



*A Center Guide**

Education Leaders' Guide to Transforming Student and Learning Supports.

New directions for student and learning supports are key to systemically addressing barriers to learning and teaching. The aim is to unify and then develop a comprehensive and equitable system of student/learning supports at every school.

This guide incorporates years of research and prototype development and a variety of examples from trailblazing efforts at local, district, regional, and state levels. The prototypes and examples can be adopted/adapted to design and plan ways to transform the role schools play in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

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Preface

We had just finished a presentation on new directions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, when a member of the audience confronted Linda. In an exasperated tone, he complained:

What you discussed is nothing but common sense!

He then waited for her to offer a defense. She smiled and said simply:

You're right!

It is a common sense reality that school improvement policy and practice must move forward in transforming student and learning supports. Yet, it has taken some time for major efforts to emerge. In the meantime, external and internal barriers to learning and teaching have continued to pose pervasive and entrenched challenges to educators across the country, particularly in chronically low performing schools. Failure to directly address these barriers ensures that (a) too many children and youth will continue to struggle in school, and (b) teachers will continue to divert precious instructional time to dealing with behavior and other problems that can interfere with classroom engagement for all students.

New directions for student and learning supports are key to systemically addressing barriers to learning and teaching. To this end, this guide incorporates years of research and prototype development and a variety of examples from trailblazing efforts at local, district, regional, and state levels.

Feel free to adopt and adapt the guide and to contact us for additional guidance and aids for moving forward.*

Howard & Linda

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This is the first draft of this particular document. Any and all feedback will be appreciated to make it more useful.

What's the Current Situation?

***My job is
bullying prevention!***



***I'm only concerned
about PBIS!***



My responsibility is Title II!



***I do
Dropout
prevention!***



***My work is
RtI!***



***I direct.
special
education!***

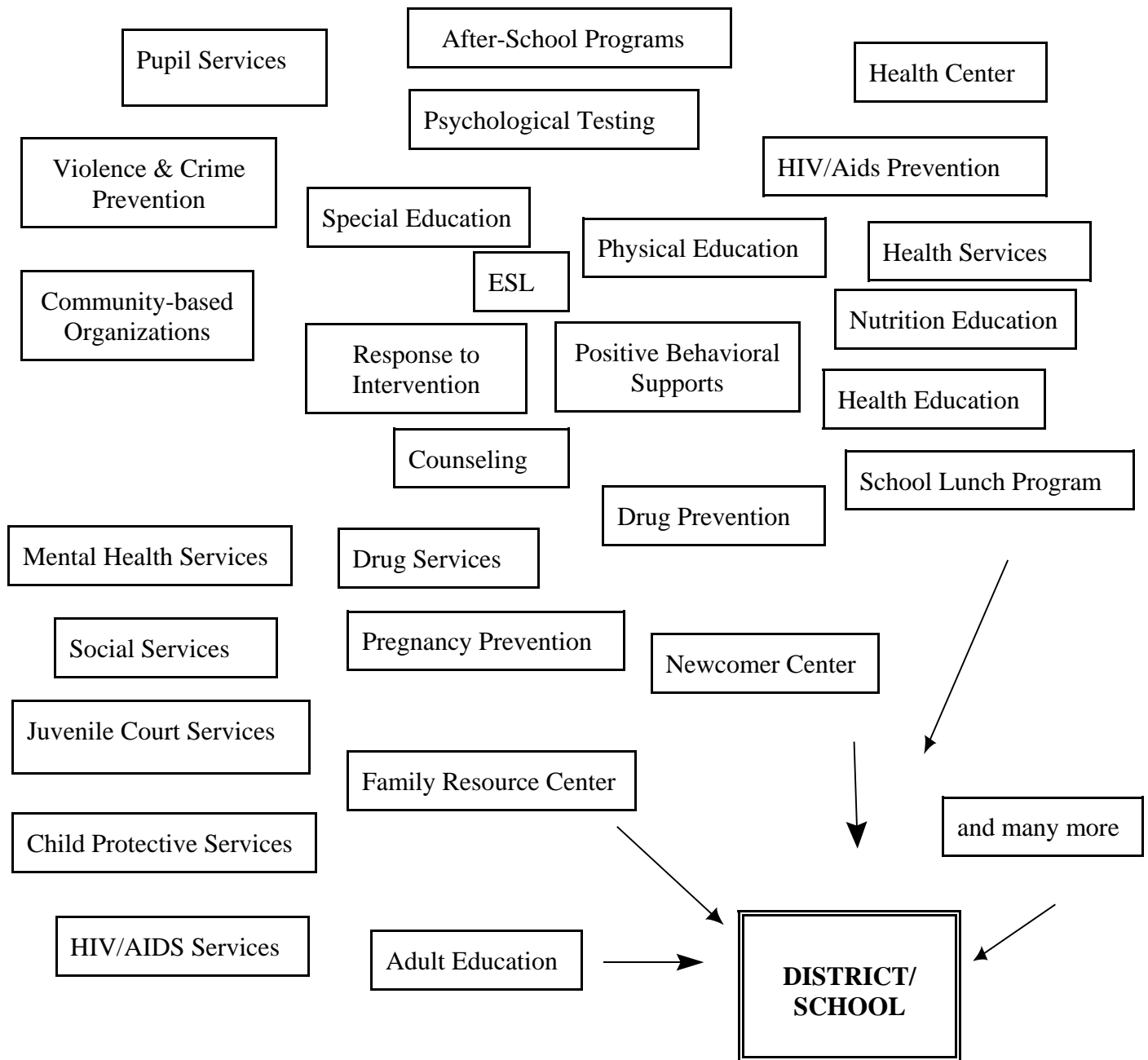


I ...



As illustrated below, mapping existing efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students yields a consistent picture of fragmented, piecemeal, and often disorganized approaches.

Exhibit 1. A great deal of possible activity, but interventions are fragmented!



Why the Fragmentation?

Obviously, the range of student and learning supports at schools varies; some have few, some have many. In some instances, community services (e.g., health and social services, after-school programs) are connected to a school. However, given their sparsity, agencies endeavoring to bring community services to schools usually must limit their activities to enhancing supports at a couple of school campuses in a neighborhood.

Moreover, there often is not a good connection between community services and the work of the many school and district-based student support staff whose roles include preventing, intervening early, and treating students with learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Such school employed personnel include psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses, dropout/graduation support staff, special educators, and others. When school and community efforts are poorly connected, community and school personnel tend to work with the same students and families with little shared planning or ongoing communication.

Ironically, some education policy makers have developed the false impression that community resources are ready and able to meet all the support needs of students and their families. This impression already has contributed to serious cuts related to student supports (e.g., districts laying off student support personnel) in the struggle to balance tight school budgets. Such cuts further reduce the amount of resources available for enhancing equity of opportunity.

An outgrowth of all this has been increased fragmentation, as well as counterproductive competition for sparse resources related to student and learning supports.

Underlying the fragmentation is a fundamental policy problem. That problem is the long-standing and continuing *marginalization* in school improvement policy and practice of most efforts to directly use student and learning supports to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students.

So, the current situation related to student/learning supports is that the enterprise is *marginalized*. As a result, the continuing trends are to establish such supports through piecemeal policies and implement them in a fragmented and sometimes redundant manner. Then, when budgets tighten, many of these supports are among the first cut. All this contributes to a counterproductive job competition among student support staff and between these school personnel and community professionals involved with bringing services to schools.

What's Needed?

It's clear we need to unify student and learning supports.



Well it makes sense, BUT my job is bullying prevention!



It sounds good, BUT I'm only concerned about PBIS!



It seems like it should be done, BUT . . .



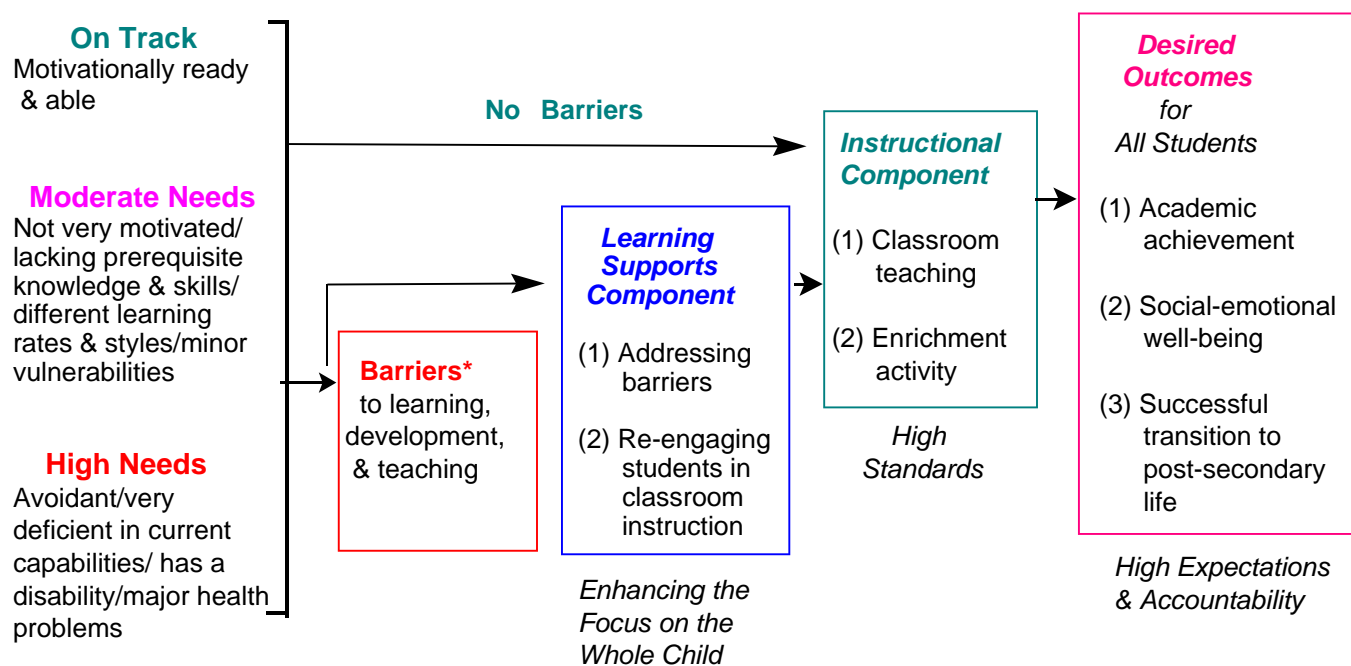
Clearly, no one thinks the current situation is a good one. The need is to unify and then, over a period of several years, develop a comprehensive and systemic approach for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. We refer to the unified approach as a *learning supports component* (see Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2

A Learning Supports Component to Address Barriers and Re-engage Students in Classroom Instruction

Range of Learners

(based on their response to academic instruction at any given point in time)



*Examples of Conditions That Can Increase Barriers to Learning

Neighborhood

- High poverty
- High rates of crime, drug use, violence, gang activity
- High unemployment, abandoned/floundering businesses
- Disorganized community
- High mobility
- Lack of positive youth development opportunities

Family

- Domestic conflicts, abuse, distress, grief, loss
- Unemployment, poverty, and homelessness
- Immigrant and/or minority status
- Family physical or mental health illness
- Poor medical or dental care
- Inadequate child care
- Substance abuse

School and Peers

- Poor quality schools, high teacher turnover
- High rates of bullying and harassment
- Minimal offerings and low involvement in extracurricular activities
- Frequent student-teacher conflicts
- Poor school climate, negative peer models
- Many disengaged students and families

Internal Student Factors

- Neurodevelopmental delay
- Physical illness
- Mental disorders/Disabilities
- Inadequate nutrition and healthcare
- Learning, behavior, and emotional problems that arise from negative environmental conditions exacerbate existing internal factors

What are Learning Supports?

Learning supports are defined as the resources, strategies, and practices that provide physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports to enable all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school by directly addressing barriers to learning and teaching and by re-engaging disconnected students.

In the classroom and school-wide, learning supports are used to directly

- (1) address interfering factors *and*
- (2) re-engage students in classroom instruction.

Both steps are essential because interventions that do not ensure students are engaged meaningfully in classroom learning generally are insufficient in sustaining student involvement, good behavior, and effective learning at school.

In ensuring both steps, interventions are designed to reduce overemphases on the use of extrinsic reinforcers, in favor of strategies that capitalize on and enhance ***intrinsic motivation***.

A learning supports *component* is established by unifying all learning supports.. This involves weaving together all that a school has with all that the community can bring to the table. The aim, over a period of several years, is to develop the component into a *comprehensive intervention system* that is fully integrated with instructional efforts.

A unified and comprehensive system of learning supports is key to enabling *all* students to have an equal opportunity to learn at school and *all* teachers to teach effectively. School-wide approaches are especially important where large numbers of students are not succeeding.

This guide outlines what is involved in designing and implementing a comprehensive and cohesive learning supports component to replace the existing fragmented and disorganized set of student and learning supports.

The prototypes are the result of years of research and development; the examples are from trailblazing efforts around the country.

With respect to cost, the emphasis is on redeploying existing resources and garnering economies of scale.

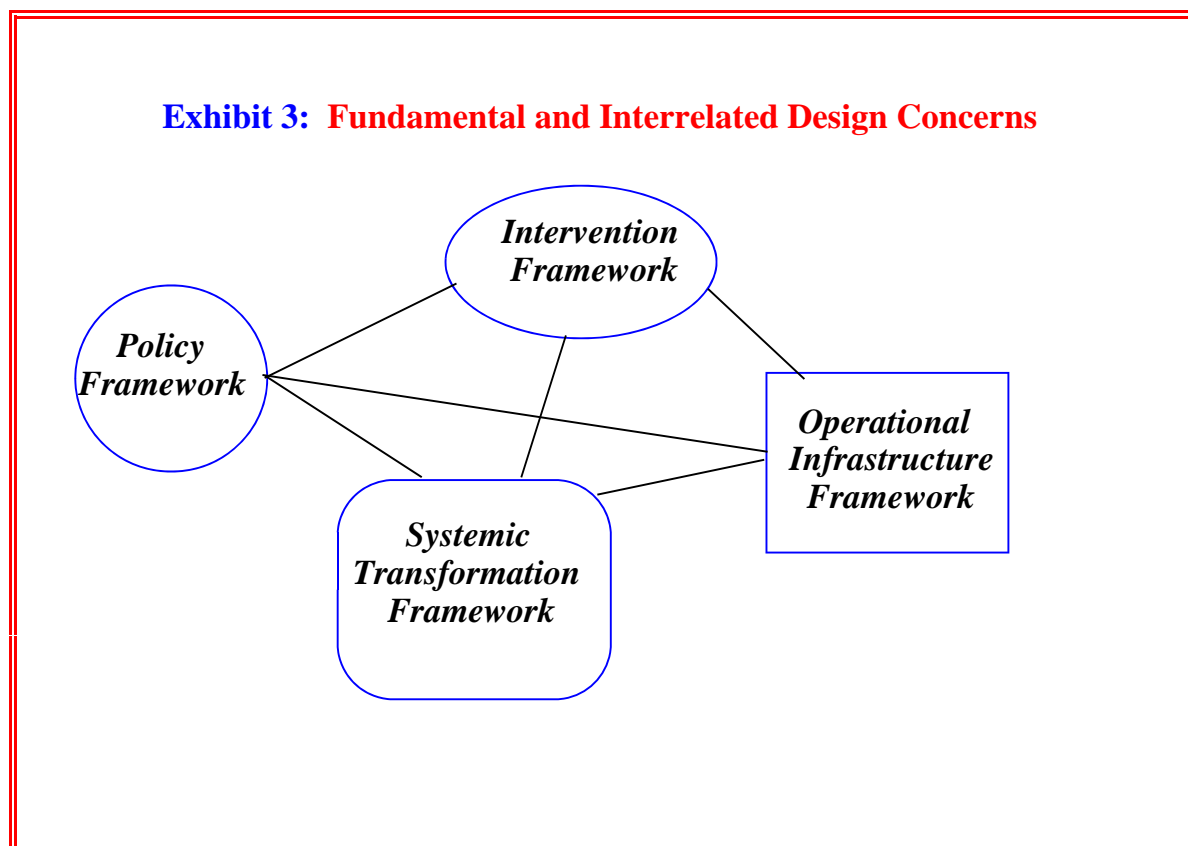
Creating a New Design



"This really is an innovative approach, but I'm afraid we can't consider it. It's never been done before."

With a view to effective implementation, replication to scale, and sustainability, creating the design calls for addressing a set of interconnected concerns. As illustrated in Exhibit 3, these involve adopting/adapting prototypes that:

- (1) *Expand the policy framework for school improvement* to fully integrate, as primary and essential, a *component* that brings together the supports for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.
- (2) *Reframe student and learning support interventions* to create a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports in classrooms and school-wide.
- (3) *Rework the operational infrastructure* to ensure effective daily implementation and ongoing development of a unified and comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.
- (4) *Enhance approaches for systemic change* in ways that ensure effective implementation, replication to scale, and sustainability.



Prototypes and Examples

We have developed prototype frameworks for each of the concerns illustrated in Exhibit 3. These have been used by trailblazers across the country. This part of the guide is devoted to providing the prototypes and pointing to examples of how they have been adopted/adapted.

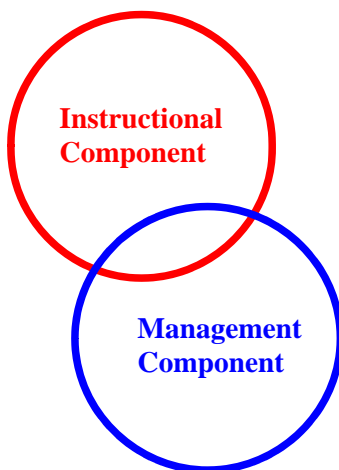
Policy Framework

In most places, school improvement policy and practice is guided primarily by a two component framework (i.e., an instructional component and a management component). As a result, all interventions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students are given secondary consideration at best. As already noted, this is because they are marginalized in school improvement policy. And, the marginalization is a fundamental cause of the fragmentation and disorganization.

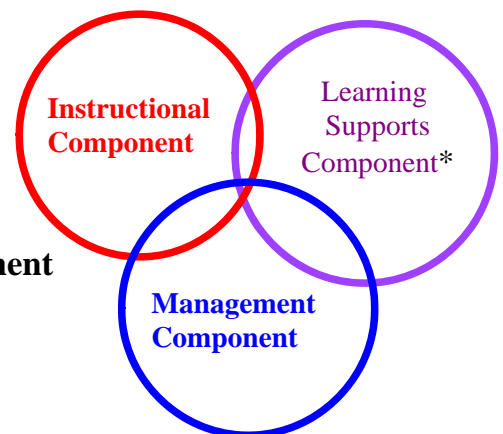
Ending the disorganization and effectively weaving together what a school and a community are doing to confront barriers to equity of opportunity calls for establishing a three component school improvement framework. As illustrated below, the expanded policy framework is intended to ensure a *primary* commitment to addressing barriers to learning and teaching via a learning supports component.

Exhibit 4. Expanded Policy Prototype

Two Component Framework



Three Component Framework



Expanding School Improvement Policy and Practice

*States and districts are trending toward using the umbrella term *Learning Supports* to encompass efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching.

Related to the above expanded policy are prototypes and guidelines delineating:

- an expanded *accountability framework* for schools; one that focuses not only on achievement, but also on personal and social development and on improvements that directly address barriers to learning and teaching (see prototype at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/account.pdf>)
- standards for student/learning supports and related quality indicators (see prototype at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/commcore.pdf>).

Reframing Student and Learning Support Interventions

In keeping with public education and public health perspectives, the prototype intervention framework encompasses efforts to enable academic, social, emotional, and physical development and to address behavior, learning, and emotional problems in the classroom and school-wide at every school and in every community.

Over the last decade, versions of the prototype have been incorporated in a variety of venues across the country (see examples and lessons learning in *Where's it Happening?* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/nind7.htm>).

The intervention prototype

- (a) organizes programs and services into a circumscribed set of *content arenas of activity* and
- (b) conceptualizes levels of intervention as a full continuum of integrated intervention subsystems, each of which stresses weaving together school-community-home resources.

Content arenas of activity. Organizing content is one facet of establishing, over time, a unified, comprehensive, and systemic approach. While interventions are commonly framed in terms of tiers or levels, such a framework is an insufficient organizer. To escape the trend to generate laundry lists of programs and services at each level, it is necessary to also group them into a circumscribed set of arenas reflecting the *content purpose* of the activity. Our prototype emphasizes categorizing interventions into six arenas. These are designed to:

- *Enhance strategies in regular classroom to enable learning* (e.g., improving instruction for students who have become disengaged from learning at school and for those with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems; includes a focus on prevention and early intervening, with an emphasis on enhancing intrinsic motivation and using strategies such as personalized instruction and response to intervention)
- *Support transitions* (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate the many daily and school year transitions, including school and grade changes)
- *Increase home and school connections and engagement*
- *Respond to, and where feasible, prevent crises*
- *Increase community involvement and support* (outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers)
- *Facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance* as needed

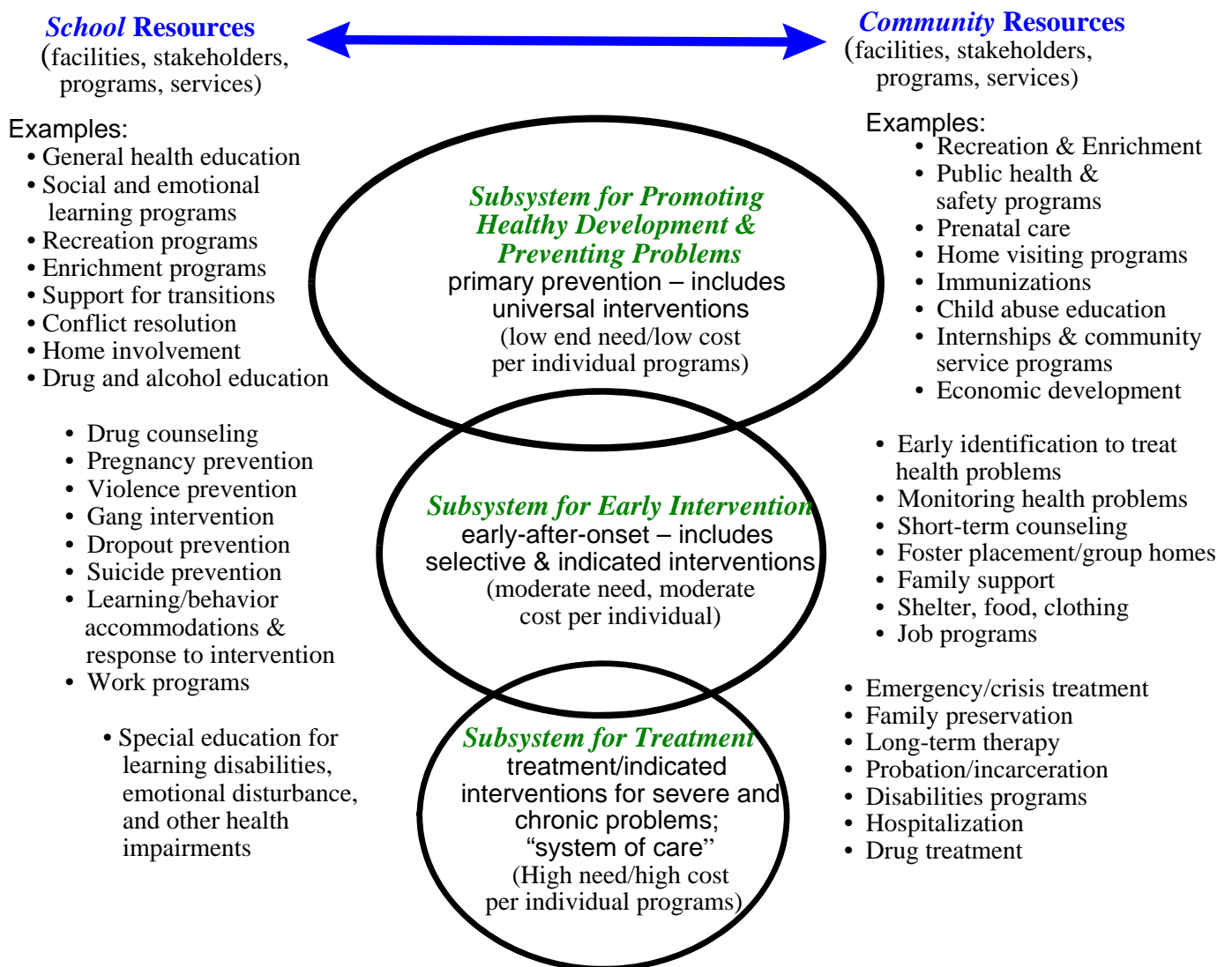
For more details on each arena, see Appendix A.

Continuum of integrated subsystems. Beyond intervention content, a fundamental second facet of a unified and comprehensive system or learning supports is an integrated continuum of interventions that strives to

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

As graphically illustrated in Exhibit 5, (a) each level represents a subsystem, (b) the three subsystems overlap, and (c) all three require integration into an overall system that encompasses school and community resources. Note that this framework moves thinking beyond the three tier pyramid that schools have been using.

Exhibit 5. Intervention Continuum: Interconnected Subsystems



As illustrated in Exhibit 6, the six *arenas* and the *continuum* constitute the prototype intervention framework for a comprehensive system of learning supports. Such a framework is meant to guide and unify school improvement planning related to developing the system. The matrix provides a framework for mapping what is in place and analyzing gaps. Effectively implemented, the whole produces more than the sum of its parts.

Exhibit 6. Intervention Prototype Framework for a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

Integrated Intervention *Continuum* (levels)

	Subsystem for Promoting Healthy Development & Preventing Problems	Subsystem for Early Intervention	Subsystem of Treatment (“System of Care”)
Arenas of Intervention Content	In classroom learning supports		
	Support for transitions		
	Crisis response/prevention		
	Home involvement & engagement		
	Community engagement		
	Student & family assistance		
	Accommodations for differences & disabilities	Specialized assistance & other intensified interventions (e.g., Special Education & School-Based Behavioral Health)	

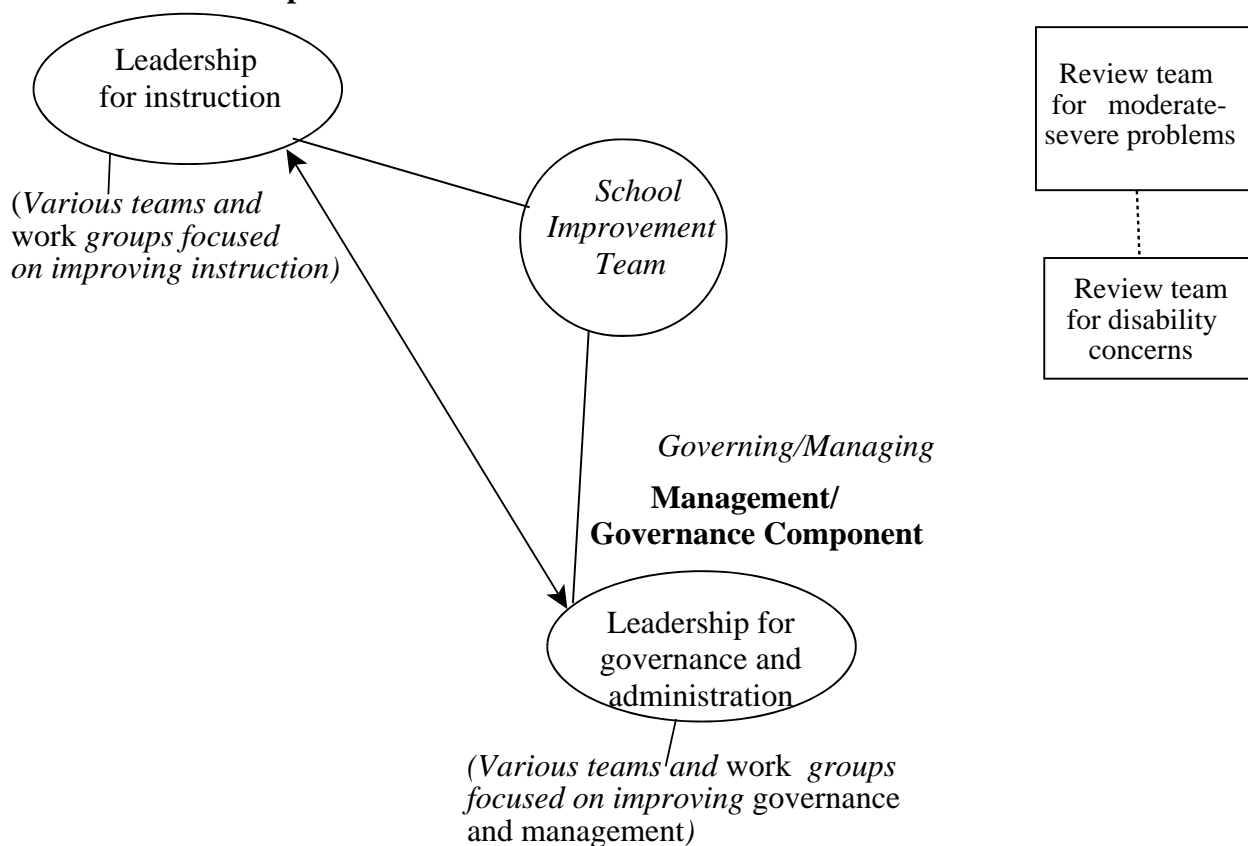
- Effectively designed and developed at a school, a learning supports component:
- addresses barriers through a broader view of “basics” and through effective accommodation of individual differences and disabilities
 - enhances the focus on motivational considerations with a special emphasis on intrinsic motivation as it relates to individual readiness and ongoing involvement and with the intent of fostering intrinsic motivation as a basic outcome (i.e., personalized instruction)
 - adds remediation, treatment, and rehabilitation as necessary, but only as necessary.

Reworking the Operational Infrastructure

Stated directly, the current operational infrastructure at a school contributes to the ongoing marginalization of student and learning supports. It tends to look like this:

Facilitating Learning/Development

Instructional Component

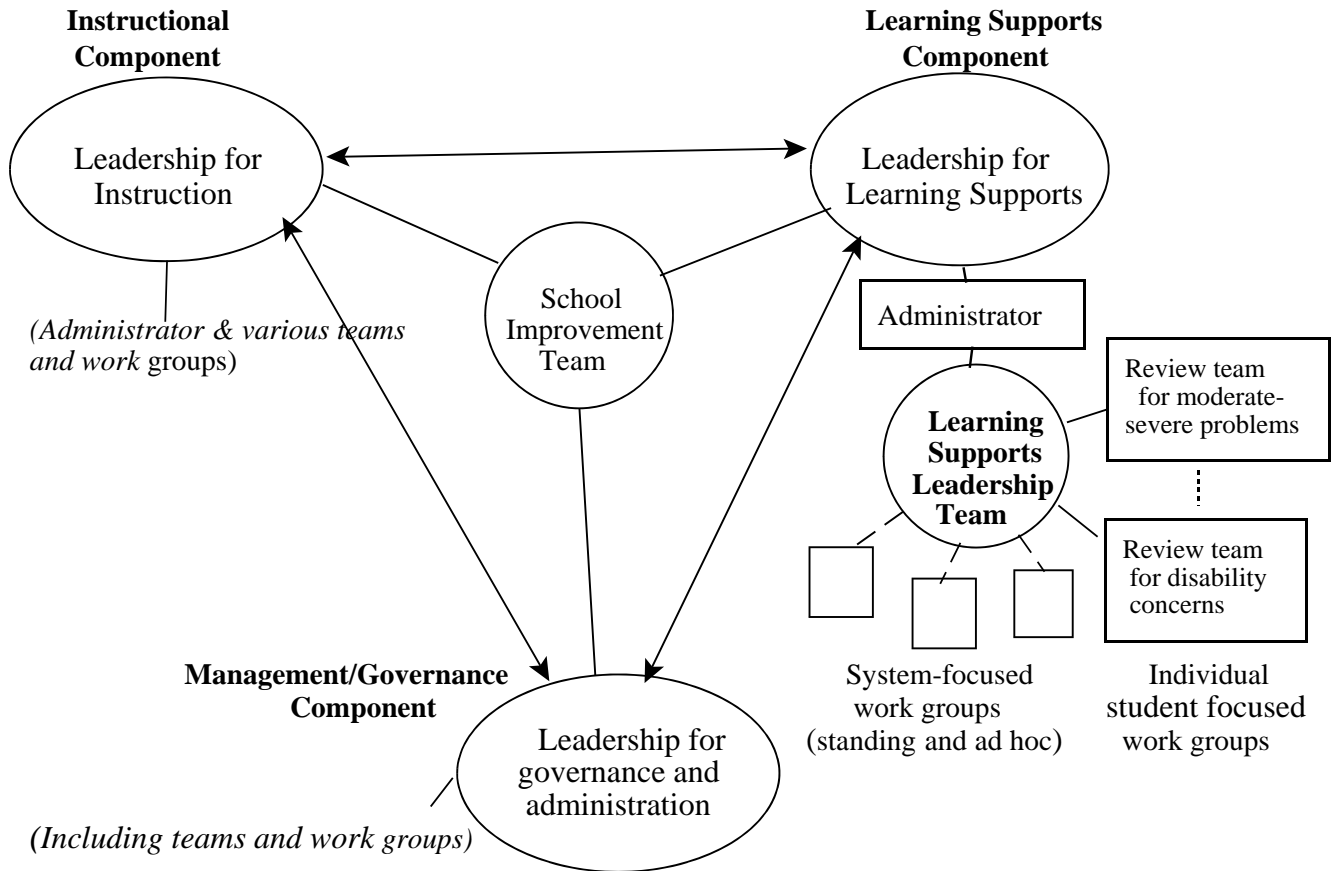


Note that usually there is no administrative leadership for student and learning supports. And the teams focused on students who are manifesting learning, behavior, and emotional problems are mainly concerned with making decision about individual referrals rather than about systemic improvements to prevent problems and stem the tide of referrals. Also note these teams usually have little of no connection to the table where school improvement needs are discussed and decisions made.

In contrast: Exhibit 7 illustrates the basic features of an operational infrastructure prototype that fully integrates a focus on student/learning supports with the aim of unifying and developing a comprehensive and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

Exhibit 7. Prototype for Integrated Operational Infrastructure at the School Level

(This operational infrastructure should be paralled at the district level -- see Appendix B.)



As illustrated in Exhibit 7, each of the three primary and essential components for school improvement require

- administrative leadership with responsibility and accountability for daily implementation and ongoing system improvement in keeping with the vision for the component
- a leadership team to work with the administrative leader (as well as with other advocates/champions) on ensuring system implementation and development,
- standing work groups with designated ongoing functions and ad hoc work groups as needed to accomplish specific short-term tasks.

In this infrastructure, the administrative leaders for the instructional and learning supports components are part of the management/governance component to ensure all three components are integrated and that the learning supports component is not marginalized. And, if a special team is assigned to work on school improvement planning, implementation, and evaluation, leaders for all three components are on that team.

With specific reference to the learning supports component:

At a school (and at other levels), administrative leadership is key to ending marginalization of efforts to address behavior, learning, and emotional problems. The administrative leader has responsibility and accountability for effective implementation and continuous development of a comprehensive and cohesive system of student and learning supports.

The administrative leader and the component leadership team (e.g., a *Learning Supports Leadership Team*) meet weekly to guide and monitor daily implementation and ongoing development of all programs, services, initiatives, and systems that are concerned with providing learning supports and specialized assistance. The focus is on component cohesion, integrated implementation, ongoing development, and effective use of resources. The resources of concern come from the general fund, compensatory education, special education, and special projects. They encompass student support personnel such as school psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses; compensatory and special education staff; special initiatives, grants, and programs for afterschool, wellness, dropout prevention, attendance, drug abuse prevention, violence prevention, pregnancy prevention, parent/family/ health centers, volunteer assistance, and community resource linkages to schools.

At the district level, the need is for an operational infrastructure that provides administrative leadership and capacity building support in ways that maximize development of a comprehensive system of learning supports to address barriers to learning and teaching at each school (see Appendix B). And, 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, a chief officer).

For more on details on reworking the operational infrastructure, see

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/infrastructure/anotherinitiative-exec.pdf>

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentssupport/toolkit/aidk.pdf>

For examples of job descriptions for an administrative leader for learning supports,

see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkitb4.htm>

How Can Small Schools Staff the Desired Operational Infrastructure?

Obviously, a small school has less staff and other resources than most larger schools. Nevertheless, the three major functions necessary for school improvement remain the same in all schools, namely (1) improving instruction, (2) providing a unified learning supports system to address barriers to learning and teaching, and (3) enhancing management and governance.

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

With less personnel, a principal must use who and what is available to pursue all three components. Usually, the principal and whoever else is part of a school leadership team will lead the way in improving instruction and management/governance. As presently constituted, however, such a team may not be prepared to advance development of a learning supports component. Thus, someone already on the leadership team will need to be assigned this role and 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 additional training for the tasks involved in being a Learning Supports Component leader. The leader, however chosen, will benefit from eliciting the help of other advocates/champions at the school and from the community. These all can help ensure development, over time, of a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports.

Connecting 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 children in that family may all be experiencing problems. Many schools also share student and learning support personnel.

Connecting a family of schools using a multi-site team provides a mechanism to help ensure cohesive and equitable deployment of student and learning support resources. Such a team also can enhance the pooling of resources to minimize redundancy, reduce costs, and achieve economies of scale.

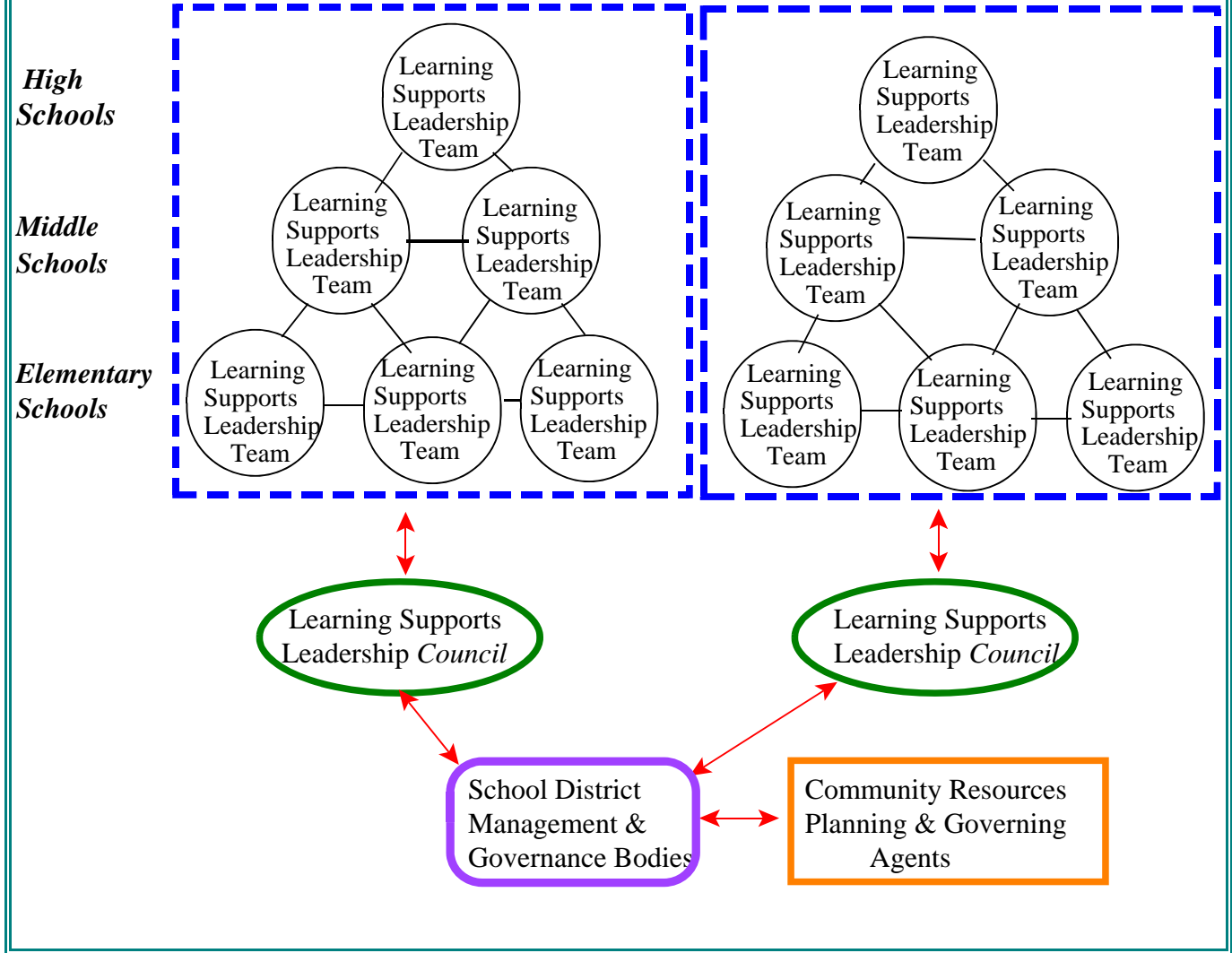
In general, a multi-site learning supports leadership mechanism facilitates communication and connection, develops cost-efficiencies, and ensures quality improvement across sites. Such a mechanism can be particularly useful for integrating the efforts of high schools and their feeder middle and elementary schools. This clearly is important in eliminating redundancies, redeploying resources, and implementing economies of scale.

For example, in terms of addressing barriers with those families who have youngsters attending more than one level of schooling in the same cluster, it is neither cost-effective nor good intervention for each school to contact a family separately in instances where several children from a family are in need of special attention. Moreover, some programs and services can be shared among the family of schools, and so can some professional development and other capacity building. Such sharing can produce substantial cost-savings.

As illustrated in Exhibit 8, a multi-site body, or what in the prototype is designated as a Learning Supports Leadership *Council*, brings together one-two representatives from each connecting school's Learning Supports Leadership Team (e.g., a high school and its feeder middle and elementary schools). Such a Council meets about once a month.

Natural starting points for councils are the sharing of needs assessment, resource mapping, analyses, and recommendations for reform and restructuring. Specific areas of initial focus may be on such matters as addressing community school violence and developing prevention programs and safe school plans. Items on its ongoing agenda are (a) coordinating and integrating programs that serve multiple schools, (b) identifying and meeting common needs with respect to guidelines and staff development, and (c) creating linkages and collaborations among schools and with community agencies. In this last respect, it can play a special role in community outreach both to create formal working relationships and ensure that all participating schools have access to such resources. Multi-school teams are especially attractive to community agencies lacking the time or personnel to link with individual schools.

Exhibit 8. Connecting Resources Across a Family of Schools, a District, and Community-Wide



Clearly, all of the operational infrastructure prototypes involve a fundamental transformation of the usual institutionalized operational system.

Successful systemic transformation requires policy that ensures a well-designed and resourced process to facilitate essential systemic changes. We turn to that now.

Prototype for Facilitating Systemic Transformation

Successful implementation of systemic transformation in established institutions requires effective facilitation, especially when change is to take place at multiple sites and at multiple levels. Logic models are helpful in strategic planning. Such models stress that the foundation for innovative change is a well articulated vision, clear aims, and a sound rationale. While each facet of a logical framework outlines how to get there from here, it is widely acknowledged that neither direct implementation nor the processes for facilitating such implementation are likely to play out in a linear manner,

Example: Framework for Facilitating Institutional Transformation

See Section III of the Center report entitled: *Bringing New Prototypes into Practice: Dissemination, Implementation, and Facilitating Transformation*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/implrep3.pdf>

With specific respect to new directions for student/learning supports, the discussion in the above cited report differentiates (1) direct implementation from the process of facilitating implementation and (2) implementation of a specific practice or program from efforts to transform institutions such as schools.

The key to successful transformation is to allocate resources for both direct implementation and the processes involved in facilitating the transformation. Given that budgets for schools are always tight, this means identifying ways to redeploy and pull together existing resources and weave them with whatever new funds can be mustered, as well as with any other resources that come along (e.g., extra-mural support).

Avoiding common deficiencies associated with facilitating systemic change requires giving sufficient strategic attention and time to

- establishing an effective systemic change operational infrastructure
- creating readiness among a critical mass of key stakeholders in settings where changes are to be introduced
- developing a design document to communicate and guide the work
- developing a multi-year strategic plan
- ensuring policy is instituted that makes the changes a high priority
- reworking an organization's daily operational infrastructure to support development and sustainability of the changes.

A prototype operational infrastructure for facilitating systemic transformation in schools consists of mechanisms, such as steering groups, planning and implementation teams, and external and internal coaches (see Exhibit 9). Facets of this infrastructure are temporary – put in place until the transformation is successfully made.

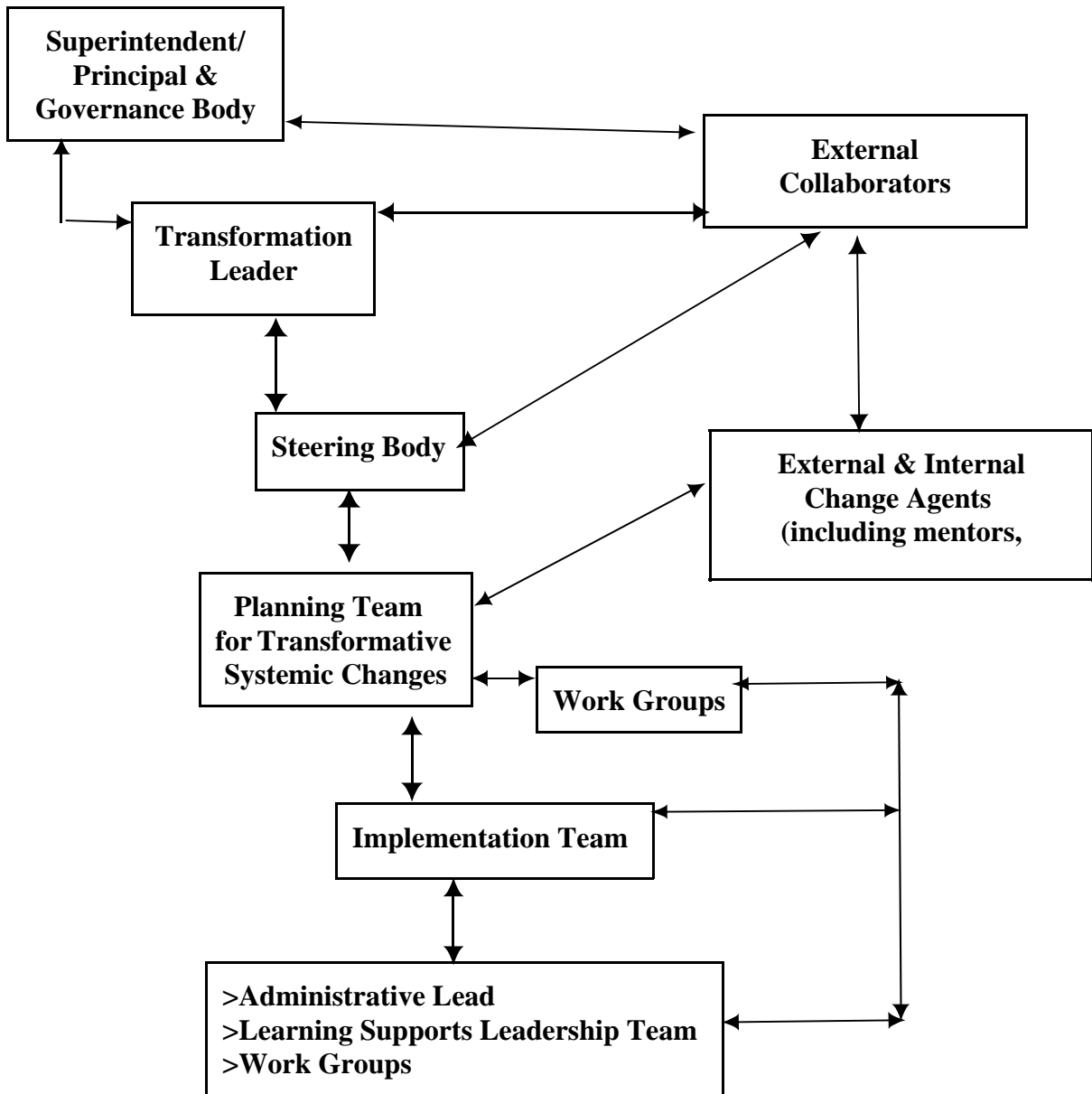
Effectively establishing such an infrastructure requires ensuring enough resources are devoted to developing the mechanisms and building their capacity to carry out a multi-year strategic plan. Capacity building involves ensuring sufficient resources for the transformation (e.g., staffing; budget; guidance materials; external mentoring, coaching, development of effective of each systemic change mechanism, professional development, and technical assistance for deepening understanding, commitment, and skills). Customization is done to ensure that capability for accomplishing major tasks is not undermined (e.g., special attention is given to ensuring these mechanisms are not created as an added and incidental assignment for staff).

As each mechanism is established, the focus is on

- enlisting a broad enough range of key leaders and staff (e.g., leaders directly involved with student and learning supports, as well as others such as leaders for instruction, school improvement, data/evaluation; a given staff member may be part of several workgroups/teams)
- ensuring group/team members understand each mechanism's functions and interrelationship
- providing the type of capacity building that ensures members understand the essence of what needs to be accomplished and are committed to the importance of the work
- assisting in development of clear action plans.

A note of caution: Designation of a top-level administrative leader who has had sufficient professional development related to understanding how to facilitate systemic transformation is key to the success of any systemic transformation initiative in a complex organization. And, everyone in the organization needs to be held accountable for the development of the planned changes. When the individual assigned to lead a systemic transformation is not a high level administrator, s/he may not even be sitting at key decision making tables when budget allocations and other fundamental decisions are discussed. And, those who are at a higher level and anyone without accountability for planned changes may be less than cooperative in response to such an individual's efforts to facilitate changes.

Exhibit 9. Prototype for a Temporary Operational Infrastructure to Facilitate Transformation



Developing a Multi-year Strategic Plan



Once a good design has been established, the next step involves developing a multi-year strategic plan. Strategic planning for developing a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports is done within the organizational context and is intended to be fully integrated into the overall approach to school improvement.

Strategic planning is a formal process that translates a desired future into a broad set of goals or objectives and a sequence of steps to achieve the vision. With specific respect to developing a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports, strategic planning is meant to ensure that the vision articulated for improvement and the design are effectively and efficiently implemented. The plan spells out an answer to:

How do we get there from here?

Strategic planning can be organized around four major phases of systemic change and transformation.

First Phase – Introduction and Creating Readiness, Commitment, & Engagement

Second Phase – Start-up and Phase-in: Building Infrastructure, Capacity, and Pursuing Initial Implementation

Third Phase – Replicating to Scale, Sustaining, and Evolving to Enhance Outcomes

Fourth Phase – Generating Creative Renewal and Replication to Scale

The multi-year plan outlines objectives, steps, tasks, and timelines to be accomplished during each phase and general strategies for accomplishing them. The strategic plan is the basis for specific action planning.

The Center's prototype for this facet of the work is entitled:
*General Guide for Strategic Planning Related to Developing
a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports.*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/stratplan.pdf> .

For a district example, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/alstrategic.pdf>

Concluding Comments

The real difficulty in changing the course of any enterprise lies not in developing new ideas but in escaping old ones.

John Maynard Keynes

Addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students is a school improvement imperative.

Developing and implementing a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports is the next evolutionary stage in meeting this imperative. It is the missing component in efforts to close the achievement gap, enhance school safety, reduce dropout rates, shut down the pipeline from schools to prisons, and promote general well-being.

System transformation is never easy; but at this juncture in the history of public education, it is essential to enhancing equity and social justice.

See Appendix C for information on additional resources, including the Center's *System Change Toolkit*.

Appendices

A. Prototype for Six Content Arenas

B. Prototype for an Integrated Infrastructure at the District Level

C. Some Additional Related Resources

Appendix A

Prototype for Six Content Arenas

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 include plans to develop more effective and comprehensive systems for directly dealing with factors that keep too many students from succeeding at school and beyond.

Our work over many years stresses that the supports needed cluster into six content arenas. (Think of them as the curriculum of learning supports.) The six arenas are designed to continuously enhance:

- **Regular classroom strategies 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** – programs and systems for assisting 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** – programs and systems to increase and strengthen home and school connections
- **Community involvement and engagement** – programs and systems 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** – programs and systems 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** – programs and systems to facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance on campus and in the community as needed

A brief discussion of and examples related to each of these arenas follows.

For more extensive examples, see:

>the set of self-study surveys designed to map what a school has and what it needs 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 Regular Classroom Strategies to Enable Learning

A key to personalizing learning and stemming the tide of out-of-class referrals is to “open classroom doors” to bring learning supports into the classroom. This requires in-class collaboration with student support staff and other teachers, as well as training volunteers to assist with students-in-need.

Learning supports in the classroom are designed to enable student 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. Learning supports are designed to increasingly enable teachers to personalize instruction for all students, add special assistance in the context of implementing “Response to Intervention,” and provide a greater range of accommodations and learning options.

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 a self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, the Center has free continuing education modules on:

> *Personalizing Learning* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/personalizeI.pdf>

> *Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families* –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageI.pdf>

Supports for Transitions

Supporting transitions involves a range of interventions that address changes that 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.

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 a self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, the following free Center resource may be helpful for professional development:

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

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.

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.

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 a 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>

Community Involvement and Engagement

Most schools are reaching out to a few community partners. Learning supports aims 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 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 comm.
- 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, the following free Center resources may be helpful for professional development:

> *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>

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.

Examples of Crisis Response and Prevention

- 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, the following free Center resources may be helpful for professional development:

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

>*Resources for Responding to a Crisis* – <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

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

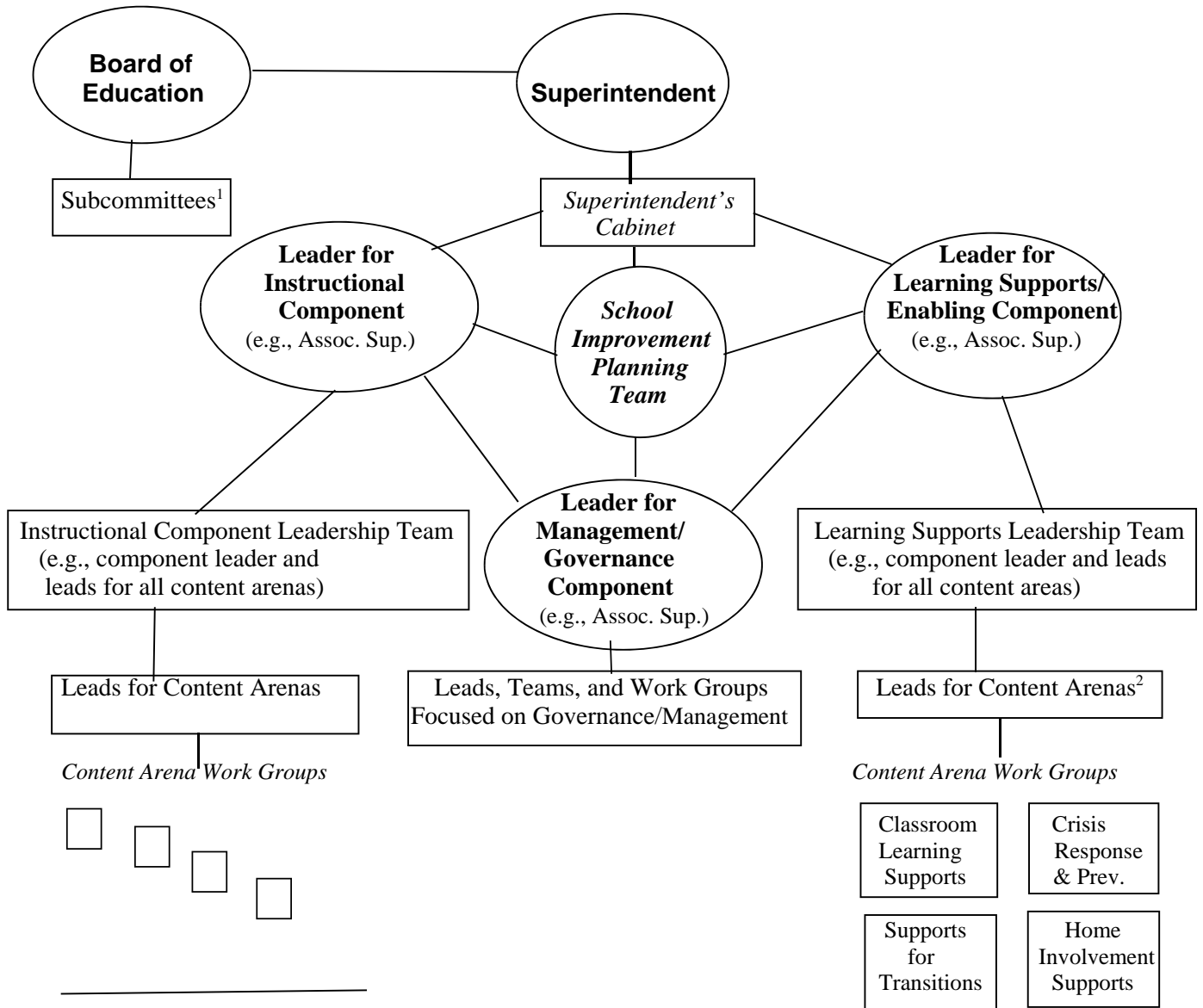
- Providing support as soon as a need is recognized; doing so in the least disruptive way
 - > “Prereferral” interventions in classrooms in the context of “Response to Intervention”
 - > Problem solving conferences with parents
 - > Open access to school, district, and community support programs
- Referral 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, the following free Center resources may be helpful for professional development:

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

Note: As one facet of the intervention prototype for a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports, the six content arenas intersect with a full continuum of interventions. The continuum encompasses three subsystems: (1) promoting healthy development and preventing problems, (2) responding early after problem onset, and (3) treating chronic and severe problems.

Appendix B
Prototype for an Integrated Infrastructure at the District Level



Notes:

1. If there isn't one, a board subcommittee for learning supports should be created to ensure policy and supports for developing a comprehensive system of learning supports at every school(see Center documents *Restructuring Boards of Education to Enhance Schools' Effectiveness in Addressing Barriers to Student Learning* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/boardrep.pdf> and Example of a Formal Proposal for Moving in New Directions for Student Support <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newdirections/exampleproposal.pdf>

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

Appendix C

Some Additional Related Resources

System Change Toolkit

Transforming Student Supports into a Unified & Comprehensive System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

This toolkit provides links to a range of resource aids (presentations, tools, guides). Below are examples of what is offered:

Overview, Q &A, and Initiating the Work

Answering: *What is a Unified & Comprehensive System of Learning Supports?*
Examples of Brochures from Districts and State Departments
Q & A Talking Points
Powerpoints, Webinars, and Handouts
Examples of Policy Statements/Legislation
Example of Funding Stream Integration
Content for Preparing a Prospectus/Proposal for Moving Forward
Website Prototype for SEA, LEA, and School Learning Supports System

Designing and Planning a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

Reframing Intervention
Reworking Infrastructure
Expanding the Accountability Framework for Schools
Guides for Administrators
Examples of state and District Design Documents
Guides and Aids for Design Work Groups
Guides for Strategic Planning
About System Change and School Improvement
Aids for Initial Capacity Building

Phasing in a New System

Practice Guides for coaching, enhancing readiness, including learning supports system in school improvement plan, phasing-in district and school site implementation, social marketing

Ongoing Capacity Building, including professional development for all school staff

Addressing the Problems of Systemic Change

Link to Center's On-line Clearinghouse Resources

Adelman, H.S., & Taylor, L. (2006). *The School Leader's Guide to Student Learning Supports: New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Adelman, H.S., & Taylor, L. (2006). *The Implementation Guide to Student Learning Supports in the Classroom and School Wide: New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Adelman, H.S., & Taylor, L. (2008). *Rebuilding for learning: Addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging students*. New York: Scholastic, Inc.
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/rebuild/rebuildingtoc.htm>

Introduction to a Component for Addressing Barriers to Student Learning –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefs/introductionbrief.pdf>

Five Essential Elements of a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/essentials.pdf>

What Every Leader for School Improvement Needs to Know About Student and Learning Supports – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/whateveryleader.pdf>

Developing a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: First Steps for Superintendents Who Want to Get Started –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/superstart.pdf>

Establishing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports at a School: Seven Steps for Principals and Their Staff –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/7steps.pdf>

Beginning Steps in Personnel Development Related to Establishing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/personneldevelopment.pdf>