

Part II

Strategies for Implementing the Center for Mental Health in Schools Framework

Chapter 3

Strategies for Engagement

Note: In this chapter, the terms “mental health professional and resource coordinator” refer to school social workers, guidance counselors and school psychologist, as well as to community-based licensed mental health providers.

The Center for Mental Health in Schools’ framework is a systemic way of thinking about and organizing the work of school support services—school guidance counselors, social workers, co-located community mental health staff, nurses, attendance and family liaison staff, and so on. This framework includes the traditional work of these staff—assessing and providing services to individual students, leading classroom guidance lessons, and dealing with student emergencies. Additionally, the Center for Mental Health in Schools’ framework, developed by Adelman and Taylor:

- 1) Provides a conceptual framework for organizing student support services
- 2) Links the various components of their framework (Safety/Crisis Response; Support for Transitions; Family Involvement, etc.) to school achievement and success
- 3) Provides surveys and ways to map already existing school resources so that schools can identify and meet their students, families, and teachers’ needs
- 4) Focuses on prevention as well as on intervention
- 5) Focuses on individual student services and school reform (systems change)

Adelman and Taylor’s approach reframes student supports as *learning supports* to address barriers to student learning. Support staff roles are realigned so they can develop comprehensive, integrated approaches to reduce these barriers. To fully implement this framework, a school district would look at their policies and practices around student support services. At the district level, administrative staff might look at a more effective deployment of their existing resources—minimizing fragmentation, counterproductive competition and policies that marginalize the work of support services staff. (The above was adapted from the brochure, *Summits Initiative: New Directions for Student Support*, UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools, Department of Psychology, P.O. Box. 951563, Los Angeles, CA 90095.)

This manual will not address the process involved in changing district policies and structures; the focus here is on the work of support staff so that a Learner Support Framework can be created in their school. It is important to understand that the Learner Support Framework will be most effective when administrators at all levels in a school district are informed about this framework and are involved in its implementation.

This chapter addresses steps that support staff can take to introduce this framework to an individual school. As mentioned in the opening chapter, the Adelman and Taylor framework organizes school support staff work around six components. Students, staff and parents’ needs can be surveyed for each component and existing resources mapped. Adelman and Taylor place student services on a continuum from those serving low need to high need students. Schools generally have well-developed and easily identified services for high need (special education) students. The Center for Mental Health in Schools focuses on helping support staff create programs to benefit all students, for example, their manuals describe crisis prevention ideas that will increase the safety and improve the school climate for all students.

When the CMHS framework is introduced in a school, often only a handful of staff are familiar with the concepts developed by Adelman and Taylor. Initially, staff trained in using this framework should spend time providing information and orientation sessions to administrators, teachers, other school staff, and to families. The orientation should contain information about the barriers to learning that most students encounter during their school experience. The orientation should explain that the barriers can be addressed by assessing the school's current resources and by surveying members of the school community about the needs and the gaps in services. Developing plans to address these identified needs will be the focus of a team of support and other school staff. To accomplish this work, usually one support staff is designated as a Resource Coordinator and the team that works with them as the Resource Coordinating Team.

Since school resources are limited, frequently the current staff in the building does this work. Often the Resource Coordinating Team develops from the work of those on the Student Assistance Team. Typically the resource coordinating activities to reduce barriers to learning are phased into a school. One suggestion from Adelman and Taylor's framework suggests that the Student Assistance Team set aside 10-15 minutes every meeting to review issues affecting the school's climate. Most school climate concerns will fall under one of the Adelman and Taylor framework's six components. By selecting one of these components as a starting point, support staff and others can then use the needs assessments and surveys developed for this component. Then already existing resources in the school can be mapped and interventions can be developed to meet the school's needs. When the Student Assistance Team starts to look at the bigger picture needs of the school and its students, the Team is starting to function as a Resource Coordinating Team. As support staff and others in the school develop school wide initiatives and move ahead with implementing this framework, they may decide to create a more formalized Resource Coordinating Team. (The above was adapted from the Resource Coordinating Team, UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools, Department of Psychology, P.O Box. 951563, Los Angeles, CA 90095.)

Coordinating Resources

School support staff are very familiar with the role and functions of a Student Assistance Team; the idea of a Resource Coordinating Team is often a new idea. The table below explains some of the differences between the “case oriented” Student Assistance Team and a Resource-Oriented Team:

A Case-Oriented Team	A Resource-Oriented Team
<p>Focuses on specific <i>individuals</i> and specific <i>services</i></p>	<p>Focuses on <i>all</i> students and the <i>resources, programs, and systems</i> to address barriers to learning and to promote healthy development</p>
<p>EXAMPLES OF FUNCTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing referrals • Assigning cases • Planning interventions • Case monitoring • Case progress review • Case reassessment 	<p>EXAMPLES OF FUNCTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping resources • Analyzing resources • Surveying needs of students, teachers and parents • Enhancing resources • Program and system planning/development • Redeploying resources • Coordinating and integrating resources • Social “marketing”

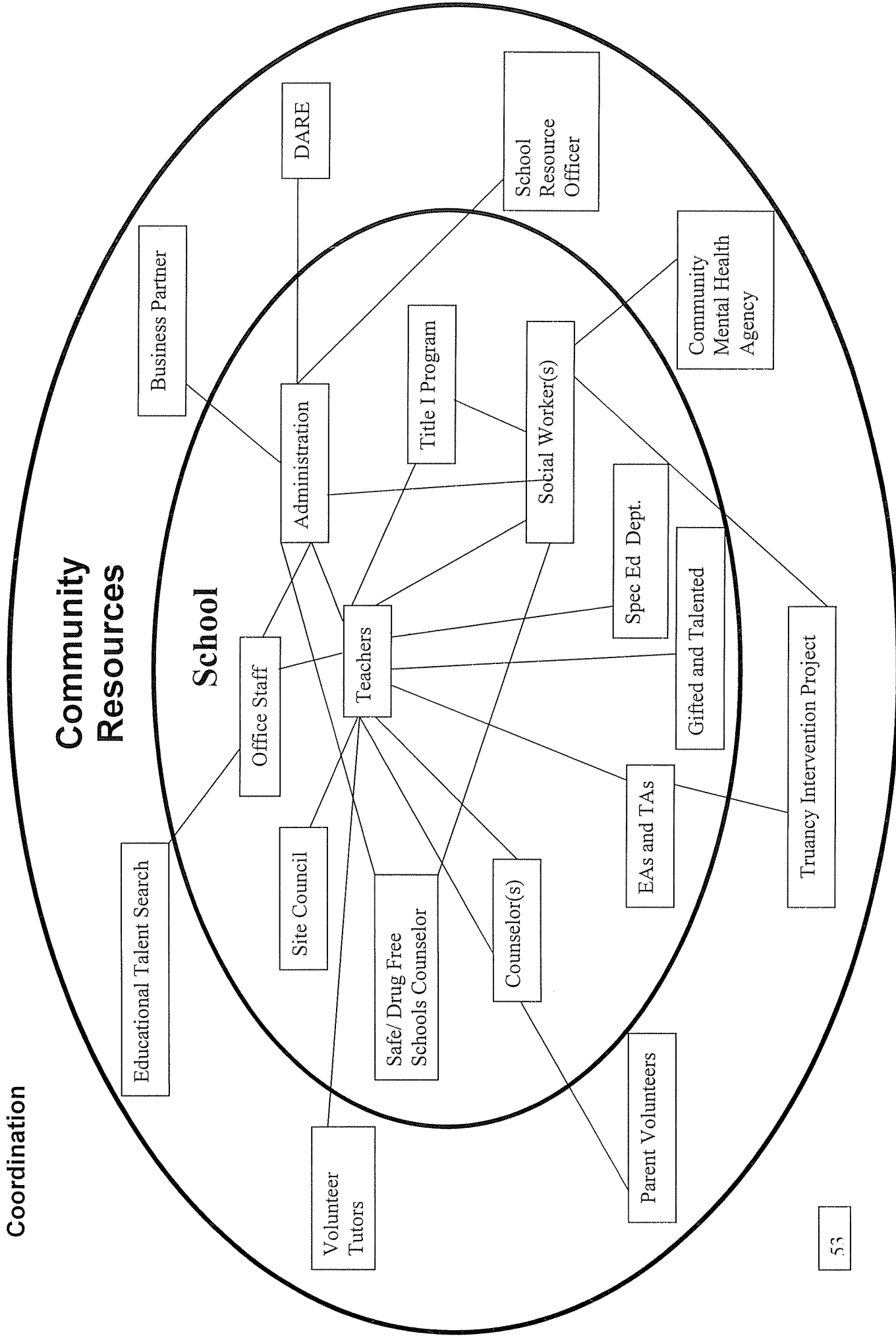
Table 1 Adapted from: Adelman and Taylor, A Center Report: *Resource Oriented Teams: Key Infrastructure Mechanisms for Enhancing Education Support*, March 2001, UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools, Department of Psychology, P.O Box. 951563, Los Angeles, CA 90095, p. 5.

Both of these teams (Case Oriented and Resource Coordinating) are needed in the schools. Initially, creating “another team” may be seen as a burden, however, the Resource Coordinating Team can improve access to student supports, develop programs to improve school climate and potentially reduce the work of the Student Assistance Team. When trying to accomplish both functions within the same meeting, sufficient time must be devoted to the coordination and appropriate use of existing resources and systems.

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the usefulness and function of a Resource Coordinating Team. Figure 3 is an example of what the communication patterns in a school might look like. It shows how communication can be inefficient, with some members of the school community not communicating what they are doing with others. Figure 4 shows how communication about all members can flow through one body (a Resource Coordinating Team) so that information can be shared among the whole school community more effectively.

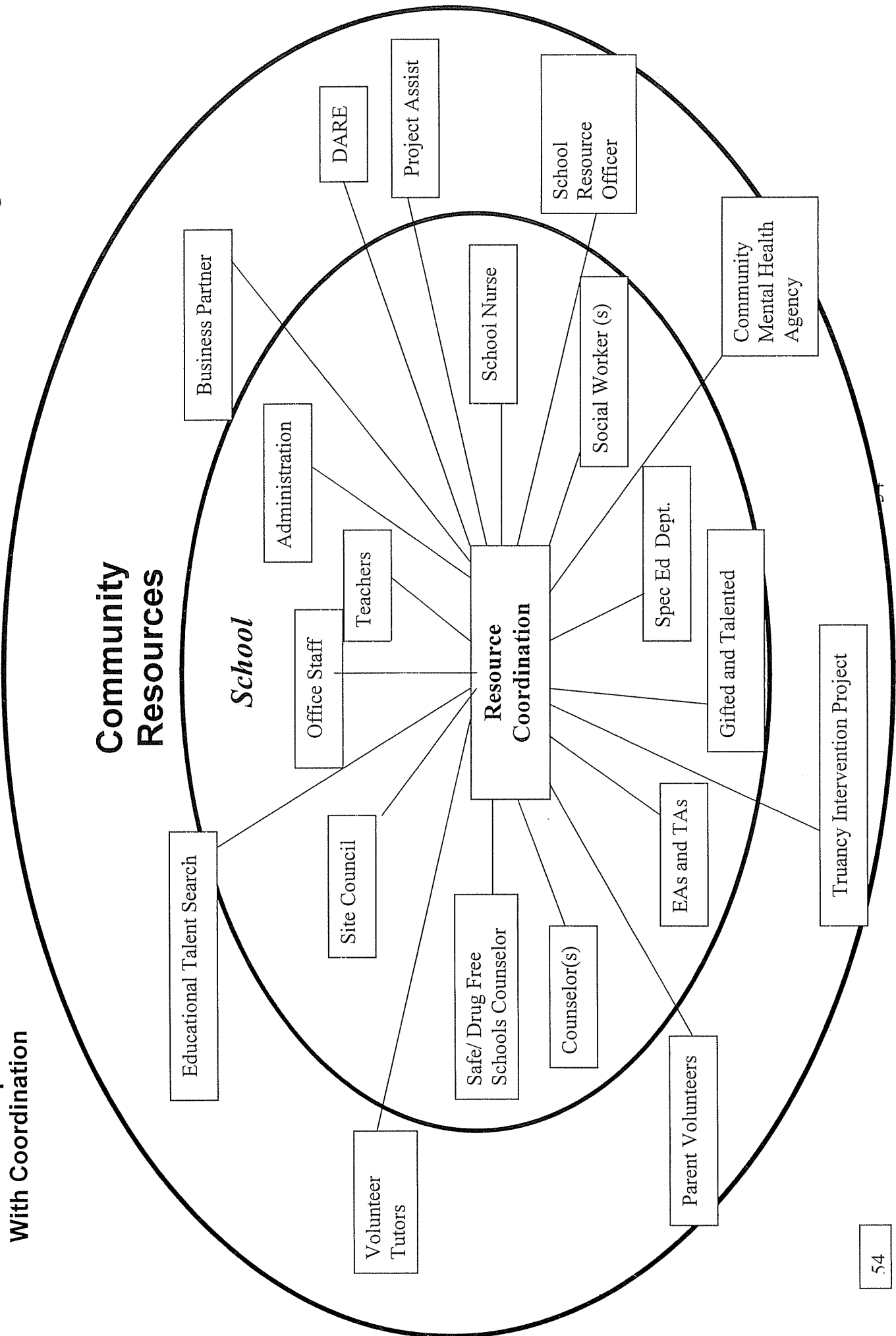
**Resource Map
Without
Coordination**

Figure 3



Resource Map With Coordination

Figure 4



The next section describes ways that a school support staff or outside mental health consultant can begin to work as a Resource Coordinator. “How to Become Part of the System” provides some suggestions on how to enter the school and understand how schools function. “Assessing Needs and Setting Goals” explains when and how to use the Adelman and Taylor surveys developed for each of their six components. Usually a Resource Coordinator will use survey information along with a Resource Map of existing services to help the Resource Coordinating Team develop goals to address the barriers to learning in the school. Ideas on how to do Resource Mapping will be explained later in this chapter.

How to Become Part of the System to Meet Your Goals

A key skill for implementing the framework of Adelman and Taylor is to effectively engage the school’s staff in this process. This is true whether a school support staff is implementing this framework or a mental health professional from a community agency is coordinating the work.

The Resource Coordinator’s task is to facilitate a process from *within* the system. When a mental health staff from an outside agency enters the school to make changes that the educational staff will have to adopt, getting buy-in will be necessary. As an outside employee, this person will need to *join* the school staff by first becoming part of what works in the system. When a school employee is in this role, similar concerns need to be addressed. Being part of the system means becoming an integral part of the school community:

What might educators be worried about as this Framework is implemented?

- That teachers’ jobs will become more difficult by adding work for them to do.
- That the demands and stresses of teaching a class of 20-40 students will not be understood.
- That the work of teachers will be judged negatively.
- That accommodations for one student will be seen as unfair by the rest of the class and/or by students’ parents.

Staff implementing this framework must communicate to school staff through actions and attitudes that they are there to help students succeed by reducing barriers to learning, improving the school climate and supporting teachers in their work. Teachers’ plates are already full. Suggestions will be more palatable if they take the form of “ instead of X, try Y ” rather than “in addition, do Z”. It is important to remember that if a new task or responsibility is added, another one should be taken away.

The Coordinator’s challenge is to communicate *how* an intervention is not only good for James, but that it will benefit *the teacher and the whole class*. Interventions that are simple, quick, and applicable to the whole class will be the most useful. By addressing this concern, the Resource Coordinator will be on his or her way to being seen as a valuable part of the school community.

Educators and mental health professionals share the goal of helping children and adolescents be successful at school, in the community and at home. Each group of professionals has received specialized training focused on specific aspects of a child’s development. These areas of concern are not mutually exclusive but are interdependent. A child who feels successful in the school environment will be a more successful, confident learner. A child who can express him/herself appropriately will be less aggressive. Finding common ground and looking for win-win solutions will take the school community towards successful integration of mental health services to improve the school’s climate and environment.

Additional Tips to Get Established in the Schools

Understanding a New System: “Look Before You Leap”

When entering a new school, the first step staff need to take is determining the chain of command in the system, who has the authority to authorize changes. In most schools, either the principal or an assistant principal will need to give final approval to any changes. Once initial approval has been obtained for a project, the administrator should be given regular progress reports. This helps insure that the administrator clearly understands what is to be accomplished and that the administrator still approves of the changes.

The Resource Coordinator implementing the Center for Mental Health in Schools framework needs to check-in with other support staff, like the school social worker(s) and guidance counselor(s). When initially starting this work, regular check-ins with these staff is strongly recommended. It is very important that the Resource Coordinator does not unwittingly cross over roles (or step on toes) with these important staff members. The Resource Coordinator’s work can often complement the work of the other support staff to the benefit of the students. By carefully delineating roles when working on shared initiatives and making sure each person’s job responsibilities at the school are understood by all, the Resource Coordinator will reduce potential confusion or conflict in this type of work

Work Space: “It Used to Be a Closet”

Before any systems work can be done, it helps if the Resource Coordinator has a visible workspace. Flexibility is required in this process. If the Resource Coordinator will be doing individual, family, and/or group work, it is crucial to inform the administrator that private space, large enough to accommodate a certain number of people, will be needed. Sometimes shared space can be used for groups: for example, the nurse or parent-educator may be on site only a few days a week and their space can be used for groups on days they are out of the building.

When providing direct services, the Resource Coordinator should not compromise the confidentiality of students/clients. They may need to explain why a hallway, cafeteria or auditorium stage would be inappropriate for clinical work. Remember: occupational therapists and speech therapists often provide their special services “in the open.” It is the Resource Coordinator’s responsibility to explain how their needs differ and why. If the Resource Coordinator is employed by an external agency, this subject may require more explanation and information as schools and mental health agencies are under different regulations regarding data privacy.

Making Your Presence Known at the School: “Leave Your Invisibility Cloak at Home”

- Don’t hide in the office.
- Get a feel for the climate of the school by walking around before classes at the start and end of the school day. The presence of adults in the hallways and as buses are loading helps with safety issues. This is usually appreciated by staff.
- Check in with staff and students by walking the hallways, dropping by the cafeteria, visiting on the playground, and eating lunch in the teachers’ lounge several times a week. Rotate the times for this informal check-in in order to meet different groups of staff and students.

- Join committees, not just the obvious mental health/safety-meeting type, but also ones that address staff morale or school climate. Here the Resource Coordinator will get to know some of the staff not routinely seen and may then be able to influence broader school decisions.
- Follow any building dress codes.

Reaching Out to the School: “Drumming Up Business”

As a Resource Coordinator trying to address systems issues in the schools, “business” does not necessarily come to you, particularly not in the beginning. School personnel are busy trying to keep up with the ever-increasing demands on them and haven’t yet figured out where this work fits. Once the needs, or gaps in the system, are identified, the Resource Coordinator’s job is to try to find creative, unobtrusive ways to meet these needs or bring them to the administrator or appropriate school committee’s attention. When bringing a problem to teachers or administrators’ attention, remember to also bring some sample solutions. The purpose is to make teachers’ work more effective, not more complicated and cumbersome.

Reaching out to the School: “Get in the Loop”

Administrative secretaries and maintenance staff usually know a great deal about how the school functions and are great sources for:

- Finding out how to get keys, a telephone, computer, and furniture for the office.
- Making sure a mail-slot is assigned.
- Finding out how to get photocopies made.
- Getting on the intra-school e-mail and voice mail systems.
- Gaining access to the school’s computer information system.

Understanding the History of Reform: “Do Your Homework”

Find out what the school’s history is on pertinent topics, such as parent involvement. School staff often have many experiences with initiatives that were unsuccessful or did not last long enough to produce results. Find out what can added or changed to increase the chances of success

Formal and Informal Power Structures: “Where Angels Fear To Tread”

In most organizations there are formal and informal holders of power and influence. There are usually people who greatly influence decisions in the organization without holding a position high in the formal hierarchy. These people typically have gained respect and informal influence through years of service in the school. Their opinions may be highly regarded by the formal leadership. Find out who these people are and consult with them.

Making Sense of and Respecting the School Norms: “Where’s Waldo?”

Figure out how the class schedule works. Determine what mysterious comments like “it’s a B day” mean. It is more difficult to locate students in middle and secondary schools because classes change during the day. Once the Resource Coordinator figures out where a student is, find out what is the least disruptive way to call the student from class without upsetting instruction. When running a group, rotate the times from session to session so students are not

taken out of the same class all the time. When seeing students for individual sessions, check to see if the student is in academic trouble in one or more classes and try to not take her/him out of this class(es). Also, understand and use the hall pass system, if the school has one.

The Keys to Effective Communication: “Read from the Same Page”

Never assume to know how people communicate in the school. Find out what is the best method to communicate with key stakeholders. Do staff prefer e-mail, voicemail or notes in their mailbox? Problems can develop because assumptions are made that staff members know about, have received and read important communications. For example, e-mails are sent well in advance of a meeting; staff may then say later, “Oh, I never read my e-mail. Everyone knows they have to talk to me directly if they want me to attend a meeting.”

Use multiple means of communicating the same information to school staff, i.e. e-mail and a memo in everyone’s mailbox. Color paper or clip art are also good ways to get people’s attention in communications.

Coordinate, Coordinate!

One of the goals of the Resource Coordinator is to ensure that services to a student are not duplicated, i.e., to make sure the student is not already being seen by another professional in the school. For example, the assistant principal might take a student to the guidance counselor because the student is showing signs of depression. Meanwhile, a teacher refers the same student to a different support staff person, also to assess for depression. A Resource Coordinator on the Student Assistance Team can reduce duplication. They would be aware of which students were referred for services and help staff decide which person should work with this student.

It is also critical that the Resource Coordinator and other support staff get back to their referral sources to inform them that either the student was seen or efforts are in place to meet with the student. The Appendix contains examples of Referral and Feedback forms, pages *A-48 to A-49*.

Important Allies Among the School Staff

Establishing a good relationship with the administrative secretary, building engineer and the cafeteria staff are key to functioning effectively in a school. These employees are critical allies in scheduling a parent or student group meeting in the school. For example, the Resource Coordinator will probably need to schedule the room with the administrative secretary. Then the building engineer and custodial staff need to know that their help is needed with cleaning the room and moving tables and chairs. If it is an evening meeting, the principal’s permission will be needed in order to use the building after hours, etc.

Assessing Needs and Setting Goals

As the Resource Coordinator learns the Who’s and the How’s of the workings of the school, this person is also figuring out what the needs of the school are, and how to set goals and priorities for the work that needs to be accomplished.

Using Surveys Effectively: “And the Survey Says...”

One of the most logical ways to figure out what the school needs and wants is by doing a comprehensive survey. Asking people to fill out long cumbersome surveys is likely to work against efforts to build relationships and gain acceptance. School staff are often “surveyed to death” by various entities. Find out what other surveys and data have been collected recently, and see if any of this data can be used in this work.

If, after gathering data through alternative means, a survey is needed, design it to be concise, practical, to-the-point, and easy to analyze. An alternative is to use a focus group of stakeholders. It also helps to give out food or prizes for filling out surveys. The surveys developed by Adelman and Taylor are well designed to gather this information. All of the six Component Surveys are at the end of each chapter. The surveys are also located in the Appendix, see pages A-2 to A-14.

After gathering information through surveys, the Resource Coordinator needs to inform staff of the results and how they will be used. This is important as frequently teachers have taken the time to complete surveys and never been informed of the outcomes. To understand a school community, surveying parents and students is also important. The Adelman and Taylor framework surveys were developed to gather this information. The surveys ask whether staff or parents know if the school has a certain service, training or program; whether they want more of that service or training; or whether this area has not been developed but staff or parents see this as a needed service. For example, in the area of Crisis Intervention, staff are asked about whether all school staff are aware of the school’s crisis plan; if the plan is updated at least annually, and whether training occurs on how to respond to a school wide crisis or an individual student crisis. This information is very useful when setting goals for implementing the framework and setting priorities about where to initially focus efforts.

Resource Mapping

Once information about the school’s needs and priorities has been gained from surveys, the Resource Coordinator’s next step is to create a Resource Map. A Resource Map is a comprehensive document that describes the kinds of resources and services available to students and staff. The Resource Coordinator might find that no one person has a clear understanding of all the resources and programs offered by various school, district or community agency staff in the school. Creation of a Resource Map can start by the Resource Coordinator meeting with a group of support staff and/or administrators. The Coordinator can start the meeting by distributing a chart they have developed of existing services and how to access them. Those attending the meeting are asked to contribute their information about the school’s resources to this list. The Coordinator should spend time gathering information from the various District offices to enhance the Resource Map. These Maps can be tailored to meet a variety of student, family and staff needs. *(See Appendix for assessment tools for developing a resource map, pages A-15 and A-16.)*

By mapping the school’s resources, the Resource Coordinator will be able to see where services overlap with each other, as well as be able to identify gaps in services. The Resource Coordinator can analyze existing resources, how they are accessed, and where resources may be duplicated. The Resource Map can be reviewed with the Resource Coordinating Team. This information can then be used to design new responses to emerging school concerns and to potentially reallocate school personnel and funds to meet these needs.

Setting Priorities and Goals

As the needs of the school are determined and the Resource Coordinator understands what are the school's priorities in addressing barriers to learning and school climate concerns, the next step is to develop goals and a work plan to meet these needs. Input and feedback should be obtained from administrators, teachers and parents throughout the process of developing the goals and the work plan. A work plan should include the goal to be accomplished, the steps to reach the goal, staff who will be working to accomplish the goal, and a timeline for reaching the goal. A sample work plan is located at the end of this Chapter, *pages 62 and 63*.

Once a work plan has been drafted, it should be reviewed with administrators and various stakeholders prior to publicly informing the school faculty, parents or others about the efforts to integrate and coordinate support services to reduce barriers to learning. By involving many members of the school community in creating the plan, the potential for successful implementation of the plan is increased.

The Importance of Demonstrating Your Value to the School: “Do Something...”

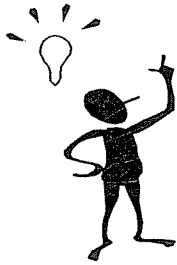
No matter how many times the CMHS' Resource Coordinator introduces their work, school staff may still be still unclear about what the Coordinator will be doing. It is essential that the Resource Coordinator does something helpful soon after arriving at the school. This usually means doing the bigger picture work simultaneously with actively responding to a specific request from school staff.

The Resource Coordinator can start by addressing needs and concerns identified by the principal and teachers. This person should choose something salient yet easily addressed, even if there are much broader and equally important issues at the building level. By doing something tangible and useful for the staff, perhaps something school staff have not had the time to do themselves, the Resource Coordinator's role can begin to be understood and valued. For example, developing a referral form for students staff are concerned about (*sample form in the Appendix, page A-48*) or leading a short-term group for students on topics such as Anger Management or Social Skills can be good ways for the Resource Coordinator to get started in a new school.

The Resource Coordinator should volunteer to help with sign-ins at conferences and family events or pass out food. Don't be afraid to roll up your sleeves and dive in to whatever activity needs help.

Choose Your Commitments Wisely: “...But Don't Do Just Anything!”

The challenge is to be useful and helpful, but it is important not to automatically do everything that is asked. The Resource Coordinator needs to be purposeful, weighing the various requests carefully with the priorities, long-term goals, and mandates from the grant/agency/district. As everyone knows, there is no shortage of good things that need to be done in the schools and schools welcome help. The Coordinator needs to balance services offered that directly respond to individual student needs and keeping their eye on the big picture of developing a system and programs that respond to the needs of most of the students and staff in the building. By meeting with others in the school district who are also involved in doing Resource Coordination, this person can stay focused on the tasks needed to coordinate resources and gain ideas and support for their work.



Keys to Success

- Understand and respect the fact that school staff are very busy and have an inordinate amount of paperwork to complete. If the mental health professional calls them to a meeting or asks them to fill out questionnaires or surveys, make it worth their time and remember to get back to them with the result.
- Attend various committees that relate to the mental health professional's areas of interest.
- Understand the political climate of the school.
- Use both formal and informal power structures in the school.
- Make connections with people from as many segments of the school as possible (teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, secretaries, special education staff, social workers, guidance counselors, nurses, engineers, people who have been at the school for a long time, new staff, students, parents) and ask for their input and feedback.

Be strategic in being helpful, but not so helpful that this effort becomes overextended and loses focus.

St. Paul Public Schools Learner Support Work Plan

Key Area	Sequential Action Steps	Persons Responsible	Timeline	Progress

St. Paul Public Schools Learner Support Work Plan

SAMPLE

Key Area	Sequential Action Steps	Persons Responsible	Timeline	Progress
Emergency/Crisis Prevention and Response	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use Resource Map to identify resources. 2. Use surveys to evaluate need for training of staff on safety issues and crisis de-escalation. 3. Create a Work Crisis Team if none exists and implement key components from Crisis Assistance and Prevention Survey. 4. Conduct training on identified issues to include emergency response plans, media relations, psychological first aid, suicide prevention as identified in survey. 5. Develop a school-wide campaign to improve school climate by reducing bullying behaviors. Classroom advisory lessons on solving problems, helping students recognize bullying behavior and curriculum on actions by-standers and those being bullied can take to improve school climate and safety. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resource Coordinating Team (RCT), Administration 2. RCT, Administration 3. RCT, Staff, Administration 4. RCT, Staff, Administration 5. RCT, Staff, Administration 	<p>Fall</p> <p>Fall</p> <p>Fall</p>	