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ABSTRACT

This report describes how staff at the school, cluster, and central offices have responded to the Philadelphia district's new student support ethos. This report does not present student outcome data or measure the quantity or quality of services because the evaluation teams believed it was too early in the implementation of the initiative to expect students to be affected to a measurable degree. This report does present findings on the district's most substantial attempt to redesign student support services, the Family Resource Network. The Family Resource Network seeks to improve coordination of student support services with city social services and community organizations. The evaluation team conducted interviews with more than 300 employees and representatives of external agencies, observed meetings, analyzed documents, and conducted an opinion survey of more than half of the district's 12,000 teachers. In these early days of the Children Achieving initiative, the school district has struggled with finding a balance between service provision and service coordination. Answers should emerge as the district focuses more closely on support services, but the district is cautioned against separating administration of student support and instruction to a great degree. (Contains 3 tables and 27 references.) (SLD)

CHILDREN ACHIEVING: PHILADELPHIA'S EDUCATION REFORM

PROGRESS REPORT SERIES 1996-1997

Restructuring Student Support Services: Redefining the Role of the School District

1

prepared by

CONSORTIUM FOR POLICY RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

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OMG CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

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Restructuring Student Support Services: Redefining the Role of the School District

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Consortium for Policy Research in Education

March 1998

PREFACE

In December of 1995, the *Children Achieving* Challenge charged the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) and its partners, Research for Action, OMG Center for Collaborative Learning and the Philadelphia Writing Project with the evaluation of *Children Achieving*, Philadelphia's school reform initiative. Research began in January 1996 and will continue through December 2000.

During the 1996-97 school year, the evaluation team conducted qualitative research in 21 schools, 14 clusters, interviewed District officials, and administered a District-wide survey of teachers. Drawing on this data, a series of five reports have been drafted. They include:

- Restructuring Student Supports: Redefining the Role of the School District
- Guidance for School Improvement in a Decentralizing System: How Much, What Kind and From Where?
- Making Sense of Standards: Implementation Issues and the Impact on Teaching Practice
- The Accountability System: Defining Responsibility for Student Achievement
- Technical Report on the Results of a Survey of Philadelphia Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

Asserting that children who lack health care, food or shelter or who otherwise face hardship cannot achieve at high levels, the School District of Philadelphia, with the assistance of its partners, is working to develop, expand and restructure many of the District's non-instructional supports for students. As part of the *Children Achieving* initiative, Philadelphia's school leaders are working to improve the quality of student support services, to provide students and their families access to a wide range of community services and supports, and to coordinate the work of the various service-providing agencies.

This report describes how staff at the school, cluster and central office levels have responded to the District's new student support ethos. The ultimate test of the *Children Achieving* reorganization of student support services will be increased efficiency of service delivery, improved access to services and better student academic achievement. This report, however, does not present student outcome data or measure the quantity or quality of services provided by the School District, because the evaluation team believed it was too early in the implementation of the *Children Achieving* initiative to expect students across the system to be affected to any measurable degree.

This report presents findings on the District's most substantial attempt to redesign student support services, the Family Resource Network. The Family Resource Network seeks to improve coordination of student support services with city social services and community organizations, and to transform the responsibilities of student support professionals in schools from providing direct services to roles emphasizing service coordination and advocacy for children.

The evaluation report is framed by an analysis of the theory underlying the Family Resource Network and other student support functions created or modified by *Children Achieving*. The report describes the ongoing implementation of the Family Resource Network and examines its links with other student support initiatives, including:

- the structural and policy changes intended to promote the new student support ethos, especially the effects of decentralization of student support services and special education on schools and clusters;
- the response of central office staff, counselors, nurses and school-community coordinators to the changes in student support brought about by *Children Achieving*, especially their feelings about the Family Resource Network and its impact on their jobs;
- the role of Family Resource Network coordinators in helping school-level student support professionals reorient themselves to the Family Resource Network;
- the potential of small learning communities (instructional units in which groups of teachers and students work together closely and which are intended to be more supportive of students than larger traditional school groupings) to provide a structure that bridges instruction and student support;
- the quality of centrally sponsored professional development opportunities offered to school-level student support professionals;
- the efforts of Family Resource Network central office staff to influence state social policy; and
- the response of leaders of city social service agencies to the changes in the District's student support services.

The evaluation team conducted interviews with more than 300 employees of the School District of Philadelphia and representatives of external agencies; observed more than three dozen meetings and professional development sessions; analyzed several School District documents as well as relevant literature produced outside the system; and conducted in the spring of 1997 an opinion survey of more than half of the District's 12,000 teachers.

The Need for Student Support in Philadelphia

The quality of children's lives outside of school affects their ability to succeed in school (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997) and many of the children of Philadelphia endure enormous hardship. More than half of the 400,000-plus children of Philadelphia live in poverty, and 25 percent receive direct cash benefits or welfare or belong to families who do (Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, 1996a). More than one-tenth of Philadelphia's children under age 15 live in families with annual incomes of less than $5,000 (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1996). Children enrolled in the School District of Philadelphia are poorer than these figures suggest as a greater proportion of poor families send their children to public school. More than 80 percent of the students enrolled in the School District receive public assistance or qualify for free or reduced price lunch (Yancey, 1994).

Growing up in impoverished circumstances influences every part of a child's life—his or her health, family, neighborhood, and education (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Corcoran & Chaudry, 1997). Children born in Philadelphia, as in other large cities, are less likely to have mothers who received pre-natal care, to have been born at a healthy birth-weight, and to survive infancy than elsewhere in the United States (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1996). More than 40 percent of Philadelphia's children live in single-parent families. Nearly one-third reside in Philadelphia's distressed neighborhoods, a figure nearly twice the average for the nation's 50 largest cities and more than five times the average for the nation as a whole (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1996). Approximately 13,500 Philadelphia children are reported each year as abused or neglected, 7,000 are subjected to out-of-home placements (Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, 1996a) and 1,100 are arrested for committing a violent crime, a rate that is nearly one and one-half times the nation's urban juvenile violent crime rate (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1996). And each year, about one in 15 unmarried teenage girls has a child of her own.[1]

Facing any of the issues reflected in these statistics would be difficult, but many children are coping with multiple problems at once. A recent survey of Southeastern Pennsylvania United Way agencies revealed that more than 75 percent of the children- and family-serving agencies in the Philadelphia area have noticed an escalation in the intensity of clients' needs and in the number of children and families with multiple problems (Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, 1996b). Data from a retrospective study of children born in Philadelphia in 1988 and 1989 and enrolled as Philadelphia first graders in the 1995-96 school year indicates that children with multiple risk factors are less likely to succeed in school. They were more likely to be absent more than 20 percent of school days, more likely to receive failing report card marks in language arts and mathematics, and more likely to be retained in the first grade (Philadelphia School Readiness Project, 1996).

School districts have long offered supportive services for students to help ameliorate some of these problems, but these traditional services—guidance counseling, school nursing, and social agency referrals—have proven inadequate to the task. More than two-thirds of Philadelphia's public school teachers report that social and personal problems are among the biggest obstacles to student academic achievement. An even greater proportion of Philadelphia teachers believe that their students' success or failure is not due to their own efforts but to factors beyond their control.[2] The *Children Achieving* initiative seeks to support both teachers and students, by addressing the complexity of student needs and structuring student support services in new ways.

[1] Data derived from **The Bottom Line is... Children**, Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, 1996 and from U.S Bureau of the Census, USA Counties 1996, CD-ROM.

[2] CPRE, A Survey of Philadelphia Teachers. 1997.

The CHILDREN ACHIEVING THEORY *of* STUDENT SUPPORT

Finding: The *Children Achieving* theory of student support emphasizes coordination of services, advocacy for children and a holistic approach to student needs, and requires major changes in how the School District provides student support, including the reorientation and retraining of staff.

The increased number of children facing multiple risks, as well as a growing understanding of the deleterious affects these risks have on school performance and completion and other life outcomes, has caused many educators, social workers and child advocates to question the way support services for children and families are delivered in the United States. As a new superintendent, David Hornbeck was aware of this critique and addressed the need for improved student support services in his initial conceptualization of *Children Achieving* in August 1994:

Community services and supports can make the difference between success and failure. Children who are unhealthy, hungry, abused, ill-housed, ill-clothed or otherwise face the kinds of problems outside the school born of poverty will not achieve at high levels. Therefore it is imperative that initiatives be dramatically expanded to provide the necessary services and supports to reduce the impact of these major barriers to learning.

The School District of Philadelphia, strapped for resources to provide basic programs and implement other reform-oriented initiatives, has not acted to "dramatically expand" support services for students in the conventional way, that is, by increasing funding. Taking guidance from the national trend toward service integration,[3] as well as responding to sheer practicality, the *Children Achieving* initiative, under the leadership of the Hornbeck administration, has emphasized the coordination of services at all levels of the School District:

As a School District, we must forge mutual relationships with organizations in the larger community and in city government that can meet students' non-academic needs, link students with necessary services, or actually bring the programs into the schools. . . . Each school must develop its capacity to collaborate with community partners and public agencies, and these agencies and partners must recognize that a school focus provides them with great opportunity to improve the effectiveness of their delivery of services. (School District of Philadelphia, 1995)

"Expanding services" under the *Children Achieving* initiative means increasing collaborations with other groups and agencies that may be better equipped to provide services. Implicit in this strategy is an assumption that the combined resources will result in better quality services, increased productivity (that is, more service for the same resources), and reduced duplication of services.

This focus on coordination is central to many aspects of the *Children Achieving* initiative, but it has specific meaning in the area of support services. Coordinated student support services must include "a shared commitment to prevention, holistic services with a family focus, culturally and linguistically sensitive services, and long-term partnerships rather than intermittent collaboration" (School District of Philadelphia, 1995).

[3] For a discussion of the trend toward the development of integrated or coordinated social services, see for example, Talley & Short, 1995; Kirst & Kelly, 1995; and Hayes, Lipoff, and Danegger, 1995.

The intent of *Children Achieving*, in addition to collaborating with other groups to coordinate and provide services, is also to "enhance existing services" (Field Notes, November 1996) by aligning the District's mode of student support with contemporary notions of best practices in child development and social service provision. These best practices include a prevention orientation, a whole family and whole child focus.[4] Such a transformation would require dramatic changes in the city's social service infrastructure, including "a willingness to change the way the schools, public and private agencies and community-based organizations are organized to encourage linkage and expand services" (School District of Philadelphia, 1995). It also requires school staff and others committed to educating children to reorient their work: "School personnel, parents, community members, volunteers, agency representatives and neighbors. . . must be retrained and reoriented in their roles, responsibilities and perspectives" (School District of Philadelphia, 1995). The *Children Achieving* Action Design also suggests that all parties must become advocates "in every forum possible" for supportive services for children and families.

Coordination, advocacy, and an holistic perspective are central to the School District of Philadelphia's new theory of student support. This complex and ambitious theory calls for an enormous change in how social services are provided throughout the city and calls for the School District to lead the reform effort. The evaluation team summarizes the theory as follows:

The School District of Philadelphia will support the academic achievement of its students by providing its children and families with more efficient social services (due to increased resource coordination and reduction in service duplication) and more effective social services (due to better service accessibility, a focus on prevention, and holistic treatment) through the retraining and reorientation of School District staff, collaboration with "various city, state, and federal entities, community-based organizations and non-profit as well as private health and social service entities,"[5] and advocacy for children and for the reform of social service provision throughout the city.

[4] See Schorr, 1988 for discussion of the best practices in social service provision.
[5] School District of Philadelphia, 1995.

The ELEMENTS *of* STUDENT SUPPORT *in the* SCHOOL DISTRICT *of* PHILADELPHIA

Finding: New student support structures have been designed to reflect the *Children Achieving* theory of student support.

Under the *Children Achieving* initiative, the School District of Philadelphia has created new organizational structures and strategies to implement this new vision of student support services. The small learning communities, the Comprehensive Support Process, the equity support function and the Family Resource Network share the goal, to varying degrees, of improving supports for students served by the School District of Philadelphia.

The School District is employing the Family Resource Network as the primary vehicle for revamping student support services. The design of the Family Resource Network reflects *Children Achieving*'s vision of student support:

{The Family Resource Network} weaves together the in-school resources in a given cluster (e.g. nurses, guidance counselors, community liaisons, school psychologists) with those available in the communities the cluster serves (e.g. family resource centers, youth access centers, social workers, health providers, support groups). Its role is primarily one of advocacy and coordination, ensuring that the children and families within a cluster have access to the full range of services, supports and opportunities. . .
(School District of Philadelphia, 1996a; p. 2)

> *At the central administration level the Family Resource Network consists of the management team including the Executive Director, three directors, two administrative assistants, and one special assistant. Additionally, there are about 20 specialists/advisors who work in specific areas, such as mental health, parent involvement or physical health. Each cluster should have a Family Resource Network coordinator, but, due to budget constraints, only nine of the 22 clusters did so during the 1996-97 school year. At the school level, the Family Resource Network includes traditional student support staff: guidance counselors, school nurses, and school-community coordinators, among others.*

The primary functions of the Family Resource Network are coordination and advocacy, with an emphasis on making connections between schools and communities.

Other School District documents express the need for within-school coordination among Family Resource Network staff:

Of particular importance to the schools and District is the coordination of our own resources within school buildings (e.g., school nurse, school-community coordinator, guidance counselor, parents, volunteers, principal and other school staff). Some schools have created holistic approaches to student problems, successfully coordinating the responses of all the available in-school resources. More often, however, sharing expertise and knowledge, training across functions and generally working together to provide comprehensive services remains sporadic... (School District of Philadelphia, 1996b; p. 3)

Coordination is one of the primary functions of many of the departments within the Office of Standards, Equity and Student Services, the umbrella office that includes the Family Resource Network and an Equity Support function, which coordinates the administration of traditionally categorical programs that support student learning, including: Title I, Special Education, English as a Second Language/Bilingual and Desegregation programs. The School District's equity mission links the Family Resource Network and Equity Support roles by including as a goal the development of:

Student and Family Supports that: a) provide safety nets for students within the classroom, small learning community and school so that no student falls between the cracks; and b) link students and families with community and cross-city resources to create comprehensive, coordinated support networks.
(School District of Philadelphia, 1996c)

> *The mission of the School District of Philadelphia Equity Initiative is to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities and success in achieving rigorous standards for all students, including historically underserved students such as low-income students, disabled students, special-needs and language-minority students as well as racial, ethnic and gender groups who have been traditionally underserved.* (School District of Philadelphia, Equity Framework, July 1996)

The District's equity mission is also reflected in the goal of the Comprehensive Support Process, a new initiative designed to provide a large majority of students the instructional and non-instructional supports they need to succeed in the regular classroom. The Comprehensive Support Process version of service coordination relies on the collaboration and exchange of teachers, especially among colleagues within small learning communities. Developed by leaders of the Equity Support Office and the Teaching and Learning Network, the Comprehensive Support Process encourages a holistic approach to student needs so educational strengths and needs are assessed in tandem. The goal of the Comprehensive Support Process is to "...create a network of linked, safety nets within the classroom, small learning community and school designed to support **every** student's right to be successful learners who reach high standards that prepare them for post-secondary education and the workplace" (School District of Philadelphia, 1997a). The importance of coordination was summarized in a Comprehensive Support Process document distributed to the members of the Superintendent's Cabinet[6] by paraphrasing an African proverb: "It takes a whole village to educate a child" (Williams & Mulvihill, 1997).

> *The Comprehensive Support Process is a means to providing a successful school experience for ALL children in the Least Restrictive Environment. It assures administrators, teachers, and parents that collaborative problem-solving structures will be in place in all schools to support the needs of students and their teachers. The process fundamentally begins in the classroom where the classroom teacher analyzes the strengths and learning needs of the students and adapts and manages the classroom instructional environment to create optimal learning conditions. The teacher may also receive collaborative peer support from the small learning community where additional strategies are brainstormed and are put into place in the classroom. When more intensive support is indicated for a student, the small learning community may request specific assessment and intervention from a Student's Support Team, one which is individually developed to meet the student's identified needs within a specified time frame. (School District of Philadelphia and Eastern Instructional Support Center, 1997)*

[6] The Superintendent's Cabinet includes cluster leaders and departmental directors of offices in the central administration.

The collaboration of school professional staff in the Comprehensive Support Process depends largely on the functioning of small learning communities, organizational structures which the District sees as inherently more supportive of students. By developing stronger and tighter-knit communities of teachers and students, the thinking is that the educational process will become more personalized and naturally lead teachers and other school staff to a more holistic understanding and support of students. The School District's list of "essential components" of small learning communities includes elements that support students by creating closer relationships and more collaboration among students, faculty and staff. In addition, the District's Strategic Action Design (1995) notes that "[Small] Learning Communities will be closely connected with parents and with community resources and services."

Among the essential components of small learning communities are[7]

- Multi-year: Structured to provide a close relationship among and between students, staff, families, and communities for more than one school year.
- Collaborative: Teachers have sufficient time to engage in on-going, meaningful planning and professional development activities in support of . . . student support services.
- Partnered: Small learning communities are the locus for school and work-based partnerships with employers, post-secondary institutions, social service agencies, and community-based organizations. (School District of Philadelphia, 1995)

[7] Please note: this is an excerpt from a longer list of small learning community characteristics.

The THEORY *in* USE *in the* SCHOOL DISTRICT *of* PHILADELPHIA

The Family Resource Network, the Equity Support function, the Comprehensive Support Process and small learning communities all reflect *Children Achieving*'s underlying theory of student support, which is characterized by an emphasis on coordination of services, advocacy for children, and a more holistic approach to student needs. There are two primary goals of this restructuring: to alter the way student and family support services are provided both *within* and *outside* the School District. The remainder of this report describes the efforts of District personnel to make progress toward these dual goals.

Many documents and much rhetoric exists to support the new vision of student support; however, the theory in use is frequently very different than the version that exists on paper. The School District of Philadelphia, like other large urban districts, is a vast bureaucracy consisting of many segments that share work, cross paths, communicate and cooperate to varying degrees. As School District employees at the central office, cluster and school levels have worked to implement the tenets of *Children Achieving*, the vision has been interpreted and reinterpreted in myriad ways. Modification of the District's vision as it is put into practice is consistent with research on social policy implementation[8] and is to be expected; so too are the discrepancies in how the vision has been interpreted and communicated at different levels of the District.

In the following sections, we present data that illustrates some of these differences, particularly highlighting District personnel's varying interpretations of the theory of student support by level. It is important to note at the outset however, that many of the differences in the interpretation of the restructuring of student support that are described below may be developmental; that is, they reflect the early stage of implementation of *Children Achieving*, and especially of the Family Resource Network, that this report recounts. Employees of the District, including many of the school staff quoted here, have not all had ample time to learn about, adopt and adapt the "new way" (School District of Philadelphia, 1996d) of student support to their own work. Still, understanding the differences and what factors encourage and hamper understanding of the theory is essential to improving its implementation.[9] It is in the spirit of informing implementation efforts, rather than making a final judgment of them, that this data is presented.

[8] See for example, McDonnell and Elmore, 1987; Palumbo & Calista, 1990; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1979.

[9] See for example, Weiss, 1995.

Student Supports at the Central Office

Finding: Central Family Resource Network personnel describe a Family Resource Network that is vastly different from traditional student support services, and well aligned with the theory expressed in *Children Achieving* design documents.

In the summer of 1995, a Family Resource Network summer institute was held to "provide a forum for discussing and formalizing the mission of the Family Resource Network" (School District of Philadelphia, 1996). The group of over two hundred representatives of external agencies, parents and school staff who participated agreed with the proposition discussed at the event: the central office student services administration would have to be overhauled to support the development of the Family Resource Network throughout the District. Anticipating other reorganization activities at the central office, the Family Resource Network design team created a committee of School District personnel to reconsider the structure of student supports services in the central administration.

One result of this review was the creation of the central Family Resource Network, with jurisdiction over the former Student Services, Special Education, Student Substance Abuse, Attendance and Health Services Departments. The central Family Resource Network was restructured to be led by a management team made up of an Executive Director, three directors, two administrative assistants, and one special assistant. By the beginning of the 1996-97 school year, Family Resource Network personnel at the central office also included about twenty staff who worked as specialists in areas like parent involvement or behavioral health.

- **Central office Family Resource Network staff believe that the School District of Philadelphia should diminish its service provider role and focus instead on working collaboratively with city agencies and community groups that have a service provision mission.**

Central Family Resource Network staff have had opportunities to understand and shape the Family Resource Network; as a result, they were able to adopt and incorporate the *Children Achieving* approach to student support services readily into their own work. The management team particularly displayed remarkable agreement about how the *Children Achieving* vision of student support should be translated into practice. They viewed the Family Resource Network as a means of reducing the non-educational services provided by the School District and of building stronger linkages with other agencies that could provide social services more effectively to the children of Philadelphia. This model would reduce duplication of services and deliver services more effectively and efficiently. Three different Family Resource Network central office management team members described the model as follows:

We're {the School District of Philadelphia} not a great health or social services delivery system, and we shouldn't try to be: that's someone else's job. We're not good at it, we're not trained or set up to do it. We should care about those things, but other agencies specialize in delivering those services, so we shouldn't... We need to let go of the things that are not in our mission... (Field Notes, March 1996)

In terms of the Family Resource Network in general, we want to get out of the business of providing services. Most of the services we provide are available in the community. For example, the School District {of Philadelphia} has a mandate to do health screenings periodically. So we employ a bunch of doctors. Our doctors never really see the same youngsters for treatment. The screening and evaluation results don't lead to interventions... The more effective way {to do this} is {for the School District} to link families with services, tie a family with a provider, and let us meet our mandate {that way} as opposed to {actually} doing it ourselves. It also allows us to use the resources more effectively.
(Field Notes, December 1996)

We have a hard enough time doing education. We should let others do what they do best.
(Field Notes, December 1996)

The model for student support espoused by Family Resource Network management team members emphasizes a singular mission for the School District of Philadelphia.

Another member of the Family Resource Network management team provided an illustrative example of the central office's efforts to move from service delivery and toward service coordination. When asked whether the goal of the School District was to "get out of the business of delivering services," the management team member described the decision to eliminate 10 of the 15 centrally employed dental hygienist positions. The money saved from this action would fund, in 1997-98, Family Resource Network coordinators in the 13 clusters that did not have them during the previous school year. "They [the hygienists] were doing [dental] screens... but [to help a child] you can't just do the screen," the management team member said, explaining that children were not getting the follow-up treatment that would make a dental screen worthwhile. There was no process to connect the children to a dental care provider or to check if they had received treatment. The decision to phase out the dental hygienists was intended to foster that process. The goal was to "invest in Family Resource Network coordinators" who can connect with providers that offer full dental care. "It's getting us out of one type of business and putting us in another—to get children connected [for example] to dental care." (Field Notes, June 1997)

- **Central office Family Resource Network staff focused on making the Family Resource Network role exclusively non-instructional.**

This emphasis on reducing the services directly provided by the School District and the enlarged focus on the District's educational mission seemed to lead Family Resource Network central office management team members to the conclusion that the Family Resource Network should streamline its role. At a February 1997 management team meeting, the team members discussed whether the Family Resource Network should be "exclusively non-instructional" and most members agreed. "We just have to package it so it doesn't look like we're dumping [our responsibilities] or cost-shifting [onto other departments]," one said. Several team members described this philosophy in subsequent interviews. The idea was to focus exclusively on serving students' non-educational needs and to let go of any student support activities having an instructional component.

This debate emerged particularly in regard to special education, an area that often combines both student support and instructional components. Although the management team had made tremendous efforts to move authority for special education to the schools and clusters (a strategy that is described in more detail below), a few low incidence special education programs were still being managed centrally, as economies of scale made it impractical for children with rare kinds of disabilities, autism for example, to be served by their neighborhood school or cluster. Midway through the 1996-97 school year, there was talk of shifting even those programs to the School District's Office of Leadership and Learning [OLL] because they had an instructional element. By the end of the school year however, the balance had swung, with the Family Resource Network Executive Director submitting to the OLL a proposal for joint management of the low incidence special education programs.

This focus on the non-instructional stemmed, the evaluation team believes, from at least two sources: increasing frustration about the resistance of school and cluster staff to taking on responsibility for special education students, also described in more detail below, and a well-intentioned desire to free teachers from performing duties that distracted them from teaching. One central office Family Resource Network management team member said, "We need... to relieve the instructional people of the burden of providing social services best provided by another professional," (Field notes, March 1996).

But separating "support" from "instruction" was problematic. The dividing line was often difficult to draw, and on numerous occasions central office Family Resource Network staff reacted extremely, suggesting that any function having an instructional component should be transferred to a department with teaching expertise. These attempts to delineate between the support and instructional functions seemed to deny the inherent links connecting them. One Family Resource Network Cluster coordinator lamented the narrowing of the purpose of the Family Resource Network; "The Family Resource Network role has become one of public relations and community events—not instructional support," (Family Resource Network Coordinator, November 1996).

Finding: Leaders of the Family Resource Network instituted many structural changes to promote the *Children Achieving* vision of student support, including: downsizing the central administration and sending the savings from the cuts to schools and clusters; giving schools the authority and flexibility to decide how to use money previously allocated specifically for particular positions or categorical programs; and organizing the work of student support professionals around four goals.

In addition to having strikingly similar philosophies of how student support services should be provided in the School District, Family Resource Network management team members also shared a determined resolve to put that philosophy into practice. Many structural and policy changes were made which were intended to develop the infrastructure for coordination: decentralization of authority to schools and an accompanying downsizing of central staff devoted to student support was a priority; the work of all student support professionals was organized around four goals; and efforts to create agreements with other child-serving agencies in the city were pursued. Family Resource Network leadership viewed their role as building the structure that over time would promote the coordination of support services, both within the District and throughout the city. As a Management Team member told a researcher, "The policy changes we are working on will *facilitate* coordination down the road" (Field Notes, November 1996). The following sections review these efforts, focusing first on the structural changes that most affected other staff of the School District, and later examining work that focused on external agencies.

- **Central office Family Resource Network staff have vigorously pursued the *Children Achieving* goal of decentralization for fiscal, philosophical and managerial reasons.**

The Family Resource Network management team has eagerly pursued decentralization, a central goal of the *Children Achieving* initiative. Much of their efforts focused on two related areas: decentralization of management and authority of both student support services (including the counseling, psychology and nursing functions) as well as special education to the cluster and school levels. "[Decentralization] is what the Superintendent said should happen and [the Family Resource Network Executive Director] is determined to make that happen" (Field Notes, November 1996).

One of the first and most dramatic decentralization efforts began in the 1995-96 school year, when the central Family Resource Network was created, combining the former offices of Student Services and Special Education, among others. But the Family Resource Network was more than just a new name for these traditional functions; it also drastically restructured these offices, dismantling the large and separate hierarchies that had arisen around school psychology and counseling, and school health services. A primary goal of this reorganization was to create within the School District better coordinated and more efficient administration of student support services. "We wanted to move out of separate silos and make people generalists" (Field Notes, September 1996).

Additionally, Family Resource Network leadership wanted to provide schools and clusters more authority over staffing and fiscal resources. For example, prior to this restructuring, nurses and counselors would report centrally, getting supervision, budgets and supplies from the central staff. Under *Children Achieving* and the Family Resource Network, these staff now report to the principal of their school. Additionally, some student support positions are "tradeable." While in the past, schools were allocated certain staff positions by the central office, currently schools have the flexibility in some cases to use their resources differently. Money allocated for a special education teacher might be used to purchase instead two classroom aides, if school leadership felt the resources would be used more effectively distributed in that manner.

Efforts like these continued throughout the 1996-97 school year. The central Family Resource Network staff discussed converting central office personnel positions to cash and transferring authority and control over these resources to the schools and clusters. Working on a very limited budget with no new resources available, members of the Family Resource Network management team were committed to providing funds for schools to use at their discretion. A 1997 Family Resource Network reorganization plan showed central office expenditures shrinking from about $12 million in 1995-96 to $10.5 million in 1996-97 to $8 million in 1997-98.

Some of these changes were evident to school-level staff. They recognized that supervision had been altered and that staff allocations were more flexible. But they received little of the intended increase in fiscal resources. The Family Resource Network management team had hoped that the full amount of savings would be transferred to the schools and clusters, but much of the reduction was used to decrease the 1996-97 District budget deficit and never reached the other levels.[10]

But, decentralization efforts were not made only to meet fiscal demands. Most of the Family Resource Network central office staff saw these efforts as philosophically aligned with the move toward service coordination:

We've been successful in taking an office that had literally hundreds of folks who reported to the central office. Now, we're down to about 20 or so. Just in the past month we've reduced that even further. Streamlined it to make it more efficient to have staff that are creative and flexible and can work across categories. (Field Notes, June 1997)

We are trying to eliminate central office from managing programs and have principals manage what happens in their building, and have cluster staff be coordinating those services or programs. A real good example is the health services. At one time there was a central office that really managed them. The nurses reported here, their payroll was here. Now, if a nurse wants to know "Who do I report to?" and "Where do I get rubber gloves?" we tell them "You report to the principal," and "You get rubber gloves through the principal." (Field Notes, December 1996)

We really feel we should manage no services. Somewhere between that position and completely central office control is where reality is. (Field Notes, December 1996)

10 Savings generated from cuts at the central Family Resource Network funded in 1997-98 Family Resource Network coordinators in clusters that did not yet have them.

Some of the Family Resource Network management team's belief in decentralization arises from past experience. Most management team members have managed student support programs or special education services from the central office, an experience they describe as an exercise in frustration:

For us, we have been out there and we have seen the futility of managing student support at the central office. Special ed. has been managed centrally and that is why it is not integrated {with the rest of the educational program}. The law says that it should be locally controlled and managed, and it still isn't. {In the past} We pulled special ed out and managed it from the central office because it seemed that it would be easier but it has never resulted in quality services. It is impossible to manage from central office: we have 30,000 special ed eligible students. If you put the money there, the responsibility should lie right there with the local community. (Field Notes, December 1996)

Family Resource Network management team members frequently expressed such feelings, particularly about special education. Several management team members said that the parallel system developed for special education needed to be dismantled to make it more efficient and effective. The evaluation team heard frequent comments emphasizing the need to have special education more integrated into the work of the whole District: "There's no office of second grade here [in the central office]. Why should there be one for special ed?" (Field Notes, February, 1997) Schools and clusters should be responsible for special education children, just as they are responsible for the education of the average child.

But this point was applied not only to special education. The central office Family Resource Network emphasized shifting authority and funds to schools and clusters. For example, Safe and Drug Free Schools funds were distributed via the clusters rather than through the central office in 1996-97. Community liaison grants were also provided to clusters without Family Resource Network coordinators to help "jump start the Family Resource Network" (Field Notes, June 1997). Additionally, central office Family Resource Network personnel worked closely with school and cluster staff to coordinate funding from many different sources to develop the largest National School and Community Corps in the nation.

- **Efforts to decentralize were not always greeted enthusiastically by school and cluster staff, or by employees of other central office departments.**

The Family Resource Network management team did not expect that everyone in the School District would be grateful for increased control, flexibility and responsibility, but the intensity of the backlash was distressing. Family Resource Network management team members were at times inundated with complaints about their decentralization efforts; they reported they were often accused of "dumping" their responsibilities on others.

We've locked horns with every office: information technology, personnel, budget, and been accused of dumping to get rid of our responsibilities. (Field Notes, December 1996)

{The Family Resource Network} will not go out to the cluster leaders with anything that implies them doing work. {The Family Resource Network management team} gets criticized regularly for dumping work {on them}. Even when we give them money, they complain. (Field Notes, March 1997)

Complaints of dumping came not only from the school sector, but also from central administration offices and especially from the cluster level. In order to integrate programs previously managed separately, central office Family Resource Network staff tried to transfer work to other parts of the District, but few were happy to receive them. This was particularly true in the controversial area of special education. The Family Resource Network Executive Director described a Cabinet Retreat exercise in which the Superintendent's Cabinet members could send anonymous memos to each other. He received more than anyone else and eighteen of the twenty messages were complaints about special education decentralization efforts (Field Notes, November 1996).

Aggressive decentralization efforts also alienated some of the less influential Family Resource Network central office staff, those not part of the Family Resource Network management team. One Family Resource Network advisor/specialist[11] characterized the Family Resource Network management team's actions as "working to eliminate jobs" (Field Notes, February, 1997) and described their harmful effects:

The whole way {the management team} reshuffled everything was {so painful}. It was worse for {the people who were demoted} than if they weren't in the system at all... There is no way to encourage teamwork if you have a history of demoting, if staff have a sense that they will be shipped out to a different building... Morale is so low it's scary. They've dismantled the system without creating a new one. You can't change a system overnight. (Field Notes, February, 1997)

Another advisor/specialist claimed that lack of supervision was resulting in "bad information" going to parents and school-level student support professionals, "[The bad information is being provided] because there is not a lot of leadership or guidance from the top. Before there were Special Education Administrators in each region. They laid down the law... I can't do it... I can make suggestions but they don't have to follow them" (Field Notes, February 1997).

The opposition from their colleagues seemed only to galvanize the Family Resource Network management team's belief in the importance and desirability of decentralization. Even after eliminating several central office positions, they compared the large size of their staff with another urban district's student support staff and termed the discrepancy "embarrassing" (Field Notes, November 1996). One Family Resource Network management team member lamented the downsizing but persevered: "The Superintendent is clear—you cannot just tinker with one piece, you must do all ten [pieces of *Children Achieving*]. [Decentralization is] why partnering is even more important—with families, community agencies..." (Field Notes, February 1997).

Noting "one man's dumping is another man's decentralization," Family Resource Network central office personnel offered possible explanations for the opposition to their efforts at decentralizing authority. One Family Resource Network advisor/specialist said that clusters have been slow in capitalizing on their flexibility and fiscal control and believed it was a matter of convincing the clusters that they "have the money and the sense" (Field Notes, February 1997).

[11] Family Resource Network advisors/specialists work at the central office level and have responsibility for a particular service area, such as behavioral health, parent involvement, or early intervention, coordinating (and in some cases managing) services in their area of expertise.

Cluster-level adjustment to the decentralization of student support services was seen as an issue of confidence; school-level resistance was explained as fear, especially in the case of special education. Controversy had followed the central office Family Resource Network's devolution of authority for special education to schools and clusters. Family Resource Network central office staff felt that the resistance to decentralizing special education was because it "has accountability on it [in the form of federal and state laws and mandates] and people don't like the accountability" (Field Notes, November 1996). Others explained in more detail:

The parents are very knowledgeable, and do a lot of "consumer advocacy." A lot of the families [of special education students]... have a heightened sense of their own entitlement. They make demands that schools can't meet. (Field Notes, November 1996)

There are many rules for special ed, and now we are saying, "You have responsibility for the entire program." People are scared of it, afraid they are going to run afoul of the law. They would rather have someone else take responsibility. (Field Notes, December 1996)

One management team member described other central departments as threatened by the Family Resource Network's rapid pace and willingness to let go of management responsibilities: "We are realists. The other offices are real concerned if we were to do this [decentralization] it puts pressure on other offices, puts pressure on them to put money at the school level. They give you arguments about economies of scale" (Field Notes, December 1996).

- **The Family Resource Network shaped its 1996-97 work around four goals which were widely communicated and understood but which did not push school-level staff to think of their roles differently.**

To add specificity to the Family Resource Network mission, in 1996-97 the central office Family Resource Network management team outlined four broad goals in the Family Resource Network Work Plan: to improve student attendance, student health, school safety, and family and community involvement. The Work Plan included one to four objectives for each goal area as measurable standards of success for the Family Resource Network. For example, one objective under school safety was to decrease suspensions over the school year by 10 percent. The rationale for and the dilemma in this accountability system are described in the work plan:

The main purpose of the Family Resource Network's goals for 1996-97 are to communicate the mission of the FRN in a tangible, hands-on way. In many cases, this has meant selecting performance indicators that are in essence, merely proxies for the outcomes we would like to see. For example, the ultimate goal of the FRN is to ensure that our students are healthy. However, this is not so easy to measure, nor is it easy to implement.

Family Resource Network Goals:
School attendance *will improve from 85 percent in 1995-96 to 89 percent in 1996-97.*
Students will be healthier. *One hundred percent of students will have health insurance, 100 percent of students will have a primary care physician, 50 percent of students will have complete EPSDT screenings.*
Schools will be safer. *Serious incident reports, suspensions and out of neighborhood transfers will each decrease by 10 percent.*
Family and community involvement will increase. *The number of volunteers will increase up to 5,000. One hundred percent of schools will have certified LSCs. One hundred percent of schools will have at least 85 percent competency on the Family Involvement Checklist. One hundred percent will have a viable Family Resource Network.*

Indicators that were more conducive to quantitative assessment were selected to chart progress because of the difficulty in measuring broad constructs like "school safety" and "student health." The quantitative milestones were intended to create an accountability system to monitor the effectiveness of the Family Resource Network.

The team that developed the Family Resource Network Work Plan, primarily the management team and Family Resource Network coordinators, prepared a welcome letter to disseminate information on the goals of the Family Resource Network which was sent to school-based student support staff, including psychologists, counselors, speech-language therapists, social workers, and others. All the Family Resource Network Cluster coordinators (two served on the team that developed the Work Plan) were informed of the goals, and they based much of their subsequent work on the goals. For example, two coordinators who were not directly involved in writing the Work Plan said:

We {the Family Resource Network} have four goals: attendance, making sure students are insured {health insurance}, safety and community involvement and partnerships. Therefore those are my four goals. (Family Resource Network Coordinator, December 1996)

There are four major focus areas... Our first goal is to increase average daily attendance in {the cluster} schools. Second, I am working with the team to assure that all students have appropriate and proper health insurance coverage, and if they don't, we get that coverage... Our third goal is to work with the Family Resource Network team to decrease serious incident reports and decrease suspensions and out of neighborhood transfers... And fourth is to work on increasing the number of volunteers in our schools.
(Family Resource Network Coordinator, December 1996)

Advisor/specialists also endorsed the goals. One said, "Whatever I do has to be in support of those four goals" (Advisor/Specialist, January 1997).

The four goals were well-communicated and accepted by central office staff, by cluster Family Resource Network coordinators, and to a lesser degree, by school-level staff. Ironically, the ready acceptability of the goals might have hampered school-level staff from grasping the complexity of the *Children Achieving* vision of student support and the Family Resource Network design. The goals are ambitious, but somewhat conventional. Increasing District-wide student attendance by four percent in one year is a formidable task, but increasing attendance is something that many school-level student support staff have seen as part of their jobs for some time. As one counselor reported, "Attendance, involving families... those have been goals in our school for years" (Field Notes, April 1997).

In some ways, the acceptability of the Family Resource Network goals may have reinforced the traditional conception school-level staff have of their jobs. Indeed, one Family Resource Network management team member described the goals as traditional as "Mom and apple pie" (Field Notes, February 1997). Transformations of the kind required by *Children Achieving* rarely result from propositions that enjoy such easy consensus.

Many who endorsed the most radical vision of the Family Resource Network seemed to object to what they perceived as the narrowness of the goals. A nurse who was generally very supportive of the Family Resource Network vision—"It makes sense to a professional"—found the goals and objectives almost antithetical to the Family Resource Network mission:

{The goals} contradict what they {Central Family Resource Network} say they want the nurse to do. On the one hand, they are talking about ground up involvement. I educate {the community} all the time. I agree with that. But how do you monitor all the children {to see if they have a health care provider}? How am I going to even get a 100 percent response rate? These goals make the nurse into just a monitor. (Nurse, May 1997)

A central office Family Resource Network staff member questioned the focus on measurable goals, "The things you can measure do not always make the most sense in the real world" (Field Notes, February 1997).

Putting aside the measurement debate, what the goals do not convey is that student support professionals may have to employ different methods to reach the desired objectives. Encouraging school people to change the way they do their jobs was included in the Family Resource Network design documents and discussed informally, but was not reflected in the four goals of the Family Resource Network. The *Children Achieving* design suggests that two aspects of the initiative would push people toward this understanding: professional development, which will be discussed in the next section of this paper, and accountability. Accountability in the four goal areas, however, is problematic. Student (and teacher) attendance is included in the Performance Index for every school[12] (an accountability mechanism that catalogues the school's progress toward student proficiency), but there is little consensus about whether and how to hold schools accountable for parent involvement, student safety and student health. Providing rewards and sanctions to schools in these areas would prove difficult and controversial.

The School District did make progress in most of the Family Resource Network goal areas over the course of the 1996-97 school year. By installing electronic verification machines in all middle and elementary schools, more than 2,500 students were provided with health insurance and connected to primary care physicians. Average daily attendance rose to 86 percent of enrollment, and over 4,000 new volunteers were involved in the schools. Additionally, numerous informal supports, such as school partnerships with communities of faith, were also developed.

Finding: Coordination between the central office Family Resource Network and other departments involved in student support issues was uneven. With offices that shared responsibility for a specific student population, Family Resource Network staff reported good working relationships. Coordination was less apparent when the connections were more tenuous.

The School District of Philadelphia has four offices that relate directly to student support and its connection to student achievement: the Office of the Superintendent, the Office of Leadership and Learning, the Office of Standards, Equity and Student Services, and the Office of Accountability and Assessment. The data collected by the evaluation team during the 1996-97 school year focused primarily on the first three of these offices. The Family Resource Network and the Equity Support administration are both part of the Office of Standards, Equity and Student Services. Two other departments that take an holistic approach to students, the Office for Early Childhood Education and the Office of Education for Employment, are housed in the Office of Leadership and Learning.

[12] For more information about the School District of Philadelphia's performance index, please see Luhm, Foley & Corcoran, forthcoming.

Central office staff that were interviewed agreed that coordination between offices and departments dealing with instruction had vastly improved over the 1996-1997 school year.[13] Coordination between offices responsible for student support services was less apparent, but there was some improvement. For example, representatives of the Family Resource Network and the Office of Education for Employment mentioned their "excellent" collaboration on the Education Leading to Employment and Career Training program for teenage parents (Field Notes, March, 1997); and the Early Intervention Program, managed by the Family Resource Network and the Office for Early Childhood Education, worked collaboratively to provide early intervention services to children enrolled in Head Start and the Parent Cooperative Nurseries. Perhaps collaboration of this kind was more natural because the programs either shared populations and had a legal mandate to provide the services, as in the case of Early Intervention and Early Childhood,[14] or because the offices split the program management and service provision duties, as is the case in the Education Leading to Employment and Career Training program.

Collaboration among offices or departments within the central office was less frequent when connections were more tenuous. The members of the evaluation team made three observations about the central office personnel involved in work related to student support services: the similarities in their vision of the ideal student support system; their differences over who should be responsible for its management; and the infrequent interaction with other offices working toward this end.

The Comprehensive Support Process is a good illustration of how coordination is still developing in the School District of Philadelphia. The Comprehensive Support Process is an extension of the school team-based model of student support. It is the School District's version of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Instructional Support Team, which is designed to identify and aid students at risk of school failure. After referral of a student by a teacher or parent, the Instructional Support Team (including teachers, counselors, parents, the principal and other concerned adults) assesses the student's educational needs and develops an appropriate program, which may include assignment to special education or other program modification. All Philadelphia schools currently have some form—often multiple forms—of the Instructional Support Team in place, although it is often called by a different name, such as Student Support Team or the Pupil Support Team.

The District's Comprehensive Support Process seeks to transform the Instructional Support Team approach from one that labels a child so that he or she qualifies for special programs or special funding to an approach that ensures that all possible avenues are pursued to make the classroom context responsive to the individual needs of the child. Following a presentation at a Workteam Leaders' meeting in May 1997, a member of the evaluation team summarized the Comprehensive Support Process in her Field Notes:

The Comprehensive Support Process begins at the classroom level where "teachers should build safety nets into lessons to account for their students' learning, cultural and gender differences." The challenge is to provide support so that teachers know how to adapt instruction, curriculum and assessment to respond to the needs of various students. {The presenter} noted that this "classroom support piece" was missing from the model advocated by the state's Instructional Support Team. "We see it as essential." The idea is to assure that the child is not being referred to special education because his teacher does not have the appropriate skills to accommodate him.

The actual process envisioned is two-tiered. First, if after teachers have built the safety nets into their classroom lessons and they are still not reaching a child or children, Tier 1 kicks in. This is focused at the small learning community level, where there would be ample opportunity for teachers to discuss with their

[13] See Christman, 1998 for more details on coordination in the central office.

[14] Additionally, a key Family Resource Network staff member also had lengthy experience with Early Childhood Programs.

peers the needs of the particular student or students, and get suggestions for alternative teaching methods. If these interventions did not work, Tier II kicks in. This is "more formal, highly documented, intensified support and linkages," like those more traditionally associated with the special education referral process.

The difference between the District's Comprehensive Support Process and other team-based approaches to student support services is the change in perspective: when a child is not achieving, it does not always mean the child has a deficit or disability. Low achievement is sometimes attributable to a mismatch in instructional strategies and student needs.

One tenet of the Comprehensive Support Process is that "comprehensive support works better when it is... aligned with other support mechanisms within and beyond the school" (Williams & Mulvihill, 1997). Yet, Family Resource Network personnel initially had little involvement in its development. About a month after the proposed design of the Comprehensive Support Process was presented to the Superintendent's Cabinet, the Family Resource Network published a position paper on Student Support Teams (1997d), which criticized the proliferation of teams in a single school and advocated the establishment of one comprehensive school team. This document did not mention the Comprehensive Support Process or make any reference to its development. It is promising that both the Family Resource Network staff and developers of the Comprehensive Support Process agree on establishing a more streamlined support process, but the lack of direct connection between their initiatives is troubling.

The Family Resource Network was simultaneously developing the "Seamless System of Care" initiative in partnership with the city Department of Public Health. The design of the Seamless System of Care shares the philosophy and goals of the Comprehensive Support Process but is an entirely separate endeavor. While this Health Department partnership emphasizes behavioral health, its prevention level echoes the goals of the Comprehensive Support Process of increasing teacher understanding of, for example, child development and teaching techniques that might help them accommodate mildly troubled students in the regular classroom. This initial focus on teachers would create support services that are wholly integrated into the classroom teacher's regular repertoire. As in the Comprehensive Support Process, student problems that could not be dealt with in the regular classroom would be referred to a team and invite more intense services if necessary (Philadelphia Department of Public Health & School District of Philadelphia, 1997).

In some ways, the alignment between these two initiatives is promising: student support initiatives emerging from the central office have similar values and goals. But why weren't they better connected? Our discussions with the leaders of various central office departments revealed some interesting explanations about the disconnection between student support initiatives. One reason offered to us alluded to the central Family Resource Network's history as the special education office. Wary of the Comprehensive Support Process becoming just another special education referral process that did not involve in-depth examination of the practice of regular classroom teachers, developers of the Comprehensive Support Process made a conscious effort to make it a "regular ed. initiative" (Field Notes, November 1997).

Additionally, we think that this disconnection is also symptomatic of the challenges that developed from the central FRN's staff focus on being "exclusively non-instructional." They simply did not seem to consider the Comprehensive Support Process as part of their responsibilities, perhaps due in part to the fact that it contains an instructional element. When asked about the Comprehensive Support Process, one management team member appeared unconcerned that "[Family Resource Network staff] had little involvement in it... I don't know much about it" (Field Notes, June 1997). By trying to carve out a specific role that is exclusively non-instructional, the central Family Resource Network staff did not see the Comprehensive Support Process—an effort that bridges the messy boundary between student support and instruction—as part of their jurisdiction.

As noted earlier, differences in interpretation between groups involved in implementing a new policy or program, especially groups operating at different levels of a system, are not unusual and are probably the norm rather than the exception. Differences of this kind were apparent to us as we studied the implementation of student supports under *Children Achieving*, especially between student support services staff at the central office and school levels. It is important to bear in mind however, that this report describes an early stage of implementation of *Children Achieving*. While many structural changes had been initiated in the 1996-97 school year, District staff, particularly those working in schools, had not all had ample time to make sense of these changes or to integrate the new student support ethos into their own work. Recognizing that attitudinal changes are often more difficult to promote than specific policy or structural shifts, the data presented below is intended to describe the initial stages of what is essentially a developmental process. In the following sections, we describe how school staff have responded thus far to the Family Resource Network, how they perceive its goals and how they understand their own role in it.

Finding: While school staff are generally enthusiastic about and say they understand the purpose of the Family Resource Network, analysis of interview data suggest that they understand it and other student support structures in ways different from their central office counterparts and different from the theory outlined in *Children Achieving* design documents.

The evaluation team and its partners administered a survey in the spring of 1997 to more than 7,000 district staff from 243 of the District's 261 schools. The survey collected data on staff attitudes and opinions about general school conditions and specific aspects of the *Children Achieving* initiative. Particular survey items measured school staff opinions about the purpose, potential and impact of new structures and policies, including the expansion of the small learning communities and the creation of the Family Resource Network.

Table 1 compares the responses of teachers and counselors to survey questions about *Children Achieving* student support initiatives. Their opinions are generally similar except in their understanding of the purpose of the Family Resource Network. Only 43 percent of teachers reported that they understand the purpose of the Family Resource Network, the major student support mechanism of the *Children Achieving* reform initiative. This suggests that the work of the Family Resource Network is not very visible, at least at this juncture, to the classroom teacher. Data from more than 100 interviews with District teachers support this conclusion. When asked about it, many teachers did not know what the Family Resource Network was. Only four teachers mentioned the Family Resource Network as a support for them or for their students. They described specific initiatives—such as funds to develop a greenhouse, the organization of a clusterwide health fair, and training on conflict resolution, for example—that were organized at the clusteroffice, rather than the work of nurses and counselors and other non-instructional staff in the school.

TABLE 1

Percent of Teachers and Counselors Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing with Statements about the Purpose, Potential and Functions of the Family Resource Network

Survey Item	**% Teachers** Agree or Strongly Agree	**% Counselors** Agree or Strongly Agree
I understand the purpose of the Family Resource Network.	43.0 N = 5,189	75.8 N = 157
I believe the Family Resource Network has the potential to benefit my students.†	92.2 N = 2,181	85.5 N = 117
I believe the Family Resource Network already has had positive effects in my school.†	59.9 N = 2,054	49.1 N = 116
The school counselor(s), the nurse, and—if applicable—the school community coordinator or psychologist, work as a team to support the needs of my students. ‡	69.9 N =1,324	100.0 N = 33
FRN activities and objectives are coordinated with the objectives this school has set for itself. †	61.4 N = 510	sample too small
Family Resource Network activities and supports have given me help in dealing with students with special needs. †	47.5 N = 552	75.0 N = 24
The Family Resource Network staff facilitates better delivery of non-instructional supports for students. †	50.2 N = 538	60.9 N = 23

† Calculated only for those who reported that they understood the purpose of the Family Resource Network.

‡ Because the Survey of Philadelphia Teachers was administered in four forms, some items were not administered to all respondents. Items, like this one, that were asked on only one form have dramatically smaller sample sizes.

It is probably premature to expect classroom teachers to be familiar with the Family Resource Network. The *Children Achieving* initiative was only two years old when this data was collected; most clusters had only been in operation for one full year and only nine clusters employed Family Resource Network coordinators during the 1996-97 school year. However, counselors, who are often identified as an essential cog in the operation of the school-level Family Resource Network, should have been introduced to the purpose of the Family Resource Network by the time of the survey. Table 1 indicates that, indeed, more than 75 percent of counselors reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "I understand the purpose of the Family Resource Network," a proportion that is significantly higher than the 43 percent of teachers agreeing with the same statement.[15]

- **School level student support staff did not consider themselves to be part of the Family Resource Network.**

Closer examination of the counselors', nurses' and school-community coordinators' opinions revealed that the qualitative interview evidence did not always parallel the survey data. The most noticeable discrepancy was the large majority of counselors who in the survey reported that they understood the purpose of the Family Resource Network, and the very small proportion of student support staff interviewed who

[15] X^2=66.56, p<.01.

expressed the philosophy outlined in the Family Resource Network design documents. For example, the Strategic Action Design (1995) and other publications describing the Family Resource Network identify counselors as a vital part of the Family Resource Network, but the 21 counselors interviewed from across the District often described the Family Resource Network as something external, not as a network of which they were part, a key point in the design of the Family Resource Network.

I have almost no contact with {the Family Resource Network}. (Counselor, May 1997)

I have no need to contact them {Family Resource Network} and we don't have one here... (Counselor, March 1997)

I personally never use {the Family Resource Network}. I have been a counselor for 22 years. Perhaps they are an asset to people who are new and don't know about the different resources. (Counselor, March 1997)

I have had very little contact {with the Family Resource Network} and don't know much {about it}. (Counselor, March 1997)

These comments seem to confirm an observation made by one central office staff member at a Board of Education meeting on the Family Resource Network (FRN) Work Plan. He said that school-level staff "...are waiting for the FRN staff to arrive. They haven't realized it's not someone coming down from 21st and the Parkway [the address of the main administration building] telling them how to do it. We are trying to get the word out that *they* are the FRN" (Field Notes, November 1996).

It is possible that the counselors' descriptions of the Family Resource Network as an external structure might reflect a semantic habit, a tendency to identify the Family Resource Network as centered in the Family Resource Network coordinator who is the coordinating staff member at the cluster level. In that case, their comments might not suggest anything significant about their perception of their own role in the Network. However, it is the general sense of the evaluation team that at this early stage of implementation, many counselors, nurses and school-community coordinators had as yet not grasped the structure of the Family Resource Network, at least not as widely as reported in the survey.

- **Most counselors, nurses and school-community coordinators did not report that their jobs were changing substantively.**

The evaluation team also suspected that student support professionals did not yet grasp the purpose of the Family Resource Network to the extent that they reported in our survey because most counselors, nurses and school-community coordinators we interviewed did not describe their roles as changing substantively. This is of particular concern because *Children Achieving* calls for a significant conceptual change in how student support staff perceive and conduct their jobs. Non-instructional staff did talk of hope for a more coordinated and more comprehensive service system, but few made the connection that this would entail a change in their own job descriptions. Only one of the 21 counselors interviewed mentioned the trade-off between coordinating services and providing services (in her case, counseling elementary school children): "I do this [create links with community agencies] and it cuts down on the time for counseling. While I'm on the phone trying to create these linkages, I could be taking a group" (Counselor, May 1997).

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The more typical response from school-level Family Resource Network personnel was to say that their duties had not changed at all, for example:

Has my role changed? I don't think so. My role is to help whether it's under Children Achieving *or whatever. The children will still have the same problems.* (Counselor, March 1997)

My role really hasn't changed {under the Family Resource Network}. (Counselor, April 1997)

{The move to the Family Resource Network} has not affected me in the least. There are always students with problems and I follow through. (Nurse, March 1997)

No, my role hasn't changed. I am an experienced counselor and I know my job. (Counselor, March 1997)

There's no difference {in my role}. (Counselor, April 1997)

My work with the nurse and the psychologist really haven't changed under Children Achieving. *We all perform the same functions we always did and we've always tried to work together as a team.* (Counselor, April 1997)

Nurses were generally more likely to say that the Family Resource Network had affected their jobs, either because they had been allocated a computer or because they were assigned to fewer schools (or in many cases to one school), improvements to which they responded enthusiastically. Some school-community coordinators and counselors told us that they had become attendance designees for their schools, a duty previously handled by home-school visitors. Neither nurses nor school-community coordinators reported substantive changes in their work due to the Family Resource Network or *Children Achieving*. Few seemed aware that their roles should be any different, and most seemed to be able to find something in the broad goals of student support in *Children Achieving* to conclude that they were already addressing its objectives.

- **Most counselors, nurses and school-community coordinators believed that they have additional, not altered, responsibilities.**

During the 1996-97 school year, changes that came as a result of the implementation of *Children Achieving*'s new vision of student support were experienced as additional responsibilities, not as altered roles by Family Resource Network school-level staff:

My role really hasn't changed. There's just more of the same. (School-community coordinator, March 1997)

My role hasn't changed. We just have new concerns like health insurance. That's the chief difference, but I still have special education concerns, funding concerns... (Counselor, April 1997)

I feel that {my role} has {changed}. In terms of providing guidance which is supposed to be my primary role—reaching students, parents and the community with the best support services I can provide—I do fulfill these areas. I did these before Children Achieving. *But now I am {also} responsible for other kinds of activities that are not in my jurisdiction.* (Counselor, March 1997)

Central office documents state, "We do not require, nor ask, that our committed teachers and care-givers 'do more.' What we request is that we learn to do things 'differently' and 'together,'" (Philadelphia Department of Public Health & School District of Philadelphia, 1997). However, many school-level Family Resource Network staff have thus far received a very different message. They seem to believe that *Children Achieving* requires not only their traditional responsibilities, but also additional work, some tasks they feel are not part of their job descriptions or others that are "more of the same."

- **Most counselors, nurses and school-community coordinators believed that the increased demands on them were a result of reduction in the number of supervisors.**

Many school-level Family Resource Network personnel told the members of the evaluation team that they felt the additional duties resulted from the reduction in the number of supervisory positions at the central office and cluster or regional level. It is true that many supervisors have lost their jobs or been demoted over the past few years. These cuts were attributable in part to the reorganization of student support services and to aggressive efforts to decentralize,[16] described earlier. But the loss of supervisory positions was also a result of budget reductions from other sources, especially the loss of Federal Title I funds, and to changes and budget cuts that occurred prior to *Children Achieving*. School-level Family Resource Network personnel, however, did not distinguish among these factors and attributed these changes in supervision—most of which they perceived as negative and burdensome—as a direct result of *Children Achieving*. Counselors and school-community coordinators told us:

There used to be a counseling department downtown and all counselors would meet together. Now we are pretty much on our own. (Counselor, April 1997)

I feel cut off now because I don't have a direct supervisor like I did when there were regions. I'm more independent and more isolated... The job has become more intense and isolating. I don't have time to come up for air. (Counselor, April 1997)

My job hasn't changed much... We have fewer meetings to go to. Before we had a director and area coordinators. Now we are under the principal's supervision. (School-community Coordinator, May 1997)

Now we have more responsibility. Home and School visitors used to do the attendance. Now, I have to do it because that position was eliminated. (School-community Coordinator, March 1997)

Nurses seem even more affected by the District's decentralization efforts. They complained that the "health hierarchy [had been] dismantled" (Nurse, May 12, 1997) and felt overburdened with additional responsibilities.

We used to have direct access to health assistants and numerous {nursing} supervisors. Now there are only a few supervisors and each takes care of a section of nurses. Now, nurses are more like individual practitioners and {the supervisors are so busy} many of the nurses call me before they would call the supervisors. I have more responsibilities on me and no more pay. (Nurse, March 1997)

{The nursing supervisor} has more than 40 nurses to supervise so she is not available. (Nurse, May 1997)

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16 For more information on decentralization in the School District, see Christman, 1998.

There is more responsibility on me {and other nurses} now because of cuts that have taken place above us. (Nurse, April 1997)

There used to be a doctor downtown who would review all the prescriptions and take care of problems, but this responsibility was transferred to the nurse at each site. (Nurse, April 1997)

I heard a rumor that there were going to be no nursing supervisors at all next year. There are only three for the whole city now. We are going to be left floundering on our own. (Nurse, May 1997)

*Before {*Children Achieving*}, I had other nurses to lean on.* (Nurse, April 1997)

- **Most counselors, nurses and school-community coordinators felt isolated and some feared that cuts in student support service positions will not end at the supervisory level.**

Interview comments from nurses, counselors and school-community coordinators suggest that in addition to feeling overburdened with responsibilities, many school-level Family Resource Network personnel felt isolated. Counselors said they were "on their own"; Nurses spoke of being "individual practitioners" and worried that they were going to be "left floundering on their own." There was also a sense among some student support professionals that the cuts would not end with the supervisors. A few counselors and nurses told us that the Family Resource Network philosophy made them feel that their jobs were not secure, and claimed that the Family Resource Network's emphasis on coordination did not allow them to capitalize on their training, ability and experience. For example, at a presentation at the 1996 Family Resource Network Summer Professional Development session conducted by the City Office of Family Centers, a counselor expressed concern about the partnerships she was expected to develop because she thought this approach would render her position obsolete. "I want to keep my job," she said. Other school level Family Resource Network staff said similar things in interviews.

The ultimate purpose of the Family Resource Network is to get rid of counselors altogether because there will just be a direct connection with outside agencies for services... There is a lot of dissatisfaction out there among the counselors. (Counselor, April 1997)

Now {what nurses are being asked to do} through the Family Resource Network, they could replace {nurses} with technicians... They have no idea what the nurse could be {if nurses were allowed to use their skills}. (Nurse, May 1997)

They are trying to diminish the role of counselor and it's a compromise for cost effectiveness. They are not serving children and they are misusing my capabilities. (Counselor, March 1997)

These worries were not shared by a large proportion of the student support professionals interviewed by the evaluation team, but there does appear to be a small but somewhat vocal number that see the Family Resource Network as a threat to their jobs. These attitudes have not engendered support for the Family Resource Network concept or for the general direction of student support services in the School District.

- **Some counselors, nurses and school-community coordinators expected that they, and the rest of the School District, would continue to be primary service providers.**

Another reason the evaluation team questioned the school staff's initial understanding of the *Children Achieving* student support concepts was the expectation of some that the School District would continue to provide many social services, despite the emphasis on service coordination. This distinction was difficult to elucidate because many counselors, nurses and school-community coordinators described their efforts to coordinate services, both within schools and with external groups. For example, as Table 1 illustrates, all 33 counselors[17] who responded to specific questions about the Family Resource Network said they worked as a team with other non-instructional staff to support students. This focus on teamwork and coordination was often reflected in interviews:

I have to be a mentor, a person that links where it's needed—like a tube of glue helping to glue this one to that one, and keeping them together. (Counselor, March 1997)

I coordinate services for the students, faculty and the community... I look at the social, academic and emotional problems of the students. After interviewing them, I bring in an outside agency or other school personnel to help the families cope and deal. (Counselor, April 1997)

Many non-instructional staff spoke of service coordination as one of their primary duties; however, many also saw coordination as a responsibility in addition to their normal duties. Therefore, it is not surprising that many school-level student support staff expect the School District to increase direct service provision, or at least, continue as a primary service provider. An excerpt from field notes taken at the 1997 Family Resource Network summer institute sheds some light on this claim:

*As introductions were being made one woman told our group that she "**was** a hygienist. But we just got cut. There were 15 of us and now there are only five. And they only kept them {the five} because they have seniority. I loved my job." I presume she was one of the hygienists whom central office staff had told us would be "cashed out" to help fund the placement of 13 Family Resource Network Coordinators in the clusters that don't already have them. The rest of the group, made up primarily of school counselors and parents, was sympathetic and, it seemed, confused. "Kids need that {dental} care so much," one woman said. "I thought that that was what the Family Resource Network was supposed to do."*

Another school-level Family Resource Network staff member said, "*Children Achieving* was supposed to put health centers in schools" (Field Notes, July 1997).

17 The Survey of Philadelphia Teachers was administered in four forms, and some items were not administered to all respondents. Items, like this one, that were asked on only one form have dramatically smaller sample sizes.

The Effect of Family Resource Network Coordinators

Finding: School-level student support staff in clusters having Family Resource Network coordinators expressed less anxiety about their jobs and fewer feelings of isolation than their counterparts in clusters without Family Resource Network coordinators. There was no evidence, however, that school-level student support staff in clusters having Family Resource Network coordinators were more likely to describe their work in a manner reflective of the *Children Achieving* vision than those in clusters without Family Resource Network coordinators.

Feelings of isolation and anxiety expressed by school-level Family Resource Network staff were less apparent in clusters having Family Resource Network coordinators. During the 1996-97 school year, nine of the District's 22 clusters had a Family Resource Network coordinator. The nine Family Resource Network Coordinators were each responsible for coordinating Family Resource Network activities within one cluster. Six coordinators were in their second year in this new role, and the three others were assigned to the second cohort of clusters in the summer of 1996. Family Resource Network coordinators were not assigned to the rest of the second cohort of clusters due to a shortage of funds. Although these circumstances were inequitable, they provided the evaluation team with a kind of natural experiment in which to compare the attitudes of school-level Family Resource Network staff by cluster—those having Family Resource Network Coordinators and those that did not.

Data from the survey conducted by the evaluation team in the spring of 1997 indicate that school-level staff working in clusters with Family Resource Network coordinators were significantly more likely to believe that they understood the Family Resource Network, to see its potential and to have witnessed some positive effects due to it.[18] Table 2 summarizes these results. Taking into account the questions about school level staff interpretation of the Family Resource Network described earlier in this paper, these statistics at least suggest that there is greater awareness of the Family Resource Network in clusters having Family Resource Network coordinators, and its impact is evident.

[18] Understand purpose of Family Resource Network, $X^2=27.48$, $p< .01$. Potential of Family Resource Network, $X^2=30.05$, $p< .01$. Positive effects of Family Resource Network, $X^2=40.78$, $p< .01$.

TABLE 2

Percent Teachers and Counselors Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing with Statements about the Purpose, Potential and Functions of the Family Resource Network, by Presence of Cluster FRN Coordinator

Survey Item		Teachers		Counselors	
		No FRNC	With FRNC	No FRNC	With FRNC
I understand the purpose of the Family Resource Network.	%	40.4	46.3	74.2	78.1
	n	2, 902	2,287	93	†64
I believe the Family Resource Network has the potential to benefit my students. †	%	91.0	93.4	79.4	93.9
	n	1,139	1,042	68	†49
I believe the Family Resource Network already has had positive effects in my school. †	%	56.9	63.3	37.9	64.0
	n	1,074	980	66	†50
[FRN members] work as a team to support the needs of my students.‡	%	70.2	68.9	sample too small	sample too small
	n	748	576		
FRN activities and objectives are coordinated with the objectives this school has set for itself. †	%	61.4	61.4	sample too small	sample too small
	n	264	246		

† Calculated only for those who reported that they understood the purpose of the FRN.

‡ Because the Survey of Philadelphia Teachers was administered in four forms, some items were not administered to all respondents. Items, like this one, that were asked on only one form have dramarically smaller sample sizes.

Similar results emerge when looking exclusively at counselors' responses to the survey. A large majority of counselors (75.6 percent) believed they understood the purpose of the Family Resource Network whether they worked in a cluster having an Family Resource Network coordinator or not, but their opinions on the potential and effects of the Family Resource Network differ. Counselors in clusters with Family Resource Network coordinators were statistically significantly more likely to believe in the potential of the Family Resource Network and to have witnessed some of its positive effects.[19]

These quantitative data are supported by data from the evaluation team's interviews. Many of the staff interviewed actually mentioned the Family Resource Network coordinators by name and described the support they offered.

{Name of the Family Resource Network Coordinator} is good at disseminating information and planning outstanding workshops about community resources. (Counselor, April 1997)

{Name of the cluster's Family Resource Network Coordinator} has given wonderful training sessions. He is an asset. (Nurse, April 1997)

We've had a lot of staff development with the FRN {Family Resource Network}. (Counselor, April 1997)

{Name of the cluster's Family Resource Network Coordinator} has brought the counselors, psychologists and school-community coordinators and nurses together to look at common concerns. It was very enlightening and informing. (Counselor, May 1997)

19 Potential of Family Resource Network, X^2=6.64, $p< .05$. Positive effects of Family Resource Network, X^2=10.83, $p< .01$.

{Name of the cluster's Family Resource Network Coordinator} has helped with resources for families, like getting kids {health} insurance... {and} has had in-services for the nurses. The staff development is much better, a great improvement. There is a new awareness of resources available. (Nurse, April 1997)

They provide staff development and training and let us know what they have available. We've called FRN to help us to help kids if we have exhausted our efforts. They would direct us and provide staff development... I feel they are a big resource. (Field Notes, May 1997)

The FRN {coordinator} does a good job keeping me informed of what is going on.
(School-community Coordinator, April 1997)

The creation of the FRN has made my job easier. (Field Notes, April 1997)

The evaluation team's interviews also provided evidence that having a cluster Family Resource Network coordinator can help reduce the isolation many student support professionals feel in their buildings.

A number of years ago, the School District took away counseling supervisors. FRN gives us a place to turn to if we have problems we can't solve or if we need help. (Counselor, March 1997)

Through Children Achieving, *I have more support.* (Counselor, April 1997)

Before {when the District was organized in regions} the school-community coordinators almost never met. Now we do occasionally because of the FRN {coordinator} and I really appreciate that.
(School-community Coordinator, April 1997)

Student support staff working in clusters with Family Resource Network coordinators seemed to feel less isolated and have less anxiety about their role than those in clusters without Family Resource Network coordinators. They appreciated the support and professional development provided by the Family Resource Network coordinators and were grateful for opportunities to network with their counterparts in other schools. The interview data, however, did not reveal any differences in how the two groups perceived the Family Resource Network. Student support staff working in clusters with Family Resource Network coordinators were no more likely to emphasize coordination or teamwork, to describe themselves as a part of the Family Resource Network, or to describe their roles as changing than those who were working in clusters without a Family Resource Network coordinator. Family Resource Network coordinators offered well-received support, but they did not push school-level staff to perform their jobs differently.

Professional Development for Student Support Staff

Finding: Professional development opportunities sponsored by the central office Family Resource Network have improved over the last two years. These activities were generally well received, but did not deeply engage school-level student support staff in the ambitious changes in student support services called for in the *Children Achieving* and Family Resource Network design documents.

In addition to employing Family Resource Network coordinators at the cluster level, another way that Family Resource Network leadership has promoted *Children Achieving*'s theory of student support was to sponsor professional development opportunities. Creating more opportunities for the professional development of non-instructional professional staff has been a priority of the Family Resource Network, at both the central office and cluster levels. Over the last two years, the evaluation team observed five professional development sessions conducted by the central office for cluster and school-level Family Resource Network personnel, including both the three-day 1996 and the four-day1997 Family Resource Network summer institutes.

The 1996 Family Resource Network summer institute was a three-day professional development session for counselors, school nurses, school-community coordinators, other student support professionals and parents. Up to three staff or parents from each school in the District attended, for a total of about 1,000 participants. Daily activities included cluster and school Family Resource Network team planning meetings and opportunities to learn about services available from city agencies and community groups via seminars and through a community fair. In the community, fair public service agencies and non-profits set up booths and handed out flyers to educate school staff about their services. More than 60 organizations were represented, including the Northwest Interfaith Movement, the CATCH Community Mental Health Centers, the Full Circle Theater, Community Family Centers, the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Good Shepherd Neighborhood House and Conflict Resolution Program, the Anti-Defamation League, the Philadelphia Black Women's Health Project, Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, Project ELECT, the Girl Scouts, and the National School and Community Corps, among others.

The response to the institute was generally positive. A few school-level FRN staff mentioned to evaluation team members that they had used the information they had received during the community fair in their work, and others generally appreciated the opportunity to learn about service coordination:

{The 1996 Family Resource Network Summer Institute} was worthwhile. It was letting the system know that working together helps makes connections. (School-community Coordinator, April 1997)

{The 1996 Family Resource Network Summer Institute} was interesting. They had good speakers. We were able to meet in cluster groups and work on a plan for our work. It helped our {School Family Resource Network} team focus. (Counselor, April 1997)

This positive attitude toward the Institute was also reflected in informal conversations with participants during the Institute. Many of the overwhelmingly female crowd expressed pride about being part of a lengthy professional development session designed just for them. Parents and school-community coordinators in particular appeared almost surprised that they were being treated as worthy of such attention and enjoyed being viewed as professionals. None of the ten or 15 participants we spoke to over the three days—most of whom had long histories in or with the School District of Philadelphia—had ever been involved in an activity like this before.

The evaluation team's assessment of the 1996 Family Resource Network Summer Institute was less positive than most School District employees who attended. The evaluation team noted that the institute was disconnected from the work of the instructional staff (who attended their summer Institute the prior week) and that little reference was made to other aspects of the *Children Achieving* reform initiative—to the standards, accountability and assessment systems, for example. One Family Resource Network Cluster coordinator reflected this concern, "We have to figure out a way to share this information with the instructional staff. It's the non-instructional staff with all the answers, but it's the teacher that might see [the problem] first" (Family Resource Network Coordinator, July 1996).

There was much rhetoric about the need for coordination but the Institute was too isolated from the work of student support professionals in schools and the time available for the Institute was too limited to make any lasting impact on the participants. The involvement of city agencies was impressive, but presentations by their representatives amounted primarily to reviews of changes in policy or catalogs of the services available to children and families. Participants found them to be informative, but they did not advance the goal of school-level collaboration in any meaningful way.

When participants did have the chance to meet in cluster and school teams, the challenges of developing coordination and team work became immediately apparent. Admittedly, the time devoted to this exercise was short: it constituted less than one-third of the Institute and occurred across the three days, not in one block of time when perhaps more work might have been accomplished. Still, the time available was not used effectively. Facilitators of these sessions seemed more concerned about process than the work that was required of the group and several times interrupted important conversations of school staff to deal with administrative issues. School staff, however, also did not seem to take their assignments seriously, forcing the emcee of the event to admonish them not to take breaks in the middle of sessions and note that there were breaks built into the schedule (Field Notes, July 1996).

The 1997 Summer Institute improved on the previous year's, and reflected the management team's desire to offer professional development opportunities that were not "categorical" (focused on a particular problem or population) but still provided "content to affect [school-level staff] jobs" (Field Notes, March 1997). In the two-day sessions observed by the evaluation team, the facilitators emphasized the connections between student support and student achievement. The sessions focused on such areas as attendance and behavioral health that were aligned to the four Family Resource Network goals, and allowed more in-depth engagement by participants. Still, the facilitation was not always effective and many participants did not seem to take the sessions seriously. And at no time was anyone heard to say that the job descriptions of the counselors, nurses and other student support professionals in the room would have to change.

Both the 1996 and 1997 Summer Institutes illustrate a dilemma: School-level student support staff need professional development that is specifically geared to their work and that also integrates the work of instructional staff. While student support professionals need techniques to support the social and behavioral development of students, and professional development for classroom teachers should focus on curriculum, instruction and assessment, the two groups should come together at some point. But time for professional development was scarce and what little time available was contested. In reference to holding professional development sessions specifically for non-instructional staff on a District-designated day for professional development, a Family Resource Network management team member said, "The principals say, 'Don't pull non-instructional staff out of the building because then we can't integrate them [into the school improvement planning process],' but we [Family Resource Network staff] can never get them out. They have no information" (Field Notes, March 1997).

This dilemma may become more pronounced as the School District advances the small learning communities effort. A school nurse described how the school staff that are unconnected to specific small learning communities are isolated from the instructional staff: "When the small learning communities meet, the specialists meet too, as their own small learning community: the nurse, reading specialist, science specialist, gym teacher, counselor, art teachers... We talk about ways we can pool our resources to help the children" (Nurse, April 1997).

There is indeed value in specialists meeting as a group, but how can the specialists become aware of the particular needs of a specific small learning community if they do not meet with these other colleagues? How can student support staff develop and integrate their professional expertise with the work of instructional staff? Effectively addressing these questions is essential in order to capitalize on the support for small learning communities that is apparent throughout the District. We describe this widespread support for small learning communities in more detail in the following section.

Finding: School staff in nearly every position were enthusiastic about the development of small learning communities—especially their supportive aspects.

Of all the *Children Achieving* elements school personnel were the most positive about small learning communities. Table 3 shows that more than 80 percent of teachers and more than 85 percent of counselors believed they understood the purpose of small learning communities. Approximately 90 percent of the teachers and counselors who reported that they understood the purpose of the small learning communities also believed that small learning communities have the potential to benefit students. Specifically, large majorities of both teachers and counselors felt that small learning communities would be supportive of both teachers and students. For example, more than three-quarters of both teachers and counselors agreed that small learning communities could renew faculty interest in improving instruction, and strengthen teachers' ability to support students. Additionally, over 70 percent of teachers and counselors agreed that small learning communities would help students meet the District's new content standards and a smaller majority felt that small learning communities would reduce the drop-out rate.

Interviews with more than 200 school staff and parents in 21 schools supports the survey findings about small learning communities. School personnel expressed some anxieties about small learning communities, such as the challenge of finding time for planning, potential divisiveness due to competition between small learning communities, and concern that small learning communities might become "another form of tracking" (Field Notes, January 1997). High school staff often mentioned the difficulty of developing rosters for small learning communities and conflicts between small learning community coordinators and department heads. Still, most staff connected to small learning communities were enthusiastic about their benefits or potential benefits, whether they worked in established or developing small learning communities. They emphasized the effects on school climate, as an evaluation team member observed at a middle school small learning community meeting:

TABLE 3

Percent Teachers and Counselors Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing with Statements about the Purpose, Potential and Functions of the Small Learning Communities

Survey Item	**% Teachers** Agree or Strongly Agree	**% Counselors** Agree or Strongly Agree
I understand the purpose of the small learning communities.	81.9 N = 5,262	85.8 N = 155
I believe the small learning communities has the potential to benefit my students.	89.2 N = 4,445	93.2 N = 132
Small learning communities can renew faculty interest improving instruction.	80.0 N = 1,396	75.8 N = 33
Participation in small learning communities will help students reach the new standards.	71.5 N =1,368	72.7 N = 33
Small learning communities can strengthen teachers' ability to support students.	78.2 N = 1,338	84.4 N = 32
Small learning communities will reduce drop-out rates.	55.3 N = 1,332	67.7 N = 31

{The small learning community faculty} briefly discussed the school's goals from last year, focusing on school climate. All the comments made were positive saying that the small learning communities were a "successful venture" and had particularly decreased the number of fist fights. The small learning community coordinator said she had solicited the opinions of students in their journals and most of them felt that the "small learning communities are working" and that they "get into less trouble."
(Field Notes, January 1997)

Some school staff members echoed these sentiments in interviews:

{Small learning communities} will have a positive impact on student achievement and will create an environment that students can grow and positively affect the school's climate. (Principal, April 1997)

{Small learning communities} make the school a calmer place. (Librarian, April 1997)

Even more, school personnel emphasized the association between the supportive functions of small learning communities—that is, the potential for closer relationships among teachers, parents and students—and the creation of school settings conducive to teacher collegiality and professionalism, as well as student achievement.

The small learning communities add to the sense of collegiality and they allow the teachers to get to know the kids better. Since we share the kids, teachers are more willing to help each other out and work on problems rather than just shutting the door. (Counselor, April 1997)

The goals of the small learning community are broader than just academic. We want to create a stimulating atmosphere that is not strictly academic that will support the kids' social development as well. (Teacher, May 1997)

When you know a student better you can get after the kid to do better. (Teacher, undated)

{In this small learning community} We're family. We have taught together... We do things socially. A kid can't cut because we talk with one another. It makes the kids more honest. (Teacher, April 1997)

With a comprehensive high school, it's so large that many children's problems went unnoticed or weren't dealt with in a timely way. Small learning communities allow {faculty} more contact {with students and parents}. (Small Learning Community Coordinator, April 1997)

Small learning communities allowed teachers and other school staff to see and express how entwined the connections between student support and student achievement are. These school staff experiences with small learning communities suggest that, when addressed simultaneously, student support and instruction often reinforce each other.

Student Supports Outside the School District

In addition to developing better coordinated student support services among School District staff, Family Resource Network personnel have also pursued coordination with support services outside the District. Schools and clusters have developed innumerable partnerships with various city organizations, from universities and hospitals, to businesses large and small and community groups of all types, including communities of faith, advocacy organizations, cultural and arts groups, and recreation centers. Activities associated with these partnerships ranged in scope from small one-time projects, such as acquiring a grant from a corporation to send school children on a field trip (Field Notes, May 1997); or as extensive as a long-term partnership, such as the development of health and wellness centers within a school (Field Notes, December 1996). While these partnerships are important aspects of *Children Achieving* and are essential to the development of the Family Resource Network, delving into their associations with schools and clusters was beyond the scope of this evaluation. It is important to acknowledge, however, that many partnerships have been developed or are being pursued.

In the following sections we focus on the more formal attempts that have been made by the School District to link with city agencies. Through the development of relationships with external groups, particularly some large city agencies and community organizations, and attempts to influence federal and state policy affecting the children of Philadelphia, Family Resource Network leadership has emphasized both advocacy for children and coordination. The following sections describes some of these efforts.

Finding: Family Resource Network Central staff were aware of and made several successful efforts to influence local and state policies affecting the children of Philadelphia.

Central office Family Resource Network staff activities included behind-the-scenes efforts to influence and, later, prepare for federal and state policies that affect poor children. Their efforts in 1996-97 centered mainly on welfare and health care reform. For example, the Family Resource Network Executive Director testified before the Commonwealth Department of Public Welfare, urging reconsideration of plans to impose time limits on welfare benefits of recipients enrolled in school and recommending additional education funding for the School District to accommodate school-age parents' mandated return to school. Family Resource Network central office staff participated in the School District's study group that analyzed the impact of the changes to the welfare laws that went into effect in March of 1997. In concert with a local advocacy group, Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, Family Resource Network staff made presentations on the shift in Federal support for poor families—from Aid to Families with Dependent Children to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families—to schools from every cluster. These sessions were well received by staff in the schools.

Family Resource Network central office staff made more extensive efforts to influence health care reform policy in the Commonwealth. As Pennsylvania was making the transition to a managed care environment called HealthChoices, Family Resource Network staff tried to develop an agreement with the four involved health maintenance organizations (HMOs) that would provide adequate health insurance benefits for poor children and would improve communication between the School District (particularly school nurses) and health care providers. Family Resource Network staff also tried to convince the HMOs to reimburse school districts for health screens, (such as the vision and hearing tests that school districts currently provide) but the HMOs claimed that the school districts were just shifting costs from one system to another. As one staff member who worked on the agreement said, "We don't want to cost shift. We want to have linkages and programs between kids and their care" (Field Notes, February 1997). Having some influence over the conversation was seen as a victory. Noting that the HMOs "weren't expecting us to think about HealthChoices policy," Family Resource Network staff celebrated the fact that they moved the HMOs from the idea that every school should have a health clinic, a winning argument that reflected their twin emphases on coordination instead of service provision and on increasing the efficiency of service delivery (Field Notes, February 1997). A final agreement with the Medicaid HMOs was not signed during the 1996-97 school year, but a sound working relationship with the group was established. Due to the efforts of the Family Resource Network leadership, the School District was recognized as a "vital link" to HealthChoices (Draft HealthChoices Collaboration Agreement, November 1997).

Finally: Leaders of external agencies generally responded positively to the District's restructuring of student support services, but were confused about the new role the School District is trying assume.

Family Resource Network central office staff also worked diligently in the 1996-97 school year to develop stronger and more collaborative relationships with other city agencies. One staff member described the efforts as follows:

What I am trying to do with the city agencies is to coordinate with them so each school does not have to individually broker with them. We are trying to create blanket policies so that a school won't have to spend 10 hours getting an after-school basketball program that already exists in 100 other schools. It doesn't make sense for them to spend time doing this with the major agencies. We're also trying to reduce the amount of paperwork, figure out who pays for utilities, the custodian {when the school is used after-hours}. (Field Notes, September 1996)

Another central office Family Resource Network staff member said that the Family Resource Network is "trying to partner with everyone" and in this way conveyed the complexity of the task. "We need to be involved but there are a whole lot of other entities" (Field Notes, June 1997).

Much of the Family Resource Network central office staff's work with external agencies is focused on creating a School District environment that is more hospitable to collaboration and a social service system that is more navigable for school and cluster personnel. These efforts include partnerships with: the Department of Public Health through Community Behavioral Health, the city's mental health agency, to pilot integrated, community-based, mental health services—"a seamless system of care"—in two clusters; the Truancy Court to hold students and parents accountable more effectively for student attendance by sharing data, streamlining procedures, and linking the Truancy Court with the clusters; the Office of Family Centers to double the number of Family Centers so one center will exist in every cluster; the Philadelphia Housing Authority and the Department of Recreation to share resources and provide coordinated after-school programs for children; the National School and Community Corps (NSCC) to create the largest school-based NSCC program in the U.S.; and the Free Library of Philadelphia to create a resource center/clearinghouse of information relevant to children and family well-being. In addition, the Superintendent is an active participant on the Mayor's Cabinet for Children and Families, and the Executive Director of the Family Resource Network is a respected member of the related working group Common Ground.

Collecting data from *all* these external sources was beyond the scope of this evaluation; yet, the evaluation team did talk to leaders of some of these groups about their impressions of the Family Resource Network, and more generally, about the quality of their relationships with the School District since the initiation of *Children Achieving*. These leaders were cautiously excited about the potential of the Family Resource Network and the District's other student support initiatives in the District, and generally supportive of the *Children Achieving* vision.

The response of most of the leaders of organizations with which the Family Resource Network had developed a relationship can be characterized by what one agency representative said, "[The Family Resource Network] gives us someone to relate to at the School District for the first time" (Field Notes, February, 1997). They were generally praiseworthy of the seriousness and commitment of the Family Resource Network leadership and supportive of the goals, describing the administrators' stance as "open to engagement" (Field Notes, February 1997). Some of the leaders were so in tune with the goals of the Family Resource Network that agency officials used the same language about the direction of student support services as Family Resource Network central office staff. One agency representative said, "The School District should not get into the business of providing... services. The city agencies should be doing that" (Field Notes, February 1997). The lines of communication are clearly open between the Family Resource Network and several important external partners.

Despite their support for the Family Resource Network in principle, these leaders of external organizations revealed a certain wariness. In interviews, they described improvements in their relationships with the District due to the restructuring of student support, but they did not believe that the changes had gone deeply enough. Some characterized the Family Resource Network as "just a reorganization of the same work they did in student support before" (Field Notes, February 1997) or as "a kind of potential not realized" (Field Notes, March 1997).

The external organization leaders offered several explanations for this uneasiness. Some leaders described the troubled histories of previous efforts at collaboration. They complained about the difficulty of communicating and collaborating with the School District bureaucracy. They noted issues of turf: one agency leader complained that the School District "has a tendency to think they 'own' the kids" (Field Notes, February 1997).

The District's difficulty in defining its new role was another reason offered by external agency representatives to explain their uncertain feelings about the District's restructuring of student support. The external agency leaders struggled over what it will mean for the School District to "get out of the business of delivering services." When asked about the new role of student support professionals, one external organization leader told us:

'Advocates and linkers...' It gets fuzzy. Both of those words are used frequently by the School District. But the meaning of those words and how those are to be... realized in a mission statement or by practice guidelines is unknown, and really, I would say that each {School District} staff member makes it up as they go along. There really isn't a governing piece on what those functions might be.
(Field Notes, February 1997)

Another representative noted the inherent contradictions in involvement in service delivery, but not providing services.

This is not unique {to the School District of Philadelphia}. This is not easy. They are not in the health care business {for example} so there is no reason that they should be the leadership in the city in terms of figuring this out. On the other hand, they have all these resources and they have tremendously needy kids, so it is a relationship that needs to be figured out as soon as possible... In trying to clarify for themselves that they are not {service} providers, it's hard for them to shape the other role with clear boundaries.
(Field Notes, February 1997)

The leaders of the external agencies, wanted the School District to place more emphasis on shaping this "other role." However, they detected inconsistency among the District's different departments responsible for student support roles and saw a need for better alignment between departments.

A huge system is trying to clarify a role that not many people have clear. And this other role... slips out of your fingers as you talk about it... Different elements of the School District define that piece in different ways. (Field Notes, February 1997)

Role definition was not a matter of concern limited to external groups, it affected District personnel as well. Central office Family Resource Network personnel also struggled to define this new role and felt a tension between service coordination and advocacy.

{Family Resource Network management team member} talked about the distinction made between being a city agency and an advocacy group. While acknowledging that some of the {School District's} role is advocacy, {Family Resource Network management team member} knows that many organizations feel that "we don't do enough." Some of the criticism is "legitimate" but {Family Resource Network management team member} feels the Family Resource Network's lack of action in some circumstances has to do with playing a dual role: of the fiscal minded city agency and of the service-oriented advocacy group. (Field Notes, June 1997)

Another central office Family Resource Network staff member anguished over what she saw as the School District's neglect of opportunities to serve children. This advisor/specialist understood the importance of financial responsibility, but lamented that it was not always possible to serve as an advocate, "I'm more of an advocate at heart. I see myself as an advocate for children. But I get these messages from my bosses and others that seem to fly in the face of what I set out to do" (Field Notes, February 1997).

The advisor/specialist was not naive about the challenges faced by the District in defining a new advocacy role for the Family Resource Network and other student support initiatives and in leading service coordination efforts in the city, while still maintaining fiscal responsibility. "We're [the School District] struggling to stay within our budget and do education. [Advocacy organizations], their mission is easier to stay within."

Defining the Role of the School District: An Illustration

The struggle over defining the role of the School District, particularly the role of central office staff members, was not limited to the Family Resource Network and its external partners. It is also illustrated by the School District's experience with the Philadelphia School Readiness Project.

The *Children Achieving* Task Force on School Readiness made recommendations on improving Philadelphia children's lives prior to their entry into the public schools. Chief among these recommendations was the creation of the Philadelphia School Readiness Project, a temporary organization that would lay the foundation for a coordinated, comprehensive citywide system of supports for children. This entity, the "School Readiness" or "Children and Families" Authority, would have the primary responsibility for helping to prepare Philadelphia children for school. Superintendent David Hornbeck described his vision of the Authority:

I proposed a Children and Family Authority, wanted a system for children conception to age five that had Children Achieving *characteristics. I wanted to set standards, pull people together across fields, and create a new system...Create a new governance structure that included heads of major systems plus community types.* (Field Notes, April 1997)

The Philadelphia School Readiness Project began its work in 1995. Its ambitious goals included creating a plan for the Authority, designing a data tracking system for children born in the city, and developing indicators of school readiness. They made inroads in these areas, but were hampered by the city's strained fiscal environment and the School District's ambivalence. Despite Superintendent Hornbeck's strong backing, representatives of the Philadelphia School Readiness Project never felt they received support from their counterpart in the School District, the Office of Early Childhood Education.

We've never been able to get information on what the Early Childhood Office is doing. Really, its like pulling teeth... That was what I got as their attitude: "Tell us the information you want but don't ask us to work ***with*** *you."* (Field Notes, December 1996)

The relationship between the Philadelphia School Readiness Project and the District's Office of Early Childhood Education was strained. Some of the strain seemed attributable to differing views within the School District about who should manage early childhood services. A representative of the Office of Early Childhood Education, which administers Head Start programs, Parent-Cooperative Nurseries and Comprehensive Day Care programs, disagreed with the Superintendent's initial view that the task of getting children ready for school should be the responsibility of a city entity other than the School District:

From the beginning, if I thought that we {the School District} can get out of the business of providing {early childhood} services and then we take the responsibility from kindergarten on, then I would work on it. But, as a city, we don't know how to do that yet. I've looked at other areas where they have developed an early childhood authority—South Carolina, Virginia, Seattle—they have made attempts to do that but they run into all the obstacles: the programs have different funding streams etc. {and} people still believe that we {School District of Philadelphia} run the best programs... It would be a shame to dismantle them. (Field Notes, December 1996)

This attitude led one Philadelphia School Readiness Project representative to observe, "You've got David Hornbeck saying one thing, and everyone else in the School District doing something else" (Field Notes, December 1996).

The Philadelphia School Readiness Project finally recommended a drastically scaled down version of the Children and Families Authority. Superintendent Hornbeck later admitted that the School District had been ambivalent about the development of the Authority:

The whole pre-school issue was supposed to be a major focus... {But the idea of a Children and Families Authority}, all of that proved to be more than people could conceive... My energy simply ran out on this issue. It was one fight too many... Head Start people were nervous about my ideas. I was offering to consider giving up 30 to 40 million dollars of programs and putting it into a new entity, and I began to fear that we would cobble together a weak compromise and give up good programs...
(Field Notes, April 1997)

There are probably multiple reasons why the partnership between the School District and the Philadelphia School Readiness Project failed to result in a Children and Families Authority, not the least of which was a stingy municipal fiscal environment. Resources were not the only issue however. The evaluation team suggests that a primary concern was the District's struggle to understand and define its new role. School District employees, including the Superintendent, believed in the value of coordination but not at the cost of good programs, which they feared would be dismantled if handed over to the Authority. While some would surmise that this was simply an issue of turf, the evaluation team suggests that the failure is more complicated than a simple reluctance to relinquish control of programs and resources. Employees of the District and other agencies, with varying degrees of commitment, were working to provide better services for children and families; they were engaged in the process of shaping a new system of support services. But understanding how the various "dancing partners" should maneuver was extremely challenging and raised problematic questions: For example, who should provide early childhood education services? How should those services be linked to maternal and child health programs, home visiting, immunization campaigns, early intervention services and pre-natal care? Similar questions concerning management and responsibility could be raised about many other types of services for children and families. As one central office staff member noted, "We all agreed that the kids should have the services, we just didn't agree on how" (Field Notes, December 1996).

CONCLUSIONS *and* RECOMMENDATIONS

Defining the School District of Philadelphia's new student support role, as envisioned in the *Children Achieving* reform initiative, has been a major challenge for everyone in the system. The evaluation team observed an initial tendency to define the School District's role as either service provision or service coordination. But as District personnel realized that neither of these extremes was tenable, they struggled to understand which functions and services should remain or become a School District responsibility or the responsibility of other city or community agencies. The complexity of the School District itself raised difficult questions about who within the District should be responsible for particular programs and services, thus creating confusion among district employees about their roles within the District, and for some, a determined inflexibility about change, or a narrow devotion to managerial efficiency.

Determining the degree to which the District is capable of decentralizing operations has been a major stumbling block for the system. This was well illustrated in the travails of the Family Resource Network as it attempted to devolve authority for student support programs and special education to the school and cluster levels. Critical questions arise, even assuming the appropriateness of the *Children Achieving* principle of managing programs as close as possible to the student. How quickly can programs and services be transferred, either elsewhere within the School District or to external agencies? Do these offices and agencies have the capacity to provide such services? Do the services or appropriate providers currently exist? Is it irresponsible to transfer responsibilities to a school or cluster when the District has insufficient financial resources to provide the necessary support, such as professional development? Who should be responsible for managing programs for students with specific needs? Can student support services be provided in a way that neither marginalizes these students nor overwhelms classroom teachers who are already adapting to a new standards, assessment and accountability system?

The evaluation team believes that sensible answers to these questions will emerge as the School District focuses more closely on its dual functions of student support and instruction. The Comprehensive Support Process provides such an opportunity. The Comprehensive Support Process is benefiting from greater attention and wider participation this year than it did in the 1996-97 school year. As one of the Superintendent's 1998 Cabinet goals, it is among the District's top priorities. The evaluation team commends and supports the District's efforts to emphasize and investigate more deeply the connection between student supports and instruction, as required by the Comprehensive Support Process. The District is cautioned, however, against separating the administration of these two complex and necessarily interrelated functions. Separating the administration of support and instruction may promote efficient management, but makes recombining these functions more difficult at the classroom level. It is necessary to encourage the connection between professionals traditionally geared toward either student support or instruction, such as the involvement of several administrative departments in the enhanced 1997-98 version of the Comprehensive Support Process.

As the implementation of these new student support structures continues, improved efforts to communicate and support changes in the schools are necessary to help redefine the roles of school staff. The District has had limited success thus far in educating school-based student support professionals about the new role expected of them. Our qualitative research illustrated how school personnel have not yet fully grasped the theory of student support embedded in *Children Achieving*, even as large proportions reported that they understood it and were incorporating it into their own work. Some of the discrepancies between what school-level student support staff reported that they understood and what they actually did is probably developmental. In the early stage of implementation that this report describes, they had not had ample time to incorporate the new ideas about student support into their own work. As implementation continues, however, District leadership must work to more effectively communicate the vision of student support, cognizant that many student support professionals feel they already understand it, when other signs suggest that they do not.

More emphasis must also be placed on the role of classroom teachers in this area: few teachers at the end of the 1996-97 school year were aware that they were expected to play a more active role in accommodating students with complex social and educational needs. When a large majority of teachers say that the social and personal problems facing students in their classes is one of the biggest obstacles they face in helping their students and even more feel that their success or failure in teaching students is due primarily to factors beyond their control rather than to their own efforts and ability, ensuring that adequate supports for students are provided and informing teachers of their own role in that process is essential.

District leadership seems, perhaps understandably, reluctant to convey this message clearly. The District is simultaneously pursuing other reforms that require dramatic change in the work of teachers and other District employees, which renders student support a lower priority. The evaluation team detected a sense among employees across the District that teachers are being asked to do so much in the form of standards, assessment and accountability that little more can be required without exacerbating teachers' feelings of being beleaguered, and in some cases, besieged.[20]

These problems are intensified by the limited resources available to underwrite changes in student support. The School District of Philadelphia has projected a budget deficit for 1998-99 of more than over $100 million (this would include no major new outlays but just maintain current operations). Expecting teachers to change their practice to provide more in-classroom student support without the necessary time, training and additional staff may be unreasonable. The evaluation team continues to support the School District's efforts to obtain adequate funding for Philadelphia's public school children.

The Philadelphia School District fully implemented one promising support strategy in the 1997-98 school year by assigning Family Resource Network coordinators to the balance of the District's 22 clusters. Survey as well as interview data suggest that the Family Resource Network coordinators have contributed to stronger feelings of security among school-based student support professionals and to greater understanding among instructional staff of the student support concepts proposed in the *Children Achieving* initiative. The evaluation team encourages the Family Resource Network coordinators to increase their efforts to support the nurses, counselors, school-community coordinators and psychologists in their schools, providing them a model for school-level student support that deflates the fear and complacency that too often strands student support professionals in traditional roles. The Family Resource Network must also continue its efforts to decrease the number of traditional responsibilities which occupy student support professionals. If counselors continue to have primary responsibility for administrative issues like special education paperwork, rostering, credit accumulation and attendance, and nurses continue to conduct myriad health screens, little headway will be made in transforming their responsibilities to coordination and advocacy.

The evaluation team remains intensely interested in the emerging shape of student support services in the School District of Philadelphia. During the 1997-98 school year, the evaluation team will continue to study the progress of the Family Resource Network and the development of small learning communities by interviewing central office, school and cluster level staff. The evaluation team will follow the implementation of the Comprehensive Support Process by including in schools identified as pilot sites

[20] See Simon, forthcoming and Luhm, Foley & Coorcoran, forthcoming for more information on the feelings of classroom teachers about the *Children Achieving* reform initiative.

for this initiative in the sample and observing professional development sessions conducted as part of the process. The evaluation team hopes to observe classroom teachers who have been trained in the rudiments of comprehensive support and to follow the work of several Comprehensive Support Process school teams. The evaluation team will also increase its attention to special education to understand the enormous changes that have occurred in the system and their effect on school personnel and students by adding interviews and focus groups to be conducted with students in four high schools.

The evaluation of student support and instruction in 1997-98 will address the following questions:

- How do small learning communities contribute to improved understanding of the connection between student support and instruction? How are student support professionals integrated into the work of small learning communities? How do small learning communities communicate their needs for student support services to school, cluster and central office specialists?
- What strategies—including professional development and staff redeployment—does the Family Resource Network use to promote District-wide adoption of the *Children Achieving* student support concepts? How effective have these strategies been? How are school-level staff responding to these strategies?
- How is the Comprehensive Support Process being presented to school-level staff and how is it being implemented in schools? What strategies is the central office employing to promote the Comprehensive Support Process and how are school-level personnel and students responding? How is Comprehensive Support Process connected to small learning communities?
- What are the major changes occurring in special education, especially changes funding, management, and referral? What was the impetus for these changes and how are District personnel, parents and students responding?

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ABOUT *the* CHILDREN ACHIEVING CHALLENGE

Many innovative school reform plans have foundered for lack of resources. In February 1995, shortly after the School Board adopted Children Achieving, The Annenberg Foundation designated Philadelphia as one of a small number of American cities to receive a five-year, $50 million Annenberg Challenge grant to improve public education.

Among the conditions for receiving the grant was a requirement to produce two matching dollars (i.e., $100 million over five years) for each one received from the Annenberg Foundation, and to create an independent management structure to provide program, fiscal and evaluation oversight of the grant. To assist in meeting both these conditions, the District turned to Greater Philadelphia First, an association of chief executives from the region's largest companies, to help raise the matching dollars and to provide the oversight required by The Annenberg Foundation. A staff was hired, and the Children Achieving Challenge came into being.

For the Challenge staff, the initial question was how to harness the, at times, fragmented efforts of various organizations that work with the School District to improve schools. Such organizations usually focus on specific projects but often have been unable to do much to improve the school system as a whole. For this reason, Challenge staff have served as catalysts, conveners and coordinators in a massive collaboration between internal and external partners. As a result, the Challenge has helped bring the School District together with all of its potential partners in a collective focus and a new way of working that can sustain itself long after the Challenge is gone.

Greater Philadelphia First houses the Challenge and provides oversight to it through the GPF Partnership for Reform. In addition to its focus on education, GPF provides leadership on issues important to the economic development and quality of life of the community.

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A WORD *of* THANKS

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