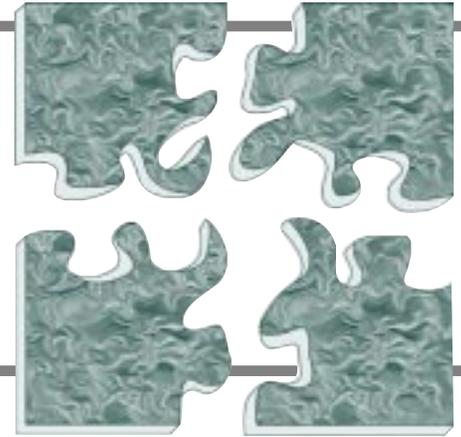


BEST PRACTICE BRIEFS



PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

RECOGNIZE THAT

- factors external to the school are involved in most school learning and behavioral/emotional problems
- building trust among partners takes effort
- developing a range of services occurs over time

BE CONCERNED ABOUT

- buy-in from all stakeholders, including unions
- sustainability

DEVELOP

- prevention as well as treatment services

ASSIGN

- responsibility for Learning Support Services at board, administration, and building levels

DO NOT EXPECT

- instant results



OUTREACH
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MICHIGAN STATE
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FULL SERVICE SCHOOLS-2

BEST PRACTICE BRIEF NO. 6 defined the Full Service School. This BRIEF explores some of the issues in development and organization, the factors related to effectiveness, and an example of an evaluation.

DEVELOPMENT OF A FULL SERVICE SCHOOL



A Full Service School, providing the Learning Support Services¹ that children and families need to succeed, can be **initiated** by

- the principal and administration team, or school improvement team (*school building level*)
- the superintendent and school board (*school district level*)
- a human service agency (*community level*)

Development may be **in response to**

- concerns about educational reform or access to services
- a recognition that existing Learning Support Services are not integrated with each other or with the school instruction and management
- a mandate or incentive from
 - a state statute
 - availability of federal or foundation funds

The **developmental process** can start with educational reform and, as a logical next step, move to meet the children's socioeconomic and developmental needs. Or, independent of educational reform efforts, it can start with the development of a family resource center, school health center, or other component to support children and families. Generally, the process evolves in the context of an existing staff, building limitations, and customary school district requirements—all of which may present obstacles to be overcome.

¹ Learning Support Services, i.e., the various components that a Full Service School might include are outlined in **BEST PRACTICE BRIEF NO. 6.**



THE IDEAL SITUATION

- an **explicit assignment** to put in place a Full Service School
- a **clean slate** that permits the selection of
 - committed and capable principal
 - teachers interested in educational reform
- **autonomy and flexibility** free from the school district's administrative control; i.e.,
 - control over the building's budget
 - status quo in funding, assignment of teachers, class size
 - protection against micro-management

Educational reform and development of a Full Service School at the Wexford Elementary School, a collaboration between the Lansing School District and Michigan State University, has had these advantages.

The **evolution** of a Full Service School is always incremental because the development process is a complex one. It includes

- organizing a **community-school structure** that will involve all stakeholders
- developing a focus and **accountability structure** within the school district
- undertaking a **planning process** that includes
 - assessing services needed and available resources
 - identifying best practice for each of the component services
 - resolving funding and logistical issues

Development of a Full Service School involves the formulation of needed services. In most schools, it also means reviewing those components of a Full Service School that already exist within the school and building interconnections.

COMMUNITY-SCHOOL STRUCTURE

The **Community-School Planning Committee** may be a workgroup of a multi-purpose collaborative body (composed of directors of agencies, school superintendent(s), and community representatives). Or the structure may be created specifically to develop the Full Service School. In either case, the Community-School Planning Committee is made up of stakeholders who will be concerned with the planning and implementation process. The Community-School Planning Committee may be school-building based or district wide,

with representatives from

- the school
 - teachers
 - pupil personnel staff
 - school administration
 - teachers union
 - school board
- potential users of service
 - parents
 - students
 - other residents of the neighborhood
- the community
 - human service agencies and organizations
 - clergy, business, government

The members of the Community-School Planning Committee require a clear understanding of the concept and potential of a Full Service School in order to

- defuse misconceptions
- commit to tacit, if not active, support early in the process

The **Community-School Planning Committee works best** when

- there is a clear **focus on** the goal of **improving outcomes** for children
- there is **strong leadership**
- time and effort are spent to **obtain buy-in** from the various groups
- attention is paid to **developing trust** and a **group process** that makes possible a collaborative enterprise
- the group **operates by consensus** and works through disagreements

ACCOUNTABILITY INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN THE SCHOOL

Within the school building and the school district, an infrastructure that supports and integrates all Learning Support activities will promote development. This involves

- organizing a **board committee** to oversee Learning Support Services
- assigning responsibility for Learning Support Services to a **specific person** at the building and at the district level
- developing a **team** composed of all persons, both school and community agency employees, who are delivering or proposing Learning Support Services within the school

At both district and school building level, this infrastructure is responsible for recommendations and actions to

- overcome duplications and fill gaps
- make most effective use of available resources
- incorporate beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors into overall school policy and practices
- develop operating procedures and practices that
 - accommodate the varying cultures of the school and the community agency
 - build interconnections between services
 - make services user-friendly

Aspects Of User-Friendly Services

- “no wrong door”—staff facilitate access to all services
- a common intake form
- convenient hours

THE CONTINUUM FOR MOVING TO THE FULL SERVICE SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

1. **There is no inventory or listing in the school of available Learning Support Services; staff are not aware of each other’s activities.**
2. **School and agency staff form a Learning Support Services team to identify and coordinate activities.**
3. **A staff person is assigned responsibility for Learning Support Services in the building.**
4. **School district has a deputy administrator responsible for Learning Support Services.**
5. **School board has a committee assigned to provide oversight for Learning Support Services.**

THE PRIMARY PLAYERS

The Principal within the school building and the **Superintendent** of the school district **are key** to the effective development of Learning Support Services. The stage is set for effective programming when the principal and superintendent

- recognize the role of Learning Support Services in educational reform
- are committed to working collaboratively
- are committed to involving parents
- expect teachers and Learning Support staff to interact

- are readily available to Learning Support staff
- understand the potential and limitations of each Learning Support Service

The Coordinator is essential to the development of comprehensive and integrated services. For effective planning and service development, one person should be assigned to facilitate the process, bring together the interested parties, keep the collaborative process moving, and assist the participants to overcome obstacles. While the principal or an agency staff person can undertake this role, competing responsibilities will limit the time and energy available for these tasks. A designated person outside the school district (such as the staff person to a collaborative body workgroup, a United Way employee, or a contractual facilitator) may more successfully undertake this role.

In the implementation phase, this work is generally undertaken as a full-time assignment. The Coordinator becomes the person responsible for

- developing, facilitating, and coordinating the Learning Support Services
- developing linkages between the school and community agencies
- encouraging the use of services and the involvement of parents

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE COORDINATOR

- easy to talk to, accessible, responsive
- collaborative
- resourceful as a problem solver
- persistent in getting parents and community agencies involved
- empowering of others, using a strength-based strategy

INVOLVING PARENTS

Educational reform stresses the involvement of parents in their children’s educational performance, as volunteers in the school, and as participants on planning and policy committees. The school can make parents feel welcome and comfortable through the attitude of the principal, teachers, and staff; the ambiance in the front hall and the reception areas; the use of volunteer greeters, etc. Offering literacy, health, or access services is a non-threatening way to welcome parents into the life of the school.

THE CONTINUUM FOR MOVING TO THE FULL SERVICE SCHOOL

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1. Parents are not involved
2. Parents are encouraged to connect to school to facilitate their child's learning
3. Parents provide volunteer services in school that facilitate learning
4. Parents are involved in planning and policy development

THE PLANNING PROCESS

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

To determine which services are appropriate to develop, the concerns of teachers and support staff, parents, community residents, and students (upper elementary through high school) should be identified. A needs assessment can be accomplished by

- a mailed or door-to-door **survey**
- representative **focus groups**
- a **community forum**
- a **welcoming party** to which parents and community residents are invited

ALLOW SUFFICIENT TIME

for obtaining information and planning regarding needed services. A well-planned base will save money and the frustration of inappropriate services down the line.

These mechanisms enhance sound planning and service development by

- obtaining information from stakeholders about such issues as their experience with health services, availability of recreational opportunities, desired community outcomes, etc.
- involving stakeholders in a discussion of the meaning of data on such issues as school achievement, mortality and morbidity, and problem behaviors in their community
- initiating relationships and identifying individuals and organizations who can later serve as resources

DETERMINING SERVICES

The Full Service School will be most effective in removing barriers to learning if programming includes a **range of services** – from prevention through intervention for at risk and special needs children. Services should be targeted toward those barriers to learning that are significant within that school.

Note: Prevention services include school readiness services, teaching life coping skills, mentoring, enrichment services, etc.

THE CONTINUUM FOR MOVING TO THE FULL SERVICE SCHOOL

SERVICE EMPHASIS

1. Staff provide information, referral
2. Staff provide case management
3. Staff provide direct services
4. Staff facilitate, organize, and connect with community agencies and parents

DETERMINING WHERE TO LOCATE SERVICES

The school may not be the appropriate site for service to families and neighborhood residents. An off-site facility and sponsorship may be more appropriate when

- minority parents/neighborhood residents with a history of not trusting the school are unwilling to use school-based services
- the school building has no space for proposed activities
- adolescents who have dropped out of school are a target for services
- the school board does not want to be associated with a controversial service (such as family planning)

BE PREPARED TO MAKE EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS

to establish and maintain working relationships between the school staff and service staff when service staff are located off site, in a separate building, or in an inaccessible area of the school.

SPACE AND COST ISSUES

Space and cost issues are inherent in many of the activities proposed for a Full Service School; they should be thought through early in the planning process.

Space will be needed for additional full- or part-time staff and the proposed activities.

- If classrooms are to be used after school by outside agencies, teachers can no longer consider classrooms their exclusive space.
- A health center will have specific space requirements: one or more rooms with space for private conversation and examinations, for group sessions, as well as for hand washing and laboratory facilities, etc.
- Air conditioning may be required for indoor summer activities.

Additional costs may need to be recognized and included in the budget and in the allocation of resources by the various partners. Examples include:

- Janitorial, heating, and lighting costs for activities that take place in the school auditorium, gymnasium, or classroom outside of regular school hours
- Costs for transportation and food if programming includes times when children would not normally be in school
- Necessary remodeling
- Security costs in some communities

Additional **transportation** may be required to take students to off-site services, or parents to the school. Transportation issues may be particularly difficult to solve in rural areas.

FUNDING

The options selected for funding can impact the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of services.

FUNDING	PRO	CON
<i>Agency Options</i>		
School district alone funds services	Ownership and control are clear	No capacity to draw on community resources, involvement
Community agency alone funds services	Ownership and control are clear	School district has no ownership or commitment to sustaining the service
School district and community agency jointly fund	Joint commitment, responsibility	Relationships, commitments may become unstable over time
<i>Type of Funding</i>		
State or foundation time-limited grants	Permits more extensive level of service	If grant ends, services are cut back
School district and community agency redirect funds	Joint commitment, responsibility	Relationships, commitments may become unstable over time

A **prudent financial plan** will focus on sustainability and will include the following:

- **Start-up funds** to underwrite the one-time costs for planning and initial implementation.
- **Redirection of funds** by the schools and the community agencies. Whenever possible, traditional funding sources should be used. This strengthens the commitment and signals an integrated component and not a parallel service.
- **Ongoing funding resources** to be accessed for eligible health and social services (e.g., insurance, Medicaid, welfare funds).

FORMALIZE THE FISCAL UNDERSTANDINGS

in a **written memorandum of agreement** between the school and participating agencies. Any agreement will cover the common objectives, commitments of funds or in-kind resources, conditions, provisions for periodic discussions to resolve obstacles, and the date for review and renegotiation. A written document establishes institutional memory and a formal mechanism for educating new staff, which is essential in a world where school and agency executives who developed the services and understandings may move on to other jobs next year.

Considerations for Using Resources Productively

- prevention activities and collaborative development are emphasized along with direct treatment services
- provisions are made for training teachers and for ongoing discussions between teachers and Learning Support staff
- services are targeted and focused toward desired outcomes
- services meet the priorities of families and the community
- existing services provided by school staff or outside agencies are coordinated with the new health center, family resource center, or youth service center
- a project mentality does not separate services provided by community agencies from those traditionally housed within the school
- pupil services personnel view their counterparts from community-based organizations as non-threatening to their jobs

CAUTIONS FOR EFFECTIVENESS

What might the community agency and the school keep in mind when embarking on the development of an effective Full Service School?

Trust between the school and community partners and between the school and parents, and **buy-in** from school staff, agency staff, and the neighborhood form the basis for effectiveness. No lasting decisions can be made in the absence of trust. For the school and the community agencies, an effective working relationship requires trust at the **organizational level** between the school administrators and the agency administrators. Trust is also required at the **service delivery level**

- between the principal and the coordinator
- among the working partners—the teachers and other school staff on the one hand, and the service coordinator and service providers on the other

However, as in any relationship, an effective working partnership is not accomplished without effort. It requires negotiation, as well as recognition of and accommodation to each other's unique culture, to reach an acceptable compromise.

A LONG TRUST-BUILDING PROCESS AND PLANNING EFFORT

will be required when

- providing health and social services is not seen by the school staff as part of educational reform
- cultural and racial differences between residents and community service providers have constrained services in the past
- there is a history of distrust between the school and human services agencies

Confidentiality issues are the rocks on which many collaborative efforts shipwreck. The issue of sharing information about service recipients can be used as a road block when individuals and agencies want to guard their own turf. Communities have found ways to work through these concerns—if they really want to improve outcomes for children and families.

The partnership between the school and community agencies should be a win-win situation: the school is getting services that advantage their children; the community agency is getting better access to a population that it has an obligation to serve.

The likelihood of developing an effective Full Service School is enhanced when

- the **principal is supportive**
- administrators are willing to allow the amount of **staff time** required for collaborative planning
- Learning Support Services are seen as an **integral part** of the school effort
- principal and teachers are **committed to parent involvement**
- planning is carried out within an **already established base for collaboration**; agencies and school see each other as collaborative partners and do not indulge in turf wars
- partnership is **inclusive**; all stakeholders are brought on board before decisions have been made
- there is agreement on the **overall goal**; business and community commit to ongoing support for schools and children learning

DO FULL SERVICE SCHOOLS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Each component within a Full Service School should be evaluated as to whether or not it meets its specific objectives. For the Full Service School as a whole, the question is whether the provision of Learning Support Services makes a difference in the educational performance of children.² Significant improvement in school-wide indices (as opposed to those for specific children and families served) cannot be expected to occur within a single year but will require sufficient time for a sizeable portion of the student body to have benefited from services.

Healthy Start, California³

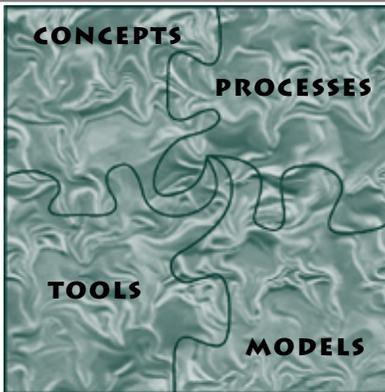
Of the various state initiatives, the most complete evaluation available is that of California. After two years, all indices except dropout rates were moving in the desired direction. In addition, the following statistically significant changes were found:

- **Family mobility** was reduced.
- **Parent involvement** was increased.
- **Behavior** improved in elementary classrooms for children receiving services and for the classroom as a whole.
- **School performance** improved for children in kindergarten through grade 3 who had the poorest performance.
- Students in kindergarten through grade 3 and those who were absent most frequently showed a significant decrease in **absenteeism**, gaining an average of 12 additional days of schooling.
- Improvement in mathematics scores, greater parent interest, and decreases in student mobility and suspension rates were associated with the availability of a **balanced continuum of preventive and treatment services**. This balance was also associated with improved results for individual adults and adolescents in employment, basic needs, health, and teen risk behaviors.
- **Youth enrichment** activities made the most positive contribution to improvement in grades.
- Schools that emphasized **accessibility, family focus, cultural competence**, and the incorporation of Learning Support Services as an **integral part of school programming** had generally higher levels of parent involvement and greater community support.

What was the relationship between these outcomes and the provision of Learning Support Services? The findings indicated that:

²Evaluation of outcomes for Full Service Schools is difficult for a variety of reasons: Services vary from school to school; who receives services and in what amounts is not controlled; there is no comparable control or comparison group; there are other co-existing changes and interventions that may also impact outcomes.

³Four reports by SRI International (1996) cover the implementation process in California and evaluation of results for children and families receiving services and for the schools as a whole. School data from reports and surveys of staff were obtained for the first 44 sites after two years of operation. Follow-up data for children and families receiving services for at least six months were obtained at 62 sites. More than one-third of the families served were adult family members; 14 percent were siblings younger than school age. Unmet basic household needs, poor access to health care, mental health, and poor school performance were common concerns. The average client received 12 units of service over six months. Mental health services were the most common.



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See also **REFERENCES** listed in **BEST PRACTICE BRIEF NO. 6**.

This **BEST PRACTICE BRIEF** was developed with the assistance of **Michigan State University** faculty and staff PATRICIA A. FARRELL, Department of Family and Child Ecology and **OUTREACH PARTNERSHIPS**; JEANETTE KLEM CZAK, College of Nursing; MAENETTE BENHAM, College of Education; reviewed by PATRICIA NICHOLS and SHARON PANCHUK, Michigan Department of Education, and MARCIA LEONE, Middle Schools Education Association; and with appreciation for the work of HOWARD ADELMAN and LINDA TAYLOR. BETTY TABLEMAN, Editor; Research Assistants MEGAN BUURMA, School of Criminal Justice, and ELIZABETH BETHARD, Public Policy and Administration; OLGA OLOWOLAFE, Administrative Assistant. KATHY BLACK, Designer.



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