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ABSTRACT

Changes in the overall conditions of children as indicated by income, family structure and background, health, and other measures warrant a reassessment of the delivery of children's services and a reconsideration of the school role. Children's conditions and their implications for educational administrative policy are examined in this paper. The current educational system, based on inadequate single policy solutions that result in underservice and fragmentation, requires a fundamental rethinking. Short-term efforts of various states that have reconceptualized the purpose of children's services are briefly described. A crucial long-term goal incorporates a changed perspective that recognizes the child within the context of the larger social system and views the school as the nexus of institutional networks. From this perspective, the school role changes from deliverer of educational resources to that of broker of multiple resources. (15 references) (LMI)

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Rethinking Children's Policy: Implications for Educational Administration

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Schooling and the Environment of Children

America's children and youth[1] and their educational prospects are profoundly affected by the context of their lives and their relative location in the larger society. Among the related set of elements that shape children's experiences one can include the level of family income, parental employment, family structure, racial and ethnic background, health care, the availability of alcohol or other substances, and family support systems such as child care or mental health services.

In recent years substantial changes in these components have redefined the contours of childhood. For instance, a growing number of children have come to experience poverty and often other incidental risks which seem to be cumulative, such as poor physical health, lower academic achievement, and lower self-reports of happiness. A growing number of children from single-parent families and minority and limited-English-proficient backgrounds are entering the public schools. At the same time many of the income support and other programs that serve children and youth have experienced declining or limiting resources. Aid to Families with Dependent Children and other such programs do not cover the eligible population. Increasingly schools must meet the needs of children and youth from backgrounds and experiences they were not set up to serve and have historically not served well.

Educational leaders, especially school administrators, need a better grasp of the educational implications of the everyday lives of children, and a new strategy for bringing together the various public and private organizations to help. The current fragmentation across children's services represents a fundamental failure to confront the comprehensive needs of children, youth and adults. Essentially, it has neglected to begin with the simple, provocative question: What is it like to be a child who needs help? The current top-down policy approach operates from the organizational perspective of the multiple service providers. This paper outlines the changing conditions and needs of children to form a basis for analyzing the effectiveness of the current services delivered to them. We then move to the conditions of the services as they presently exist, and to prescriptions for improving and reconceptualizing policies and administrative approaches. Finally, the role of the schools in this new conceptualization is delineated.

Analyzing the Conditions of Children as a Prelude to a New Policy

The context of children's lives has undergone considerable change in the last few decades. Since 1969 an expanding cohort of children have come to experience poverty, a condition that increases the likelihood of health and academic risks; furthermore, economic status is the singlemost predictor of adult self-sufficiency.[2] Family structure has also shifted dramatically, with the notion of two biological parents—one working outside and the other inside the home—a diminishing proportion of families. The numbers of children from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds have increased relative to the majority population, greatly so in some states and locales.

To explore these changes and their consequences, Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) recently sponsored a major report on the conditions of children and youth. In the following section we use the aggregate national statistics drawn from the PACE report and others to examine these conditions. Although any particular element may vary considerably by region and state, these numbers provide a fairly accurate portrait of the general trends.

Poverty. Today nearly 20 percent of children in the nation live in poverty, from 14 percent in 1969.[3] The median income of families in the bottom income quintile (20 percent) has eroded over time from $9,796[4] in 1977 to $8,919 in 1986, and the gap between the incomes of the poorest and wealthiest families has grown. The decline in real income to those in the lower quintile has been accompanied by gains for those in the top 40 percent of income. Race and ethnicity, gender, and family structure are strongly associated with the likelihood of poverty. In California, for example, 27 percent of Asian, 32 percent of black, and 34 percent of Hispanic children were poor in 1985–86, in contrast to 10 percent of all white children. In 1984, half of single women with children lived in poverty, compared to 11.4 percent of two-parent families.[5]

While many children fare well in households with low income, studies have shown that these children are more likely to die in infancy and early childhood,[6] suffer serious illness,[7] become pregnant during teen years, or drop out of school,[8] and are less likely to continue education beyond high school.[9] Despite statistical associations of these outcomes with poverty,

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the direction of causality is less clear.[10] The life chances may be linked to the lack of access to adequate health care and nutrition, the often lower quality of schooling in poorer neighborhoods, the stress of poverty on family relationships, or other elements.

Family Structure. Most institutions that serve children and youth are structured on the assumption that children live with two biological parents, one working in the home and the other in the formal labor market. This traditional type now comprises only a small proportion of families—less than a third. Forty-six percent of children live in homes where both or the only parent is working.[11] Because of an increase in divorce and a rise in the number of births to single mothers,[12] about one-half of all children and youth will live in a single parent family for some period of their lives.[13] However, at any particular point in time 75 percent live in two-parent families, including step-parents.[14] Nationally, about one-tenth of families have step-parents present. The proportions living in single-parent families vary substantially by race and ethnic group: In 1985 roughly 10 percent of Asian, 12 percent of white children, 24 percent of Hispanic, and 52 percent of black children lived in these family settings.[15]

Family structure is, as we have said, a good predictor of children's economic well-being, with single mothers disproportionately represented in poverty statistics. The hourly wages of single mothers are lower than those of other women (whose wages are generally more than one-third less than men's), and although the majority of these women work, many depend on public assistance. Child support payments are notoriously meager or non-existent for most primary care-givers. In 1985 only half of all custodial mothers had court-ordered support decrees for financial assistance, and most received less than 50 percent of the payments stipulated. For mothers with income below the poverty level, the situation was worse. Only 40 percent obtained support decrees from the courts, and one-third of these actually received nothing.[16]

The way family structures develop has consequences for children. When single-parent families occur as a result of divorce, the consequences, at least in the short-term, may be negative for children's emotional well-being. A study of 7 to 11 year-olds found children of divorce twice as likely to use mental health services as other children the same age. Children of divorce are more likely to become substance abusers, marry as teenagers, become sexually active at an earlier age and become pregnant more often. Single parenthood whether as a result of divorce or otherwise is often a stressful situation for the parent, and one which may have consequences for the child-parent relationship. In addition, children of single mothers who have never been married tend to be poorer, more dependent on welfare and living in poor housing.[17]

Work. In recent decades both female and teenage work behavior has changed dramatically, while working mothers from poor families have come to join them. Economic pressures have made the option of becoming a full-time homemaker almost obsolete for the majority of women and men.

As of 1987, over half of all mothers with children under six and nearly 70 percent of mothers with children aged 6 to 17 were seeking employment or worked in the formal labor market outside the home.[18] As with other indicators reported here, this varies by race and ethnic origin. Forty-two percent of white and 51.4 percent of black mothers of children under six worked.[19] The consequence of changing work patterns is a high (and unmet) demand for affordable quality child care and after-school care.

Teenagers, too, are working in the formal labor market in large numbers. In 1985, almost 62 percent of all 16 to 19 year-olds worked during some part of the year. At least one-third of all high school students hold part-time jobs in any given week, with 75 percent of seniors working an average of 16 to 20 hours weekly.[20] The majority of this income is used to buy clothes, food, and personal items. The evidence on the effect of work on teenagers is not definitive. Some studies have found that working detracts from schoolwork and was associated with dropping out. But other research and program evaluations suggest that work can provide positive models and can lead to improved academic performance.[21]

Health. In general terms, progress has been made on a number of fronts concerning children's health. In California, for example, 97 percent of kindergartners have received adequate immunization for measles, rubella and mumps. Death rates from communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and pneumonia have fallen by a hundredfold in the past 50 years as a result of antibiotics, sanitation, and other advances. Fewer than 10 percent of California's children are considered to have serious health problems and/or chronic disabilities that limit their activities.

However, the conditions of poverty not surprisingly lead to disproportionate amounts of health problems. As mentioned, the morbidity rates of these children is higher than the rest of the young population, and they are more likely to suffer serious illness. A relative lack of prenatal care for women in poverty leads to low birthweight children, a condition which often predicts persistent health problems. In California, children in poverty in 1984–85 spent twice as many days in the hospital as other children. The two-to-one ratio also held true between minority and white children. In addition, blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities are less likely to have health insurance than white non-Hispanics, especially in the "near-poor" category where family incomes are too high to qualify for medicaid but low enough to make private health insurance a serious financial burden.[22]

The major health problems for adolescents result from things they do to themselves or each other. They show a disturbing trend in deaths from suicide, murder and preventable accidents. In addition, 5 percent use illicit drugs, 20 percent smoke cigarettes, and 35 percent regularly use alcohol.[23] Physicians estimate that about 15 percent of the children born in big city California public hospitals had drug or alcohol addicted mothers.

In sum, the overall conditions of children as indicated by income, family structure and background, health and other measures have changed considerably in the last few years. These changes warrant a reassessment of the delivery of services to children and a reconsideration of the appropriate role of the school.

Problems of Providing Services for Children with Multiple Needs

The condition of the services currently delivered to children and youth is plagued by two broad problems—underservice and service fragmentation. These two problems amplify the issues and challenges confronting children outlined above, issues which have important implications for schooling. In short, given these societal changes business as usual in children's services is not good enough, and will contribute to even greater long-term problems.

Underservice

Across areas of child abuse, mental health, child care and other domains of youth policy, the information collected in the California conditions of children report draws a clear conclusion: A substantial portion of needy youth are either unserved or underserved by existing policy arrangements.

At a time when families in poverty are on the increase, funding for supplemental income programs like Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), for instance, has been diminishing—down $7 billion since 1980. In 1985–86 the parent(s) of less than *half* of all poor children nationwide received income from AFDC. Furthermore, the supplemental income that AFDC does provide falls short of families' minimal needs.

Other evidence also indicates a declining infrastructure of support for children from poor families. Thirty-nine percent of eligible children do not receive free or reduced-price lunches; one-fourth are not covered by health insurance; 38 percent do not receive food stamps; public housing accommodates only 21 percent of all families in poverty.[24]

Other segments of support systems for all families are overburdened as well. Although California far exceeds other states in providing funding for child care, public programs met only 2.2 percent of the child care needs of children up to 2 years old from families eligible for subsidy. For children aged 3 to 5 public programs served only 17.9 percent of the eligible population, and 7 percent for children 6 to 10 years old.[25] And the cost of care exceeds most families' ability to pay. Again using California as an example, the average costs of preschool care for one child in 1986 consumed about 11 percent of the income of a family earning at the median level, and 27 percent of the income of a family of four at the federal poverty level.[26]

Also overburdened are child abuse delivery systems; in California, for example, one-fifth of the emergency response calls for child abuse went unanswered for a week or more.

Service Fragmentation

Consider the San Francisco family of six foster children headed by a severely disabled 67-year-old woman. The family lives in public housing, receives financial assistance, and receives services from multiple agencies. The broad array and diversity of the agencies is reflected as follows: The Department of Social Services (DSS) is involved with the foster children; the woman has a DSS worker from the Adult Division. San Francisco General Hospital Family Health Center is the health care provider of the woman and many of the children. Staff of the Visiting Nurses Association of San Francisco make regular visits to the patient, and a public health nurse visits the 14-year-old teen mother. The Teen Pregnancy Parenting Program and the Unified School District provide special services to this teen. The San Francisco General Hospital Early Parenting Program also provides services to the mother. Some of the older children who have drug problems have been involved with the police and have received drug rehabilitation program services. There have been reports that the foster children are having school problems, and one of the foster children has been recently placed in a special education program. All of the foster children have either Big Brothers or Big Sisters.[27]

The lawyers, psychiatrists, physicians, and mental health and education professionals, each from their own perspective and within the context of their particular involvement, try to develop support strategies and services. In California over 160 programs residing in 35 agencies and 7 departments exist to serve children and youth, an array which certainly is not unique to this state. The tally does not include the many private organizations that also provide important assistance. Existing fragmentation is a monument to the single-issue policies and single-issue solutions that dominate social policy in America. Historically, children's policy has proceeded ad hoc as problems are "discovered," leading to a patchwork of solutions with little consideration of the existing policy configuration. Policies and programs for children are driven largely by political definitions of the problem and administrative definitions of the solution—specific responses to specific problems—rather than a consideration of the aggregate policy environment.

Lost in this fragmented intervention is an opportunity for professionals providing children's services to observe or acknowledge the cumulative impact of their activities on the lives of children and their families. With compartmentalization children and families continue to fall between the cracks of various administrative definitions of "the problem," bringing costly redundancy at a time of general underservice. This can lead to an absolute loss of resources and support for children who need it most. The isolation of services has particular consequences for schools, the institution which has the most sustained contact with children and their families. While the manifestations of fragmentation and underservice often are most evident as problems in school, the majority of schools do not have, for example, family counselors or health facilities. Furthermore, they lack much information about or contact with other services that could help address these needs.

Consequences of Fragmentation

In addition to under- or non-service, fragmentation has a number of consequences on the conditions of children who are served, and may be especially acute for children with multiple needs.

Isolation of problems and labeling. Public responses typically focus on individual pathologies; task forces investigate problems like suicide, latch key children, substance abuse, or other disturbing conditions. Though important, the method of isolating particular problems for investigation or response leads to a fundamental loss of vision on the often close linkage *between* these various problems for any particular individual. Too often youth with multiple problems receive a programmatic label (substance abuser, delinquent, drop-out, teen parent) that misrepresents or oversimplifies the nature of the trouble and obstructs comprehensive assessment or response. No existing mechanisms trigger comprehensive planning or integrated case management, particularly important for children and youth with multiple needs.

Discontinuity of care. When children and youth move from one level of care to another, e.g., from home to detention in juvenile hall, from inpatient psychiatric hospitalization to residential treatment, or from dependency to emancipation, they

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move in and out of different departmental jurisdictions, encountering different groups of service providers who do not follow them to the next level of care. If service systems were better integrated, high-risk families, children and youth would be part of a system of care that responded to their needs knowledgeably and consistently regardless of their place in the service continuum.

Conflicting goals. Conflicting concepts of purpose or treatment philosophy generate dissension and attenuate service. While the debate in part reflects differences between liberal and conservative political factions, it also reflects important differences in notions of service and standards of effective service or quality. For example, in California there is a longstanding debate in the area of child care between the Department of Social Services and the Department of Education. The former frames the fundamental purpose of child care services as custodial; the latter conceives of child care as a developmental problem. This elemental lack of agreement on general purpose has generated incapacitating suspicion and lack of cooperation between agencies at both state and local levels. Within the juvenile justice system an unresolved disagreement exists between those who believe programs should continue a dominant focus on rehabilitation, and others who believe in deterrence through punishment. Few services see children as more than a temporary "recipient" with documented needs to be filled. In all children and youth sectors, there is a crucial imbalance favoring acute care over preventative or developmental services. This de facto definition of the "problem" as short-term and compartmentalized is compounded by the absence of any system of longitudinal record keeping or assessment.

Inability to bring existing resources to bear on problems. Lack of communication among service providers also frustrates service provision. School staff are often unaware of services available through juvenile justice, social service, or mental health agencies. Furthermore, one cannot expect actors at the base of the children's services to have developed broad networks for sharing information when no one at the top of the system knows the extent of services available for children. In California, for example, counties and school districts are the major provider of children's services but no data are available concerning total expenditures for children in the counties. A major study was needed just to compile and analyze children's programs and budgets in one county.[28]

Disempowered youth. Partly as a result of fragmentation and partly as a result of an embedded paternalistic approach towards children and youth, these populations have not been asked to participate in the dialogue of identifying problems and possible alternative solutions. By segmenting out the different manifestations into isolated agencies it becomes difficult for the individual to coordinate what he or she wants or needs.

"Who is there for the children?" This question cannot be answered if no one is looking at all the elements of children's lives and considering how they fit together. It is the whole environment which creates the conditions for an adult life of satisfaction and productivity. Few teachers, physicians, workers in the juvenile court system, social workers or others focus on the interactive or interdependent nature of their contribution to the experience of youth. Instead they look only at their own performance as members of particular agencies. Research has barely begun to develop a broader frame of reference that could answer these questions or illuminate the aggregate effects of the totality of children's policies on youth and their families. California, for example, simply collects no data on how the recipients or targets of the state's Byzantine children's services experience the system.

Rethinking Children's Services: Short- and Long-Term

As we have seen, the consequences of a system of children's services that are defined by administrative boundaries and conceptions of "turf" are more than simply exasperating or inefficient. The system, many professionals and analysts agree, is beyond fixing with a bit of this improvement and some of that innovation. It is in need of fundamental rethinking. This is not a new conclusion. Neither is the prescription of "more integration," "more coordination" and "more collaboration."

Yet most analyses stop with this plea. The problems of doing other than continuing current arrangements are admittedly formidable An institutional structure of children's services that is built upon political compromise, time-honored professional terrain, and existing administrative arrangements intimidates efforts at reform. Such a structure comprises fundamental obstacles to seriously considering a different model of children's service. The usual prescription encourages an earnest nod at the need for "more integration" or "new approaches," but quietly counsels a return to existing practices for reasons of political, bureaucratic and fiscal feasibility. Schools are a major cause of this fragmentation since they have been independent from the governing authority of county, city and other children's agencies, and have their own taxation. What are some of the obstacles towards coordination?

Few earmarked resources for coordination. The monetary incentives for agencies or institutions to do other than move along in single-track service are non-existent to negative. Few resources are designated by policy makers to encourage cooperation among agencies or agents. When efforts to integrate or coordinate do occur, they generally come "above and beyond" the already crowded scope of children's service professionals' responsibilities.

Finding mutuality. The California conditions of children report provides numerous examples of debates among service providers about who would get the money following the child if services were shared. Whose treatment philosophy would dominate? Who would get to decide about the standards, scope and nature of programs or services for children in a joint-agency setting? How would instances of misaligned incentives be resolved?

One need only look at programs authorized by different levels of government to see the difficulties of coordination and cooperation. For instance, these problems have arisen over efforts to merge federal and state eligibility requirements. Even more problematic from the perspective of the local service provider (and so from the perspective of the intended beneficiary) are the obstacles to effective service delivery created by programs that involve multiple agencies or centers of authority, even within the same service sector such as mental health or juvenile justice.

Training segregation. The isolation of professionals, agencies and services is the inevitable result of a system which rectifies and reinforces conceptions of discrete problem areas and bounded professional "turf." The socialization and training of professionals begins at the university where traditional departmental structures stymie interprofessional or coordinated

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professional programs. Most people who work with children and youth sectors are trained in separate schools within the academy, such as schools of education, social work, public health and public administration. Nor do they find common ground once they begin practicing since professional meetings and conferences rarely overlap the fields. These professionals thus form separate networks for all of their careers For example, the San Diego Superintendent of Schools had been in his job over five years before he met the major county level administrators of children's services.

Promising Responses to Tackle the Concerns: The Short-Term

However, even in the face of such imposing difficulties, a number of promising responses to the problems inherent in present arrangements are appearing in California and other communities around the country. Pushed by a sense of urgency and conviction, practitioners and policy makers in diverse arenas have moved to recast aspects of children's services both structurally and conceptually. While they fall short of addressing dysfunctions in the system and attempt more modest goals of making a particular domain of children's services work better, in the future they can provide valuable and real-life lessons about the problems and the potential benefit of cooperation and coordination. However, our intent here is not to evaluate these projects or describe them in fine detail but merely to point out efforts that move in the right direction.

To deal with the discontinuities of a fragmented service system and isolated professional staff, Ventura and San Bernadino Counties in California created coordinating mechanisms to integrate services to clients. Ventura County established an interagency network which includes cooperation at the highest administration levels. The agency directors of Mental Health, Social Services, Corrections and Special Education formally consented to share responsibility for the system. All services are based on written interagency agreements identifying the full range of problems that place a child at risk and the treatments they will implement. With a special focus on high-risk children who are either potentially or actually living out of their natural homes, the Ventura program reportedly has been successful in blending services and personnel from agencies participating in the network into a comprehensive and continuing treatment for troubled youth. Services follow the child, thereby establishing new links with private sector providers.

The San Bernadino program is modeled after Ventura's efforts, but has its own distinctive features. All major youth-serving agencies in the county—juvenile justice, the schools, public health, community services, the district attorney, the sheriff, libraries, Head Start, probation and others participate in the Children's Policy Council. This council in turn is served by a Children's Advocate Council, which provides advice and "grassroots" awareness of problems and community-based children's issues. Members include representatives from the PTA; United Way; Foster Parent Advisory Committee; Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Advisory Board; drug advisory board; the ministry; and the Native Americans group. A Children's Services Team provides the vehicle for on-going monitoring and evaluation of program services; a First Fund of Children's Resources seeks to form a partnership between the public, private-for-profit, and non-profit sectors to provide monetary and in-kind contributions, goods and services.

In both Ventura and San Bernadino, planning for an integrated service model was facilitated by special funding from state sources, and influential members of the community—a juvenile court judge in both cases—pushed for change. Both efforts had high level support from key agencies from the beginning, as well as a strong commitment of middle-level professional staff.

Minneapolis also has a structure to coordinate a range of youth services. Unlike the Ventura and San Bernadino efforts, which originated with and are sustained by youth service professionals, Minneapolis's Youth Coordinating Board (MYCB) is a creation of municipal government and the Mayor. Created through a joint powers agreement between the city of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Public Schools, Hennepin County, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the Minneapolis Public Library Board, the 11-member MYCB defines its goals in terms of promoting the integration and quality of services for *all* of the community's young people, not just youth with special needs.

As in Ventura and San Bernadino, funds were made available for planning and operation of the coordinating body. Each of the five sponsoring governmental bodies contractually agreed to provide at least $100,000 per year for five years to support basic staffing and operating costs. The apparent success of the MYCB thus far is to a significant degree a consequence of the vigorous commitment of the Mayor to an integrated youth policy for the city and making its development a top municipal priority. Further, the strategy for getting started and mobilizing broad community support for the effort was important to the MYCB's present level of operation. Plans and activities began with a well-regarded early childhood family education program that did not, in the words of the executive director, "isolate the poor of particular neighborhoods" but served all children from 0–5 years with home visits, child advocates and other services. MYCB has created its own local property tax base that can provide revenue for continuing its integrated services plan.

The Ounce of Prevention Fund in Illinois, created in 1982 as a partnership between the state child welfare agency and a private, philanthropic institution, serves as a broker and coordinator of services in a number of communities throughout the state. The Ounce of Prevention Fund supports a statewide system of service, research, training and technical assistance focused on community-based programs for pre-teens, teen parents, and their families. Launched with matching grants of $400,000 each from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and the Pittway Corporation Charitable Foundation, other funders include an array of state agencies and private foundations as well as the National Center for Child Abuse and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Fund appears to be an effective response to the regulatory tangles that impede interagency coordination because as a third party organization it has more flexibility to blend services and activities. Also, because it is dedicated to broaching services and leveraging community-based support from a variety of sources (e.g., churches, community action groups, corporations, the schools and so on), it is able to enhance the resources available to the youth it serves. And, as a third party intermediary, the Fund is free of suspicion of "special pleading," narrow institutional self-interest, or problem definitions rooted in professionally prescribed domains.

While each of these efforts has pursued substantively different programmatic strategies, each also has self-consciously *reconceptualized* the purpose of children's services, moving from the traditional clinical and constricted notions that dominate most of practices to a developmentally based view that sees the needs of youth as evolutionary and continuing. These approaches place youth services in the broader context in which children live—family, school, neighborhood. For example, the Ounce of Prevention Fund seeks explicitly to shift services from traditional perspectives based on a model of individual pathology to services that are built on models of individual development. The MYCB also features developmental language. While it is difficult (and perhaps too early) to tell the extent to which these reconceptualizations of the "problem" signal more than superficial or rhetorical change in policy, they nonetheless are prominent in self-reports. in service guidelines and in goal statements. Only systematic evaluations over several years could tell us whether these approaches have been successful in meeting their objectives. But merely locating many children's services in one place helps clients more easily use the system.

Goals for the Long-Term

To make integration work—to create a community of resources responsive to children's needs—children's services will have to be marked by comprehensiveness, competency and diversity. It will do little good to talk of integrating services for children unless we integrate children as active participants into the community of services and resources. It is not integration if we simply move to integrate services that continue to talk *at* rather than *with* children; or that continue to do *to* and *for* children rather than plan and work *with* them, and their identified areas of support.

Comprehensiveness comes in creating channels of communication, using the child as a prime transmitter of information. Current practices send social workers to observe and to talk with adults as the first and primary sources of knowledge about how children are faring. Children themselves can be far more involved as conduits of information. To be sure, the rearrangements of institutions to facilitate an easy flow of information and a comparison of available resources must come with a reconceptualization of the role of the child. Forging a matrix where individuals from at least one part of the services system are in touch with children on an ongoing basis could facilitate exchanges which begin with the child. As it is, the majority of children's services respond to crises as they emerge, and they do not know what has happened in other parts of children's lives or their interactions with other service agencies.

Relatedly, competency is the second feature that must mark long-term solutions. Here we mean creating institutions and institutional tasks that actively engage children in identifying and solving their own problems and that involve them in tasks, group support systems, and long-term commitment. Adults in both schools and service agencies typically talk *at* children, labelling their problems and fixing solutions dictated by administrative fiat or "that's just how it's done" procedures. Children and youths rarely have a chance to enter into the problem identification dialogue or to consider and evaluate possible alternative solutions, weighing risks and benefits. Youth services personnel—as well as procedures and policies—offer and dictate a paternalistic approach and argue that the "mess of their lives" indicates that they have no such capabilities.

Diversity cuts two ways. At one level, we mean to imply a diverse but coordinated set of agents and organizations available to serve children and youth. At another level, diversity comes from the array of ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic groups who respond to these agents and organizations in different ways as a result of cultural values, behavioral norms, language habits, and available resources. Different families encourage or discourage their children to participate in the array of community resources beyond the primary family unit. For example, urban black families are more inclined to permit their children to find work and leisure resources beyond the family than are recently arrived Mexican families. Single-parent middle class families who have chosen "voluntary poverty" are much more likely to enable their children to take advantage of an array of free public services than are single-parent households who did not choose poverty. Services must be aware of and sensitive to this diversity not only as a way of reaching out to those who may need assistance but also to respond with assistance in a meaningful way.

Getting from Here to Widespread Integration of Services for Youth

The political momentum for a new, more comprehensive policy for children and youth has unusual potential now, in part because of possible intergenerational linkages. For instance, the concerns of the middle class about child care can be fused with the urgent child care needs of disadvantaged groups. People are realizing that security in their older ages rests to some degree on the productive capacity of the young. Building a broader coalition for improvement depends on public support, but another crucial element will be the successful enlistment of education, health, protective services and other sectors' professionals and leaders, as well as among those across the public and the private sectors. Their support is needed not only to give momentum to changes that would bridge the various services, but to give them a chance for success.

We are skeptical of symbolic reorganization devices like a state department of children's services or a state children's code of law. Surface reorganizations fail to acknowledge that the problems we have analyzed are deeply rooted and cannot be solved by superficial changes in organizational structures. Our understanding of the ingredients to successfully initiate local service coordination suggests that flexible initiative money through foundations has been crucial in generating effective local child resource policies. Other key characteristics are cooperation among mid-level bureaucrats, commitment from top executives, and adaptation to particular local contexts. Consequently, we believe that federal and state government should provide seed money and prescribe a local process for the reconceptualization and planning of integrated children's services.

The longer range perspective requires support from research and evaluation that presently is missing. One of the chronic problems in attempts to develop complex understandings of the conditions of children's lives is the lack of adequate information about the aggregate effects of the national, state and local services on individuals and groups Because children's needs are not neatly compartmentalized, and because a consequential part of the policy debate cuts across categories, labels, and professional domains, it is essential that research on children and children's resources also not be bound by existing institutional arrangements or authorization. Information specific to the state and local contexts is a prerequisite for any kind of policy analysis that will successfully lead to change. Policy makers realize that support from the public emerges when they perceive connections to specific local issues and problems.

It will also require that the high boundaries between professionals be lowered, beginning with university training and extending through professional practice. Programs to prepare educational administrators should provide more inter-professional experiences and curriculum. Ohio State University has designed such programs, which help bring together nurses, doctors, lawyers, social workers, educators, and others. This early orientation to inter-professional preparation can help break down the barriers that are built into the delivery system and create integrated professional networks.

But most importantly, coordination of youth services must find an organizational and structural center. We suggest that the school would be the logical and most likely hub of integration.

The Role of Schooling

Schools provide the organizational context for the most sustained and ongoing contact with children outside the family setting. This element facilitates a relatively long-term understanding of the needs and concerns of youth, a perspective often missing from other services. Because of everyday contact, the school can provide a setting for continuing exchanges with children that can better include them in the processes of identifying problems and possible solutions and can more quickly catch new needs as they arise. The developmental approach embedded in many schooling activities could also provide a much-needed perspective to other services which tend to respond to episodic and acute crises as they emerge.

The historic separation of schooling from city or county government militates against coordination and the notion of the school as a center of activity for youth services, however. Since the early part of this century schools developed a separate board and tax base with few formal linkages to other units of local government. However, this separation did not protect schools from politics. It did succeed in encouraging only sporadic interaction with general government and often adversarial relationships with town/municipal governments.[29] We contend that this metropolitan political separation is dysfunctional with respect to meeting the multiple needs of many students. The political or informal linkages between most cities, counties, and schools are minimal and not oriented around the particular developmental needs of at-risk children. Furthermore, separation has weakened a potential coalition for children since educators rarely coordinate political strategy with other service providers.

With this vision, the school could become the site or broker of numerous services such as health clinics, after-school child care, alcohol and drug abuse programs and organized recreation programs. More child care and preschool programs could be located on or near school grounds to provide a better transition with the regular school program. While the school should not financially carry all these services, it could provide the facilities and welcome city, county, and private agencies to school grounds. Schools would need additional funds to help provide integrated case management of the student with multiple problems. The familiarity of a case manager with all matters of consequence currently affecting the family would improve assistance to parents and youth and help prevent problems before they emerge or become severe.

The effective case manager knows about the various public or private agencies that can help and attempts to orchestrate the fragmented service delivery systems. In successful examples, the case manager coached the individual in identifying his or her own problem and course of action. The case manager never took over for the parents or told them what to do—responses which serve to reinforce the dependence of the family on outside authorities to solve their own problems.

The school as the site of numerous children's services will require a rethinking of the role of the principal. If the principal were designated as chief administrator of the broader array of services for children, time for instructional and other schooling duties might be insufficient. This kind of change would also require drastic alterations in the current scope of principal preparation and programs for staff development. Another strategy would be to locate a children's services coordinator at the school who would be employed by county or city government. This option would relieve the school of stretching out its current administrative obligations. The services coordinator would report to an interagency council of local children's services. In the California context, county government has the major non-school responsibility for children with multiple needs and would hire the school site coordinator.

While there are many visions of the next wave of school reform, the school as the hub for comprehensive student services should become more prominent. The bottom third of the achievement band and students who are failing from numerous interrelated problems are not likely to be helped much by a strategy that focuses *solely* on raising academic standards or providing more teacher decision making. Children's prospects have a good chance of improving only through a broader conception of childhood.

In Conclusion

Today's schools build on yesterday's notion of "family" and children's environment in both form and function. The social institutions upon which schools are built have shifted dramatically, and the problems of family/school relations are too complex, too varied, and too enmeshed with larger social realities to respond to single policy solutions such as parent partnerships, parent involvement mechanisms and the like.[30] Although school administrators and teachers acknowledge that children and youth arrive not as empty vessels but as complex individuals whose entire experience shapes how well they learn and attain in school, policies and practices generally do not reflect this understanding. Policy makers intermittently demonstrate this view with monies for school counselors, lunch programs, parent involvement mechanisms and the like. But primarily the school is considered the locus of learning while other bureaucracies—the juvenile courts, health and welfare agencies, drug and substance abuse programs—are conceived to meet separate components of children's lives.

Given the rapidly changing nature of school populations and the persistence of poverty, health, and other problems, policy makers and school practitioners must bridge the connection between the conditions of education and the total conditions of children. Promising responses can be crafted by moving from a focus on the functional requirements of a healthy, curious, productive, motivated child. This changed perspective draws attention to the child as an actor in a larger social system and to the institutional networks and resources present in that larger environment. It requires looking beyond family to the primary networks that make up a child's environment, and thinking of the school in a new way, as a nexus of institutions within this environment. Taking this view, the school moves from the role of "deliverer" of educational services to the role of broker of the multiple resources that can be applied to achieve successful, productive and happy lives for children.

Footnotes

1. We refer here in general to the ages 0 to 18. For the sake of linguistic convenience, we will often use the term children or youth but we mean to refer to the entire cluster of legal juveniles.
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3. M. Wald, J. Evans, and M. Ventresca, "The Economic Status of Children," in M. Kirst (ed.), *Conditions of Children in California* (Berkeley: Policy Analysis for California Education, 1989), p. 53.
4. In 1986 dollars.
5. Wald, Evans, and Ventresca, op. cit., p. 57.
6. Wald, Evans, and Ventresca, op. cit., p. 59.
7. L. Egbuonu and B. Starfield, "Child Health and Social Status," *Pediatrics*, 69 (1982): 550.
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9. J. Flanagan and W. Cooley, *Project Talent: One Year Follow-up Studies* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh, Project Talent Office, 1966).
10. Wald, Evans, and Ventresca, op. cit., pp. 59–60.
11. M. Wald, J. Evans, C. Smrekar, and M. Ventresca, "Family Life," in M. Kirst (ed.), *Conditions of Children in California*, op. cit., p. 45.
12. A condition which results not from an increase in birthrates to single women, but because of a growth in the number of women in the U.S. population.
13. L. Bumpass, "Children and Marital Disruption: A Replication and Update," *Demography*, 21 (1984): 71.
14. Only 60 to 65% of all children presently live with both biological parents.
15. Wald, Evans, Smrekar, and Ventresca, op. cit., p. 33.
16. *The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families* (Washington, DC: The William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship, 1988), p. 38.
17. Wald, Evans, Smrekar, and Ventresca, op. cit., p. 42.
18. *The Forgotten Half*, op. cit., p. 41.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 45.
21. Ibid., pp. 45–46.
22. N. Halfon, W. Jameson, C. Brindis, P. Lee, P. Newacheck, C. Korenbrot, J. McCroskey, and R. Isman, "Health," in M. Kirst (ed.), *Conditions of Children in California*, op. cit.
23. N. Halfon, Integrated Services Testimony to the Senate Select Committee on Children and Youth, December 7, 1988.
24. Wald, Evans, and Ventresca, op. cit., p. 61.
25. W. N. Grubb, "Child Care and Early Childhood Programs," in M. Kirst (ed.), *Conditions of Children in California*, op. cit., p 86.
26. Ibid., pp. 76, 80.
27. Provided by Dr. Laura Grandin, Project Director, County of San Francisco Children, Youth and Family Service Feasibility Study, 1988.
28. P. Goren and M. Kirst, *An Exploration of County Expenditures and Revenue for Children's Services* (Berkeley: Policy Analysis for California Education, 1989).
29. L. N. Carol et al., *School Boards: Strengthening Grass Roots Leadership* (Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1986).
30. S. B. Heath and M. W. McGlaughlin, "Policies for Children with Multiple Needs," in M. Kirst (ed.), *Conditions of Children in California*, op. cit.

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