

Detroit Public Schools, Detroit, MI

For several years, Detroit's schools have struggled to move in new directions for student support. Efforts have flowed, and ebbed with the District's survival problems.

In the late 1990s, their rationale and framework for change was laid out in: *A Framework for Change: The Resource Coordinating Team (An Integrated Learner Support System)*. The stated aim was to use school-site Resource Coordinating Teams as the mechanism for developing an integrated learner support system. As stated in the Executive Summary:

“If school reforms are to ensure that **all** students succeed, such reforms must be designed to guarantee what the word **all** implies. **All** includes students who are motivationally ready for learning as well as those who are experiencing external and internal barriers that interfere with their ability to benefit from high standards and improved instruction. Failure to address the barriers to learning in a comprehensive way accounts for most learning, behavioral, health, and emotional problems seen in our schools today.

School reform initiatives have typically focused on managerial or governance constructs, instructional strategies, or community engagement efforts. While these areas are important to school transformation, they do not address the specific needs of students and those obstacles or barriers to their success. The missing link in educational reform is the establishment of a supportive, student-centered learning environment where professional school and community resources are identified and linked to address barriers to learning that confront urban students. . . an integrated learner support system.

This integrated organizational structure . . . consists of three components: a learning or instructional component, a governance management component, and an enabling component, [built around] the Resource Coordinating Team [RCT], which seeks to enhance and augment all school transformation efforts. . . .”

“The scope and focus of the Resource Coordinating Team is inclusive and broad based as it addresses the following programmatic areas supporting the school development process:

- C student and family assistance
- C support for transitions
- C community outreach
- C home involvement
- C crisis prevention and intervention
- C classroom focused enabling.”

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Framework for Change: The Resource Coordinating Team

*(An Integrated Learner Support System)
Executive Summary*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If school reforms are to ensure that all students succeed, such reform must be designed to guarantee what the word all implies. All includes students who are motivationally ready for learning as well as those who are experiencing external and internal barriers that interfere with their ability to benefit from high standards and improved instruction. Failure to address the barriers to learning in a comprehensive way accounts for most learning, behavioral, health, and emotional problems seen in our schools today.

School reform initiatives have typically focused on managerial or governance constructs, instructional strategies, or community engagement efforts. While these areas are important to school transformation they do not address the specific needs of students and those obstacles or barriers to their success. The missing link in educational reform is the establishment of a supportive, student-centered learning environment where professional school and community resources are identified and linked to address the barriers to learning that confront urban students.

A shared belief that the school and the school system must be learner-centered requires a strong commitment to a rigorous institutional self-examination in order to provide students with the organizational structure, educational curriculum and the support mechanisms needed to become life long learners and contributing citizens. This belief must be firmly in place as the foundation for creating effective site-based managed, rejuvenated, restructured and empowered schools.

In the Detroit Public Schools, we are seeking to build such site based managed schools that are caring learner-centered communities where all key stakeholders participate constructively in the major decisions that affect the school and the learners of that school. These constructivist learner environments must be based upon the sound foundation of effective research and experiential practice. With this in mind, our district examined and considered the Comer school development model, the existing special education intervention assistance team structure as well as the work of Howard Adelman and others in utilizing an approach that coordinates community resources. These initiatives significantly influenced and guided our efforts, which materialized into an integrated learner support system.

This integrated organizational structure for our schools consist of three components: a learning or instructional component, a governance management component and an enabling component, the Resource Coordinating Team, which seeks to enhance and augment all school transformation efforts.

The RCT strengthens the framework for school effectiveness and companions with a strong curriculum and clear vision for school-based management. **The Resource Coordinating Team (RCT)** is a school-based coordinated home/ school/ community resource collaborative whose purpose is to understand the problems or barriers to learning and to correct or prevent their manifestations. The RCT is a problem solving team that will work closely with parents, students and community to promote a -school environment which is learner-centered and which results in the social, cognitive, emotional and health conscious development of the learner by:

1. identifying, coordinating and integrating the internal and external services and programs that address the underlying barriers to the teaching and learning process and to facilitate their understanding, prevention and correction
2. structuring individual and school-based intervention plans that respond to the needs of staff, students and their families
3. securing the proactive involvement of parents and community and providing timely responses to student needs, and
4. creating opportunities for open dialogue and discussion regarding school concerns, issues and development

The composition of the Resource Coordinating Team includes representatives of all staff members who have a defined responsibility to lead or support a school's instructional efforts. Participants who may generally be included as members of the RCT are administrators, school social workers, school psychologists, guidance counselors, nurses and/or other health related specialists, attendance officers, teacher consultants, teachers of the speech and language impaired, regular and special education teachers, curriculum specialists, bilingual specialists and community agency representatives. This list is not all inclusive and may be augmented by other service providers as the need warrants.

The scope and focus of the Resource Coordinating Team* is inclusive and broad based as it addresses the following programmatic areas supporting the school development process:

*Adapted from Addressing Barriers to Student Learning: Closing Gaps in School /Community Policy and Practice, c1997 Adelman, Howard and Linda Taylor. School Mental Health Project: UCLA. Department of Psychology

- *student and family assistance* - Such assistance extends beyond the traditional support services by expanding the supportive family network, resolving possible explosive situations before they erupt and by providing consultation services to families and students from within the system or through community agencies and organizations.
- *support for transitions* - Support will be provided by assisting the learner in making adjustments such as the promotion to ninth grade; move to or from special education; school-to-school and grade-to-grade transfers; prevention and intervention programs; and achievement and recognition programs.
- *community outreach* - Efforts have been initiated to embrace community and service organizations, public and private agencies, business and professional organizations, the faith community, colleges and universities, professional foundations, and individual school volunteers in addressing school needs and concerns. Among the agencies working with the teams to address students' needs are Wayne County's Family Independence Agency (the County's social services agency), Department of Community justice, Human Services Coordinating Body, Children's Center, and Third Judicial Circuit Court. Also involved are the City of Detroit's Office of Children's Ombudsman, Police Department, and Health Department; Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan; the Detroit Federation of Teachers; and the Organization of School Administrators and Supervisors.
- *home involvement* - Parental support is critical in the educational process. Such involvement embraces the parent as a learner and addresses parent or caregiver learning needs, i.e., obtaining a GED, participation in English classes as a second language, mutual support groups, parenting classes and helping parents become effective at home teachers.
- *crisis prevention and intervention* - Such attention facilitates immediate emergency care when there is a crisis as well as the appropriate follow-up care provided to a student, groups of students, families and community members as necessary.
- *classroom focused enabling* - This support to classroom teachers will personalize the teaching learning process and build professional relationships that enhance teacher effectiveness in working with a range of learner abilities, instructional strategies and needs.

The Resource Coordinating (RCT) is a critical operational component that strengthens the framework for school effectiveness. Its mission is to enhance academic achievement by promoting a healthy school environment that addresses the social, physical, cognitive, and emotional development of all children and youth.

The Intervention Assistance Process will be used by the RCT as a systematic way of defining individual action plans for learners who have failed to achieve promotional standards. The process is **designed to provide the classroom** teacher with early assistance strategies that aim at helping the learner experience success in the regular education classroom. The results of individual action planning and implementation may assist in avoiding unnecessary labeling of a disability. In the event that special education and/or Section 504 accommodations are needed, the individual action plan forms the basis for establishing the need for evaluation.

The RCT is a results driven concept and process with success of the initiative based upon improvement in the following areas:

- student outcomes - attendance, achievement, reduced violence;
- staff performance- increased collaboration and integration of learner-centered resources and strategies;
- school development - aligning and developing systematic practices and policies that address learning needs of all learners;
- parent /home/ community engagement - reciprocal sharing of resources such as extended educational experiences for parents, partnerships and parent centers.

The research emphasizes that RCTS on a large scale only happen through the establishment and maintenance of structures and operational mechanisms that are designed to enhance collaboration, provide appropriate levels of staffing and allocate the time necessary for intervention. Further, staff training, monitoring and evaluation will be critical to support the personnel and professional adjustment required when rethinking the roles, responsibilities and relationships of all service providers.

The Resource Coordinating Team supports the belief that all children can learn at the highest level of performance without consideration to their circumstance or level of functioning, gender or family circumstance, heritage or physical capabilities. The RCT serves to link the district's efforts to a shared vision. The approaches to the RCT seek to establish systemic change by building relationships within schools, among schools and between schools and communities. This collaborative mechanism for the coordination and integration of resources can influence

institutional change so that policies and practices become and remain learner-centered.

The important work of improving our schools is a challenging undertaking, which will require the integrated and collaborative efforts of all of our key school community stakeholders to ensure success. Parents, teachers, administrators, school support staff, business partners, professional foundations, service and faith organizations, as well as many others critical to school development. This work will require a shared, collective belief that the school and the school system must be learner-centered and must place the welfare of its learners as its principal responsibility. Further, this work will require the commitment and support of, central administration, as well as, the resources and personnel required for the

Effective delivery of services.

Research indicates that despite the influx of educational reforms, despite the appearance of multiple, best and promising practices, and, even despite the common assertions that "all children can learn", much remains the same. However, in each of these hallmarks, though well intentioned and focused upon educational reform, it is clear that change will not occur and be sustained until we address the barriers to learning. When we have done this, we will have put forth the greatest effort to prepare our children for the world of their futures, creating the conditions for each child to succeed at high levels in an ever changing, demanding and challenging environment.

RESOURCE COORDINATING TEAMS

MISSION

The Resource Coordinating Team (RCT) enhances academic achievement by promoting a healthy school environment that addresses the social, Physical, cognitive and emotional development of all children and youth.

DEFINITION

The Resource Coordinating Team is a school-based problem solving group that works collaboratively with parents, staff and community in addressing individual and school-wide issues.

FUNCTIONS

The function of the Resource Coordinating Team is to:

- coordinate and integrate services and programs that address the underlying problems and barriers to learning and facilitate their understanding, prevention and correction
- assist in structuring individual and school-based intervention plans that respond to the needs of the students, staff and families
- advocate proactive involvement and timely responses to staff, students, parents/ families, community and others
- promote a learner centered school environment that personalizes the learning and teaching process

COMPOSITION OF THE TEAM

The Resource Coordinating Team's membership will include representatives of all staff members who have a defined responsibility to lead or support a school's instructional efforts. These team members are listed as follows and may be augmented by other service providers as needs warrant.

administrator(s)
School social worker
School psychologist
Guidance counselors
Nurses and other health related specialists
Attendance officers
Teacher consultants
Teacher of the speech and language impaired
Regular and special education teacher
Curriculum specialist
Bilingual specialist
Community agency representatives

Many of the contributing factors that limit a child's academic achievement are outside of the classroom. Family instability, health and nutritional problems, emotional well-being, and numerous other conditions play a role in determining whether or not a child is equipped to learn.

For true reform standards to take place in urban schools, educators must tackle more than curriculum and testing issues. They must take a holistic approach that attempts to remove all barriers to student success. Such an approach requires that educators possess a compassionate concern for their students' total welfare.

In the Detroit Public Schools we have recognized needs and have established the Resource Coordinating Team (RCT) as an innovative support system to address the hurdles that can negatively impact a child's development.

WHAT IS THE RESOURCE COORDINATING TEAM [RCT]

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

THE GOAL OF THE RESOURCE COORDINATING TEAM IS TO STRENGTHEN A SCHOOL'S EFFECTIVENESS BY:

- Addressing the quality of life issues that impact a child's emotional, social, and intellectual development from both a prevention and intervention perspective.
- Linking with community agencies that can provide needed services for children and their families.
- Structuring individual student and school-based intervention plans that respond to both student and school community needs supporting systems and strategies which enable teachers to teach more effectively and students to reach rigorous academic support standards.

Resource Coordinating Teams take a village approach to educating our children by invoking the participation of various members of the school staff and community to ensure that each child receives the assistance he or she needs to reach their greatest potential.

RESOURCE COORDINATING TEAM PARTNERS

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

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

CRISIS PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

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

HOME INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLING

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

STUDENT AND FAMILY ASSISTANCE

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

RESOURCE COORDINATING TEAM AN INTEGRATED LEARNER SUPPORT SYSTEM

SUPPORT FOR TRANSITIONS

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

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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

CLASSROOM FOCUSED ENABLING

Programs to enhance classroom based efforts that address barriers to learning

**Please join us by being part of our education village as
we seek to make a measurable difference in the lives of our children**

for more information,
CONTACT

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK SERVICE

Detroit Public Schools

A Framework For Change Resource Coordinating Team

In 1998 the Detroit Public Schools embraced the concept of Resource Coordinating Teams as a critical operational component that strengthens the framework for school effectiveness. The mission of the Detroit Public Schools resource coordinating team is to enhance academic achievement by promoting a healthy school environment that addresses the social, physical, cognitive and emotional development of all children and youth. In Detroit Public Schools, we are seeking to build site based managed schools that are caring learner-centered communities. Harriet Kirk, Director of School Social Worker Services for Detroit Public Schools coordinated the initial Steering Team composed of the following: School Psychology, School Social Work, Guidance and Counseling, Attendance, Office of Specialize Services, Comer Project and Alternative Schools. Representatives from each discipline met to research, devise and develop the operational plan. Once the plan had been written the sub-committee met with DPS professional development staff to brainstorm in order to develop an outline, timeline and training model for the following activities:

- Awareness Training for Board Members, Administration, and Support Staff
- Staff Develop for Facilitators/ Trainers of the RCT process
- Staff Development for all Detroit Public School Teams
- RCT Facilitator Training Materials

The Training modular consisted of a three-day agenda of activities:

Day One

- Welcome and introductions
- Overview of Seminar
- The Resource Coordinating Team
- Team Identity
- Group Activity
- Concepts and Benefits of Teams
- Different Ways of Talking
- Walkabout Review
- Reading Assignment: Characteristics of Effective Teams

Day Two

- Review
- How Effective Teams Operate
- • The Seven Norms of Collaborative Group Work
- Collaborative Decision Making: Consensus
- Problem Solving
- Reflections

Day Three

- Review
- Intervention Assistance Planning
- Problem Solving Revisited
- Group Activity
- Implementation Plan Development
- Evaluation

After the training of two hundred and sixty three schools (263), the Office Of Student Support Services implemented the second phase of the reform initiative, which involved the assignment of RCT Constellation Coordinators. The State and City government took over the Detroit Public Schools and many reform efforts have taken on a different look.

The RCT Coordinators are still giving support to school teams. Ninety (90%) of DPS schools have functioning RCT teams in spite of the changes because the team approach in developing intervention strategies for children and their families works. We are very proud of our work with this reform initiative because collaboration of support services makes a difference in helping students to improve academically.