

**PROVIDING SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR
CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES:
WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO**

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Therefore, the mission of the school as a whole has begun to expand to include not only teaching children but also participating in providing services and supports that help them enter school, everyday, ready to learn.

At the state and district level, educational administrators are participating with their social service colleagues to reform formal supports, such as health care and child protective services, to make them effective and accountable for results. These efforts are translating into community-wide collaboratives at the state and local levels, as well as the increased presence of formal services at or linked to schools.¹ Reforms of this scale are necessary to truly change children's lives.

But building these relationships and making these changes take time. Children grow up and grow poorly while bureaucracies move slowly. Teachers and other school staff know that without addressing children's immediate, practical needs, they won't learn. And it's much harder to bring children back to school as enthusiastic learners once they have already experienced failure. So, while schools are participating as full partners in the systemic reforms around them, while they are forming collaborative relationships with human services, they can also create their own programs to help provide the supports students need to learn. Expanding the mission of the school to include these supports and services will also facilitate longer-term, cross-agency collaborations: schools will understand more about the "business" of providing supports to children, and school leaders will be accustomed to this broader role.

Schools traditionally have been reluctant to venture into the provision of social supports. At a time when schools are under tremendous pressure to return to the "basics," these functions might be seen as taking away from the core educational mission of the school. Expanding the school's mission also often means changes in the roles of teachers, administrators and support staff. Even these informal supports take precious stores of volunteer time, school funds, and planning

¹ For more information, one source is Dryfoos, Joy. Full-Service Schools: A Revolution in Health and Social Services for Children, Youth and Families. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994. Telephone 415-433-1767.

time. And schools may feel that undertaking this role would be seen as encroaching onto the "turf" of other agencies and organizations.

But the reality is that schools are where the children are, and in order for schools to accomplish their educational mission, they need to participate in helping students become ready to learn, even if they don't always arrive at school that way. Fortunately, many schools have begun providing these supports and their experiences can help smooth some of the bumps along the road.

We do not want to lose the forest for the trees. Make no mistake: small, informal services on the scale that schools can support cannot solve all of the problems that hinder children's ability to learn and grow. Providing these supports cannot substitute for broader reforms, or we will just end up repeating the mistakes of the past. But forests are also composed of many well-tended trees, and planting and feeding some oaks and maples will mean that some shade exists where none was before. And these small successes can both pave the way for greater accomplishments and keep people motivated as they strive for long-term change.

This paper describes (1) how a school can examine its mission to provide institutional support for this expanded role, (2) a process for deciding what supports to provide, and (3) examples of supports that other schools have undertaken. It is meant for the school administrators and teachers who will need to lead this process if it is to succeed.

II. INCORPORATING SERVICES AND SUPPORTS INTO THE MISSION OF THE SCHOOL

Even the informal, low-cost services and supports described in this paper require some time, energy, space or materials—commodities in limited supply in any community. In order for supports to be successful, the school must embrace this expanded mission whole-heartedly. Section III of this paper describes a process school-based groups can use to design and deliver

supports. But the first step must be for the school to examine its own culture. It will be much harder for supports to exist and grow if the school climate is hostile to the idea that schools should do anything other than simply teach the students who show up at their door. Supports will grow much more easily if the routine management of the school, from job descriptions and evaluations for principals and teachers, to the procedures for deciding how space is used is considered in light of this expanded school role. But creating this attitude may take concentrated time and attention from education administrators as well as individual school staff. Some suggested areas of attention follow.

- **Job descriptions for administrators:** A welcoming attitude toward social supports needs to start with the school leadership. Job descriptions and evaluations of school principals and vice-principals need to include mention of their ability to organize and encourage needed supports. Principals need to understand, accept and advocate for this part of the school's mission. They can also work with teachers and school staff to provide services and facilitate communication and coordination among the participants. It is important that specific staff members have responsibility for organizing the supports. Administrators can ensure that responsibility is clearly assigned, and they need to develop rewards for teachers and other people who organize and provide these supports -- even the most dedicated teachers, counselors, parents and other volunteers will burn out if they are not supported and recognized for their efforts.
- **Job descriptions for teachers:** These efforts cannot succeed without enthusiastic support from teachers. Teachers will be involved in every step, from identifying problems, to referring students, to participating in providing supports. The goal of these programs is not to "turn teachers into social workers," but rather to involve them in offering supports that come easily to the school and address the most pressing problems they see everyday. For example, teachers would not be involved in long-term counseling for students, but many schools have developed peer support groups for students that are facilitated by teachers and other school staff.

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- **Roles of support staff:** Many supports, especially those delivered outside of normal school hours, will require additional work not only from volunteer leaders, but also from custodians and security personnel. Schools will need to incorporate the costs of these personnel, as well as necessary changes to labor agreements, into their plans.
 - **Space planning:** When deciding how to use the building space, schools need to include options for providing social supports. Many urban schools are far short of space even for classroom functions. However, a variety of spaces can be adapted for this purpose. For example, meeting space in classrooms, libraries, cafeterias, etc. can be used for support groups; a secluded corner with electrical hook-ups can house washing machines and dryers; and a small storage cabinet can hold food or clothes closets.

In particular, one of the most powerful statements schools can make is to have a room or other defined area designated for parents. Ideally, this room would serve as a family resource center, with paid full-time staff. But if the school and community cannot provide that level of funding, just having a welcoming, designated space where parents can gather, where materials can be located, and where volunteers can work will help make parents feel more "at home" and encourage their involvement.

- **Budget planning:** While many forms of support can be delivered for minimal out-of-pocket costs, service delivery is much easier if there are small pots of funds for supplies, refreshments, child care, transportation etc. If the school budget and fund-raising plans are oriented to accomplishing the school's desired goals, social supports will need to be considered alongside educational supports for allocation of funds. In addition to school funds, schools can build relationships with other organizations in the community, such as businesses, that could supply funds, volunteers, supplies, expertise and other needed commodities.
- **School schedules:** Two years ago, Scott High School in Kentucky created "Uprising," a very successful peer support group for a diverse cross-section of students. The students and a teacher leader meet once per week just to discuss the ongoing issues of growing

up and becoming responsible adults -- what they call "living your word". The founders of this group, science teacher David Taylor and English teacher Pat Fox,² emphasize that key to the success of this group has been a flexible school schedule that allows the students and teachers to meet during the school day. Schools that have developed a team approach to helping individual students have also found it helpful to be able to use time during the school day.

Of course, time during the day is extremely precious and subject to many competing demands. Furthermore, often it is students who most need more instructional time who are pulled away from the classroom for these "extra" services. But it is important that school staff be willing to consider allocating time during the day for social supports.

The dilemma of dividing up precious time, space and money will always persist. But it is important that allocation of these commodities take into consideration the social supports that are necessary for the school to accomplish its educational mission.

- **Teacher training:** The skills necessary to organize, provide or participate in these supports are not often part of the teacher certification process. In-service training opportunities for teachers need to include time for faculty and staff to gain new organizational skills and to learn about the substance of providing supports, participating in human services reform and adopting a family focus. They also need to encourage enthusiastic support for the school's participation as well as for the individuals providing services. Training sessions can cover topics such as: identifying student needs, working collaboratively with education colleagues and those from other disciplines, recognizing what these informal supports can accomplish as well as what their limits are, running support groups for students and colleagues, and establishing relationships with parents. Training for all service providers needs to include understanding different cultures and designing services that fit with those cultures.

² For information, contact Pat Fox, Scott High School, 5400 Old Taylor Mill Road, Taylor Mill, KY 41015; (606) 356-3146.

- **Parent engagement:** Schools have always been concerned with increasing parent involvement in the educational mission of the school—encouraging parents to be classroom aides; to donate materials, time and money; and to chaperon field trips. With this expanded role for schools, there are also expanded opportunities to involve parents—not just as recipients of social supports, but as experts in designing and providing them as well. Parents are often the best people to welcome new students and families into the school, conduct needs assessments to determine what other families need, and to provide information about other community resources.

For example, Fienberg/Fisher Elementary School in Miami, with a largely Hispanic and low-income student population, organized "Healthy Learners." Parent volunteers (called "Rainmakers" for Referral and Information Network) provide other parents with direct supports as well as information and referral services. When a lice infestation threatened to close down the school, the parent volunteers went door to door in the neighborhood, distributing lice shampoo and giving low-key, non-threatening, parent-to-parent advice.³ The parents of students at Morristown Elementary School in Vermont faced a serious shortage of before- and after-school child care. After getting approval for their plan from the School Improvement Team, the parents organized this care using the school facilities. The parents now run and finance the child care program on their own. In this case, the school served only as a catalyst and a cooperative partner that enabled the parents to solve their own dilemma.⁴

Involving parents (as well as professionals from different disciplines) in providing services does raise some issues that schools need to address, such as protecting

³ For information on the Healthy Learners project, contact Grace Nebb, Principal, Fienberg/Fisher Elementary, 1420 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, FL 33139; (305) 531-0419.

⁴ For information, contact Dorothy Reeve, school nurse, Morristown Elementary, RR #1, Box 7250, Morrisville, VT 05661; (802) 888-3101.

confidentiality. But there are ways to protect confidentiality while giving service providers essential information.⁵

- **Public engagement:** While the school is considering how to gain public support for its educational reform efforts, it needs to include plans for communicating with the public and gaining support for its participation in providing social supports to families and children. This participation, whether it be serving on a community-wide collaborative making decisions on a policy level, or providing a direct service such as a clinic or clothes closet, has its own public engagement issues. However, the methods that schools are developing to engage the public on educational reforms will also be effective in this area: communicate early and often; use simple, jargon-free language; and find out what parents want and be responsive to their priorities.
- **Union engagement:** Discussions with unions over changing teacher and staff roles in education will also need to include changing roles in participating in social supports for students and families. Unions for school nurses and other support staff may be concerned about the prospect of using volunteers for certain services, like home visits. Unions for custodians and other support staff may need to be consulted if the school needs to expand its operating hours.

The Los Angeles Educational Partnerships's Los Angeles Learning Centers provides one framework for this task of incorporating services and supports into the ongoing management of the school. In this design, each school is organized around an "Instructional Component," a "Management Component," and an "Enabling Component." The Enabling Component integrates community services with existing educational supports, rather than just linking services to a

⁵ One resource is Soler, Mark and Clark Peters, Who Should Know What? Confidentiality and Information Sharing in Service Integration (Falls Church, VA: National Center for Service Integration, 1993). The authors are from the Youth Law Center, 114 Sansome St., Suite 950, San Francisco, CA 94104; (415) 543-3379. Most materials are aimed at interdisciplinary professional teams, rather than parents and other lay volunteers, but many issues are the same.

school site. It addresses the need for extra-educational supports within the classroom (ideas for teachers on how to handle problems in class); direct services provided by the school as well as referral to community resources; and involving parents as problem solvers. The Guidebook for the Enabling Component emphasizes that these supports need to move from "activity that is viewed as supplementary ("added-on") toward a full-fledged integrated component of restructuring that is understood as primary and essential in enabling learning...the Enabling Component warrants a degree of attention by policy makers, scholars and practitioners that is at least on a par with efforts to restructure instruction and management."⁶

III. A PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Even though these services are meant to be provided with minimal leadtime and preparation, thinking carefully about how to develop the services will prevent problems from occurring further down the road. Think of painting a room. The temptation is to simply start painting; taking the time to cover floors and mask light fixtures seems unnecessary, especially if the room is informal and doesn't require a perfect job. The painter may think "I'll just be careful when I get to that part." But then enthusiasm or fatigue, or both, take over. The painter may be lucky and not tip over the can or brush the roller against the light. But it is more likely that half-way into the job she will realize that the work would have gone faster and neater if the preparation work had been done. So too will following at least a minimal process for identifying and providing supports help ensure that supports arise smoothly and endure as long as they are helpful.

Embracing change: The first step is for school leaders, including administrators and teachers, to accept and embrace this expansion of the school's mission and role. As

⁶ Howard Adelman, Getting From Here to There: A Guidebook for The Enabling Component, January 1995. For information, contact Prof. Howard Adelman, Department of Psychology, UCLA, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1563; (310) 825-1225.

explored in the section above, there may be reasons why teachers and principals are reluctant to embark upon this journey. But school leaders need to embrace this concept with commitment and enthusiasm, or efforts to organize and provide services will simply be wasted.

Empowering volunteers: The next step is to empower parents and other volunteers to take leadership roles. Parents are the best judge of what services and supports they need, and they are often able to connect with other parents in ways that are difficult if not impossible for professional providers. If the culture of providing supports is to be firmly established, parents need to be involved in decision-making from the earliest stages. This means that school leaders need to develop a collaborative relationship with parents as true partners.

Generating enthusiasm: Third, schools need to consider how to generate enthusiastic participation among the volunteer service organizers and providers: parents, teachers and other school staff, and youth themselves. Schools will need a cadre of volunteers to plan and deliver services. The shortage of and competition for time and energy is endemic across our society. Participating in providing services and supports competes with work, family time, hobbies, and other civic, religious, social and cultural activities. After facing long commutes, stressful jobs, tight budgets and demanding families, both parents and teachers are emotionally and physically exhausted. How can schools entice people to give them some of this precious time and energy? As Sarah France, the coordinator of a Readiness to Learn grant in Washington state puts it, schools need to ask "what's the burn?"—what "hook" will move this work high enough on a teacher's and family's priority list? Schools need to build in as many hooks as possible:

- Ensure that people feel needed.
- Recognize volunteers for their contribution; this recognition can take many forms, such as plaques and public acknowledgement, or tangible tokens of appreciation such as small gift certificates. In addition, every volunteer probably has family members "keeping the home fires burning" while they do the volunteer work.

Schools may want to acknowledge or recognize the work that these supporters do as well.

- Help volunteers gain experience or skills that are useful to them in their jobs.
- Ensure that the contributions of teachers, support staff and other professional staff are specifically acknowledged in their job evaluations.
- Explain how the programs will benefit the volunteers' own children as well as children in the neighborhood.
- Match volunteers with work or subjects that interest them.
- Find ways that volunteers can work with their friends or in teams that build camaraderie (many boards that want substantial parent or lay participation ask each professional to bring a lay person with him/her).

In addition, the process of designing and delivering services needs to make it as easy as possible to participate. Making meetings and work sessions attractive to volunteers may be common sense but careful consideration of participants' needs will go a long way to encouraging participation. Many publications discuss hosting successful meetings; a few key points are to (1) provide food—hosting meals towards the end of the month is especially attractive for low-income families; (2) provide transportation when necessary; (3) depending on the parent's preference and the work to be done, provide either child care or an environment in which children are included; and (4) provide materials in appropriate languages, and interpreters for meetings and social functions.

Using the results framework: to start the process of deciding what services are needed, schools can look at the results they have identified as their highest priority. Even small programs need to fit into a larger scheme of what the school and community want for their

children. Otherwise, they simply add to the fragmentation and the feeling of many disparate people "spinning their wheels" in an uncoordinated effort. In many cases, these outcomes will be broadly stated goals that will take significant time and resources to achieve. However, they can and should be broken down into "intermediate" outcomes that give some guidance as to immediate steps that can be taken and interim measures that can be used to evaluate progress. These intermediate outcomes can be affected by informal services and supports.

For example, many communities have chosen as one of their key outcomes "success in school." While this may seem dauntingly ambitious, it can be broken down into smaller, interim goals, such as improved attendance, homework completion rates and participation in school activities, and reduced symptoms of distress, such as anxiety, fear, depression and loneliness. These interim goals can be affected by informal supports.⁷

Assessing needs: The next step is to determine the obstacles to achieving these intermediate outcomes and what supports are needed to address them. There may be multiple reasons for any given problem -- for example, in rural Kentucky (as in urban areas), schools found that a major reason why some children were abusing drugs was a lack of alternate activities for after-school hours. When the basketball coach at Eminence (Kentucky) Middle School opened the gym for practice, he found dozens of people showed up just to watch, even if they didn't have a friend or relative on the team. It was something to do. Therefore, to address the substance abuse issue, they are trying to create engaging activities for their youth.

Schools need to determine what these obstacles are, what supports are needed to address them, what supports are already being provided in the community, and what the remaining gaps are.⁸

⁷ One of the fundamental principles of the reform of community services and supports is to shift service provision from an emphasis on inputs to an emphasis on results. Increased attendance can be viewed as an input -- it is a goal only because it can be directly tied to the true result of success in school. However, these intermediate goals are necessary and can be valuable as long as they are not permanent substitutes for the true outcome desired.

⁸ One resource is Bruner, Charles, Karen Bell, Claire Brindis, Hedy Chang, and William Scarbrough. Charting a Course: Assessing a Community's Strengths and Needs. Falls Church,

If schools find that a needed support is already available, but students aren't using it, they can provide the means -- transportation, membership fees, etc. -- for them to do so.

Another example is the Healthy Learners project in Miami, which found that children did not complete homework partly because their crowded homes did not provide a supportive environment for study. The parents organized after-school study halls that provided quiet, supervised study space. Attendance can be improved by supports such as meals for children, supplemental clothing, and increased contact with parents that helps move school attendance up their priority ladder.

Schools will often want to conduct a family needs assessment to determine what families' priorities are. However, schools will need to do more than send home a survey in the child's backpack in order to learn from a sizable portion of parents, especially those who have not had much contact with the school or whose first language is not English. The school may also need to use focus groups, or individual or group interviews. Parkwood Elementary School in Seattle used multiple avenues to contact families — it not only provided a written survey, but called parents, hosted a pot-luck dinner celebrating different ethnic themes and visited parents' homes to gather the information. Appendix A provides a sample survey, using excerpts from surveys from Kentucky, Maryland and Washington state. It may also be useful for schools located near each other to combine their data and develop a common plan for services. This reduces duplication and can have a stronger impact on an entire neighborhood.

Assessing resources: Next, schools need to determine what services and supports school staff and parents can provide. What resources does the school have? Teachers who are willing to organize support groups? Parents who have more time and less money, or vice-versa? Space or materials or equipment that could be used? Specific skills, such as community organizing, writing, counseling, computer skills? A good organizational base of parents and teachers? All of these can serve as the basis for launching a good program.

Providing services: use both leadership and partnership skills in getting these supports started and delivering them successfully. Many schools have some school-wide body that can help organize these supports: parent-teacher-student organizations, a site-based decision-making council, the community services and supports committee, etc. While the support will benefit from having one or a few people spearhead the initial effort, it is vital that these supports be incorporated into the ongoing mission of the school, rather than be the "pet project" of one teacher or staff member. Otherwise, the support may not last once that one person either becomes burned out or moves on to a different job.

It is also important that the service be designed carefully, with input from the families who will be participating. A list of "attributes of effective services" (see figure 2) may help to start the process of thinking about how to deliver the services in a way that attracts families. For example, some services that have no stigma attached to their use, such as parent centers that are attractive to everyone, are more effective if they are in well-traveled, public areas. Others that may have more stigma, such as clothes closets, need more private space.

Evaluating progress: evaluate these supports as to their ongoing effectiveness. Even though a full-scale evaluation is not appropriate, it is helpful if the school has some mechanism to evaluate progress. Even these small projects use up precious time and energy. These supports need to be examined periodically to determine if their target outcomes are still the highest priority, if they are effective at addressing the intermediate outcomes, and what could make them more effective. As discussed above, these outcomes may be interim measures that reflect symptoms rather than root causes. But they do provide a means for determining if the support is accomplishing its goals. For example,

- Peer support groups will be especially helpful for dealing with issues of self-esteem and peer pressure that can lead to poor school performance and violence. They can also help reduce the incidence of unhealthy behaviors, such as sexual activity, and tobacco, alcohol and drug use.
- Parent support groups may be especially helpful at reducing child abuse and neglect.

- A family resource center can help families become involved in their children's education, encouraging them to attend school and devote more attention to their schoolwork.
- Providing food and other essentials can encourage children to attend school and improve their performance.
- Facilitating access to community services (through a directory, referrals and other means) can help with a variety of interim outcomes, such as decent and stable housing, employment for parents and youth, etc.

If a service or support does not seem to be having any effect, it needs to be examined to see how it could be changed to be more effective, or if it should be replaced with another approach.

IV. EXAMPLES

While the discussion above has mentioned several examples of supports and services, it may be helpful to have some ideas of what other schools have done. The list below is meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive and prescriptive. Bear in mind that schools need to start with the results they want, and then design supports to match, rather than selecting a laundry list of supports without a clear idea of how they fit together.

- **Peer support groups for students:** These groups can be facilitated by teachers, staff, parents, or anyone else who is willing to organize the group and facilitate discussion. The San Diego school district offers teachers "Student Assistance Program Training" that trains them to identify problems and facilitate support groups for students.⁹ Teachers at Ray Kroc Middle School in San Diego have taken the training and are considering offering groups on subjects as diverse as living with diabetes, when parents divorce, and

⁹ For information on the San Diego program, contact Judy Beck of the San Diego City Schools, 4100 Normal Street, San Diego, CA 92103; (619) 293-2682.

when a family member has cancer. However, many peer support groups have been successful without formal leadership training. Examples of topics that could be covered are:

- Growing up issues
 - Cultural pride and awareness (O'Farrell Community School in San Diego sponsors separate peer support groups focusing on cultural pride for African-American and Hispanic students)¹⁰
 - Diverse family structures—living with grandparents, etc.
 - Deaths of family members or close friends
 - Participation in gangs (O'Farrell Community School provides gang intervention groups during the school day)
 - Public safety issues
 - Coping with divorce or abandonment
 - Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon
 - Living with diabetes, cancer, or other chronic illnesses or disabilities.
- **Peer support groups for parents:** Topics for these groups include children as gang members, coping with adolescent rebellion, single parenting, etc. A helpful resource may be the Family Resource Coalition's Starting and Operating Support Groups: A Guide for Parents, a guide for lay people on running these type of self-help groups.¹¹
 - **Student assistance teams:** Schools are using teams of teachers, parents and human service professionals to discuss and find solutions for individual student problems. In Brattleboro, Vermont elementary schools, "Early Response Teams" consisting of a

¹⁰ For information, contact Mary Skrabucha, Family Support Services Coordinator, O'Farrell Community School, 6130 Skyline Drive, San Diego, CA 92114; (619) 263-3009.

¹¹ Distributed by the Family Resource Coalition/National Resource Center for Family Support Programs, 200 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1600, Chicago, IL 60604; (312) 341-0900.

child's teacher, parent and human service caseworkers will meet to develop a joint approach to assisting individual students. While this strategy involves outside workers, it was initiated by the elementary school principals.¹²

- **Conflict resolution and peer mediation instruction:** While these do generally require formal training on the part of the school staffperson or parent, they are an increasingly popular and vital means to counteract the pervasive violence in schools and neighborhoods. John F. Kennedy Elementary Montessori School near Louisville, KY provides conflict resolution training for children starting in kindergarten.¹³
- **Parent networking groups:** Parents can provide information and referral to other services, and help families establish personal relationships that can help them weather a variety of large and small crises. In the Healthy Learners project, new parent volunteers go door-to-door in the school neighborhood to learn about their parent neighbors and establish connections with them. In the Los Angeles area, the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center has used hundreds of parents to provide services to other families.¹⁴
- **Family resource center:** As discussed above, even if full-time professional staff are beyond the school's current budget, schools can still establish family centers with part-time staff or parent volunteers. It is important to have a designated space for this function so that parents feel they have some place that is genuinely theirs. As one example,

¹² For information, contact Deborah Brown, Early Education Services, Windham Southeast Supervisory Union, 218 Canal Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301; (802) 254-3742.

¹³ For information, contact Peggy Williams, Kennedy Elementary, 3807 Young Avenue, Louisville, KY 40211; (502) 473-8280.

¹⁴ For information, contact Yolanda Trevino, Director, Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, 13330 Vaughn Street, San Fernando, CA 91340; (818) 896-7461.

"At the Ellis School in Boston, the parent center—a room for parents—was a low-cost success...[T]he school was "a different place" because the parent center existed. It made possible the substantial, continuing, and positive physical presence of family members in the school...It is difficult for school employees to say "The parents just don't care," when caring parents can be seen daily. Staffing the center were two paid coordinators (both of them parents of children in the school), as well as a number of unpaid volunteers. Parent visitors dropped in for coffee, a chat, and information [as well as other services]...School administrators and teachers used the center as a resource. For example, through the parent center they could reach a mother whose child was in emotional distress, make arrangements for a school open house, order teaching materials, or offer comfort to children in moments of crisis."¹⁵

- **Home visits:** This strategy can be very labor-intensive, but often there is no other way to reach parents who hesitate to come to the school. Several examples of home visits have been mentioned; schools have used home visits to learn about family needs, provide direct services, give information about community resources, and to help families feel more comfortable about coming to the school.
- **Community service bank:** Many schools encourage or require their students to participate in service activities. This benefits the provider as well as recipient. O'Farrell Community School in San Diego requires every student to contribute twelve hours of work—four each to their school, home and community.
- **"Glue" money:** As discussed above, it is important that schools not duplicate what already exists in the community. Many students are prevented from using available community services by seemingly small financial barriers: low-cost memberships, public

¹⁵ Don Davies, "Schools Reaching Out: Family, School and Community Partnerships for Student Success" Phi Delta Kappan, January 1991.

transportation costs, etc. Sid Gardner of Center for Collaboration for Children coined this term to describe small amounts of funds that could be used to "stick" children on existing supports. Jeanne Jehl of the San Diego City Schools reports that one program bought universal membership in Boys and Girls Club to ensure access to afterschool programs, and another covered public transportation costs for the largely Somali student population to use the Jewish Community Center.

- **Child care:** This is an ever-present need in virtually every community. As described above, parents in Morristown Elementary in Vermont organized their own before- and after-school child care. The parents interviewed and hired the providers, the care is financed by parent fees and the program uses school facilities.
- **Necessities and near-necessities:** Storage and distribution services for basic necessities of life, such as food; clothes and shoes for children and their parents; and baby supplies for teen parents. Many schools, including the San Diego schools, distribute low-cost children's books to families and talk to parents about how to read to their children. In Denver, the Family Resource Schools, a project of the Denver Public Schools, the city of Denver, businesses and community organizations, provides a variety of services through the schools, including food and clothing banks.¹⁶ Schools such as College Place Elementary in Seattle have also started providing a washer and dryer for parents to use to wash their children's clothes. It is particularly important that these services are in a location that provides parents with some privacy in accessing them.
- **Community resource directory:** This is a tangible product that schools have developed to assist both teachers and parents wanting to find resources for families. In San Diego, a cluster of schools has established the Crawford Community Connection (CCC) which brings together the school and social service agencies to provide supports to local families. They developed a directory which lists information about the school; services

¹⁶ For information about Family Resource Schools, contact Lucy Trujillo, Project Coordinator, 975 Grant St., Denver, CO 80203; (303) 764-3587.

provided by the CCC (including food, blankets, clothing, legal assistance, and referral to other services); and services available in the community (such as job referral services, adult education, health clinics, counseling centers, etc.).¹⁷

- **Flexible funds:** Schools can maintain small pots of funds to pay for small, emergency expenses that cannot be funded through other means. Morristown, Vermont has developed a fund called "Morristown Cares," which uses contributions from school personnel and families. The elementary school nurse, Dot Reeve, handles the fund and has paid for such things as eyeglasses, medications, dental care, clothing and scholarships for summer camp. The fund has averaged \$1,600 in donations annually.
- **Community resource training:** O'Farrell Community School in San Diego used a teacher in-service training day to bring in a variety of community service providers. These providers each spent five minutes describing what they could do for students and families, and telling teachers how to access them. It was especially important that O'Farrell's family resource staff had established relationships with each of these providers so that teachers felt confident that calls for help would be answered. Another way to provide this information is for school staff to visit community-based organizations and get a first hand tour of the service provider.
- **Business partnerships:** Partnerships with local businesses can take a variety of forms, such as student jobs or internships; discounts for good grades; career discussions at the school or workplace; donations of supplies for other support events, such as leftover clothing or food; and contributions of human resources and specific skills, such as budgeting or advertising.
- **Mentors:** Schools are using older youth as well as adults to serve as mentors both in and outside school. However, these programs, like the others mentioned, need to be

¹⁷ For information about the CCC, contact Barbett Wood, director, 4191 Colts Way, San Diego, CA 92115; (619) 287-0894.

carefully nurtured. One of the reasons for following the process outlined above is to help ensure that programs can meet families' and children's expectations.

V. CONCLUSION

As stated in the beginning, clearly these services are not the solution to gang violence, teen-age pregnancy, and school drop-out, as well as ineffective formal systems. States and communities need to undertake comprehensive reform of their formal helping systems. Without the "macro-level" work, the volunteers providing these supports will soon burn out and there will be nothing to replace them.

And there need to be collaborative efforts between schools and other agencies to provide services that schools cannot undertake alone. Schools would be taking a step backward if they simply added to the fragmented, single-discipline nature of the current service system. These supports will be much more effective if they take place in a context where the school is reaching out to other community partners to provide a more integrated, comprehensive array of supports.

But these steps take time. Adults argue while teachers and parents watch their children losing the battle of growing up healthy and happy. These steps outline specific actions schools can take, starting today, to meet the needs of the children they see everyday.

Figure 1: ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE SERVICES

<i>Geographically and physically accessible</i>	Located close to families, near public transportation, and are accessible to people with disabilities.
<i>Psychologically accessible</i>	Rules and operations are easy to understand and use.
<i>Minimal barriers to participation</i>	Families know about and can gain ready access to supports.
<i>Comprehensive and responsive</i>	Doing "whatever it takes" to help families.
<i>Personalized responses</i>	Individualized attention based on families' unique strengths, needs and circumstances.
<i>Family-centered and family-friendly</i>	Staff work with whole families and include them in decision-making.
<i>Partnerships between parents and professionals</i>	Parents and professionals work together; parents are seen as resources and not just as recipients of services.
<i>Responsive to community</i>	Supports address neighborhood conditions that affect families' lives.
<i>Preventive orientation</i>	Preventing problems before they start or become crises.
<i>Mission driven, shaped by client needs</i>	Staff are focused on, and driven by, an empowering sense of mission rather than a disempowering obligation to follow the rules.
<i>Unbureaucratic climate</i>	Services are delivered in a manner that is flexible, friendly, approachable and receptive to families' ideas.
<i>Relentless, problem-solving capacity</i>	Staff continue to seek new ways of addressing family needs.
<i>Emphasis on relationships of mutual trust</i>	Parents and professionals, as well as professionals from different disciplines, build relationships based on trust that help them work together effectively.
<i>Results-oriented accountability</i>	Supports are designed, delivered and evaluated based on the results the community wants for its children and families.
<i>Evolving</i>	Staff evaluate how they are meeting the needs of families and children and change their operating procedures to fit new circumstances.
<i>Focus on individual and community strengths</i>	Services focus on personal abilities and neighborhood assets instead of problems and deficits.
<i>Support for healthy development</i>	Services do not just fix problems but promote healthy development by building the competencies people need to thrive.
<i>A sense of connectedness between the worker and child, youth or family</i>	Workers are not simply "doing their job" but feel connected to -- believe in and respect -- the people with whom they work.

Source: Adapted from Lisbeth Schorr, Deborah Both and Carol Copple, eds., *Effective Services for Young Children: Report of a Workshop* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1991).

Appendix A: Sample Family Needs Survey

This sample survey is adapted from surveys from:

Greenwood Elementary School and Sanders Elementary School, Louisville, KY

Chase Lake Elementary School, Edmonds, WA

College Place Elementary School, Lynnwood, WA

Family Preservation Initiative, Inc., Baltimore, MD

Children First of Dorchester County, MD

FAMILY NEEDS SURVEY

It is the mission of [school name] for ALL students to be successful and learn to their optimum potential. Our goal is for all students to come to school "ready to learn" and have every opportunity to succeed. We want to work together with our families in order for this to happen.

The purpose of this survey is to find out the needs of our students and families so that we can determine those community resources that can be most helpful and supportive. We will compile the results to determine and prioritize the strongest needs at our school. You are helping us to meet your needs. We appreciate your time in completing this survey. Your responses will be confidential, unless you choose otherwise.

Please return the survey to by .

**PLEASE PLACE A CHECK IN FRONT OF THE RESPONSES THAT REFLECT YOUR
OPINION. SOMETIMES, YOU WILL CHECK MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE PER STATEMENT.**

- ▶ **My family has lived in this community for**
 less than one year 3-5 years
 1-2 years more than five years

- ▶ **The zip code of my home is** _____ [or use other means to determine location, if it is relevant and will not identify the respondent]

- ▶ **The primary language spoken in our home is** _____

- ▶ **The age(s) of my children is (are)** _____

- ▶ **After school, my child goes (if more than one child, use numbers to indicate which ones go where)**
 home with adult supervision to a relative's or babysitter's home
 home with no adult supervision to day care
 to a friend's house other (describe) _____

► Below is a list of outcomes that services for children and families could address. Please indicate which are the most important results that supports in your community should focus on:

1 = very important, highest priority

2 = somewhat important, moderate priority

3 = not too important, lower priority

- _____ Prevention of teen-age pregnancy or parenting
- _____ Healthy births
- _____ Children fully immunized
- _____ Children with no untreated health problems
- _____ Academic achievement
- _____ High school graduation (drop-out prevention)
- _____ Children who are happy and have high self-esteem
- _____ Prevention of child abuse
- _____ Children in nurturing, stable families
- _____ Prevention of substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, tobacco)
- _____ Prevention of criminal behavior
- _____ Prevention of gang involvement
- _____ Prevention of suicide
- _____ Prevention of accidents
- _____ Prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS
- _____ Youth prepared for work after graduation
- _____ Youth prepared for further education after graduation
- _____ Families with sufficient incomes
- _____ Employment opportunities
- _____ Families with adequate housing
- _____ Other _____
- _____ Other _____

► Now check which results *you personally need help with* in order to achieve for your family:

- _____ Prevention of teen-age pregnancy or parenting
- _____ Healthy births
- _____ Children fully immunized
- _____ Children with no untreated health problems
- _____ High academic achievement
- _____ High school graduation
- _____ Children who are happy and have good self-esteem
- _____ Prevention of child abuse
- _____ Children in nurturing, stable families

- _____ Prevention of substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, tobacco)
- _____ Prevention of criminal behavior
- _____ Prevention of gang involvement
- _____ Prevention of suicide
- _____ Prevention of accidents
- _____ Prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS
- _____ Youth prepared for work after graduation
- _____ Youth prepared for further education after graduation
- _____ Families with sufficient incomes
- _____ Employment opportunities
- _____ Families with adequate housing
- _____ Other _____
- _____ Other _____

► **I would like assistance from school or community resources in the following areas:**

Health care

- _____ general health care services
- _____ dental care
- _____ vision/hearing care
- _____ immunizations
- _____ counseling or mental health services
- _____ other (describe) _____

Family needs

- _____ food
- _____ clothing
- _____ washing/drying clothes
- _____ baby supplies
- _____ housing
- _____ high school completion (GED) classes
- _____ English for speakers of other languages (ESL) classes
- _____ budgeting and financial management
- _____ job training and placement for parents
- _____ part-time or summer jobs for students
- _____ applying for welfare, food stamps or other government services
- _____ help with heat/utility bills
- _____ family social activities (such as family fun nights)
- _____ other (describe) _____

Family support

Peer support groups, or family counseling or other support services to deal with:

- sexual or physical abuse
- death or long-term illness
- family separation
- step-families
- depression
- suicide awareness and prevention
- adolescence issues
- peer pressure
- stress on parents
- stress on students
- diverse family situations (single parents, living with grandparents, etc.)
- parent with a disability
- child with a disability
- substance abuse
- other (describe) _____

- before/after school care
- full-time child care
- parenting classes or workshops on specific issues (such as _____)
- drug or alcohol prevention and treatment
- nutrition information
- recreation programs (exercise, dance, art, sports)
- cultural pride and awareness
- mentoring/Big Brother/Big Sister/Best Buddy programs
- conflict resolution
- other (describe) _____

Education support

- parent workshops on helping children be successful in school
- tutoring services
- support for homework
- Other (describe) _____

▶ **Would you like to be involved in providing some of the supports listed above?** Yes No

▶ **If yes, which ones?** (or circle the ones that interest you)

▶ **What would assist you in being more involved?**

- Scheduling events in the late afternoon evening weekend
 Transportation
 Child care provided or funded
 Other (describe) _____

▶ **Do you feel supports for children such as peer support groups should be provided during the school day?** Yes No

▶ **From whom would you prefer to receive services?**

- Professionals Paraprofessionals
 Community members Other parents

▶ **In what setting(s) would you prefer to receive services?**

- School Local church or other community organization
 Office building In my home
 Neighbor's home Other _____

▶ **Which of the following are important in order for you to be able to use services?**

- Located close to school or home Located close to public transportation
 Offered evenings and weekends Bilingual services
 Low fees (or no fees) Child care provided
 Staff sensitive to family's needs Flexible services to meet family's needs
 Other (describe) _____

▶ **Do you use any supports that the school already provides? If so, which ones?** _____

▶ **Please respond to the following thoughts with a rating of 4 to 1:**

4 means strongly agree 2 means disagree 0 means no feelings
3 means agree 1 means strongly disagree at this time

Some items are asking for your suggestions rather than a rating.

▶ **I feel the school should be involved in providing supports to**

families and students (such as the ones listed above) 4 3 2 1 0

- ▶ **I feel that the school's environment is warm and welcoming to parents.** 4 3 2 1 0

- ▶ **I feel that as a parent I have opportunities to be involved at the school.** 4 3 2 1 0

- ▶ **The following would assist me in becoming more involved as a parent at the school:**

- ▶ **I feel comfortable contacting my child's teacher.** 4 3 2 1 0

- ▶ **I feel comfortable contacting the principal.** 4 3 2 1 0

- ▶ **I feel comfortable contacting the counselor.** 4 3 2 1 0

- ▶ **I feel comfortable asking school staff for information or help.** 4 3 2 1 0

- ▶ **When I have contacted school staff for information or assistance, I felt that I received excellent service and was helped.** 4 3 2 1 0

- ▶ **My suggestion for improved communication or contact would be:** _____

- ▶ **I have the following concerns regarding the school that haven't been expressed:** _____

- ▶ **I have the following concerns for myself, my child(ren), and my family that haven't been expressed:**

- ▶ **I especially like the following things about the school:**

▶ **ONLY COMPLETE THIS ITEM IF YOU WANT.** After completing this survey, I would like to speak to someone at the school in order to discuss my concerns or suggestions. My name is _____ and I can be reached at _____.

Excerpts from the letter that accompanied the survey distributed by Chase Lake Elementary School.

Dear Parents:

As you know, last year the School Site Council in collaboration with the Chase Lake staff created a mission and vision for Chase Lake, so that it could be the very best school to meet the needs of each and every student and family. As a result, the school concept "I-Tech, the Chase Lake Community Learning Center" was created.

We want Chase Lake to work for you and your child. During conference week of December 13 to December 17, we will be conducting a **"Parent Survey" in order for you to give your thoughts about our school and for us to determine needs of our Chase Lake students and families.** This survey will help us to know what community resources and support systems we need and how to best serve our families and students.

The results of this survey will be used in the following ways:

- ▶ to assess those areas at Chase Lake that need improving
- ▶ to structure our "Readiness to Learn Grant" which will provide us the opportunity to connect community and school services
- ▶ as a tool to develop activities and services for our Chase Lake students, parents, and families offered through our "Community Learning Center"

We invite you on the day or evening of your child's conference to go to Room 1, have some coffee and cookies, and take a few minutes to complete this survey. This is your opportunity to let us know how we can best serve you and your child. If you would like to complete the survey before your child's conference, we will have them in Room 1. You are also welcome to complete the survey after your child's conference. The results will be communicated to all in January.

The teachers and I are looking forward to seeing you during Conference Week. I want to be of assistance to you in any way I can, so please let me know if you'd like an appointment to speak to me. It is my desire to play an important role in your child's education and to work with you to enable your child to progress to his or her maximum potential.

Respectfully,

Patricia A. Johnson
Principal