welcoming -- Summary of Intervention form can be filled out and given to the a case manager or other designated person who monitors follow-through related to interventions.

D. *Extended welcoming follow-up interview*: A week after the extended intervention is completed, another (modified) follow-up interview should be carried out respectively, with the student, parent, and teacher. If a problem remains, additional intervention is in order -- *if feasible*.

Ideas into Practice
Welcoming Strategies for Newly Arrived Students & Their Families

Starting a new school can be scary. Those concerned with mental health in schools can play important prevention and therapeutic roles by helping a school establish a welcoming program and ways to provide ongoing social support.

Special attention must be directed at providing Office Staff with training and resources so they can create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere to everyone who enters the school. And, of course, there must be workshops and follow-up assistance for teachers to help them establish welcoming procedures and materials.

Start simple. For example, assist teachers in establishing a few basic ways to help new students feel welcome and part of things, such as

O   giving the student a *Welcome Folder*

A folder with the student's name, containing welcoming materials and information, such as a welcome booklet and information about fun activities at the school.

O   assigning a *Peer Buddy*

Train students to be a special friend
>to show the new student around
>to sit next to the new student
>to take the new student to recess and
    lunch to meet schoolmates

Some parents are not sure how to interact with the school. Two ways to help new parents feel welcome and a part of things are to establish processes whereby teachers

O   invite parents to a *Welcoming Conference*

This is meant as a chance for parents to get to know the teacher and school and for the teacher to facilitate positive connections between parent and school such as helping the parents connect with a school activity in which they seem interested. The emphasis is on *Welcoming* -- thus, any written material given out at this time specifically states WELCOME and is limited to simple orientation information. To the degree feasible, such material is made available in the various languages of those likely to enroll at the school.

O   connect parents with a *Parent Peer Buddy*

Identify some parents who are willing to be a special friend to introduce the new parent around, to contact them about special activities and take them the first time, and so forth.

The following list are additional examples of prevention-oriented welcoming and social support strategies for minimizing negative experiences and ensuring positive outreach.

1. FRONT DOOR: Set up a Welcoming Table (identified with a welcoming sign) at the front entrance to the school and recruit and train volunteers to meet and greet everyone who comes through the door.

2. FRONT OFFICE: Work with the Office Staff to create ways to meet and greet strangers with a smile and an inviting atmosphere. Provide them with welcoming materials and information sheets regarding registration steps (with appropriate translations). Encourage the use of volunteers in the office so that there are sufficient resources to take the necessary time to greet and assist new students and families. It helps to have a designated registrar and even designated registration times.

3. WELCOMING MATERIALS: Prepare a booklet that clearly says WELCOME and provides some helpful info about who's who at the school, what types of assistance are available to new students and families, and offers tips about how the school runs. (Avoid using this as a place to lay down the rules; that can be rather an uninviting first contact.) Prepare other materials to assist students and families in making the transition and connecting with ongoing activities.

4. STUDENT GREETERS: Establish a *Student Welcoming Club* (perhaps the student council or leadership class can make this a project). These students can provide tours and some orientation (including initial introduction to key staff).

5. PARENT/VOLUNTEER GREETERS: Establish a General Welcoming Club of parents and/or volunteers who provide regular tours and orientations (including initial introduction to key staff). Develop a Welcoming Video.

6. WELCOMING BULLETIN BOARD: Dedicate a bulletin board (somewhere near the entrance to the school) that says WELCOME and includes such things as pictures of school staff, a diagram of the school and its facilities, pictures of students who entered the school during the past 1-2 weeks, information on tours and orientations, special meetings for new students, and so forth.

Some strategies (cont.)

7. CLASSROOM GREETERS: Each teacher should have several students who are willing and able to greet strangers who come to the classroom. Recent arrivals often are interested in welcoming the next set of new enrollees.

8. CLASSROOM INTRODUCTION: Each teacher should have a plan to assist new students and families in making a smooth transition into the class. This includes ways to introduce the student to classmates as soon as the student arrives. (Some teachers may want to arrange with the office specified times for bringing a new student to the class.) An introductory Welcoming Conference should be conducted with the student and family as soon as feasible. A useful Welcoming aid is to present both the student and the family member with Welcoming Folders (or some other welcoming gift such as coupons from local businesses that have adopted the school).

9. PEER BUDDIES: In addition to the classroom greeter, a teacher can have several students who are trained to be a special buddy to a new student for a couple of weeks (and hopefully thereafter). This can provide the type of social support that allows a new student to learn about the school culture and how to become involved in activities.

10. OUTREACH FROM ORGANIZED GROUPS: Establish a way for representatives of organized student and parent groups (including the PTSA) to make direct contact with new students and families to invite them to learn about activities and to assist them in joining in when they find activities that appeal to them.

11. SUPPORT GROUPS: Offer groups designed to help new students and families learn about the community and the school and to allow them to express concerns and have them addressed. Such groups also allow them to connect with each other as another form of social support.

12. ONGOING POSITIVE CONTACTS: Develop a variety of ways students and their families can feel an ongoing connection with the school and classroom (e.g., opportunities to volunteer help, positive feedback regarding participation, letters home that tell "all about what's happening").

Do You Know About . . . ?

Model Programs in Child and Family Mental Health
edited by Michael Roberts and the Task Force on Model Programs in Service Delivery (1996).
Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers

This collection of "best" practices contains descriptions of 18 programs. Four are concerned with primary and secondary prevention; nine are interventions for targeted problems; five deal with family based and coordinated family preservation services. Several are examples of prevailing approaches to placing mental health interventions into school settings.

The American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law

Among this organization's goals are 1) improvement of laws, policies, and judicial procedures affecting children; 2) research and dissemination on law, policy, and practice for children and families; 3) education and assistance of non-attorneys on child-related law and its effect on their work; 5) increase of public awareness of the law and system of justice related to children. The Center has expertise in child abuse and neglect (including sexual abuse and exploitation), child welfare and child protective service system enhancement, foster care, family preservation, termination of parental rights, child support, child fatalities, parental substance abuse, child custody and visitation, and parental kidnapping. They have an extensive list of publications on diverse topics of relevance to professionals concerned with young people's mental health and psychosocial problems.

Contact: 740 15th St., NW
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We are confronted with insurmountable opportunities.
Pogo

There is a great deal to learn from efforts to establish *Systems of Care.* Systems of Care is the concept used to guide establishment of comprehensive and coordinated services for emotionally disturbed individuals. Despite the controversy generated by data from the Ft. Bragg study of Systems of Care, the concept nicely underscores the realization that multiple programs are necessary to address certain problems and that it is essential to weave these programs together into a cohesive intervention system.

In broadening the focus to the many efforts to address barriers to and enhance healthy development and learning, Systems of Care represent one end of a continuum. Viewed through the lens of addressing barriers to learning, an essential range of interventions encompasses a comprehensive, integrated continuum of community and school programs for localities. The framework for such a continuum emerges from analyses of social, economic, political, and cultural factors associated with the problems of youth and from reviews of promising practices. It encompasses a holistic and developmental emphasis. Such an approach

requires a significant range of programs focused on individuals, families, and the contexts in which they live, work, and play. Such a continuum ranges from primary prevention and early-age intervention, through approaches for treating problems soon after onset, to treatment for severe and chronic problems.

Ultimately, all this must be viewed from a societal perspective and must include programs designed to

    C promote and maintain safety at home and at school
    C promote and maintain physical and mental health
    C provide preschool opportunities
    C address early school-adjustment difficulty
    C improve and augment ongoing social and academic supports
    C intervene prior to referral for intensive treatments,
    C provide intensive treatments.

Implied is the importance of using the least restrictive and nonintrusive forms of intervention required to address problems and accommodate diversity. With respect to concerns about integrating activity, the continuum of community and school interventions underscores that interprogram connections are essential on a daily basis and over time. That is, the continuum must include *systems* of *prevention, systems* of *early intervention* to address problems as soon after onset as feasible, and *systems of care* for those with chronic and severe problems. And each of these systems must be connected seamlessly

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Moving Beyond School-Linked Services to Interconnected and Comprehensive School-Community Approaches

As more community health and human service agencies link some of their efforts to school sites, it is evident that such linkages do not by themselves produce interconnected interventions. Part of the problem is that community agencies mainly are collocating on a school site rather than arranging to mesh with school-owned programs and services. Another part of the problem is that community agencies often are unaware of what efforts a school already has in place for addressing barriers to and promoting development and learning. As a result, all concerned are missing out on a great opportunity to improve intervention effectiveness.

> In most localities where agencies are collocating on school sites, the resources are sparse. Even when all the resources in a community are combined with all those a school has, there is nowhere near enough to do what needs to be done. And, when the resources are offered in fragmented and piecemeal ways, redundancy and waste erode what is already a weak safety net.

The new federal budget provides significant opportunities to further enhance resources for addressing barriers to and promoting development and learning at school sites. Just focusing on the U.S. Department of Education, there are more funds related to compensatory education (e.g. Title I), safe and drug free school programs (Title IV), programs for children and families with limited English proficiency (Title VII), and efforts to increase home involvement in schooling and after school programs. Moreover, Title XI continues to be a vehicle for enhancing how learning support programs are coordinated and restructured. And, of course, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act not only yielded a budget increase, but provides significant opportunities to reform and restructure programs and services. Anyone who is concerned with moving toward interconnected and comprehensive school-community approaches will want to be certain that new and existing collaboratives understand the possibilities of (a) budgetary increases and (b) federal, state, and local policy efforts to encourage consolidated planning and school-wide programming.

Interconnected systems for meeting the needs of all students.

Aims:

*To provide a CONTINUUM OF SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY
PROGRAMS & SERVICES*

*To ensure use of the LEAST INTERVENTION NEEDED*

School Resources
(facilities, stakeholders,
programs, services)

Examples:

C General health education
C Drug and alcohol education
C Support for transitions
C Conflict resolution
C Parent involvement

C Pregnancy prevention
C Violence prevention
C Dropout prevention
C Learning/behavior
   accommodations
C Work programs

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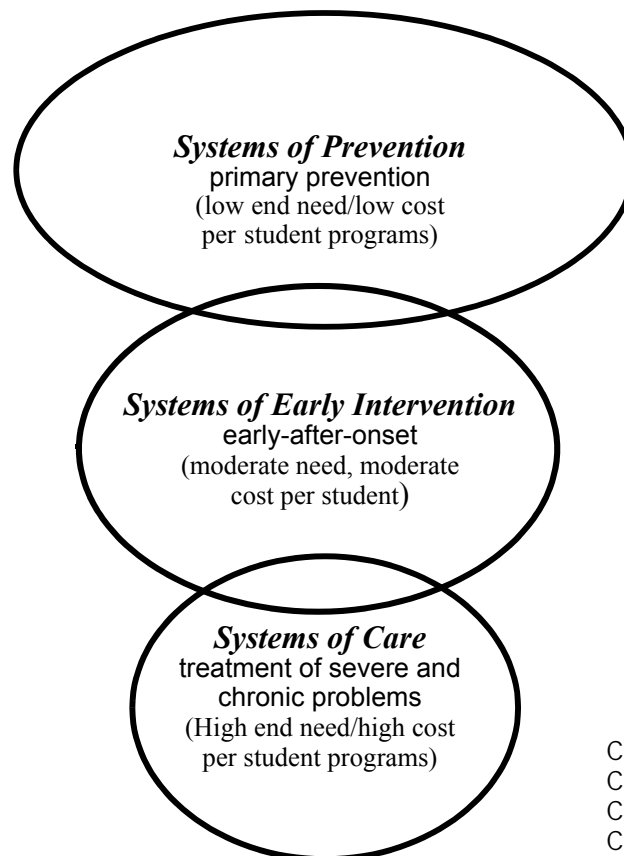
Community Resources
(facilities, stakeholders,
programs, services)

Examples:

C Public health & safety
   programs
C Prenatal care
C Immunizations
C Recreation &
   enrichment
C Child abuse education

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

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

Systems of Prevention
primary prevention
(low end need/low cost
per student programs)

Systems of Early Intervention
early-after-onset
(moderate need, moderate
cost per student)

Systems of Care
treatment of severe and
chronic problems
(High end need/high cost
per student 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 *systems* of *prevention, systems* of *early intervention*, and *systems of care*.

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

**Mental Health in Schools Should Not Be Viewed as
A Separate Agenda from a School's Instructional Mission**

In terms of policy, practice, and research, it is more fruitful to see mental health as embedded in the continuum of interventions that comprise a comprehensive, integrated component for addressing barriers and enhancing healthy development and learning. Once policy makers recognize the *essential* nature of such a component, it should be easier to weave together all efforts to address barriers and, in the process, elevate the status of programs to enhance healthy development.

With policy in place, work can begin to restructure, *transform, and enhance* school-owned programs and services and community resources, and include mechanisms to coordinate and eventually integrate school and community resources. To these ends, the focus needs to be on *all* school resources (e.g., compensatory and special education, activity supported by general funds, community resources) and *all* community *resources* (e.g., public and private agencies, families, businesses; services, programs, facilities; volunteers, professionals-in-training). The aim is to weave all these resources together into the fabric of every school and evolve a comprehensive, integrated approach that effectively addresses barriers to development, learning, and teaching. In addition, families of schools need to establish linkages in order to maximize use of limited school and community resources. Done properly, the *end product* can be cohesive and potent *school-community partnerships* that strengthen neighborhoods and communities and create caring and supportive environments that maximize learning and well-being.

*Please use the enclosed form to ask for what you need and to give us feedback.
Also, send us information, ideas, and materials for the Clearinghouse.*

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