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*Developing Our Youth:  
Fulfilling a Promise,  
Investing in Iowa's Future*



ENHANCING IOWA'S SYSTEMS OF SUPPORTS FOR  
DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
WITH THE  
IOWA COLLABORATION FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FALL, 2004**



**IOWA'S PROMISE**  
THE ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH



**iowa**collaboration  
for**youth**development

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**FALL, 2004  
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## **Acknowledgments**

*Appreciation is expressed to those who contribute every day to ensuring that Iowa's children and youth grow up physically, socially, emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally healthy and that the schools, homes, and communities where they live, work, and play are safe and supportive. Special appreciation is expressed to those who worked on the design for systems of learning supports as described in this concept paper. Their unwavering commitment to the development of partnerships among schools, students, their families, and communities to create a network of supports for the children and youth across our state caused this work to become a reality. Now it is time to put into action the important ideas described herein.*

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*Resolution from the  
Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development Steering Committee  
September, 2004*

*W*HEREAS, the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development Steering Committee strongly believes that ensuring the healthy development of all our children and youth is a crucial investment in Iowa's future;

*W*HEREAS, this investment means that all children/youth in Iowa succeed in school, are healthy and socially competent, and are prepared for productive adulthood;

*W*HEREAS, children/youth who grow up in safe and supportive schools, families, and communities are better prepared to become responsible citizens who contribute to their local communities and the entire state in a productive and emotionally healthy manner;

*W*HEREAS, a primary factor of success in school is academic achievement, and academic achievement is supported and enhanced when children/youth are physically and emotionally healthy and safe;

*W*HEREAS, any barriers to healthy development and learning that may exist can and should be alleviated by a system of learning supports that incorporates a full continuum of programs and services which ensure safe, health promoting, supportive, and inclusive learning environments;

*W*HEREAS, this continuum of quality programs and services requires a combination of community level changes that transcend what any one system alone can provide and that maximize our use of limited resources of our schools and communities;

*W*HEREAS, cohesive policies and practices of state level partners of the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development are designed to reduce fragmentation and mutually align resources as essential to support and effect system changes at the regional and community levels;

**T**HEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Steering Committee of the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development agrees with the concepts and principles put forth in this document and will develop, integrate, and oversee cross-agency implementation of a comprehensive system of supports to promote healthy development and address barriers to learning, thereby ensuring that all children and youth have an equal opportunity to succeed in school and in life.



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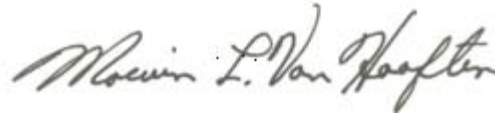
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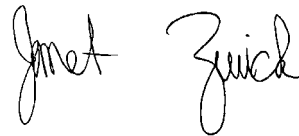
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## FORWARD

*At no time in our history has the educational imperative for the academic achievement of all students been so crucial. The learner of today is the learner of tomorrow; the learner of today is the productive and contributing citizen of tomorrow. Students achieving today will ensure that our citizens of tomorrow are equipped to be self sufficient, raise families, govern, and make important contributions to their communities, the workforce, and a stable economy.*

*Learning is everyone's business. Schools alone cannot fulfill this imperative. The support of families and communities is essential if all students are to achieve at high levels. Without their help and support, the challenge will not be met. We, at the Department of Education, are grateful for the collaborative efforts of our state agency partners in the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development in this important endeavor.*

*Through our collective efforts, we must meet the learning needs of all students. Not every student comes to school motivationally ready and able to learn. Some experience barriers that interfere with their ability to profit from classroom instruction. Supports are needed to remove, or at least to alleviate, the effects of these barriers. Each student is entitled to receive the supports needed to ensure that he or she has an equal opportunity to learn and to succeed in school. This paper provides guidance for a new direction for student support that brings together the efforts of schools, families, and communities .*

*If every student in every school and community in Iowa is to achieve at high levels, we must rethink how student supports are organized and delivered to address barriers to learning. This will require that schools and school districts, in collaboration with their community partners, develop a comprehensive, cohesive approach to delivery of learning supports that is an integral part of their school improvement efforts. Investing in our young people today is investing in their future, and, in turn, investing in their future is an investment in the future of our state. We must make this investment.*



Judy Jeffrey, Interim Director  
Iowa Department of Education

This document is intended for policy makers and leaders at the state, regional, and local levels within and outside of the education system who have a compelling interest in the achievement of all students and are seeking effective ways to improve student learning. It introduces a set of new concepts for systems of supports that students need if they are to achieve at high levels. The document calls for rethinking the directions for student supports in order to reduce fragmentation in the system and increase the effectiveness and efficiency by which it operates. The intended results are for all children and youth to succeed in school, grow up healthy and socially competent, and be prepared for productive adulthoods.

## **Developing Our Youth – Investing in Iowa's Future**

*We have to show our values. It's time – no it's past time – for the youth work field to reconcile its commitment to all youth with its commitment to those most in need or most likely to be forgotten if they are not targeted. Equally important, it is time for the youth field to reconcile its commitment to providing educational alternatives with its commitment to transforming education.*

Karen Pittman (2004)

### **The Investment**

Iowa has a proud history of leading the nation in education, strong community support for schools, and high expectations of parents for their children's success in school. These values persist today. While Iowans are proud of their schools, no community ought to be satisfied until *all* its young people are healthy and socially competent, successful in school, and have an equal opportunity to grow into productive and contributing citizens. Communities need the best from each of us to make the best for all of us.

Now the national focus is on closing the achievement gap and helping all students achieve their full potential. In Iowa, the goal for the educational system is to improve the learning of all students so they become successful members of a community and workforce (*Iowa Administrative Code, School Rules of Iowa, Chapter 12 Preamble*). To accomplish this, schools and communities must work together and with their regional and state level partners. As part of Iowa's educational system, schools and school districts need to address all aspects of students' learning, social-emotional, and physical development.

In recent years in Iowa, there has been an increasing concern about little or, in some instances, no growth in standardized achievement test scores in reading and math. Pressures for accountability as well as demands by employers for skilled workers challenge us to develop ways to raise academic achievement levels of all students. At the same time, increased diversity and unacceptable levels of children living in poverty contribute to the challenge.

Meeting the challenge will require not only improving teaching, but also will necessitate developing better ways for schools, families, and communities to facilitate learning and thereby

***"It is not enough to say that all children can learn or that no child will be left behind; the work involves "... achieving the vision of an American education system that enables all children to succeed in school, work, and life."***

*From the 2002 mission statement of the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)*

**“...it is a truism that learning is neither limited to what is formally taught, nor to time spent in classrooms. It occurs whenever and wherever the learner interacts with the surrounding environment. All facets of the community (not just the school) provide learning opportunities. Anyone in the community who wants to facilitate learning might be a contributing teacher...When a school successfully joins with its surrounding community, everyone has the opportunity to learn and teach.”**

*Adelman and Taylor,  
(Spring, 2001)*

alleviate *barriers*, both external and internal, that can interfere with learning and teaching. What is needed is a cohesive system of learning supports that wraps around the teacher and classroom and that is focused on achieving our desired result for students to be successful in school. As stated in a report by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989),

*“School systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students. But when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge.”*

## **Reflecting on Our History: Building on What We Have Learned**

For over a decade, the Iowa Department of Education has directed resources and support to area education agencies (AEAs) and local school districts (LEAs) for the purpose of fostering the healthy social-emotional, cognitive, and behavioral development of all Iowa's children and youth. These resources and supports have been provided through two statewide initiatives:

- The *Iowa Behavior Initiative* (IBI), introduced in 1993, provided funds and technical assistance through the Behavioral Teams Academy to twelve pilot schools over a four-year period. This initiative focused mostly on the behavior of students. After pilot implementation, it was evident that a more holistic approach was needed and additionally that expansion to statewide implementation using the current model would be a slow and difficult process.
- *Success4* was launched in 1998 to build upon what was learned from the successes of IBI and also to address the need for greater involvement of schools statewide. *Success4* expanded the scope of IBI from an emphasis on behavior to a broader focus on healthy social-emotional, intellectual, and behavioral development. More than 360 schools in over 60% of Iowa school districts engaged in a wide array of activities and programs designed to advance the purposes of *Success4*.

Despite the successes of IBI and *Success4*, some students still had needs that extended beyond the supports that the school alone could provide. It was apparent that it would take the combined efforts of schools and communities if all students

were to succeed in school. These efforts would need to –

- take full advantage of existing resources;
- reduce fragmentation;
- align services;
- get more clearly focused on helping all students succeed;
- identify tasks that can be combined, stopped and/or replaced instead of just adding new work;
- target what we know is achievable;
- invest in the most effective practices;
- organize effective and efficient supports systems; and
- ensure that staff have the skills they need to effectively implement learning supports.

Along with a growing body of knowledge and research-based practices, these initiatives laid the groundwork for the current state efforts to ensure all students have equitable educational opportunities.

## **Collaborating for Improvement**

The Iowa Department of Education is committed to strengthening learning supports for all students. Recognizing the need for school-community collaboration, the Department is working with the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development\* to contribute to the success of all children and youth. To move the process forward, the Department of Education worked with national consultants and a national advisory panel and created a stakeholder group and several workgroups to provide input into a Design Team. The Steering Committee of the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development serves as the state steering committee for this work.

The specific focus for the work of the teams was to design an infrastructure and set of learning supports frameworks that could be fully integrated with Iowa efforts to improve instruction, create quality leaders, and manage resources. Such an infrastructure and frameworks will be helpful guidelines that can be adapted readily to fit state, regional, and local school and community needs for realizing results. The aim is to enhance Iowa's *system* of learning supports by embedding such a system into the Iowa school improvement process so that all students will have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

***"Ideally, we want the families and communities of young people to supply all that they need - love, a secure childhood, adequate housing, access to health care, a good education, discipline of character, a sense of personal responsibility, and a commitment to their communities and their country."***

***White House Task Force  
for Disadvantaged  
Youth Final Report  
(October, 2003)***

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\* The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development is a state led interagency partnership designed to better align policies and programs for the purpose of facilitating cooperative efforts among multiple state and community agencies on youth-related issues. State level collaboration partners include the Governor's office, the Departments of Public Health, Education, Human Services, Workforce Development, and Economic Development (Commission on Volunteer Services), and the Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning of the Department of Human Rights

### **Results for Iowa Children and Youth**

This document presents the conceptual design and its rationale. The approach described is intended to produce the results Iowa's citizens want for all their children and youth - that they are

- successful in school;
- healthy and socially competent;
- prepared for productive adulthood; and
- in safe, supportive schools, families, and communities.

### **Moving Forward - A Case for Change**

Despite our best intentions, every day there are students who have barriers in their lives that interfere with their "success in school". They display a wide range of learning, behavioral, physical, and social-emotional problems that interfere with their ability to participate fully and effectively in school environments and benefit from the instruction teachers provide. Educators recognize, and the research supports, that these barriers to learning call for consistent, system-wide attention. That is, the need is for a focused, cohesive, research-based effort that engages schools and their communities in collaboratively promoting the healthy development of all children and youth and addressing all major barriers to learning and teaching.

All levels of the education system simultaneously are facing declining resources and increasing demands for results and accountability. The economic future of our state has a direct relationship with the success of our public education system. An educated, well-prepared workforce is necessary to attract the kind of business that will ensure the future economic well-being of Iowa. As educators, policymakers, and communities work to continually improve their schools and meet the academic achievement standards set forth by the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the challenges are clear. To achieve the result that "all students succeed in school," Iowa must:

- *Increase student proficiency in reading and math.*  
Although seventy percent of Iowa students are proficient in reading and math, scores have shown very little or no growth over recent years (*The Annual Condition of Education Report*, 2003).

- *Eliminate the achievement gaps.*  
Gaps exist between white students and other subgroups of students (i.e., students eligible for free and reduced priced meals, English language learners, students with disabilities, and some ethnic and minority groups) (*The Annual Condition of Education Report*, 2003).
- *Foster students' social-emotional well-being.*  
Factors related to feelings of self-confidence/sense of efficacy, self esteem, positive values, and commitment to learning are still areas of concern for one out of four students (2002 Iowa Youth Survey).
- *Improve attendance at school.*  
Attendance at school is an indicator of both student health and student engagement in school. If a student is not in school, that student misses exposure to instruction. Worse yet, chronic absenteeism seriously disrupts the learning process. Overall absenteeism levels have remained relatively stable over the last decade at around 95% to 96%. Nevertheless, there still are students who repeatedly are part of the remaining 4% to 5% of those absent. Their absences from school create significant barriers to their learning (*The Annual Condition of Education Report*, 2003).
- *Increase connectedness to school.*  
Strong scientific evidence demonstrates that increased student connection to school promotes educational motivation, classroom engagement, and improved school attendance. These three factors in turn increase academic achievement. Student connection to school is the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals (*Whitehouse Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth*, October, 2003). Although there is an improving trend in the percent of Iowa youth who state that they feel supported at school by the school staff and their fellow students, one of four indicate that they do not feel this support (2002 Iowa Youth Survey).
- *Increase graduation rates, while at the same time decreasing dropout, suspension, and expulsion rates.*  
High school graduation and the pursuit of higher education increase the likelihood of success in Adulthood (*Child*

**“There is an overwhelming amount of evidence that academic achievement levels are correlated with, if not directly influenced by, how well students are faring in other areas of their lives: physical, nutritional, social-emotional, vocational and others. Equally important, research shows that helping students address their non-academic needs and interests pays off”**

**Irby, Thomases, and Pittman  
(2002)**

**“Student achievement outcomes, of course, are influenced by factors within the school system and by the well-being of the families and the neighborhoods in which they operate. Thus, student performance must be viewed within the context of the current status of indicators of school and community well being, such as economic, social, and health measures. If those indicators are not improving or are declining, it is patently unfair to ignore these contextual conditions in judging school performance. The school's role in addressing these contextual factors is to pursue a holistic, systemic, and collaborative approach to addressing barriers to student learning.”**

*Adelman and Taylor  
(2003)*

*Trends, 2003*). Although the overall graduation rate in Iowa in 2002 (our baseline year) was 89.4%, a disproportionate number of those not graduating are children with disabilities, African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians. The same patterns hold true for those who drop out (*The Annual Condition of Education Report, 2003*).

To accomplish the above goals, Iowa must focus efforts on improving instruction, enhancing the professional development of teachers and educational leaders, fostering the healthy development of students, and addressing barriers to learning and teaching. With specific respect to barriers to learning and teaching, it is recognized that such concerns extend beyond the scope of quality instruction and beyond the classroom. Research has identified a wide range of neighborhood, family, school, peer, and personal factors that lead to learning, behavior, and emotional problems (Hawkins and Catalano, Dryfoos, Slavin and Jessor, 1994). These factors are embedded in social and economic conditions that exist in Iowa:

- *Child abuse.*  
There is an average of 17.6 reports of substantiated child abuse for every 1000 children in the state reported annually (Department of Human Services).
- *Poverty.*  
The percent of students who are eligible for Free and Reduced Priced Meals has increased from 24.8% in 1992-93 to 28.5% a decade later. The percentage for some districts is as high as 71.2% (*The Annual Condition of Education Report, 2003*).
- *Parental involvement and support.*  
Only 60% of Iowa youth reported that they felt supported by their parents (2002 Iowa Youth Survey).
- *Safe and supportive communities.*  
Over 32% of Iowa youth reported that they did not feel safe in their own communities and 66% said that they did not feel community support (2002 Iowa Youth Survey).
- *Increased immigration.*  
Since 1985, the number of English Language Learners in Iowa schools has increased by 327% (*The Annual Condition of Education Report, 2003*).

- *Students who are entitled to special education services.*  
While total school enrollment has declined in recent years, a larger proportion of the population has been entitled to receive special education services - increasing from 8.6% of the state's student enrollment in 1985 to the current 13.1% (*The Annual Condition of Education Report, 2003*).

In addition, schools continue to be challenged to (a) provide sufficient support for such transitions as students entering a new school and/or grade, (b) facilitate sufficient home involvement in schooling, and (c) respond effectively when learning, physical, social-emotional, or behavioral problems first arise. These concerns are best addressed through an approach that weaves the resources of schools and communities together into a comprehensive and systemic component of learning supports that will improve student achievement and reduce the achievement gap. *For this to happen, such an approach must be adopted as an essential and integral part of continuous school improvement and community development.*

## Learning Supports: The Logic

The design is founded on the belief that enhanced learning supports would lead to the result, "All children and youth succeed in school", the primary focus of this endeavor. At the same time, a learning support system could improve results addressing the health and social competence of children and youth, their preparation for productive adulthood, and the family, school, and community contexts that nurture their growth. These results are contributing factors to school success. Associated indicators, supported by research as having an effect on academic learning, were identified and analyzed to enhance understanding of current data on student achievement. For a complete list of results, indicators, and baseline data, see Exhibit 1 below.

<i>Exhibit 1</i>	Indicator	Data Source	Baseline Year/ Data
<b>Result: All Iowa youth are successful in school.</b>			
	% of 8 <sup>th</sup> graders proficient in reading	ITBS/ITEDs	2001-2003: 69.3%
	% of 8th graders proficient in math	ITBS/ITEDs	2001-2003: 71.6%
	Average daily attendance rate	State Report Card	2001-2002: 95.8%
	% of students who dropped out of school (grades 9-12)	Basic Education Data Survey	2001-2002: 2.41%
	% of youth who are committed to school/learning	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 75.0%

Indicator	Data Source	Baseline Year/ Data
<b>Result: All Iowa youth are <i>healthy and socially competent</i>.</b>		
Rate of juvenile delinquency complaints per 10,000 youth	ICIS (Justice Data Warehouse)	2002: 483.6/10,000
% of youth who report they did not use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs during the last 30 days	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 76.6%
% of youth who report that they have neither planned, considered, nor tried to commit suicide	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 85.2%
% of youth who report that they have not engaged in violent/aggressive behavior	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 83.8%
<b>Result: All Iowa youth are <i>prepared for a productive adulthood</i>.</b>		
Rate at which students graduate from high school	Iowa Condition of Education Report	2002: 89.4%
% of 16 – 19 year olds who are not in school and who are not working	U.S. Census (Iowa data)	2002: 37%
% of youth who report that they help others 3+ hours/wk	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 27%
% of 11 <sup>th</sup> grade youth who report that they work 3+ hours per week in paid job	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 68%
Rate of births to teen aged mothers age 13-17	Iowa Dept. of Public Health	2002: 8.6/1000
<b>Result: All Iowa youth are in <i>safe and supportive schools</i>.</b>		
# of long-term suspensions or expulsions for violent crimes on school grounds or at school-sponsored events	Basic Education Data Survey	2002: 72
% of youth who report that staff and students at their school support them	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 41.9%
% of youth who report that the norms of the peers in their school are positive	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 71.1%
% of youth who report that they feel safe at school	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 83.1%
<b>Result: All Iowa youth are in <i>safe and supportive families</i>.</b>		
Rate of children found to be neglected or abused	IA Dept. of Human Services	2002: 176/10,000
% of families in the child welfare system	IA Dept. of Human Services	Data to be acquired
% of youth who report that their families are involved with and support them.	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 60.3%
% of youth reporting that their families provide them with boundaries	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 79.7%
<b>Result: All Iowa youth are in <i>safe and supportive communities</i>.</b>		
Rate of adult arrests	Uniform Crime Report	2002: 4287.7/100000
% of families living below the poverty level	U.S. Census (Iowa data)	2002: 7.7%
Rate of persons who are employed	IA Workforce Development	2002: 96%
% of youth who report that their neighborhoods are safe	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 78.2%
% of youth who report that their neighborhoods are supportive	Iowa Youth Survey	2002: 43.8%

## **Guiding Principles**

Based on available research and other sources of data (see pages 7 and 8), the following principles provide a foundation for the design.

### ***Schools Must Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching in Order to Accomplish their Instructional Mission***

- The mission of education includes a fundamental commitment to and accountability for students' academic achievement.
- Children/youth must be healthy and safe if they are to achieve academically and succeed in school.
- Some students experience significant barriers to their learning.
- In addition to effective instruction, student achievement is improved and barriers to learning are alleviated by a system of learning supports that incorporates a full continuum of research-based programs and services which ensure safe, health promoting, supportive, and inclusive learning environments.

### ***School-Community-Family Collaboration is Essential***

- A full continuum of programs and services transcends what any one system can provide and requires a combination of community level changes.
- Youngsters thrive and overcome barriers to learning when families are strengthened and assisted to find pathways to support their children's education and to pursue their own learning.
- Schools are strengthened when their efforts and those of community organizations and institutions are results-oriented and policies, programs, practices, and resources are mutually aligned to improve student achievement.
- Attempts to support academic achievement and address barriers to learning are enhanced when schools, families, and communities coordinate their efforts.

### ***Cohesive Leadership and Aligned Policy Are Needed at Every Level***

- Systems of learning supports require quality leaders at all levels, efficient and effective organization of resources, and well articulated planning.
- Cohesive, aligned policies and practices within the Department of Education and among its state level partners are essential to effect system changes at the regional and community levels.
- The role of state and regional agencies is to align, assist, and support community level changes.

These guiding principles led to the following hypothesis:

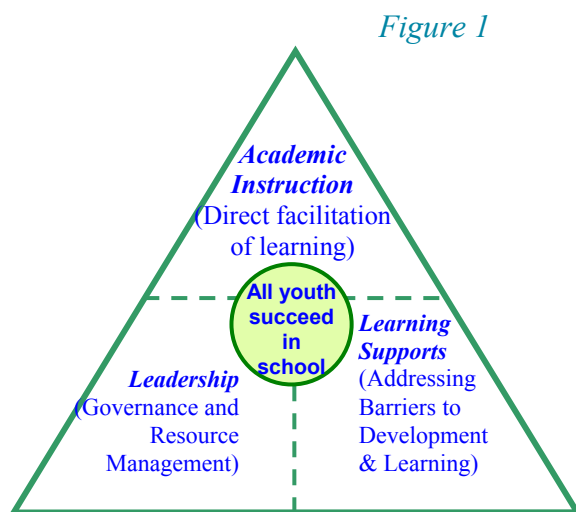
*If Iowa's schools and communities implement and sustain a fully integrated system of learning supports into school improvement programs and practices, then the learning, achievement, and performance of all children and youth will improve so they can become self-sufficient and successful members of a community and workforce.*

## Role of the Educational System in Learning Supports

For the educational system's role in learning supports the design uses a three-component organizational model that expands and can guide future school improvement efforts. (See Figure 1.) Creating this three-component model means taking all the resources currently expended for learning supports and creating a comprehensive third component for enabling students to learn and teachers to teach.

The components of the model are:

- *Academic Instruction Component:* This component represents the people and functions directly related to delivery of academic instruction.
- *Leadership Component:* The Leadership Component encompasses those people and functions responsible for the governance and management of the human, material, and financial resources in the education system.
- *Learning Supports Component:* A wide array of education personnel work with families and community partners to ensure that students succeed in school. Their efforts support classroom teachers and instruction by promoting healthy development and working to alleviate barriers that interfere with learning and teaching.



Regardless of what each component is labeled, the key point is that all three are necessary, complementary, and overlapping.

### **Collaboration Among Partners at All Levels**

As was learned with IBI and *Success4*, collaboration among school and community organizations is required at all levels in order to create a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system that supports student learning and eliminates barriers that impede it. Such collaboration is essential to reduce current fragmentation, counterproductive competition for sparse resources, and marginalization of efforts to provide learning supports.

Increased collaboration among the four levels of the educational system and with community partners (e.g., child welfare, juvenile justice, business, health, faith-based and youth development organizations) will significantly improve results for youngsters, their families, and their communities. The levels are:

- Schools, families and neighborhood partners
- School districts and community partners
- Area education agencies and regional partners
- Department of Education and state level partners

### **Outcomes for Systems**

Systems at all levels have shared responsibility for achieving the desired “Results for Iowa Children and Youth”. (See page 4.) The outcomes identified below define the nature and scope of the changes needed if systems of learning supports are to be developed and the results are to be realized. These system outcomes are

Child/Youth focused –

- quality leadership;
- safe, supportive, healthy, caring and inclusive environments;
- integrated family, school and community efforts;
- a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive school-community continuum of quality programs and services;
- aligned and supportive policies and resources;
- coordinated systems of data management and evaluation;
- inclusive policies, programs, and services responsive to human diversity.

***“There is...a case to be made for directly focusing on community development as an independent force for reform. Regardless of social class, it is hard for good schools to evolve in bad communities, and it is hard for schools not to feel the pressure and support to be good if the community is developing. Both the school and community can contribute to each other’s development....Two way inside-outside reciprocity is the elusive key to large-scale reform.”***

***Michael Fullan  
(1999)***

***“It is a child’s overall development – not simply cognitive and intellectual development – that makes academic learning possible.”***

*James Comer  
(1997)*

### **Outcomes for All Children and Youth**

The system changes that result in a fully implemented and sustained system of learning supports will achieve five (5) important outcomes for children and youth:

- Mastery of academic and social skill competencies.
- Increased attachment to, and engagement in, school and community.
- Increased personal and interpersonal assets.
- Health promoting, less risky behavior.
- Increased competence to value, work with, and benefit from human diversity.

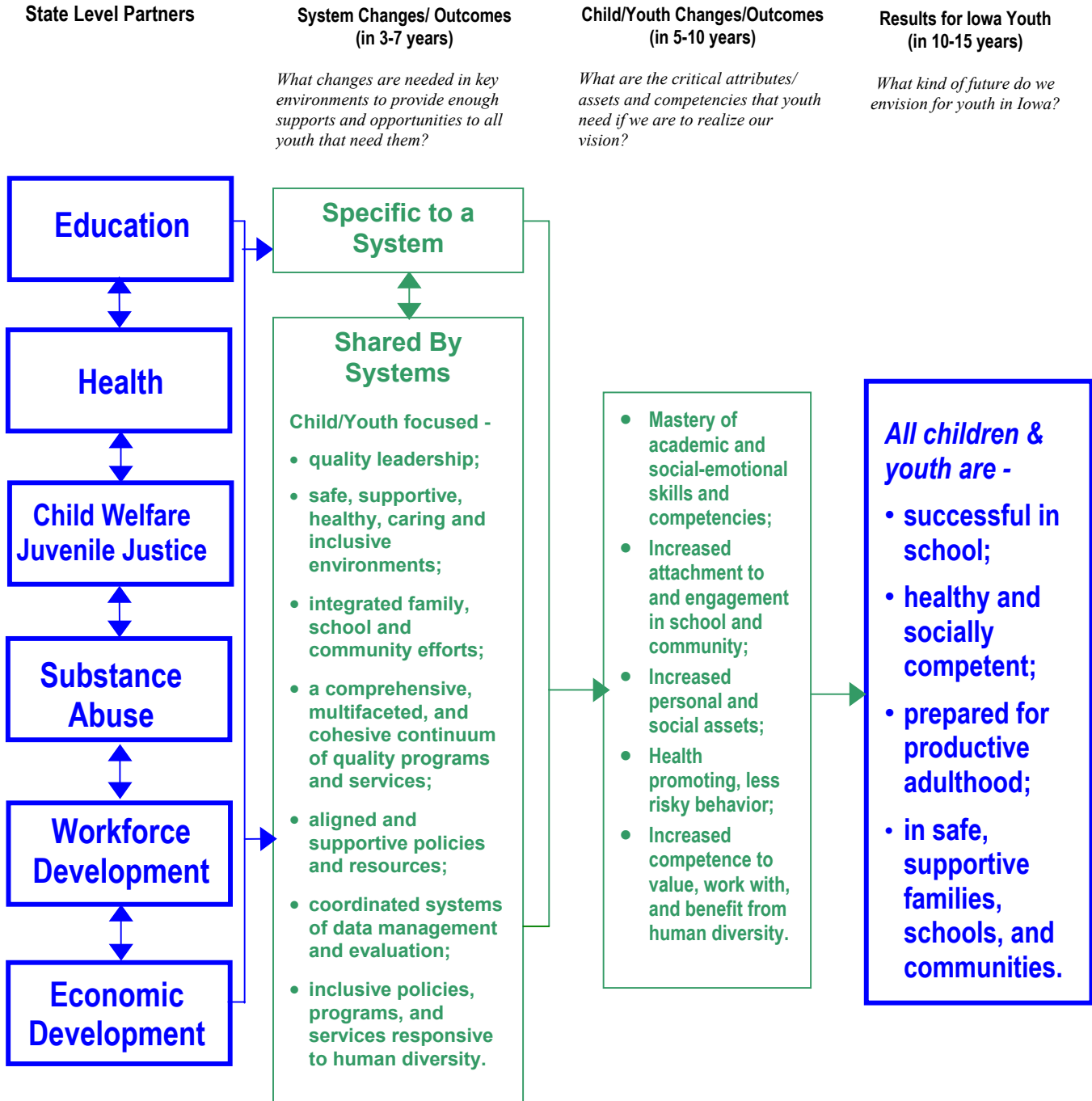
These outcomes are intermediate milestones leading to realization of long-term results.

### **Visualizing the Logic**

Figure 2 on the next page visually depicts the flow of logic upon which the design is based. The purpose of the logic model is to provide stakeholders with a roadmap describing the sequence of changes necessary to bring about the desired results. Viewing this model from left to right helps the reader follow the chain of reasoning by applying a series of “if...then...” statements which connect the short-term outcomes/effects of the change effort to the long-term results.

Figure 2

## State Systems LOGIC MODEL FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATION





## Designing a Prototype

*Schools that satisfy students' basic needs benefit from students' improved attitudes and behavior. In addition to helping their students learn and grow – academically, socially, emotionally, and ethically – these schools also help the students avoid problems ranging from emotional distress to drug use to violence. Promoting academic achievement is of course an essential goal for schools, but outcomes in these areas are also critical. The mission of our public schools historically has been – and still needs to be – to prepare students to be productive citizens, to cultivate moral character, and to promote an appreciation of arts and culture. Emphasizing the importance of learning along with other qualities that are essential to our society, such as fairness, concern for others, and responsibility helps promote a shared commitment to the school's goals, establishes common ground, and shapes the norms that govern daily interactions.*

Learning First Alliance (2001)

Once the guiding principles, outcomes, and results depicted on the logic model were established, the next step was to create a prototype of the approach to be used to achieve those outcomes and ultimately the results. A complement of work teams assisted in the design of the prototype for a system of learning supports that addressed the following facets of such a system.

- *Long term results and measures* based on available data serve as leading indicators of student success in school. Additional sets of system and student performance measures reflect the intermediate and direct impact of a system of learning supports.
- *Cohesive intervention frameworks*, grounded in the agreed upon results for all children and youth in Iowa, facilitate organization of school and community resources, programs, and services into a comprehensive continuum that supports student learning and healthy development and addresses barriers.
- *Infrastructure* organizes the functions and processes needed to implement a system of learning supports and connect the various system levels (local, regional, and state). The infrastructure focus is on mechanisms that permit schools and communities to make optimal use of their resources, reframe the roles of personnel, and integrate the instruction, management, and learning supports components of the educational system.

- *Supportive policies* at all levels are identified or developed to facilitate the implementation of a system of learning supports in ways that complement and are fully integrated into school-community efforts to improve teaching and learning and manage resources.
- *Capacity building* at all system levels (state, regional, and local) will (a) ensure use of definitions and guidelines that create a common language for improved communication within the educational system and with other child-serving systems and (b) enhance the knowledge, skills, and resources/tools needed to successfully implement a system of learning supports.

**“Education is everyone’s business. More than ever before, we all have a stake in the success of our education system. The quality of life for ourselves, our children and grandchildren hangs in the balance, and all of us share responsibility for meeting the challenge before us.”**

**Iowa Learns Council**

To begin this work, schools must engage community partners and have the support of regional and state agencies. Although the work begins at the school level, the district, regional, and state levels also need to organize themselves at the same time in ways that will facilitate local efforts to develop and maintain effective and efficient systems of learning supports that reach the students for which they are intended. All system levels must deploy resources more effectively (i.e., reduce fragmentation and competition for limited resources); reframe student supports as supports for learning and development; redesign infrastructures and realign support staff roles to create comprehensive, multi-faceted, and cohesive school-community continua of research-based interventions; and create mechanisms for assessing needs, planning, and deploying resources to address the barriers most affecting the achievement and development of students.

The next three sections expand on these facets of learning supports systems described above - the concept of an intervention framework, and the infrastructure and supportive policies that are needed to accomplish the work. The section on *intervention frameworks* describes an organizer for research-based programs and practices that, when combined, will form a comprehensive, multi-faceted, and cohesive continuum of learning supports interventions. In order to implement the continuum, the section on *infrastructure* describes mechanisms in the form of teams that must be in place to determine the needs of students for supports to their learning and the most efficient and effective ways to provide them. The last of the three sections suggests steps to be taken that will ensure that *policies* are supportive rather than inhibiting to the implementation of systems of learning supports.

## Frameworks to Guide Ongoing Development and Implementation of Learning Supports

*Teachers and other school staff have a shared role to play with families and the community in the overall positive development of children and youth. This development includes mastery of academic and social skills and competencies; increasing attachment to and engagement in school and community; increasing personal and interpersonal assets; engaging in health promoting, less risky behavior; and increasing competence to value, work with, and benefit from human diversity.*

The Learning Supports component provides a unified structure to guide new directions for learning supports and connect them to continuous improvement efforts in the school. It embraces efforts to promote healthy development and foster positive functioning as the best way to prevent many learning, physical, social-emotional, and behavioral problems and as a necessary adjunct to correcting problems experienced by teachers, students, and families.

Learning supports selected to foster the healthy development of children and youth need to encompass a holistic and developmental approach that embraces human diversity and focuses on individuals, families, and the contexts in which they live, learn, work, and play. A basic assumption is that the least restrictive and non-intrusive forms of intervention to address problems and accommodate individual needs are required. Another assumption is that problems are not discrete, and therefore, interventions that address root causes should be used.

Three intervention frameworks help schools and communities understand the importance of conceptualizing such activities in systemic terms rather than as a *series* of programs and services. They underscore the need to weave together school and community resources to address a wide range of factors interfering with young people's learning, performance, and well-being.

One framework, the service triangle illustrated in Figure 3, represents a three level approach to service delivery put forth by the Institute of Medicine and adapted by educators to depict types of interventions and the target populations of students for which they are intended. A second framework, described on page 20, suggests a scheme for categorizing the interventions into six content areas representing the wide range of supports required to meet the needs of all students. The third framework (Figure 4 on page 19) provides a way to organize the content along a continuum of care that matches the interventions to

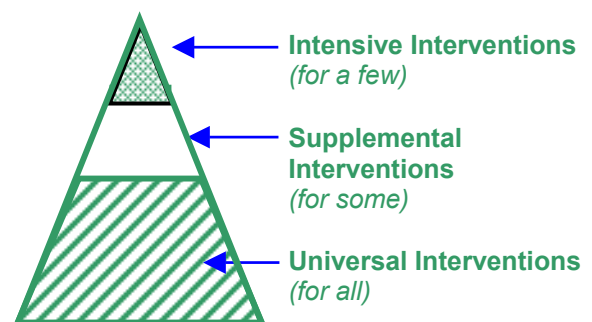


Figure 3

the level of student need and facilitates access to and between programs and services. These frameworks assist schools and communities to identify gaps and overlaps in existing programs and services, to connect them to student needs, and to strategically involve the community in enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency, and economy of a *comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive* system of learning supports.

## Content Areas for Learning Supports

***“...there is a growing body of scientifically-based research supporting the strong impact that enhanced social and emotional behaviors can have on success in school and ultimately in life.”***

*Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg,  
and Walberg  
(2004)*

Efforts across the country to develop better systems of learning supports have begun to define the content of a school's Learning Support component. Building on those efforts, this design groups learning supports into six content/programmatic areas. Together these areas form the structure for organizing, understanding, and selecting research-based interventions intended to address the needs of students who encounter barriers that interfere with their learning at school. The six content areas from the Learning Supports component are:

- Supplements to Instruction
- Family Supports and Involvement
- Community Partnerships
- Safe, Healthy, and Caring Environments
- Transitions
- Child/Youth Engagement

By defining the content that makes up the Learning Supports component in terms of these six areas, a broad unifying framework is created within which a school-community continuum of learning support programs and practices can be organized.

Exhibit 2 provides a brief overview of each of the Learning Supports “content” areas.

### *Exhibit 2*

#### ***Supplements to Instruction -- fostering healthy cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development.***

A broad range of research-based learning strategies and activities during school and non-school hours must be provided through a variety of recreational, enrichment, leadership, and academic supports and opportunities. It is essential to equip the educational community (area education agency, district, *and* building level staff) with multiple ways of providing these supports to ensure that children and youth have the

full benefit of quality instruction. In particular, school staff need to design classrooms that (a) prevent problems, (b) facilitate intervening as soon as problems are noticed, (c) develop intrinsic motivation for learning, and (d) re-engage students who have become disengaged from classroom learning. To these ends, and in keeping with the Iowa Teacher Quality Standards, a few examples of Supplements to Learning include content enhancement strategies, cooperative learning; instruction in life skills, social skills, and health; character education; and conflict resolution and enrichment programs.

*Family Support and Involvement -- promoting and enhancing the involvement of parents and family members in education.*

Families must be actively engaged (at home, at school, and in the community) as advocates and decision-makers in their child's education. Youngsters with parents involved in their education have higher grades and test scores, have better attendance, complete homework more consistently, and exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior (Henderson, A.T., and Mapp, K.L., 2002). Schools must be open to creating and supporting partnerships that include the families of all students and include practices such as:

- a) supporting families to meet their basic obligations to their children;
- b) establishing respectful two-way communication between home and school regarding matters that are essential to children and their families;
- c) enhancing home-school connections and sense of community;
- d) involving family participation in decision-making and advocacy on behalf of their children and for issues related to improving schools;
- e) engaging families in supporting their children's learning and development at home;
- f) eliciting help from families to meet classroom, school, and community needs;
- g) addressing specific learning and support needs of the family.

(Adelman, 1994, Davies, 1987, Epstein, 1988, and Henderson & Mapp, 2002)

School-based, and community-linked interventions can provide better access to what is needed for many children, youth, and their families.

*Community Partnerships -- participating with multiple sectors of the community to build linkages and collaborations offering youth development services, opportunities, and supports.*

Meaningful community involvement, linkages, and collaborations are key to providing a comprehensive system of learning supports and will result in better outcomes for children and youth. School/Community partnerships must have broad, inclusive representation when planning for the needs of students. Such partnerships need to include state and local government, business and industry, systems of positive youth development (e.g. parks and recreation, YMCA/YWCA, scouting, and 4-H.), and both public and private systems of service delivery (e.g. alcohol and other drug abuse prevention and treatment, counseling, job programs, and apprenticeships). Schools

must also be active members of existing collaborative groups that work to improve results for children and families. Ideally, such partnerships share common information on needs assessment, planning, and evaluation and focus on common measurable results to facilitate coordination of resources and ensure their effective and efficient operation across systems.

*Safe, Healthy, and Caring Learning Environments -- providing environments school-wide that ensure the physical and psychological well-being and safety of all children and youth through positive youth development efforts and proactive planning for management of emergencies, crises, and follow-up.*

Safe, healthful, and caring environments create the psychological and physical settings needed for teachers to provide quality instruction and for students to take full advantage of that instruction. *Psychological environments* affect the ability of students and staff to function effectively at school. Such environments attend to emotional well-being (nurturing learning environment) and the social conditions (caring community) of the school. School-wide efforts in this area typically address the culture and climate of the school and may include school-wide proactive discipline and character development programs. *Physical environments* (classroom, school building, grounds, and surrounding neighborhoods) include safety conditions, temperature, noise and lighting, furnishings, and accessibility. The need for well-coordinated crisis prevention, preparedness, response, and follow-up is continuous so that students can effectively handle unexpected disruptions, perceive their environment as safe, and be psychologically free to re-engage in learning without undue concerns and delays. Healthful environments require attention to nutrition, wellness, and physical fitness. Anti-bullying programs, positive behavioral supports, general health education, safety audits, and application of the concepts of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) can help schools improve their environments.

*Child/Youth Engagement -- providing opportunities for youth to be engaged in and contribute to their communities.*

Effective youth involvement in service to their communities and decision-making positively affects the youth involved, the adults involved, and the overall organization. While children and youth are recipients of the collective supports provided by their family, their school, and the larger community, they must also be viewed as *partners* in this process. An integral part of positive youth development includes the opportunities for children and youth to exercise leadership through active decision-making roles in the development and implementation of options for their own learning and enrichment. Youth engagement has the greatest impact when adults create such opportunities and support youth as they engage in developmentally appropriate activities. Some examples of youth engagement are service-learning, peer mentoring, peer mediation, self advocacy, and problem-solving programs, and youth service on councils and boards that make decisions that affect children and youth.

*Supports for transitions -- enhancing the school's ability to address a variety of transition concerns that confront children, youth, and their families.*

Transitions fill the lives of children and youth – transitions from early childhood programs to school, transitions between school levels (elementary, middle, and high school), transitions from home to school, transitions between classes, transitions precipitated by family moves within and between communities (mobility), and transitions to and from school to adulthood. Successful transitions for children and youth make a significant difference in their attachment to and engagement in school, their motivation, their readiness to learn, and their ability to benefit from instruction. Transition policies, planning, and programs are basic to increasing positive attitudes toward school and should focus on issues that confront children, youth, and their families such as access to programs and services, transportation, and building relationships through networks of social support. Examples of relevant practices include readiness to learn programs, before and after school programs to enrich learning and provide safe recreation, vocational and college counseling, welcoming and social support programs, and school-to-career programs. The scope of planning also needs to address family mobility and the role of schools in countering the effects of many school transfers.

A research base for specific learning support programs and services in each area can be readily garnered from the large body of existing literature. Future work of the Iowa Department of Education and its partners will be to develop a network of stakeholders with specialized expertise to review the research on programs and strategies in this framework and post their findings on the web for schools and communities to use in their planning efforts. This review will include an evaluation of the quality and rigor of the research, the outcomes of the interventions that verify that the intervention will make a contribution to the results for Iowa youth, and identification of the populations targeted for the intervention. Special attention will be given to research-based programs and services that are responsive to and develop competence in valuing, working with, and benefiting from human diversity.

### **A Continuum of Interventions to Meet the Needs of All Children and Youth**

Schools and communities are already implementing some programs and services that address the six content areas described above. Currently, many of these programs and services operate in isolation of one another and do not provide a cohesive, comprehensive approach to providing learning supports. By viewing the programs along a continuum of student needs, schools and communities are more likely to be able to provide the right services for the right students at the right time. Such continua encompass efforts to positively affect a full

*“...young people learn best when they are engaged with their heads and hearts, and where they have real choice in the situations in which they are involved.”*

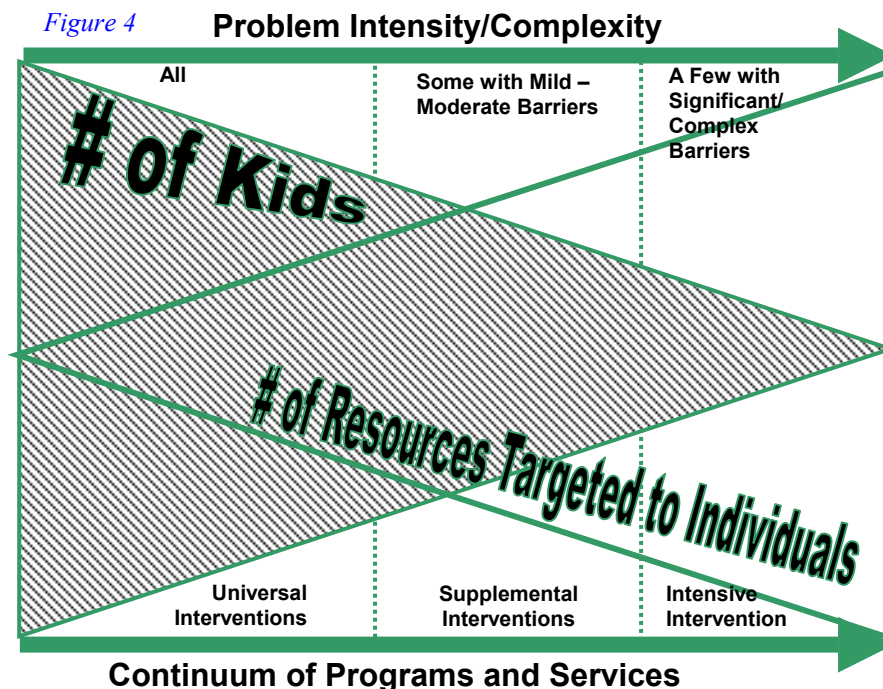
*Karen Pittman, et al*

spectrum of learning, physical, social-emotional, and behavioral problems in every school and community in Iowa by

- promoting healthy development and preventing problems;
- intervening as early after the onset of problems as is feasible; and
- providing special assistance for severe and chronic problems.

A continuum provides a structure for mapping resources and identifying gaps and redundancies in services, thus increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the supports to learning. When complete, the interventions identified will encompass the full continuum of student needs and address both developmental levels and the entire age span served in the K-12 educational system.

Figure 4 turns the three-level triangle on its side and connects the level of needs of a school's student population to the level of services required to meet those needs. The dual triangles show that there are youth development and prevention programs that are designed to promote healthy development for all students without being directed to address specific problems. These programs reach the greatest number of students with the least number of targeted resources per pupil. On the other end of the continuum, the greatest number of targeted resources per pupil are directed to the few number of students who have intense and complex needs. This last category of interventions may include those intended for small groups or individual students.



## Rethinking Infrastructure to Integrate Learning Supports Fully into School Improvement

*What makes infrastructures work is the quality of conceptualization and the nature of the philosophy that underpins them....The conceptualization of infrastructure must be driven by a philosophy of moral purpose in which human capacity-building and accountability learn to work together.*

Michael Fullan (1999)

This section addresses infrastructure, a set of operational mechanisms for carrying out the functions associated with the Learning Supports component in an effective, efficient, and fully integrated manner with the processes of school improvement. A learning supports system infrastructure is comprised of mechanisms (e.g., teams, work groups, collaborations, partnerships) that include administrators, staff, and various collaborating parties. The mechanisms/teams that are developed should be designed to pursue the proactive functions that over time create a comprehensive system of learning supports. These team functions include following a process that generates decisions for adding, deleting, and enhancing programs and practices in order to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of learning supports and leverage resources. The processes executed by the team include assessing needs, mapping resources, planning, implementing, and evaluating, and providing oversight, leadership, capacity building, and ongoing support.

Given limited resources, a Learning Supports component is established by deploying, redeploying, and weaving all existing learning support resources together. This requires rethinking infrastructure at each level of the system (i.e., local, regional, and state) where decisions are made about such matters as:

- Who are the leaders with responsibility and accountability for the Learning Support component?
- What mechanisms enable leaders at the various levels to work together?
- What mechanisms ensure that there is a regular focus on resource use and component development at a school? For a group of schools in a feeder system? For a school district and its community? For an area education agency and its regional partners? For the Department of Education and its state agency partners?

- What mechanisms at the local, regional, and state levels ensure effective triage, referral, monitoring, and management of interventions for students and families at the school level?

*EXHIBIT 3*

*About Leadership*

It is clear that enhancing a system of learning supports requires strong leadership to help steer systemic changes and construct the necessary infrastructure. Establishment and maintenance of a potent learning support component requires continuous, proactive, effective teaming, organization, and accountability.

Administrative leadership at every level is key to the success of any initiative in schools that involves systemic change. Everyone at the school site should be aware of who provides leadership, promotes, and is accountable for the development of the component. It is imperative that such leadership be at a level high enough to participate meaningfully at key decision making tables when budget and other fundamental resource decisions are discussed.

Given that a learning support component is one of the primary and essential components of school improvement, it is crucial to have designated administrative and staff leadership for learning supports. An administrative school leader for the component may be created by redefining a percentage (e.g., 50%) of an assistant principal's day. Or, in schools that only have one administrator, the principal might delegate some administrative responsibilities to a coordinator. The designated administrative leader must represent and advocate learning support recommendations at administrative and governance body meetings. This leader's job description delineates specific functions related to roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities for the learning support component.

Besides facilitating initial development of a potent component to promote healthy, positive development and address barriers to learning, the administrator must lead by example, guide, and be accountable for daily implementation, monitoring, and problem solving. Such administrative leadership is a key to successfully creating and implementing a system of learning supports.

**Functions and Processes**

An orientation of efforts toward a common set of results provides an opportunity for system alignment that can create a synergistic interaction among the many functions that each system performs. When state level partners agreed on the results they wanted for Iowa's children and youth, the results became the goal toward which they could align their learning supports efforts. Every agency, organization, and individual has a contribution to make, a role to play, in achievement of the results. The way is paved for true collaboration to occur.

To create this synergistic interaction among multiple statewide systems and to achieve desired results, connections *within and among the levels* of each partner system (e.g., the educational system, the juvenile justice system, the public health system) are also essential. Particular attention must be paid to the following:

- a) common planning to realize mutually agreed upon outcomes;
- b) alignment of policy and procedures to support efforts to achieve desired outcomes; and
- c) use of a common intervention framework such as the one described in this document that serves as the unifying umbrella for the Learning Supports component for students.

While each level of a system (i.e., state, regional, and local) has *unique* functions to perform, these functions must be interrelated to create the kind of system that will make a significant contribution to the Results for Iowa Youth. In addition, many of these functions must also be *shared* across multiple systems. No single part of a larger statewide system of support can be optimally effective in isolation from any other part.

At each level of the system, Learning Supports component leaders and resource management teams carry out specific *core functions* and processes that fall within two major categories – those intended to **build the capacity of systems** to provide learning supports and those related to the actual **development and implementation of a continuum of learning supports**. In general, the functions of a learning supports system are no different than any continuous improvement planning cycle (e.g., the Iowa Comprehensive School Improvement Planning process); however, in implementation, specific functions related to learning supports will emerge that require rethinking infrastructure at all levels. Effective systems have these mechanisms in place to perform the functions identified in Exhibit 4 on the next page that are specifically related to considerations for learning supports.

**“Rather than viewing the educational system as a vertical top-down or bottom-up world, all of the participants need to recognize that they are members of one system, and that the only way that change is going to succeed is if everyone does his or her job well and learns to trust that members at other points along the continuum can and will do their jobs well.”**

Hord & Hall  
(2001)

Exhibit 4

**Function Category: Capacity Building**

*Core Function: Leadership and oversight of development and implementation of a system of learning supports*

**Processes:**

- Establish and articulate the agency's enduring commitment to an effective system of learning supports.
- Assess, analyze, and organize resources necessary to implement a cohesive system of learning supports.
- Develop, review, and revise plans and procedures necessary for the implementation of a learning supports system.
- Design and implement procedures to coordinate the overall learning support system activities.
- Review plans and procedures and revise as needed.

*Core Function: Professional development in and communication of learning supports strategies and practices*

**Processes:**

- Develop and provide ongoing professional development to ensure that essential skills and understandings are in place for the effective implementation of a learning support system.
- Provide training for skill development.
- Provide ongoing follow-up consistent with the foundational standards put forth in the Iowa Professional Development Model.
- Implement a communication plan about the Learning Supports system.

**Function Category: Developing and Implementing a Continuum of Learning Supports Programs and Services**

*Core Function: Ongoing assessment of student needs and audit of learning supports resources*

**Processes:**

- Aggregate student data and data obtained from teachers and community sources to analyze needs of children and youth with respect to learning, behavior, and social-emotional problems.
- Map, analyze, and enhance relevant school and community resources to improve effectiveness, cost efficiency, and program development.
- Identify tasks that can be combined, stopped, and/or replaced in lieu of just adding new work.

**Core Function: Planning**

**Processes:**

- Plan programs and system development, including emphasis on establishing a full continuum of research-based interventions, enhancing procedures for management of programs and information, and refining mechanisms for referral, case management, and quality assurance.
- Make decisions about priorities and allocation and redeployment of resources.

**Core Function: Implementation**

**Processes:**

- Implement research-based practices.
- Coordinate and integrate resources with community partners.
- Carry out social marketing and enhanced communication with stakeholders.
- Enhance system and personnel capacity.

**Core Function: Evaluation**

**Processes:**

- Conduct formative evaluation to monitor the fidelity of implementation and adjust as needed.
- Complete summative evaluation for measuring impact.

## About Learning Support Resource Management Teams

Resource-oriented teams are crucial elements of any infrastructure for implementing a cohesive system of learning supports. Some across the country call such mechanisms *Learning Supports Resource Management Teams* or *Councils*. Properly constituted, a learning supports resource team provides on-site leadership for efforts to comprehensively address programs and practices that facilitate learning and ensure the maintenance and improvement of a multifaceted and integrated approach.

Learning supports resource teams can reduce fragmentation and increase cost-effectiveness by determining and supporting ways that programs and practices can function cohesively. For example, a team can coordinate resources, increase communication among school staff, families, and community partners about available services, and monitor programs to be certain they are functioning effectively and efficiently. More generally, this group can provide leadership in planning and the acquisition, organization, and deployment of resources to guide school and community personnel in evolving their vision for the children and youth that they serve.

***“I’m becoming more convinced from our own work that to establish durable and expandable systems change, we will need to “work less” and instead be more strategic, efficient, and accountable, that is, work smarter.”***

***George Sugai  
(2004)***

This includes establishing priorities and selecting practices for learning support.

### **Team Composition**

A learning supports resource team is meant to focus on resources related to all major learning support programs and services. Thus, it tries to bring together representatives of all these programs and services. School-based professionals might include, for example, administrators, school counselors, psychologists, nurses, social workers, at risk coordinators, health educators, special education staff, after school program staff, bilingual, Title I and Safe and Drug-Free Schools program coordinators. It also should include representatives of any community agency with significant interest in the welfare of the students of that school. In addition to traditional human service providers, such a team is well-advised to add the energies and expertise of youth development professionals, members of faith-based organizations, classroom teachers, non-certificated staff, parents, and older students.

Properly constituted, trained, and supported, a learning supports resource team complements the work of the site's governance body (e.g., building improvement teams, school improvement action committees) by providing on-site overview, leadership, and advocacy for all activity aimed at facilitating learning and teaching and addressing barriers. Including an administrator on the team provides the necessary link with the school's administrative decision-making about allocation of budget, space, staff development time, and other resources.

### **Learning Supports Resource Team vs. Case Management Team**

It is important to emphasize that a *learning supports resource team* differs from a *case-oriented team* (e.g. building assistance teams, teacher assistance teams, student assistance teams, problem solving teams). Case-oriented teams focus on individual students who are having problems. In contrast, learning supports resource teams represent the type of mechanism needed for overall cohesion and ongoing development of learning supports programs and systems. Their focus is not on specific individuals, but on how resources are used. In carrying out their functions, these teams provide what often is a missing link for managing and enhancing programs and systems in ways that integrate, strengthen, and stimulate new and improved interventions. For example, such teams play a major role in carrying out the capacity building and service delivery functions already described. In some instances, creating yet “another team” may

present a burden. For a small school, the school improvement team may assume the functions of a learning supports resource team. Large schools may have staff sufficient to form a separate team. Other existing teams, such as student or teacher assistance teams, and school safety/climate-culture teams, have demonstrated the ability to carry out learning supports resource functions. In adding the resource-oriented functions to another team's work, great care must be taken to structure the agenda so sufficient time is devoted to the additional tasks.

In instances where separate teams are created, having at least one representative from the resource team on the school's governing and planning bodies ensures the type of infrastructure connections that are essential if programs and services are to be maintained, improved, and increasingly integrated with classroom instruction.

### **Creating Learning Supports Teams at All Levels**

For design purposes, it helps to conceive the structure beginning at the local level. That is, the infrastructure design first specifies an effective set of infrastructure mechanisms at a school. The school infrastructure then needs to be connected to other schools in a feeder pattern, (e.g., a family of schools.) (See Exhibit 5 on the next page.) At this level, the infrastructure must also connect with the community surrounding a given group of schools. Then, attention shifts to ensure that school level efforts are nurtured through effective infrastructure connections with a district and area education agency.

Ultimately, the emphasis on enhancing school and community connections leads to considerations of how school mechanisms interface with community infrastructure mechanisms to establish effective school-community collaborations that carry out important functions with increased efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of scale. Construction of similar structures at the regional and state levels designed to support local endeavors should occur simultaneously.

EXHIBIT 5

### *A Learning Supports Resource Team for a Family of Schools and Community Partners*

Schools in the same geographic or catchment area have a number of shared concerns, and schools in the feeder pattern often interact with students from the same family. Furthermore, some programs and personnel already are or can be shared by several neighboring schools, thereby minimizing redundancy and reducing costs. A multi-site team can provide a mechanism to help ensure cohesive and equitable deployment of learning support resources and also can facilitate the pooling of resources to reduce costs. Such a mechanism can be particularly useful for integrating the efforts of high schools and their feeder middle and elementary schools. This clearly is important in addressing barriers with those families who have youngsters attending more than one level of schooling in the same cluster. It is neither cost-effective nor good intervention for each school to contact a family separately in instances where several children from a family are in need of special attention. With respect to linking with community resources, multi-school teams are especially attractive to community agencies that often do not have the time or personnel to make independent arrangements with every school.

In general, a group of schools can benefit from a multi-site resource-oriented team designed to provide leadership, facilitate communication and connection, and ensure quality improvement across sites. For example, a multi-site *Resource Coordinating Council* might consist of a high school and its feeder middle and elementary schools, bringing together one to two representatives from each school's resource team. Such a council can be the foundation for a strong school-community collaborative.

## Policy Support and Alignment

*With respect to new directions for student support, leaders recognize that substantially enhancing the well-being of young people involves addressing key policy concerns. Policy must be developed around well-conceived models and the best available information. Policy must be realigned horizontally and vertically to create a cohesive framework and must connect in major ways with the missions of schools.*

- Adelman and Taylor (1999)

Federal, state, and local policies are important ingredients in systems of learning supports. Such policies may be formalized in legislation and related regulations and guidelines, local laws and ordinances, school board policy, and procedural guidelines and standards related to an organization's goal's and objectives. Others, although informal, may have the effect of policy by establishing norms of practice and behavior, (e.g., informal standards, mores, etc.), that shape the actions of those in an organization, community, or other social context. Some examples of informal policy are the requirements in Requests for Applications for competitive grants that define the “rules” of practice, practices institutionalized over time and viewed as the “way we do business” (e.g., hiring and professional development practices), schoolwide discipline systems that establish the norms of conduct for a building or district, and behavioral norms established in families, neighborhoods, and communities. Exhibit 5 on the next page identifies the policies that might be reviewed.

One step in ensuring a supportive school improvement/learning supports structure that promotes academic achievement and fosters healthy cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development is to review documents and practices that impact, either directly or indirectly, the school improvement system within the school district. Documents need to be gathered and practices identified prior to the review. The documents and practices can then be examined to determine if present practices need to be changed. Questions to ask in the review are:

- Is the policy written, present, and implemented? Does it support, inhibit, or is it neutral towards successful implementation of the school improvement system?
- Is the policy practiced, but not written? Does it support, inhibit, or is it neutral towards successful implementation of the school improvement system?

- Is the policy written, but not practiced? Does it support, inhibit, or is it neutral towards successful implementation of the school improvement system?

Once it is determined where the policies and related procedures fall, the organization knows where it needs to concentrate its energies to ensure successful completion of the school improvement plan. The organization has a number of options when addressing inhibiting policies (whether written or practiced), it can either eliminate the obstacles, acknowledge their presence and look for alternatives for them, or live with the obstacles. The only option available to the organization when addressing supportive, unwritten practices is to document the supportive practices by getting them written into board policy, administrative regulations, or other appropriate documents such as the master agreement. The supportive, written documents that are not being practiced should either be eliminated or put into practice.

A review of existing state policies across systems that address issues and practices related to healthy development led to the conclusion that (1) sufficient policy support exists for moving forward, (2) application for a waiver from a given written policy may be sought, and (3) over time, the situation can be improved markedly by in-depth policy review, analyses, and realignment.

*Exhibit 6*

*Examples of School Policies to Review*

The policies below have been identified as ones that could have high impact on cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development and could be reviewed. The list is not exhaustive.

- Health Services- follow through on chronic health problems/ coordination with private and public health services
- Discipline- punitive vs. instructional/developmental
- School Day – alternatives for attendance such as full day vs. part day
- Career Education- K-12 vs. high school only
- Curriculum- provisions of health and life skills learning opportunities
- Transportation- provisions for support services
- Grievances-provisions for accommodating conflicts/teaching students conflict resolution
- Community Resource Persons and Volunteers – provisions for volunteers in classrooms to assist teachers
- Curriculum Development, Implementation and Evaluation – the extent to which students are included in the mandated processes for these three areas
- Internet- Acceptable Use

*Other documents to review:*

- Job descriptions-inclusion of skills addressing cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development
- Affirmative Action Plan
- Staff Development Plan-provisions for learning about cognitive, physical and social-emotional development
- Employee Induction Plan-expectations
- Comprehensive School Improvement Plan-goals and activities related to cognitive, physical and social-emotional development
- Mentoring Program
- Student/parent/staff handbooks-expectations and provisions for support

*Examples of Practices to Review*

Below is a list of common organizational practices that are not written. School districts should review the list and determine whether they apply to the school district. The school district should also review other internal practices that impact the school improvement plan.

- Informal interviewing practices-student involvement
- Selection of professional development programs-student involvement
- The link between professional development and the school improvement plan
- Employees, other than licensed staff, get professional development
- Presence of a group that determines what professional development is offered and, if so, method of selection of the group—student and parent involvement
- The method of disseminating professional development information, both before and after, throughout the organization-parent and student awareness
- Stereotypes in hiring or assignments, e.g. woman as a superintendent or high school principal

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## Getting From Here to There: Capacity Building, Getting to Scale, Sustaining, and Institutionalizing

*Ultimately, only three things matter about educational reform. Does it have depth: does it improve important rather than superficial aspects of students' learning and development? Does it have length: can it be sustained over long periods of time instead of fizzling out after the first flush of innovation? Does it have breadth: can the reform be extended beyond a few schools, networks, or showcase initiatives to transform education across entire systems or nations?*

Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink (2000)

Those who accept the challenge of promoting the healthy development of Iowa's children and youth and alleviating the barriers to learning and teaching that hinder their success in school are confronted with two enormous tasks. One without the other is insufficient. The first task is to develop a prototype of a system of learning supports, such as the one described in the previous sections. Now, the next challenge is the initial implementation and ultimate scale-up of systems of learning supports in schools and communities across the state. The question is, "How do we get from here to there?" The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development will shepherd this effort with the Department of Education taking the lead and other collaborating agencies making essential contributions to the work.

### Steps to Implementation – What Needs to be Done

To move the prototype described in this document from the drawing board to implementation will require those wishing to replicate it to concentrate on the actions listed below. Each facet and task requires careful planning based on sound intervention fundamentals. This means paying special attention to the problem of the match between the changes needed and those who are to change.

#### *Planning*

- 1) articulating a *clear, shared vision* for their system of learning supports;
- 2) establishing/adopting *long term results and measures*;
- 3) negotiating formal and informal *partnership agreements*;
- 4) *mapping and analyzing* existing resources for availability, content, and effectiveness;

- 5) reframing student supports into an *infrastructure* for learning supports by -
  - dedicating administrative time to learning supports,
  - redefining leadership roles and functions to facilitate, guide, and support the systemic changes for *ongoing* development of learning supports systems at every level (state, regional, and local),
  - realigning support staff/pupil services personnel roles and functions, and
  - creating or enhancing teams to plan, implement, and evaluate how learning supports resources are used for a Learning Supports component.

#### *Implementing*

- 1) phasing in the six *programmatic content areas* (intervention framework);
- 2) reviewing and revising *policies* to ensure that they are supportive and facilitative of all aspects of a learning supports system;
- 3) integrating resources into a *cohesive and integrated continuum* of school and community interventions;
- 4) providing *ongoing professional development* to equip learning supports personnel with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement a Learning Supports component.

The above actions should lead to a) more effective deployment of existing resources to reduce fragmentation of services, b) a more cohesive, comprehensive and effective array of interventions to promote healthy development and alleviate barriers to learning, and c) an approach to delivering learning supports to increase student achievement and success in school that are an integral part of the overall improvement efforts of schools and communities.

### **Overlapping Phases of Implementation**

Timeframes for building capacity to accomplish desired institutional changes must be realistic. Implementation and scaling-up of a comprehensive prototype almost always requires *phased-in* change. As Tom Vander Ark, executive director of education for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, wisely notes: “Effective practices typically evolve over a long period in high-functioning, fully engaged systems” (2002). Whether the focus is on establishing a prototype at one site or replicating it at many, the systemic changes

can be conceived in terms of four overlapping phases:

- (1) *creating readiness* – by enhancing a climate/culture for change,
- (2) *initial implementation* – whereby change is carried out in stages using a well-designed guidance and support infrastructure,
- (3) *sustaining and institutionalization* – accomplished by ensuring there is an infrastructure to maintain and enhance productive changes, and
- (4) *ongoing evolution* – through use of mechanisms to improve quality and provide continuing support.

### **Capacity Building to Implement, Sustain, and Institutionalize Learning Supports**

Prototypes often are developed and initially implemented as pilot demonstrations at one or more sites. Efforts to create systems of learning supports, however, will require much more than implementing demonstrations at a few sites. Improved approaches will only be as good as the ability of schools and communities to develop, sustain, and institutionalize them in all their schools. This process often is called diffusion, replication, roll-out, or scale-up. Such a process requires support of policy and pursuit of strategies for creating motivational readiness among a critical mass of stakeholders, especially those most directly responsible for implementation, and for accommodating changes in roles and functions.

In addition to scaling up, attention must be paid from the onset to planning for sustaining and institutionalizing changes made. Knowlton Johnson, et al (2004) conducted an extensive review of the research along with proceedings from a series of “think tanks” with prevention professionals regarding the definition of sustainability and models for sustainability planning. Based on this effort, the authors acknowledge the difference between sustaining an innovation (e.g., Learning Supports) and making that innovation a part of routine practice (institutionalization). Although the authors conclude that “ ‘meeting the continual needs of stakeholders’ vs. ‘integration into business as usual’ is one major distinction between the two terms.” They say that both are necessary components for and must be considered in creating an innovation that is lasting and becomes a part of routine practice. The authors also assert that there are two primary factors that influence the sustainability of an innovation, such as Learning Supports: 1) infrastructure capacity

***“Change must be more than cosmetic. For students to reap the benefits of your efforts, school-community members and other stakeholders must ensure that improvements are deep and systemic, changing both the structure and culture of the school.”***

*Osher, Dwyer, & Jackson  
(2004)*

building to support a “sustainable innovation” and 2) the extent to which an innovation has the attributes necessary to sustain it. Exhibit 7 presents five (5) infrastructure factors that they recommend be addressed intentionally in planning for implementing a sustainable innovation and five (5) attributes of the innovations, themselves, that are sustainable.

*EXHIBIT 7*

***CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING, SUSTAINING,  
AND INSTITUTIONALIZING A LEARNING SUPPORTS SYSTEM***

**Objectives/Factors for Sustaining an Innovation**

1. *Strengthen and/or maintain administrative structures and formal linkages* – administrative capacity to carry out administrative functions required by the innovation responsively, effectively, and efficiently.
2. *Strengthen and/or maintain champion roles and leadership actions* – formal and informal leaders within adopting systems as well as champions who proactively support the concepts and principles of Learning Supports from inside or outside a system, are critical to creating an environment that supports and facilitates sustaining innovations.
3. *Maintain and /or increase resources* – trained staff, funding, computer technology, and evaluation data that provides effectiveness feedback to the system are important resources.
4. *Strengthen and/or maintain administrative policies and procedures* – communicate organizational commitment, set new norms of behavior, and assure that the innovation become part of routine practice, even after top management who advocated for the innovation leave the organization.
5. *Build and/or maintain expertise sufficient to assure integration of the innovation into the routine operations and practices of the organization* – expertise to plan, and carry out the functions associated with the innovation.

**Attributes of a Sustainable Innovation**

1. *Alignment of innovation stakeholder needs with the characteristics of the innovation*– an innovation cannot be too complex, plus it must be effective, compatible with philosophical orientation, perceived as a benefit beyond current practice, and an inspiration to increase stakeholder desire and commitment to implement.
2. *Positive relationships among the innovation's developers, organizational decision-makers, implementers, and evaluators*- positive relationships between developers and implementers and among supportive peer networks (e.g., collaborative teams, study groups, etc.) enhance commitment.
3. *Process evaluation and use of results to ensure implementation quality and integrity* – the quality of the innovation should be monitored for implementation fidelity, strength, and reach to its intended recipients.
4. *Knowledge of the innovation's effectiveness through outcome evaluation* – adopters are more likely to sustain an innovation if they believe it is effective.
5. *Ownership among innovation stakeholders so that they will desire to sustain it* – individuals are more likely to accept institutionalization processes because they are personally committed to them.

- Johnson, et al (2004)

## **Change Functions Require Change Mechanisms**

One way for state and regional agencies to assist local schools implement a process for turning existing student support programs and practices into a system of learning supports is to form a change *mechanism*, i.e., a designated team of change agents. Such staff can provide a temporary, but necessary, organizational base and skilled personnel for disseminating a prototype, negotiating decisions about replication, and dispensing the expertise to facilitate implementation of a prototype and eventual scale-up.

In Iowa, in many instances, school improvement action committees (SIACs) perform change agent functions for various aspects of school reform. Guiding the process of creating efficient and effective systems of learning supports, in all likelihood, will require re-thinking and expanding the scope of work they are currently doing and the way that the team interacts with community as part of the decision-making process. Some SIACs already may be performing these functions with respect to Learning Supports. On the other hand, assuming additional responsibilities to oversee another aspect of the school reform change process may be too much for some teams, requiring them to look to others to carry out these functions. A valuable source for such assistance in guiding the change process can lie with community coalitions or existing community planning groups. At the state level, the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development has undertaken this responsibility.

A team of change agents can dispense expertise by traveling to the location in which the prototype is to be implemented/replicated for designated periods of time. For example, state level teams can assist area education agencies and their regional partners or local school districts with their community partners; area education agencies can work with school districts and communities; and district level personnel can be active on-site partners to assist individual schools. At the same time, a core team can work closely to facilitate the specific tasks related to the four phases of prototype implementation and eventual scale-up. The team might be augmented whenever a specialist is needed to assist in replicating a specific element of the prototype design.

Managing the change process is critical for implementation and scale-up of systems of Learning Supports. The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (C-BAM) (Hall, and Hord, 2001), recognizing that change

occurs when individuals change, provides a set of three (3) diagnostic tools that have been studied and researched for over twenty-five years. Each of these tools provides a means of assessing how individuals involved in the change effort are accepting and implementing innovative practices. The three tools are: 1) *innovation configurations* that provide a description of the change when it is implemented with quality and fidelity to the design; 2) *stages of concern* that help change facilitators map the personal reactions and feelings about the change for those involved in it; and 3) *levels of use* that identify the actual behavior of individuals involved in the change and their developing facility with implementation of the elements that are part of it. These tools will facilitate the efforts of the change agent team and be a part of the evaluation of the implementation and success of the system of learning supports put forth in this document.

As Michael Fullan (1997) asserts,

*It is only by individuals taking action to alter their own environment that there is any chance for deep change...If teachers and educators want to make a difference, and this is what drives the best of them, this moral purpose by itself is not good enough. Moral purpose needs an engine, and that engine is individual skilled change agents, pushing for changes around them, intersecting with other like-minded individuals and groups to form the critical mass necessary to bring about continuous improvement.*

Involving individuals in a collaborative school-community infrastructure for change holds much promise in attaining the outcomes shared by systems invested in the welfare of all of Iowa's children and youth. Building the infrastructure and the capacity to deliver comprehensive continua of effective learning supports are key next steps toward achieving these outcomes.

## **Some Concluding Comments**

*There's a strong sense that the schools can't do it all, especially in inner-city school districts. With today's culture of accountability, schools need all the resources they can get. We're trying to get communities and schools to focus partnerships more on supporting academic achievement.*

*Steve Parson (2000)*

As steps now are taken to move the prototype from design to action in school districts and communities across Iowa, the challenges are clear, but the intended results are unarguable. Meeting these challenges will require the ongoing effort of individuals and groups who are willing to work together to improve their systems of supports for students so that they will grow up healthy, socially competent, successful in school, and prepared for productive adulthood.

Schools, in collaboration with their communities, must wrap supports around students and their teachers. These supports may be either academic or non-academic interventions that go above and beyond core instructional practices and strategies. Some school-community supports may occur in the classroom; some will occur in the school as a whole; still others may take place in the home or in community settings. For this to occur, those with a compelling interest in the welfare of Iowa's children and youth must be willing to re-think how current supports for learning are organized and delivered. This does not necessarily mean working harder. It does mean working smarter.

Every school district in Iowa is a community school district. Many of these school districts are in small communities where the farmers' cooperative is the tallest building in town. The co-op symbolizes Iowa's history of community cooperation – the same kind of cooperation required for creating systems of learning supports. Iowa is up to the important challenge of working together to create webs of learning supports that will ensure the success of all our young people. Iowans will undertake the challenge because they know that an investment in Iowa's children and youth is an investment in Iowa's future.

***“UNLESS someone like you  
cares a whole awful lot,  
nothing's going to get better.  
It's not.”***

*Dr. Seuss (1976)*

## **Fulfilling Our Promises to Iowa Children and Youth**

- ◆ ***Caring Adults:*** Ongoing relationships with caring adults – parents, mentors, tutors, or coaches – offer youth support, care, and guidance.
- ◆ ***Safe Places:*** Safe places with structured activities during non-school hours provide both physical and emotional safety.
- ◆ ***A Healthy Start:*** Adequate nutrition, exercise, and health care pave the way for healthy bodies, healthy minds, and smart habits for adulthood.
- ◆ ***Marketable Skills:*** Marketable skills through effective education help youth navigate the transition from school to work successfully.
- ◆ ***Opportunities to Serve:*** Opportunities to give back through community service enhance self esteem, boost self confidence, and heighten a sense of responsibility to the community.

*America's Promise*

## Glossary

<b>Alignment</b>	The process of creating a logical relationship between the components of a system and its efforts leading to achieving desired results, e.g., alignment of actions, resources, and policies with the results desired for Iowa's children and youth
<b>Barriers to Learning and Teaching</b>	Those factors or conditions that interfere with a student's ability to access what a teacher is prepared to teach on any given day. Barriers to learning may be internal to the student, such as learning or behavior problems, or external factors that create conditions that interfere with learning – poverty, poor classroom or school culture/climate, short-term personal or family crises, conflicts in cultures, mobility, etc.
<b>Collaboration</b>	The direct interaction between two or more parties voluntarily engaged in a co-equal relationship that involves shared decision making, sharing resources and sharing accountability, as they work toward common results.
<b>Function</b>	The normal or proper activity of a person, institution, or thing; the specific duties of a person, esp. in a professional or an official capacity.
<b>Guiding Principles</b>	The set of principles that served as the foundation for the development of the concepts and prototype for Learning Supports presented in this paper. These ideas focused the attention of the Design Team and contributing individuals on what was important; provided clarity and direction; underscored the shared responsibility for student performance and success; and served as a framework for decision making.
<b>Healthy Development</b>	The orderly and predicted changes in the physical, social-emotional, and cognitive functioning of children and youth that occur.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	The finances, personnel, time, space, equipment, and other essential resources that are allocated, organized, and used for the delivery of learning supports to students. The infrastructure is the structural foundation for learning supports that ensures system change, institutionalization, sustainability, and ongoing capacity building for systems of learning supports.
<b>Indicator</b>	A measure which helps quantify the achievement of a result.
<b>Intervention Framework</b>	A six area framework that provides a unifying umbrella for the research-based supports for learning and that guides the reframing and restructuring of the daily work of all who provide these learning supports.
<b>Learning Supports</b>	The wide range of strategies, programs, services, and practices that are implemented to create conditions and environments that promote student learning. Learning supports may promote healthy development for all students, prevent problems for students at risk, serve as interventions early after the onset of problems, or address the complex, intensive needs of some students. In schools, learning supports may be provided by teachers, administrators, pupil service personnel, special education personnel, and other staff. Provision of learning supports, however, is not limited to school personnel. Families and communities also have critical contributions to make to the successful learning of all children and youth.
<b>Operational Mechanism</b>	The structures into which learning supports personnel are organized in order to oversee and make decisions about the efficient, effective deployment of learning supports resources. These mechanisms create the human infrastructure for systems of learning supports. Examples are resource management teams/councils, change agent teams, etc.
<b>Outcomes</b>	Measures of the effects/changes produced by an agency's programs or services on the persons they are intended to serve or on the environment or infrastructure and that reflect the purpose of that program or service.

**Professional Development**

Processes and practices that meet organizational and/or individual needs, are sustained over the long-term, are collaborative, differentiated, and are tied to organizational goals. The content of quality professional development is based on research and best practice and is intended to have a positive and lasting impact on participants and their work.

**Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM)**

The Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM) operationalizes the principles and practices of quality professional development in a recommended framework intended to assist districts, schools, and individuals as they develop staff development programs targeted at the learning needs of their students. This structure is embedded in the school improvement process and is focused on instruction and curriculum. Target audiences for the model are the site and district personnel responsible for instruction. Its purpose is to improve and increase teachers' knowledge of academic subjects and advance understanding of effective instructional strategies that are grounded in scientifically based research and improve student academic achievement.

**Prototype for Learning Supports**

The integrated organization of a set of concepts about a Learning Supports component in the educational system created by the Design Team as a model/example for regional and local school and community agencies desiring to create their own systems of learning supports.

**Research-based Results**

Practices based upon vigorous, systemic and objective procedures to obtain valid and reliable knowledge related to student learning and development.

Conditions of well-being expressed as broad statements that are desired by Iowans for the state's entire population of children and youth and the families, schools, and communities of which they are members. Examples are children and youth are healthy, socially competent, successful in school, and in safe and supportive schools, families and communities. Results are attained only when multiple systems contribute to them.

**Results-oriented Scale-up**

The focusing of actions, policies, and practices on the achievement of an identified set of results.

To go in graduated steps from the initial implementation of the learning supports effort to full implementation in all the schools and communities in Iowa.

**Students**

For the purpose of this concept paper, the term "student" is used to refer to all school-age children and youth - the target population of the learning supports effort.

**Social Marketing**

The application of marketing principles to a social issue (e.g., *all* students succeeding in school) in order to increase the acceptability of a social idea, cause, or practice (e.g., Learning Supports) among a target group (e.g., schools, families, and communities). The ultimate goal is to motivate people to voluntarily change their behavior and to create the conditions that will facilitate the behavioral change(s).

**System**

A system is an interconnected whole that "moves and breathes" as one organism. In a system, everything is connected to everything else. Because of the interconnections between the organization's subsystems, any changes to any part of the overall system have a ripple effect on the other parts. That is, what happens in one part of the organization affects the other parts, or subsystems, of the organization. Learning supports systems have set of interrelated components that can produce effects impossible for any one of them to produce independently. In practical terms, "system" approaches demand that all the parts are of quality and that they work together effectively toward a common set of results.

**Systemic**

Efforts to enact change throughout a system. To enable various system components to fit into a larger structure and to work together effectively toward a common aim.

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