
Getting Ready to Provide School-linked Services: What Schools Must Do

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Abstract

The authors contend that school-linked services and education reform efforts are integrally related. Successful implementation of school-linked services requires new roles and responsibilities for all levels of school personnel. Drawing from their general experience and citing specific examples from the New Beginnings experience in San Diego, the authors outline these new roles and responsibilities for school superintendents, board members, principals, and teachers. They describe the planning process involved, a process that includes an initial feasibility study and community needs assessment; the need to define the scope and purpose of the collaboration; and the formation of a strategy for redirecting funds and establishing financial linkages among agencies. A key element in implementing school-linked services is involving middle management, which serves as the link between a change in policy at the executive level and a change in action. Successful efforts also require increased parent involvement and parent education at the schools as well as increased efforts by the schools to reach out and support families. The authors maintain that the implementation of school-linked services calls for increased accountability to measure whether the services meet defined goals. Toward this end, schools need to prepare to monitor outcomes on a long-term basis.

School districts throughout the country are joining the movement toward school-linked health and social services for children. Sometimes these efforts are initiated by schools, other times by social services or health agencies. In most cases, however, schools are a primary player in the effort. This article explores what school leadership and staff must do to establish school-linked services.

The first part of this article describes the context for these new efforts at school-linked services: the expanding role of the American public school, some general lessons from reform efforts of the last several decades, and the relationship between the current emphasis on school restructuring and this move toward school-linked services. The second part of the article discusses the practical implications and tasks for schools

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and their personnel when initiating school-linked services. These tasks are not minor; they require significant change and commitment from district leaders, principals, and teachers alike.

To inform the discussion of the practical implications of school-linked services, we frequently refer to the experience of the San Diego City Unified School District in planning and implementing school-linked services over the last several years. This effort, known as New Beginnings, is a collaborative effort involving the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, San Diego City Schools, San Diego Community College District, and San Diego Housing Commission. These agencies have planned a new system of services for children and families. The system is grounded in four basic principles: (1) services will focus not only on individual school-age children, but also their families; (2) services will emphasize prevention, rather than costly crisis intervention; (3) to avoid reliance on outside funding sources, each participating agency will redirect existing resources to this effort to the greatest extent possible; and (4) plans will be made to adapt the model to other communities and school sites in San Diego County.

To date, New Beginnings has opened one site—the New Beginnings Center for Children and Families (hereinafter referred to as the Center) at Hamilton Elementary School in the San Diego City

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School District. After assessing the education, health, and social services needs of all Hamilton students and their families, about 200 families have been identified to receive comprehensive case management at the Center from a team of family services advocates from participating agencies. This case management includes referral to education, social, and health services, as well as ongoing counseling and service planning. In addition to case management, mental health counseling and some health screening and treatment will be provided at the Center. Other services—including initial eligibility determination

for public benefits, information and referral, and adult education—will also be available to all Hamilton School families.

The Context for School-linked Service Efforts

School-linked services are part of a long history of both expansion of the role of schools and education reform efforts.

The Expanding Role of Schools

The role of American schools has expanded greatly in the past 100 years as schools have gradually assumed a variety of health, social service, and social training functions ranging from providing immunizations to mental health counseling to driver's training. (See the article by Tyack in this journal issue.) Indeed, a common American response to many social problems has been either to add a unit to the school curriculum (a unit regarding AIDS, for example) or to add new staff (such as school nurses). Some of these additions have become permanent. This has typically occurred when a program has had an organized constituency to advocate for continuing the program and when the program did not require fundamental changes in pedagogy. Other add-on programs or special initiatives, however, have disappeared, only to reappear several years later as a "new idea" (for example, the 1960s' "differentiated staffing," with master and mentor teachers, has become the 1980s' "career ladder").

This expansion of school roles and functions has not been a smooth upward trend. The function and shape of schools today is the result of several cycles of reform initiated in response to numerous domestic developments and the political change they produced. For example, immigration at the beginning of the century pushed the schools to provide new services to aid in assimilating newcomers into American life. The economic depression of the 1930s led to school lunches. The Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957 shocked the country into a new emphasis on math and science. The civil rights movement of the 1960s led to extensive new school programs to equalize the educational opportunities for all children, regardless of race. The increased awareness of international economic competitiveness in the 1980s fueled the "back to basics" emphasis on academic performance.

Each of these external shocks changed the political power of different school-related constituencies. Political “outs” became political “ins,” and one set of priorities replaced another. Thus, science educators seized the opportunity offered by dramatic events such as Sputnik to promote their interests. Advocates of integrated children’s services seized upon the War on Poverty in 1964 to start some school-based experiments.

Today’s renewed call for school-linked, integrated services is also in part a reaction to external events. As the economy falters and competition with other countries intensifies, there is great concern about the decline in children’s economic and social conditions, as well as dissatisfaction with school outcomes.¹

To say that school reform is in part cyclical, however, does not mean that there are not some lasting effects from each cycle of reform. Over time, fundamental alterations in the fabric of American society have and will continue to produce permanent change in the schools. Certainly, many of the education gains that grew out of the civil rights movements of the 1960s will endure. In addition, despite cuts during economic downturns, schools have continued to offer courses such as driver’s training and vocational education and to employ non-teaching staff such as counselors and teacher’s aides. The pendulum swings back and forth, but rarely all the way back.

Lessons from Previous Efforts

At least two important lessons have been learned from past attempts to change the way services are provided to children. First, the durability and stability of schools make them an essential participant in these efforts. Second, schools cannot address children’s issues alone; they must partner with other agencies in the community.

The last major push for service integration for children was in the 1960s and early 1970s. That effort was an extension and refinement of President Johnson’s War on Poverty. (This is also discussed by Tyack and Morrill in their articles in this journal issue.) There is little left from these efforts. But schools in that era were viewed by poverty warriors as part of the problem rather than part of the solution.² The main strategy was to create new institutions that bypassed schools, such as community-action agencies or model city structures.

Reformers of that era, such as Senator Daniel Moynihan and Sargent Shriver, however, learned that it is exceedingly difficult to create new institutions for poor people that will endure. Most of the community-based poverty agencies created in the 1960s faded away when the Nixon administration changed priorities. The schools, however, endured. As a result, reform efforts in the 1990s have been focused less on circumventing the schools and more on making use of their large organized constituencies (such as teachers’ unions) and omnipresent organizational structure. Schools are everywhere, and this fact is a logical impetus for thinking about school linkage to improve delivery of children’s services.

Just as a lasting and comprehensive service system for children cannot be established without the participation of the school, neither can schools meet children’s comprehensive needs without the participation of other agencies. School leaders have increasingly realized that the education system alone has neither the ability nor political clout to address the full range of children’s problems.³ In the 1960s after the advent of Chapter I (Compensatory Education), educators became more optimistic about the ability of school systems to provide social services and make a dent in overcoming the effects of poverty on their students. Compensatory education funds were used for dentistry, health care, and new clothes. School breakfasts proliferated and pupil services expanded. But as the federal money leveled off and children’s problems grew, school leaders’ attitudes changed. In the mid 1980s, educators became overwhelmed with negative changes in children’s conditions and realized that they were not likely to receive the funds to construct needed social services under the school’s sole authority.⁴ As a result, there is new interest among educators in working with other agencies.

School-linked Services as Part of Education Reform

School-linked service efforts are being initiated in the context of a broader effort at education reform. Education reform has included a wide array of strategies. Some have simply added onto or intensified the existing education system. The requirements for more tests, more courses, or more credentialing for teachers are examples of this type of change. Other strategies, however, have involved actual restructuring or changing the nature of

what schools do and what is required of their personnel. For example, there have been attempts to make teaching more interactive and to move more authority from the school district to the school site.

Most of the reforms of the early 1980s did not emphasize restructuring, but rather “intensification” of the existing education roles, routines, and structure. The United States spent 30% more on schools (after inflation) in the 1980s, and significant gains were made, especially in completion of more science, math, world studies, economics, and advanced placement courses. Teacher pay rose faster than inflation, and school policies “made the little buggers work harder” as one California legislator stated. But by the end of the 1980s, there was a growing consensus that intensifying the existing schools would *not* be sufficient to overcome barriers to learning—barriers created by the obvious decline in many other aspects of children’s lives (health, family, community). Student academic performance, although somewhat improved, was still poor.⁵

Just as there cannot be effective school restructuring without school-linked services, there cannot be effective school-linked services without school restructuring.

Concern about the minimal improvement achieved in the 1980s has fueled the current drive for restructuring. The business community has joined this call for reform. Owen Butler of Procter and Gamble expressed the business leaders’ view of restructuring:

We are trying to change the way we go about educating our young. We are trying to change from a system in which teachers are regarded as almost assembly-line classroom production workers to a system in which teachers are free to innovate and experiment and use creativity to improve teaching. We are trying to deregulate, to move the control of the schools from top-down to bottom-up. We are trying to provide better financing and attract better people into the profession. This requires a total change in “corporate culture.”⁶

Unfortunately, most restructuring efforts to date have been very narrow in scope, focusing primarily on school-based management, teacher participation, and redesigning curriculum. Very few efforts have included working with other community agencies to serve the broader needs of children and families. Some reformers believe that efforts should stay narrowly focused, that schools have enough trouble teaching complex concepts and skills without taking on the task of children’s services.⁷ Moreover, conservative critics believe that more school-linked services will encourage more women to work, with a subsequent loss of “high-quality child rearing done by homemakers.”⁸ Still other critics think the schools should build “character” and positive behavior while leaving health and other children’s services to nonschool agencies.⁹

In our view, however, these limited efforts will not accomplish the main goal of restructuring: improvement in academic achievement. Educational attainment is determined not only by the time a child spends in school, but by the 91% of his or her time spent outside of school from birth to age 18. A sick child cannot learn, and a challenging curriculum cannot be mastered by a child confronting chaos at home. The schools cannot solve all these problems alone or be the only organization enabling parents to be more responsible and effective with their children.

For these reasons, establishing school-linked services to better meet the health and other needs of students is an essential component of education reform—in particular, restructuring. Figure 1 presents a list of restructuring components developed by the National Governors’ Association, a leading force in the restructuring movement. In essence, restructuring includes an examination of the organization itself, to make it more responsive to the needs of its students. If students and families need more support, restructuring looks at alternative methods to provide that support. Successful school restructuring must address all the items in figure 1, not merely pick and choose a few of them that end up being unrelated and nonreinforcing.

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Figure 1. The Main Pieces of Restructuring

Changes in Curriculum and Instruction

- Actively engage students in learning
- Promote understanding and application of skills and knowledge
- Create curricular goals that embody challenging learning tasks
- Stimulate synthesis, inference, problem solving, and analysis

Changes in Authority and Decision Making

- Decentralize so important educational decisions are made at the school site
- Increase flexibility so there are decisions left to be made by schools
- Provide the authority and knowledge to make and carry out decisions

Changes in Roles and Responsibilities Up and Down the System

- Create new, more flexible roles for teachers and principals with built-in time for acquiring new knowledge and learning
- Encourage new roles for community—parents, business, senior citizens
- Shift the role of district and state administrators from rule making and monitoring to helping school faculties create stimulating learning environments

Accountability

- Focus on results not procedures
- Use assessment instruments that measure valued goals well
- Put authority and accountability at the same level (school)
- Create a culture in which educators use information to assess how they are doing (and model this for students)

Beyond Education

- Create links with social services and health service agencies
- Ensure that all students are ready for schools

Source: Jane L. David, Bay Area Research Group, Palo Alto, California, 1990.

and community agencies—will not work. An important element of restructuring is the re-examination of traditional staff assignments, roles, and relationships within schools. When resources of other agencies are included, they must be integrated into the total structure. These issues are discussed in the next part of this article.

What School-linked Services Will Require from School Personnel

If school-linked services are to be successfully implemented, there must be significant change from every level of school personnel: the district leadership, middle management, principals, and teachers.

District Leadership

A school district's superintendent or board of education can initiate planning for school-linked services. A county or city health or social services agency can also initiate the process. Regardless of who initiates it, however, the executive leaders of the school district must be involved from the beginning and must view themselves as equals with other community agency executives involved in the collaborative process. Individual schools or school principals need the commitment and involvement of district leadership to pave the way for meaningful restructuring and delivery of integrated services.

Before a school district embarks on this process, however, it should assess its own

capacity. The school board and superintendent who place a value on inquiry and consensus will be able to build capacity for successful programs of school-linked services; a board that is contentious and divided has less energy and ability to establish working relationships with other agencies.

Developing Collegiality

The board and superintendent must be clear that, in initiating new working relationships with the health and social services agencies in their community, they cannot attempt to dominate these relationships. From the very first contact with other agencies, an atmosphere of mutual respect and collegiality, or shared responsibility and control, must pervade.

In many communities, these school and agency executives will have met only in an official capacity. Furthermore, the budget process in some states and localities will have forced them to compete in the past for available funding. This history must be overcome, and ownership of the collaboration must be shared within the group. If the process of developing school-linked services is seen as an effort to fulfill a particular agency's agenda at the expense of another's, the process will fail.

Collegiality at the executive level will validate each agency's autonomy, point of view, institutional limitations, and barriers to success. It will grow through the development of a common philosophy for the effort and a clearer sense of the interaction of services within families and communities. When institutional collaboration is well developed, "leverage points" will emerge by which two agencies working together can have a synergistic effect in

improving the lives of those they serve. For example, many low-income children are eligible for free periodic health screenings, immunizations, and treatment of common childhood conditions through the federally funded Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program. If these services can be

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provided to eligible children by a school nurse practitioner at the school site as well as by public health nursing staff and reimbursed through existing funding, an entire school population of low-income children can be served. Similarly, in San Diego, the school district and the Department of Social Services joined to create instructional modules for parents participating in the Greater Avenues to Independence (GAIN) program (the federal JOBS program in California), to help them learn to establish positive interaction with school staff and help their children to achieve success in school.

The New Beginnings experience offers some practical tips for developing collegiality. First, the five San Diego agencies involved in planning New Beginnings developed a statement of common philosophy and an agreement for shared governance that were unanimously approved by all the governing boards. Second, monthly meetings of the New Beginnings Executive Committee rotated to each agency's home site; the host for the month chaired the meeting. Thus, there was no single "chair" or organizer of the planning process. Both strategies discouraged any agency from believing it "owned" the planning process and encouraged respect for each agency's point of view and contribution to the collaboration.

The collegiality developed in the New Beginnings Executive Committee has resulted in several changes in how the institutions work together. For example, the school district now receives data electronically from the Department of Social Services to automatically establish the eli-

gibility of AFDC families for free school lunches, thus eliminating a time-consuming and duplicative process at the schools. Furthermore, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and many boards of education in the county have developed and approved a joint legislative policy statement on children and families.

Completing a Needs Assessment

School district leadership, with executives from other agencies, must undertake two essential planning tasks: conducting a needs assessment and developing a common mission. A needs assessment is essential for the partnership to understand the needs of its community, including its demographics; racial composition; cultural and language diversity; poverty levels; and indicators of risk factors for students.

In San Diego the first step in the needs assessment process was for agencies to share information among themselves about the services they provided in the Hamilton School area. In doing so, however, it was important that no agency, schools or otherwise, pointed fingers at the others for perceived shortcomings. In fact, a key to collegiality in this case was to realize that there was enough blame to go around, as well as enough credit to share in future success. These agencies not only served the same children and families and had a common mission, but also shared a sense of futility about their current efforts.

The needs assessment (feasibility study) was conducted primarily by a working group of key staff from all participating agencies. Although the primary goal of the needs assessment study was to inform the eventual development of a model program, the process also fostered a close and enduring collaboration within the working group.

The New Beginnings needs assessment included

- An “action research” project in which a social worker from the Department of Social Services worked intensively with 20 families identified by school staff over a 3-month period. The project identified the families’ needs for assistance from agencies participating in New Beginnings, as well as the barriers the families experienced in attempting to access services.
- Interviews of 30 additional families by public health nurses to learn about these families’ needs and perceptions of the agencies collaborating in New Beginnings
- A data-match study to determine the extent to which families of Hamilton students were served by multiple agencies and programs within those agencies (see figure 2)
- Focus groups of agency line workers and supervisors to determine their attitudes toward the existing “system” and suggestions for fixing it

Figure 2. Social Services Dollars Spent on Hamilton School Families

	Cases	Av. Mo. Benefits	Av. Ann. Benefits	Ann. Staff Years	Mo. Admin. Exp.	Ann. Admin. Exp.	Total Mo. Exp.	Total Ann. Exp.
AFDC	523	\$416,681	\$5,000,117	4.33	\$21,329	\$255,943	\$438,010	\$5,256,120
AFDC-FC	12	7,694	92,327	0.05	250	3,002	7,944	95,330
Food Stamps	20	2,400	28,800	0.08	343	4,118	2,743	32,918
Medi-Cal	48	3,840	46,080	0.14	688	8,252	4,528	54,332
Homeless	4	3,813	45,760	0.03	163	1,958	2,617	31,407
Children	48	0	0	1.36	7,392	88,704	7,392	88,704
GAIN	192	8,640	103,680	1.95	11,805	141,664	20,445	141,664
Total		443,069	5,316,824	7.94	41,970	503,640	483,679	5,700,474

This chart shows the results of the data match conducted for families with elementary school children attending San Diego City schools who reside in the Hamilton Elementary School catchment area, which includes 1,143 households with children. For these households, the San Diego County Department of Social Services already expends \$5.7 million through a number of benefit and service programs.

■ A migration study to look at families' patterns of moving from one neighborhood and school attendance area to another, since all agencies agreed that their effectiveness was diminished by the high mobility of families in the area

Developing and Financing the Common Mission

With a needs assessment completed, school district leadership and other agency executives must begin defining their common plan. What will be the scope and purpose of the collaboration? Which children and families will it serve and with what breadth and depth of services? What outcomes are expected? What funding will be used? There is no one right answer to these questions; the answers must be tailored to the strengths and needs of the community.

Agency executives must also revamp fiscal strategies to support the tenets of the common mission. For example, if collaboration among agencies is more effective than the current fragmentation, then funding mechanisms should create incentives for collaboration. If service interventions are more effective before problems reach crisis proportions, then financing mechanisms should be redirected to "front-end" priorities. If frontline service providers of the various agencies (teachers, social workers, public health nurses, and the like) need more flexibility in determining which services they can provide to families, then financial formulas should provide such flexibility.¹⁰

Thus, as part of their initial work, agency executives must review what they currently spend on children's services and identify funds that can be redirected to support the new priorities of the collaboration. When possible, funds should be shifted from narrow categorical programs to more inclusive, school-linked services. For example, specialized funds to combat drugs and smoking might be combined into a broad prevention approach to children's health problems. In general, "back-end" treatment funds should be shifted to increase preventive interventions. Such redirected funds can also leverage more federal dollars by providing the matching funds necessary to make schools Medicaid eligible or to provide school-based child care under the federal welfare reform program (JOBS).

In San Diego the effort to redirect and combine funds from the individual agen-

cies grew from the realization, drawn from the data match, that the county's Department of Social Services was spending \$5.7 million in service benefits, including half a million dollars in administrative costs alone, for Hamilton families (see figure 2). The school budget also included several hundred thousand dollars more for support staff, including a nurse practitioner, counselor, paraprofessional, and clerical staff. Team members felt frustration because the education and social services funding was provided in such a fragmented way. They then began to research each agency's funding streams, searching for flexibility in determining how these existing funds could be spent differently.

As a result of this research, a funding strategy was developed. New Beginnings initially redirects funds by repositioning employees from each participating agency to the Center to create a team of family service advocates. The school nurse practitioner, who was funded through a combination of district and categorical funds, has moved to the Center and works in an expanded role under the supervision of physicians from the University of California at San Diego. The County Department of Health Services is using funds appropriated for multicultural mental health services to provide a mental health component at the Center. Each participating agency assumes a portion of the overhead costs connected with the employees who are assigned to the Center.

As part of their fiscal review, agency executives must review their categorical funding streams and work for more flexibility in using these funds. Many schools, especially those serving the most disadvantaged students, currently use categorical funds to provide support staff for narrowly defined projects. Schools need to be able to use these funds and staff for the broader purposes of the collaborative project—for example, to take the time a clerk spends determining eligibility for free lunch and apply it to a larger assessment of initial family eligibility for health and social services.

Finally, financial linkages among agencies can reinforce the common mission of a collaborative, school-linked service project. Sid Gardner has described these as "hooks," "glue," and joint ventures.¹¹ Hooks formally link a child's participation in one program with eligibility and participation in another. For example, agencies can agree that foster children will automat-

ically qualify for a local job-training program. Glue money allows one agency to subcontract with other agencies to ensure that children can receive services in one place. The lead agency becomes the “broker” for the child. For example, a school could subcontract with health, social services, and job-training agencies. Glue money might allow each child to be assigned a case manager who could procure or command resources from other agencies. In joint ventures, several agencies create partnerships to raise funds for jointly operated programs.

Middle managers serve as the link between a change in policy at the executive level and a change in action.

Developing a common mission and the fiscal strategies for reinforcing it is the central task for school district leadership and other agency executives. It is a difficult task that often requires months of planning before services begin and requires further refinement once the program opens. (See the article by Gardner in this journal issue for a more detailed discussion of the planning process for school-linked services.)

Middle Management

School superintendents, board members, and other agency executives cannot implement school-linked services without the involvement of middle management. Middle managers serve as the link between a change in policy at the executive level and a change in action. At New Beginnings, school district middle management provided ongoing staff work and supported the leadership throughout the process of needs assessment and the formulation of the common mission and financing strategies. These mid-level administrators often had the clearest understanding of how the schools and other agencies were operating and how funds were being spent.

The role of middle management, however, includes more than providing information and staff assistance to agency executives. They are also the liaison with the principals and teachers of the district, and the line staff of other agencies. This requires not only that they become cham-

pions of the new collaborative approach and mission, but also that they work out the practical requirements for implementing the policy change. Examples of such requirements include the need to develop governance agreements among the participating agencies and the need to negotiate changes in personnel policies.

The Principal

The school principal must assume new roles and utilize new skills to implement a school-linked service effort. It is likely that the principal’s school leadership training did not emphasize collaborative leadership and shared decision making with other community agencies. These skills, however, are essential for the establishment of school-linked services.

First, the principal must be an active participant in developing whatever is to happen on or near the site, sharing information about the children and the community, connecting the planning group to parents and teachers, and providing a “reality check” for planners who may not be well connected to the day-to-day workings of school and community. Second, the principal must serve as an advocate for an expanded school role in working with families and other agencies, making the case with his or her peers, communities, and school staff. Teachers especially need encouragement and assistance from the principal to expand their agenda to work more actively with families while maintaining their primary focus on academic success.

Third, the principal must reorganize and link key teachers and other staff members on campus with staffs from other community health and social services agencies. Sometimes the strength of a major collaboration can be broken by a lack of interpersonal communication and understanding among these staffs. Fourth, the principal must act as an “enabler,” promoting the involvement of other staff and community members in planning and monitoring a school-linked service effort.

At Hamilton Elementary School, the principal had long been active in calling on community public and private agencies to serve Hamilton students. She is a member of the Executive Committee and has enthusiastically embraced the New Beginnings mission and organized two major meetings to acquaint parents with the effort and to get their ideas about what services the Center should provide and how it should be organized. She has continued

to be an essential voice in making the school district and the community aware of Hamilton students' needs, and in bringing together the staff and services at the Center and the school.

Teachers

At the school site itself, teaching and support staffs need to be actively involved in assessing the need for school-linked services, adapting and adopting the philosophy that undergirds it, and preparing for solid working relationships among members of the same staff and with those from other agencies. Strengthening the link between teachers and staffs from other agencies is critical, and it must often be preceded by lengthy discussion in which participants learn from each other. In the past, teachers have typically communicated with outside agencies only in times of crisis, and the teachers were probably frustrated by these agencies' inability to resolve students' problems. Furthermore, separate undergraduate and graduate training; different professional languages and values; and differences in pay scale, working culture, and union representation can deepen the gaps in understanding between teachers and those in other professions.

Thus, teachers need time to think, talk, and plan with the health and social services professionals who are involved in the collaborative effort. They are likely to have many concerns as they begin this process. For example, they may fear that they will be expected to give up their primary focus on teaching in order to become social workers, that they will not be treated as equals by those in other professions, or that school-linked service programs will become another source of "pullout programs" to disrupt instructional time for the neediest students. These concerns cannot be easily discounted or disproved, since most educators have never worked closely with professionals in a setting with integrated services. It will take time for teachers to understand that a well-planned program of school-linked services can involve them in a positive, collaborative role with other agencies and provide more effective assistance for children and families. When the collaborative system provides additional information and help for meeting children's needs, the teacher can modify classroom management strategies and instructional and disciplinary approaches as well as work with parents to involve them positively in their children's education.

Involving Teachers in New Beginnings

New Beginnings involves teachers primarily through the school's shared governance process. Hamilton Elementary School serves nearly 1,400 students on a four-track, year-round schedule. To do this, the school has restructured itself into four separate schools. Each of these schools has its own curriculum emphasis, and its teachers meet regularly to develop curriculum and discuss other instructional issues. The teachers from each school also select a team leader to represent them on the governance committee for the entire school.

Staff members from all the agencies involved in developing the New Beginnings demonstration at Hamilton met with all the teachers to discuss the needs of the families they work with and how the planners of New Beginnings proposed to meet those needs. In small groups, teachers talked about their concerns in working with other agencies, especially their concern about developing a good relationship with the "outsiders" who would be working with "their" students and families.

In addition to these direct meetings, teachers were involved with planning New Beginnings through team leaders who represented them. Even now, the Hamilton governance committee, including the teachers' representatives, works continually with staff at the Center. The committee's goal is to understand and meet the challenges the school faces in working with the other agencies. One strategy for closer communication between the school and the Center has been the designation of a family services advocate from the Center to maintain close contact with the staff of each of the four schools. Another strategy was to develop a video explaining New Beginnings to Hamilton teachers and others. This video proved to be an effective vehicle for building shared commitment from all personnel. Finally, the communication and feedback between teachers and Center staff has continued to grow through shared events and celebrations (such as the Center's official opening), as well as shared challenges.

Other Elements of Restructuring for School-linked Services

The planners of New Beginnings learned that the program necessitated change in two vital areas: school-parent interaction and accountability.

Interacting with Parents

The New Beginnings needs assessment found that parents in the Hamilton community trusted the school and saw it as a safe place for them and their children. Nevertheless, successful school-linked service efforts require change in the ways that schools interact with parents. Although the essential mission of the school—the academic success of students—remains unchanged, the school must begin to work with parents in a larger context. This requires not only increases in parent involvement and parent education efforts at the schools, but also school involvement in interagency efforts to reach out and support families. Teachers find that issues of discipline, behavior, and/or achievement for one child must frequently be dealt with as an effort to work with the whole family. In a system of school-linked services, teachers need to discuss and plan for children's needs in an interdisciplinary setting and respond to feedback from other agencies' professionals about their roles and interactions with particular children and families. Parents typically participate in these discussions of their children's needs. With families coming onto the campus frequently for services, it is likely that parents will visit the classrooms more often, creating a much more family-oriented school as well as greater potential for parent-teacher interaction—both positive and negative.

Increased involvement of parents requires the school staff to be more sensitive to the diverse cultural background of families. Because of this, New Beginnings is providing, on an ongoing basis, extensive

cross-training for Center staff and school staff in working with parents from all cultural backgrounds. The school staff also looks to the Center staff for additional assistance in understanding the needs and situations of individual families and for assistance in outreach, home visits, and translation.

Providing Accountability

Another key change for schools launching school-linked services is increased accountability requirements to measure whether outcome goals are met. These outcomes must be broadly defined. Members of school staffs, (and policymakers) should resist the temptation to view programs of school-linked services as a quick fix for low test scores or a way to reduce the costs of education and social services. Other academic outcomes are also relevant and may be easier to document, such as increased attendance, a reduced rate of retention in grade, a decrease in the percentage of students designated at risk, and a decrease in the percentage of students designated for special education.

Health outcomes for students might include the number of students who receive immunizations on schedule and the number who have had a health exam within the last year. As programs of school-linked services grow in their ability to support families, outcomes for families might include increased self-sufficiency, improved family functioning, and increased parent involvement with the school.

Such a broad array of outcomes must be monitored consistently and on a long-term basis. This often requires schools to

adopt new procedures and secure new equipment to collect relevant data. At New Beginnings the San Diego City Schools' Student Information System, which provides on-line information about district students, will be linked to a Management Information System to facilitate the case management process.

Conclusions

School-linked services are not easy to create or to implement. They impose new roles and responsibilities on school per-

sonnel at every level. They require the most difficult kind of education reform: a restructuring or change in the way schools and their staffs operate both internally and within their community. Education personnel must learn to work with other agencies and to expand the boundaries of their efforts on behalf of students. Furthermore, educators and the public must understand that, for millions of at-risk students, the goals of education cannot be achieved without the school and other agencies doing a better job of addressing students' health and social needs.

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