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ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORTING

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT GROUP

Literature Search Findings on

Wraparound/Full-Service Schools

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Education

Executive Summary

The Deputy Minister requested Accountability & Reporting (AR) to conduct research on the subject of "wraparound/full service" schools. This report presents a summary of the findings from this research; namely:

- Wraparound or full-service schools are typically located in disadvantaged communities where the population is racially and ethnically diverse.
    - These schools are usually open every day of the week and offer families assistance with child rearing, employment, and housing while providing other services on site such as medical, mental health and dental care.
    - The idea is to divide up the responsibility between the school and agencies, with one set of services devoted to helping children learn and another devoted to helping children and families gain access to the support they need.

- In order for wraparound or full-service programs to succeed there needs to be high level collaboration between schools and agencies.
    - The perspective and voice of the individual, the family, and others who have the most direct contact with the individual student are considered vital in the design of supports, services, and interventions. The decision making body typically includes school staff members, parents, other community and business representatives, and even students.
    - Together, such a council plans and oversees implementation of the program/initiative, agrees on policies and practices, and establishes mechanisms for accountability.

- Initiatives in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Australia have emphasized schools as full-service centers for their communities' way of addressing the whole child.
    - The view is based on the assumption that students are unlikely to perform to the best of their potential if they suffer from health or social problems, and therefore addressing these issues will allow students to maximize their educational achievements as well as enhance their life chances of well-being.

- Successes of wraparound/ full-service schools include academic gains, improvement in school attendance, reduction in high- risk behaviours, increased parent involvement, lower incidence of child abuse and neglect, and lower rates of violence in the participating communities.

Background

The Deputy Minister requested AR to conduct research on the topic of wraparound/full-service schools. The System Improvement Group (SIG) within AR undertook a literature search in response to this request. SIG researchers found the most useful documentation on this topic was from the United States and United Kingdom. (It should be noted that in the United States these schools are sometimes referred to as "Community Schools" and in the United Kingdome, the term "Full-Service Extended Schools" is used.)

This report presents a summary of key literature search finding regarding:
- How wraparound/full-service schools are established and managed, and challenges of establishing and managing these schools;
- Application of the wraparound/full-service school concept to early childhood development and early intervention; and
- Evaluation of success of wraparound/full service schools.

Introduction

A wraparound/full-service school, by definition, includes a community school, operating in a public school building, which is open to students, families, and the community before, during, and after school, 7 days a week, all year long. This type of system is jointly operated and financed through a partnership between the school system and one or more community agencies. (Dryfoos, 2002).

Full-service community schools revolve around a partnership between community agencies and schools to help overcome barriers to learning. The school component of such a system includes academic, behavioural, and social skills instructional strategies as well as consultation and supports for teachers (Scott & Eber, 2003).

Oriented toward the community, a wraparound/full-service school encourages student learning through community service. A before and after school learning component encourages students to build on their classroom experiences, to expand their horizons, to explore their cultural heritage, to engage in sports and recreation, and just to have fun. A family support center helps families with child rearing, employment, and housing, while providing other services on site such as medical, dental, and mental health services. Full-service community schools are usually located in disadvantaged communities where the population is racially and ethnically diverse.

Overall, the major foci of wraparound/full-service schools are to:
- Improve "academic achievement" along with youth development, and family and community well-being;
- Improve social/behavioural and school functioning of youth and prevent more restrictive living and school placement for students with significant Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD);
- Bring students, teachers, families, and community representatives together to design and implement a plan to transform these schools into child-centered institutions; and
- Take some of the burden for rearing and nourishing children off the school system.

Establishment and Management of Wraparound/Full Service Schools

The perspective and voice of the individual, the family, and others who have the most direct contact with the individual student are considered vital in the design of supports, services, and interventions. In this manner, the wraparound process involves the larger environment in developing plans that are collaborative across systems rather than top-down and that are calculated to facilitate success in the natural environment (Scott & Eber, 2003).

In order for programs to work there must be high level collaboration between the school principal and a community school coordinator who works for the lead outside agency. The picture may differ depending on whether the school or the community agency is the grant recipient. When the school is the grant recipient, the authority tends to rest with the principal, who then decides with whom to subcontract. When the community agency gets the direct grant, the coordinator has more authority, but the principal is still the gatekeeper and facilitator who must buy into the program if it is going to be successful (Dryfoos, 2002).

The decision making body includes school staff members, parents, other community and business representatives, and even students. Together, such a council plans the initiative, agrees on policies and practices, establishes mechanisms for accountability, and oversees the implementation of the programs. In the United States, only a few school/community partnerships have achieved such a high level of collaboration.

In all these efforts, the primary responsibility for high-quality education rests with the school authorities, while the primary responsibility for "everything else" rests with the outside agencies. The school system is only responsible for paying for education, while other services are supported by an array of nonschool resources of funding, including added health and social services or extended hours or parenting education. The idea is to divide up the responsibility among a number of agencies, with one set of services devoted to helping children learn and another devoted to helping children and families gain access to the supports they need.

Challenges of Establishing and Managing Wraparound/Full Service Schools

Some challenges in establishing and maintaining wraparound/full service schools are related to communication, physical environment, and leadership.

Communication: As in so many areas of human behaviour, open communication is fundamental to the success of wraparound/full-service community schools. Successful communication of common goals and targets between a school and agencies is essential in order for the partnerships to work. Communication needs to be based on a real understanding of different terminology used by the different agencies. Misinterpretation of words can severely harm communication between parties.

While open communication is extremely important, discretion needs to be practiced when handling confidential information. Therefore, in many situations information is shared on a "need-to-know basis" only.

Physical Environment: Bringing "outsiders" into the school to use school facilities after school hours and in the evenings could raise various issues. For instance, some teachers may prefer not to share their classrooms, particularly if they find their classrooms to be in disarray the next school day or if their supplies have been used. Also, overcrowded schools may have limited space available for family resource rooms and health clinics. In order for the wraparound/full-service school model to succeed, teachers and other school staff members must be well prepared and willing to integrate this approach into their current system. They need to believe that bringing others into the school will make their jobs easier. Similarly, those coming into the school must have respect for the teachers and other school staff, and they must be willing to learn the culture of the school.

Leadership: There is some evidence of leadership challenges, such as the need for careful planning and preparation for setting up the necessary collaborative arrangements. Another challenge that arises where different agencies collaborate is that of power and influence. School heads will sometimes assume that the power they enjoyed within their own school will be extended to other agencies, which is understandably not necessarily the perception of workers of these agencies (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000). Stable leadership, both in the schools and in collaborating agencies, is seen as key to the maintenance of effective collaboration (McMahon et al. 2000).

Application of the Wraparound/Full-Service School Concept to Early Childhood

Development and Early Intervention

The wraparound/full-service community school model provides a unique set of individualized support, services, and interventions for both the child and family to achieve a positive set of outcomes. The wraparound/full-service planning process involves a community-based approach to providing comprehensive, integrated services through multiple professionals and agencies in collaboration with families.

With respect to early childhood development, applying the wraparound/full-service concept involves the following steps:
- Determining, teaching and encouraging positive behaviours across all students and school contexts;
- Assessing the school's success by determining when and where problem behaviours are most predictable. This can be done by either looking at school data or inviting stakeholders (e.g. teachers, specialists, parents) to provide their perceptions on the topic through brainstorming sessions; and
- Discussing and coming to consensus on a set of strategies aimed at preventing the identified problems.

For early intervention purposes, the wraparound /full-service concept has been successfully used to improve social/behavioural and school functioning of youth and to prevent more restrictive living and school placement for students with significant Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) in mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare, and special education (Burns et al., 2000; Eber, Osuch, Reditte, 1996; Robins et al., 2003). However, wraparound/full-service planning

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has also been applied as early intervention for students identified as at risk for EBD (Eber & Neslson, 1997), which includes the 5% to 15% of students for whom school-wide interventions have not been effective. No matter what the end use (whether as prevention, early intervention, or for persons with the most intensive needs), wraparound services involve assessing needs and developing strategies that are shared across a range of stakeholders (school, community, and family). The wraparound process has demonstrated success in decreasing problem behaviours and facilitating student success in the home, school, and community.

Evaluating Success of Wraparound/Full-service School Programs

United States

In the United States, individuals involved in the community school movement believe that community school models should produce outcomes such as improved social behaviours and healthy youth development, better family functioning and parent involvement, enhanced school and community climate, and access to support services.

The literature search conducted by SIG found results for 49 school/community programs that had produced evaluation reports. Thirty-six of the 49 programs reported academic gains, which generally included improvements in reading and math test scores, examined over a two or three year period. Many of these successful programs were in elementary schools. In addition, there were reports of improvement in:
- school attendance (19 programs),
- reductions in suspensions (11 programs),
- reductions in high-risk behaviours such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and disruptive behaviour in the classroom or a general improvement in behaviour (11 programs),
- increase in parent involvement and lower rates of child abuse and neglect among participants (12 programs), and
- lower rates of violence and safer streets in their communities (6 programs).

In general, most of the programs showed positive impacts on more than just one outcome (Dryfoos, 2002).

The *Coalition for Community Schools* in the United States is an alliance for national, state and local organizations in K-16 education. It serves as an advocate for community schools as the vehicle for strengthening schools, families and communities so that together they can improve student learning. In one of their reports, *the Coalition* has looked at the impact of 20 community school initiatives across America, focusing in particular on outcomes that directly affect student learning. Although not all evaluations looked at every outcome, their collective results clearly show that community schools make the difference for students in four important ways; that is in ways that improve:
- student achievement and development,
- family engagement,
- school environment, and
- community engagement.

Student Achievement and Development
Results show that 15 of 20 initiatives reported improvement in student academic achievement, as measured by improved school grades. In addition, more than half of the evaluations found evidence of positive development, including improved attendance, reduced behaviour or discipline problems, greater compliance with school assignments and rules, increased access to physical and mental health services, greater contact with supportive adults, and improvements in personal/family situations. By addressing all the essential needs of the whole child, including physical, social, emotional and academic, community schools are able to successfully create environments that fulfill all the necessary conditions for learning.

Family Engagement
More than half of the evaluations reported specific benefits to families, such as improvements in communications with schools and teachers, family stability and ability to provide for children's basic needs, parents' ability to meet work place obligations, confidence in their ability to teach their children, and attendance at school meetings. These programs allow families to access services and opportunities to participate as both leaders and learners; thereby, making them effective partners in their children's education.

School Environment
Almost three-quarters of the evaluations examined the community school's overall environment. The results from these evaluations identified improved outcomes in many areas. For instance, principals and staff affirmed the importance of on-site services, and that more parents participated in their children's learning.

There was also nonpartisan support for public education and access to resources through community partnerships, and services were well-integrated into the daily operation of schools. In the classroom setting, evaluators found increased emphasis on creative, project-based learning and more innovations in teaching and curriculum. School environments were more cheerful and were more likely to be perceived as safe.

Community Engagement
Community schools play a strong role in community building. Evaluators noted a variety of improved outcomes, including improved community knowledge of and perception of the community school initiatives; increased use of school buildings; awareness of community agencies and access to facilities previously unknown or unaffordable; improved security and safety in the surrounding area and strengthened community pride and engagement in the school.

United Kingdom

Recent government policy in England has encouraged the formation of Full-Service Extended Schools, which work closely with other agencies, such as health care, social services and the police, to provide a broader range of services to children appropriate to their age. For instance, services provided in primary schools might include breakfast clubs, additional after-school

activities and various family services as compared to family services, family learning and adult education for secondary schools. This is seen as especially beneficial where schools are serving disadvantaged areas.

Overall, Full-Service Extended Schools are focused on:
- the need to address psychological, health and social as well as educational issues if students from disadvantaged areas are to reach their full potential;
- the potential power of schools as organizations to reach out to their community; and
- the importance of stronger links with the community to improve parental involvement and, as a result of this, student performance.

This view is based on the assumption that students are unlikely to perform to the best of their potential if they suffer from health or social problems, and therefore addressing these issues will allow students to maximize their educational achievement as well as enhance their life chances and well-being. Furthermore, it is often stated that engaging with other agencies will help the school become more central to the community, thus involving parents more strongly than is currently the case in many disadvantaged communities (Muijs, 2007).

SIG's literature search found that qualitative case studies had been carried out in eight schools in North East England that had been designated as "Leading Edge" schools in the area, and were well known for their pioneering of multi-agency work. All agencies served socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. Of the eight case study schools, five were secondary and three were primary schools. In each school, interviews were arranged with the head, a member of the Senior Management Team, a Middle Manager, a Classroom Teacher and a member of staff of a non-education agency with which the school was working.

The case studies showed that inter-agency work helps schools avoid isolation and extends expertise in the school by growing the knowledge base staff has access to. Staff directly involved in inter-agency work tend to be the most positive about it and described the process as 'enriching and reassuring'. Overall, establishing shared goals and targets, and maintaining quality relationships were deemed to be essential to the success of inter-agency work.

The studies also showed that in those schools with a very strong focus on the individual student, personal and social development is key. In these schools, success is measured in terms of increase in students' confidence and in their ability to see themselves as valued and valuable (Muijs, 2007).

In addition to the case study findings noted above, SIG's literature search found that the office of Standards in Education in England (Ofsted, 2006), reported on a survey of 20 extended school settings and found that almost all were effective in meeting the range of needs of children and adults. The major benefits gained through participating in extended services were enhanced self-confidence, improved relationships, raised aspirations and more positive attitudes toward learning.

Concluding Remarks

SIG researchers found that the following statements (taken from Dryfoos, 2002, and Muijs, 2007 references) spoke well to the need for and the management of wraparound schools:

- Many children in troubled schools feel isolated as the result of widening gap between social classes and races

- School doors are now open to outside agencies that want to help and can bring the much needed resources with them.

- Multi-agency work has been promoted as key to helping schools address the various needs of children and their parents, especially in disadvantaged locations.

- Studies have shown some evidence that this approach has been effective in:
  - improving school attendance and behaviour in the classroom;
  - reducing suspensions and high-risk behaviours such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy,
  - increasing parent involvement,
  - lowering rates of child abuse and neglect among participants,
  - lowering rates of violence.

- However, management of these different programs will require high level collaboration between schools and multi-agencies.

- Synchronizing this work is complex and challenging and will require full cooperation of all stakeholders and not just top management.

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