



**HARVARD FAMILY
RESEARCH PROJECT**

THE EVALUATION EXCHANGE:

Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child and Family Services

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Free Quarterly Newsletter

From The Director's Desk

Heather B. Weiss
Director, HFRP

In this issue, we return to a topic that was featured in one of our earliest issues of the *Evaluation Exchange* – the evaluation of school-linked services. School-linked services are emerging as a promising approach to address the increasingly complex problems facing children and families. Situated in a natural community locus, the school, these programs share a holistic, ecological view of the child and attempt to operationalize this philosophy by linking a wide array of preventive services for children and their families.

We know, however, that our under-

standing of these programs is far from complete. We do not yet understand which school-linked service interventions work and which do not. We know that these programs must be accountable, but defining to whom and for what they are to be accountable is difficult. We know that these programs have substantial governance implications but are unsure as to whether new collaborative arrangements can work. Finally, we seek to expand these interventions if they prove successful but are unsure about the conditions necessary to ensure long-term viability.

As practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and evaluators of school-linked services, we have our work cut out for us. In this issue, we carry on the dialogue about school-linked services and offer a variety of perspectives. In our lead article, we discuss some of the considerations and best practices related to evaluating school-linked services, based on the insights of nine evaluators of school-linked services programs. Our two "Promising Practices" articles move us from the practice of evaluation to the practicality of evaluation. Mary Wagner and Shari Golan, evaluators of the California Healthy Start Initiative, write about their efforts to increase the use of evaluative information at local sites. Alfredo Tijerina, a Project Coordinator for the Houston-based School of the Future, discusses how he has found evaluative information useful in his work. In our "Questions and Answers" section, we speak with Cheryl Mitchell about Vermont's efforts to integrate educational and social services at the state and local levels. Two evaluations are featured in our "Evaluations to Watch" section. The first is the evaluation of the multi-site New Jersey

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School-Based Youth Services Program being conducted by the Academy for Educational Development. The second is an evaluation of the Gardner Extended Services School in Boston that will be conducted by evaluators at Boston College. The "Beyond Basic Training" section highlights two forthcoming training programs. Our "New and Noteworthy" and "Electronic Mailbox" sections provide current information on publications and Internet sites that can help inform our practice. Finally, in our "Spotlight" section Richard Brandon and Andrew Gordon describe how they are evaluating the effectiveness of communications strategies aimed at strengthening the linkage between public opinion and public policy. HFRP researcher Diane Schilder discusses HFRP's research on results-based accountability efforts and Karen Horsch examines research results in preparing teachers in family involvement.

In closing, we would like to thank the many people who contributed to this issue. Their insights and experiences have increased our understanding of the range and complexity of issues facing evaluators today, and we hope that our readers will find the same. ♦

HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT PUBLICATION

HFRP announces the publication of its new *Resource Guide for Family-Centered Child Care*. This volume offers ideas and resources for implementing family support principles in child care, and provides practitioners with ideas and practical activities. It also features an annotated bibliography of current publications and training materials that child care providers can use to improve their efforts to support families. The Resource Guide is divided into five sections: (1) implementing family support principles and child care, (2) training programs and materials, (3) parenting materials, (4) self-assessment tools, and (5) resources for further exploration. You may request copies by contacting the HFRP publications department at 38 Concord Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138, Tel: (617) 496-4304, Fax: (617) 495-8594, e-mail: hfrp@hugse1.harvard.edu \$4.50 per copy, plus \$2.45 for shipping and handling.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

Evaluating School-Linked Services: Considerations and Best Practices

Increasingly, the traditional organizational and political boundaries between education and social services are giving way to more integrated approaches that help children and their families. School-linked services are one program approach that seeks to address concerns about fragmented and duplicative services by offering a single point of entry – the school site. These efforts take many forms, and the goals of such programs are numerous. Most display a holistic approach to children; joint planning; shared service delivery; and collaboration and/or coordination.

Determining how school-linked services programs work, what their impact is, and whether they should be expanded, however, is difficult. We asked nine evaluators of a variety of school-linked services programs to identify some considerations and best practices related to evaluating outcomes, sustainability, and collaboration. We also asked them to provide some insights into evaluation design and data collection methods. Following is a summary of their responses:

Evaluating Outcomes

In this era of increased scrutiny of and calls for accountability in public programs, demonstrating the outcomes of school-linked services initiatives is vital.

Help to elucidate complex relationships and processes by using a theory of change approach.

A theory of change approach requires programs to specify clearly their intended activities and the expected short- and longer-term outcomes of these activities. This approach is one way of beginning to clarify the "black box" of integrated social interventions. It enables evaluators and stakeholders to relate long-, intermediate-, and short-term goals with activities and processes and helps to clarify the linkages among them. A theory of change approach is best employed early in the

process – ideally in the planning stage of the intervention. Evaluators employing such an approach must be willing to play the role of facilitator to articulate the program's theory of change.

Examine a variety of long-term outcomes.

Evaluators of school-linked services programs must study a range of long-term outcomes to obtain a true picture of the impact of programs. Decisions about which outcomes to examine must be informed by the services and activities that programs actually provide as well as by consideration of the outcomes that stakeholders view as credible. In most cases, these include educational as well as social service results. Educational outcomes are critical to policymakers, school leaders, and parents but are often difficult to change. Consequently, evaluators are examining test scores, drop-out rates, student behavior, and attendance and completion rates. They are also assessing important social service outcomes such as substance abuse, violence and sexual behavior, health status, and social skills.

Include credible intermediate outcomes and process measures.

Most desired changes in social and educational well-being will take many years to achieve. Thus, evaluators point out the importance of identifying and measuring important shorter-term outcomes and processes. Evaluators of the Gardner Extended Services School (Boston, MA) note that other indicators which are or could be related to school success should also be used when examining education outcomes. These might include children's beliefs about the relationship of education to jobs, and school-related attitudes of parents, teachers, and community agency personnel. Evaluators of the Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Center Program have found that by moving from long-term social indicators to more

proximal classroom indicators, they were able to relieve some of the demands on the program to demonstrate quickly reduction in drop-out and substance abuse rates and enhanced school attendance and achievement.

Identify and understand the context for outcomes.

Given the newness of multi-service initiatives such as those linked with schools, it is important that evaluators provide information that helps stakeholders understand the context for outcomes. Findings on outcomes should be carefully framed within a description of the program's actual operating context (including fiscal and philosophical support) and should take into account some measure of the actual level of services each participant received. Evaluators of the School of the Future (Texas) point out that, in some cases, indicators may get worse before they get better. For example, a successful program which retains students with the lowest academic standing in school may result in lower test scores school-wide, at least in the short term.

Evaluating Collaboration

By their nature, school-linked services require collaboration among the different entities providing services and between these entities and the school. While collaboration among different entities serving children and families is one of the most important factors in the success of integrating social and educational services (and is often a goal of these programs), it is also one of the most difficult to evaluate.

Examine the structure, nature, and image of collaboration.

The structure of collaboration has to do with contractual arrangements and financing of service provision. The evaluators are examining the following: what services are provided, by whom, and when; the extent to which program staff and services are housed in school facilities; the availability of other school resources (personnel, expertise, in-kind support) for programs; the level of integration of school and program budgets; and the extent to which program and school staff members engage in collaborative strategic planning.

An assessment of the nature of collaboration entails an examination of how smoothly the different entities work together and to what extent cultures, goals, and interests are congruent. To assess this, some evaluators are examining the extent to which program staff participate in school-related committees, activities, and functions; school staff participate in program committees, activities, and functions; and program services are incorporated into the school's planned response to particular school problems. Through surveys and interviews, evaluators can also learn about how far school personnel are knowledgeable about and supportive of the school-linked programs.

Finally, surveys of program beneficiaries (students and parents) as well as other important stakeholders can help evaluators glean information about whether the program and its operation are viewed positively or negatively. Such information can also help evaluators to determine the extent to which school-linked services might be sustainable.

Investigate parent and family involvement as an additional aspect of collaboration.

While collaboration is traditionally conceived as the relationship among formal agencies, parent and family involvement in the school-linked services effort is also an important component of collaboration. Evaluators of the Iowa School-Based Youth Services Program are evaluating family and parent collaboration via staff assessments which consider communication systems and opportunities for families to be involved in the programs offered. Communication systems include, among other things, letters, phone contacts, home visits, newsletters, and in-school conferences. Opportunities for family involvement include individual program planning, parent/family counseling, decision-making committee participation, and classes for parents.

Use evaluation of collaboration for self-assessment and improvement.

The process of assessing the health of a collaboration can itself be useful to sites. As the evaluators of Missouri Caring Communities Initiative have found, if all partners to a collaboration are invited to complete an assessment instrument, points of agreement and disagreement can be fed

back to the site, and important issues can be determined. When gathered across sites, such data can be used to compare collaborative characteristics with outcomes. At a given site, members of the collaborative can see, for example, to what extent they agree on their biggest barriers and their greatest strengths.

Evaluating Sustainability

School-linked services often begin as experimental programs, so their duration beyond initial funding and their possible replication and scale-up are important evaluation considerations.

Examine the institutional and individual relationships.

The evaluators note that an examination of the multiple and reciprocal relationships at a number of different levels is an important aspect of evaluating the sustainability of these programs. This includes the extent and degree of engagement by parents, community agencies, organizations, churches, and other entities as well as the extent and kinds of formal support offered by local educational leaders. The evaluator of the Delaware Academy Student Health Program (New York) notes that ongoing support of constituencies is likely to depend on at least four factors: the satisfaction of beneficiaries that their own needs are being met; the belief of beneficiaries that the program is "making a difference"; the degree of controversy related to the program; and the confidence of stakeholders that the use of scarce resources for this purpose is justified relative to other potential uses. These factors can be evaluated through interview and survey data and by analysis of utilization data.

Consider the stability and adequacy of funding sources.

Evaluation of financial sustainability requires the identification of all funding sources and their relative importance and an assessment of long-term potential. It is also important to examine how programs have applied or acted on their knowledge about potential funding sources.

Examine the sustainability of outcomes as well.

While program durability is an important aspect for evaluation, evaluators also

suggest that evaluation examine the sustainability of the outcomes achieved. The evaluators of the New Jersey School-Based Youth Services Program recommend that the durability of outcomes be examined at two levels. To evaluate the sustainability of student outcomes, evaluators should look at the persistence of positive outcomes or reduction of negative outcomes over time, ideally following students through adolescence. They should also examine evidence of developmental outcomes, identifying strengths and assets that the student can both apply broadly and use to address other issues in his or her life. At the school and community level, evaluators should look at the establishment and maintenance of a stable infrastructure of peer and adult support for positive youth development and the institutionalization of a coherent and well-integrated system of linked services to address a range of youth needs.

Consider the extent to which institutions become effective “learning organizations.”

Evaluators of the Chicago Full Service Schools Initiative have found that the extent to which the program is becoming an effective “learning organization” is also an important facet of sustainability. The evaluators have begun to track the three sites included in the evaluation to assess how effectively the three planning groups “learn to learn,” that is, learn to conserve, analyze, and disseminate information. This involves striking a balance among planners between conceptual conversation and action-oriented discussion.

Evaluation Design

The nine evaluators provided a variety of insights on evaluation design:

Use a Participatory Approach.

Evaluators of school-linked services programs note that a participatory approach to the evaluation of these programs is important. The incorporation of multiple perspectives ensures the development of instruments and strategies sensitive to and reflective of stakeholder understandings of the programs and brings their perspectives to understanding and using the data collected.

Begin early.

Evaluators suggest that the evaluative endeavor should begin as early as possible. This allows time to build trust, understanding, and buy-in among participants as well as to understand basic parameters for on-site research (including potential constraints on data collection methods).

Incorporate multiple methods.

Evaluators note that the evaluation design for school-linked services programs should employ both quantitative and qualitative methods. These methods can reinforce and inform one another. For example, intensive interviews, focus groups, and observations can be used to develop questions for survey instruments. Findings from surveys and reviews of program data can be illuminated through individual interview and case study data. Information from multiple methods additionally helps evaluators to communicate findings to a wide variety of audiences.

Maintain an ongoing information exchange.

Evaluation should be seen as part of organizational learning – as integral to program design, implementation, and success. Therefore, evaluators of school-linked services programs suggest that adequate feedback loops be established to ensure timely reporting of findings to program staff and other stakeholders. This helps to develop buy-in into the evaluation while at the same time assuring that the evaluators have obtained an accurate picture of reality.

Develop local evaluation capacity.

Evaluators also note that, to the extent possible, evaluators should try to develop the capacity of program staff and others to conduct ongoing evaluative activity. The evaluators of the California Healthy Start School-linked Services Initiative used “evaluation coaches,” who were trained in the data needs of the statewide evaluation and were given specific questions to examine at their sites. Coaches, the evaluators found, were key to translating local evaluation reports provided by the statewide evaluator into possible implications for program development. The coaches increased the flexibility and relevance of large statewide

evaluation to individual communities and helped communities begin to use systematically-collected information to support their program improvement and sustainability efforts. ♦

***Karen Horsch
Research Specialist, HFRP***

A longer version of this paper will be available from HFRP in Fall 1997. Please contact HFRP's publications office at (617) 496-4304 for more information.

The Evaluators

Mary Geisz, Cornell University:
Evaluated the Delaware Academy Student Health Program.

Robert Illback, R.E.A.C.H.: Evaluated the Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Center Program.

Scott Keir, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health: Evaluated the School of the Future Initiative.

George Madaus and Mary Walsh, Boston College School of Education:
Are evaluating the Gardner Extended Services School.

Ray Morley and James Veale, State of Iowa, Department of Education: Are evaluating the Iowa School-Based Youth Services Program.

Susan Philliber, Philliber Research Associates: Is evaluating the Missouri Caring Communities Initiative.

Mary Wagner and Shari Golan, SRI International: Evaluated the California Healthy Start School-Linked Services Initiative.

Constancia Warren and Anita Baker, the Academy for Educational Development: Are evaluating the New Jersey School-Based Youth Services Program.

Sam Whalen, The Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University: Is evaluating the Chicago Full Service Schools Initiative.

The Harvard Family Research Project wishes to thank all who shared their insights with us.

Interview with Cheryl Mitchell

Cheryl Mitchell is Deputy Secretary for Vermont's Agency of Human Services. We asked Ms. Mitchell to describe some of Vermont's efforts to integrate education and social services at the state and local levels, as well as some of the lessons learned from this effort.

(1) Could you please describe Vermont's goals and strategies for integrating education and social services?

Our primary goal is to improve outcomes for children and families in the state of Vermont. We have developed a framework of outcome areas and indicators associated with each. Within this framework, we are trying to foster a "streamlining of the system." In addition, we are promoting the idea that we must focus on children and families in order to improve the community climate for people of all ages in Vermont. We are working toward meeting these goals through four interlocking strategies at the state and local levels.

• Community service delivery model

At the local level, we are employing a community service delivery model. Vermont has no county governments; instead, there are 12 service areas as well as 261 school districts and 60 supervisory unions. Each union puts together its own set of services and mechanisms which reach out to children and families. The actual plans of service are developed at the community level. An integral part of this process includes planning groups composed of parents, school personnel, social service workers, and health care providers, all of whom work with a state liaison to put together a plan that goes to the state for approval. The planning groups are responsible for a variety of school-linked services such as parenting classes, drop-in recreational programs, and early literacy programs.

• Links with the health care community

Another component of school-linked services is schools' links with the health care community, where physicians and physician's assistants spend time in

schools seeing children. This has been particularly helpful in Vermont's rural communities. Additionally, the Department of Health has entered into contracts with supervisory unions and enrolled children in health care coverage. Most of these school-linked programs are using Medicaid connection dollars, and the state has central oversight responsibilities and sets specific standards.

• Team for children and families

At the state level, there is a team for children and families, whose members include parents, community representatives, higher education representatives, and program managers from state departments. This team provides advice to programs such as statewide Success By Six, our early childhood initiative. Success By Six outlines a set of outcomes involved in preparing children for school and is supported with state general fund dollars which help communities create comprehensive systems of care.

• Financing mechanism

Another statewide program is Success Beyond Six, a financing mechanism which focuses on the needs of children, families, and school teachers, and permits schools to use local tax dollars to meet needs of specific children.

(2) What have you seen as some of the challenges and benefits to integrating education and social services in Vermont?

The issue of boundaries is an ongoing problem. Traditionally, schools have been quite separate from the rest of the world. With so many different local entities, there is often the question of who fits where. Although we still struggle with this issue,

we are making progress and moving more towards a child and family-focused service system. The growth of technology has deemphasized boundaries. With this growth has come the ability to process applications instantaneously, to know which services are available, and to schedule joint meetings. Another factor is the amount of time people spend together in the planning groups or on specific projects between schools and human services. As people feel more comfortable with each other and recognize that we are all ultimately trying to do the same thing, the issue of boundaries is downplayed.

As people feel more comfortable with each other and recognize that we are all ultimately trying to do the same thing, the issue of boundaries is downplayed.

The issue of money and legislation continues to be a problem as well. There are still areas of the state where there is a tremendous dearth of resources, and it tends to be those areas that are least aggressive in seeking out additional funding. In terms of legislation, virtually every year new

federal legislation and new state legislation target specific problems, and each piece of legislation has a requirement for an advisory committee. So, at the same time that people are trying to consolidate their thinking, there is this legislative pressure to have all these new separate entities.

Our efforts are clearly paying off in terms of what is happening for children and their families. For example, real reductions in child abuse rates, teen pregnancy rates, and overall improvements in the health status of children stand out as clear achievements. We have been able to make limited resources go much further, and that has brought a new sense of pride and commitment in our communities. People are looking out for each other, and really beginning to shoulder and share the sense that we are all jointly responsible for the well-being of children in Vermont.

(3) *How is Vermont evaluating these efforts?*

We are using a multi-faceted approach, which includes quantitative, qualitative, and case study methods. The quantitative aspect investigates three outcome areas: demographic, educational, and health care statistics. First, the set of demographic evaluations are called community profiles, in which we are simply tracking outcomes and indicators over time. With these profiles, people are able to observe trends for each supervisory union, each county or district area and the state as a whole. We can also track our work in relation to benchmarks that we have set. In our second focus, we are studying educational outcomes through our examination of school report cards. This process is being done on a school-by-school basis, and enables us to consider standardized test scores as well as school climate issues. A third, similar data tracking process is being implemented to examine health outcomes overall for Vermonters.

The qualitative approach to the evaluation features an ongoing engagement of consumer groups, parent groups, and client groups. We are interested in whether people are satisfied with the services we are offering, whether people feel respected and involved, and whether their needs are being met properly. In addition, this approach works to develop our community groups as learning communities, where evaluators from higher education groups work with community planning groups to identify their needs and mechanisms for communication.

Finally, we have done a number of case studies using the family voices process and studying changes in a community by interviewing its members in an effort to support future program planning.

As technology improves and we are administratively able to link data sets across departments, we will be in a better position to study program impacts as well as isolate the elements that are making a real difference. We also hope to improve communication systems so the continuous feedback loop is much smoother than it is right now. Technological advances such as interactive television will help us to provide timely information to improve decision making. ♦

Caroline Schaefer
Research Assistant, HFRP

PROMISING PRACTICES

Using Evaluation Results: The Program Staff Perspective

Evaluations of school-linked service programs are frequently commissioned by outside agencies, often the very groups which support these programs' survival. While in many cases, the inclusion and cooperation of the program staff are crucial to the evaluation process, the information from the evaluation is not always fed back to these staff to inform program development. While the lessons which funders extract from evaluation data are important, the information provided in the evaluation process can be valuable for program staff as well.

The Houston School of the Future has had such an experience. Houston was one of four Texas sites selected by the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health's School of the Future initiative. Each site was provided a five-year grant (1990-1995) to establish a school-based services program. The grant provided for the services of an on-site project coordinator who was primarily responsible for project administration, service and community outreach, and public relations. The goal of the project was twofold: to enable selected schools to coordinate and implement school-based social and health services on their campuses and to evaluate the effectiveness of this method of service delivery. Today, two years beyond the end of the grant period, the project is continuing at each site.

The evaluation had both a quantitative and a qualitative component. The quantitative evaluation, the purpose of which was to determine the effectiveness and impact of the project on students and their schools, used nationally known instruments to collect student-level information on emotional well-being, self-esteem, and perceptions of school climate. These data were supplemented by school district data on academic achievement. The qualitative component showed the process of project development. Data for this portion was collected through two surveys and interviews and included information on project strengths, weaknesses, and barriers; perceptions of

the project and the project coordinators; and opportunities for project continuation and potential incorporation into the educational system.

As Project Coordinator of the Houston School of the Future for more than five years, I have found that well-designed and implemented evaluations can offer information integral to supporting service programs, such as those that the Houston School of the Future provides. During one of the interviews with evaluators conducted early in the grant period, I stated that the schools would not abandon the project after the funding period ended. My prediction proved accurate, and the evaluation and its outcomes have played a part in generating the support necessary for the project's continuation in a number of ways.

• *Identifying key areas of concern:*

Each School of the Future site conducted a survey in which stakeholders identified key areas of concern. This was invaluable to us. The results of our survey supported our claim regarding the need for health services and led to the establishment of the health clinic, which has become the hallmark of the Houston school. Subsequent data collection efforts also assisted in the development of the project. For example, because a depression scale revealed a need to have a psychologist and a psychiatrist on staff, the health clinic now has these.

• *Putting proposals together:*

Since the Hogg Foundation grant funded only the coordinators and evaluation, we had to work hard to gain the support of others. The evaluation findings both confirmed what we knew early on and helped us to galvanize the support of others. For example, the evaluation of *Compadres*, a violence prevention program, helped us with our proposal for *Ensueños*, a substance-abuse program. We wove the findings into the narrative, which made our proposal stronger and resulted in our getting the grant.

Bringing it Home: Supporting the Local Use of Data

• *Building partnerships:*

In order to encourage additional support from potential collaborative partners, we give them booklets describing the project and its services, its relationship with the community, and the lessons learned from its experiences. Because of the successes identified early in the project, we have been able to build on the schools' resources and strengths and on partnership strengths. It is important to recognize the resources in the community, not just money. These publications also are used by participants for planning project expansion. Furthermore, these publications have provided us with valuable contacts and media attention, which has led to inquiries and visits. It is important to be able to show that you have done something innovative.

Some aspects of the evaluation were not as useful to us. For example, although the stakeholder survey helped the project to bring in the clinic, as a result of either confusion of records or inconsistency in record keeping, data on outcomes for students who used this service have been only moderately useful. Quantitative findings have been problematic for other reasons as well. So many variables influence outcomes from school-based service programs that it is difficult to determine which interventions led to the outcomes obtained. From the program perspective, this is particularly troublesome. Additionally, the great amount of mobility within the population left us too small a sample to study longer-term program results effectively. It also would have been helpful had project staff members been able to contribute to the evaluation design. As the project brought in services, we could have identified some of the evaluation pieces that concerned us in order to obtain information that would be more useful to us. However, although the quantitative findings were problematic in several ways, they did enable us to demonstrate to stakeholders that there were unmet needs in the community, and this helped us to gain support for the program. ♦

Alfredo Tijerina
Coordinator, School of the Future,
Houston

Documents describing the School of the Future initiative can be obtained by contacting the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, The University of Texas, Post Office Box 7998, Austin, TX 78713-7998. Tel: (512) 471-5041.

The statewide evaluation of California's Healthy Start School-linked Services Initiative, funded by a consortium of California-based foundations, has compiled the most comprehensive database available on the processes and outcomes of school-linked services. Evaluators from SRI International drew on that database throughout the evaluation to inform local sites and the Healthy Start state partnership about the implementation of the initiative and the results for children, families, and schools. SRI's experience underscores both the value of sharing evaluation information regularly with programs and the difficulty of doing so in a timely and useful way.

Through Healthy Start, the California Department of Education (CDE) awards competitive grants of up to \$400,000 to local education agencies that work in partnership with other public and private community organizations to develop new or expand existing efforts to provide comprehensive, integrated services linked to schools. The first 65 grantees, funded in 1992 and 1993, were involved in the evaluation, which was completed in 1996. The evaluation:

- described the sponsoring collaboratives and their operations
- collected detailed information on the services provided to children and their families
- assessed outcomes of participating families in the areas of basic needs, health and health care, mental health, employment and financial independence, education, teen risk behaviors, and legal system involvement
- assessed school-wide impacts regarding student mobility, attendance, school climate, parent involvement, disciplinary

- actions, and academic performance
- linked characteristics of collaboratives and services to child, family, and school impacts in order to identify factors contributing to greater benefits

- reported on the sustainability of local initiatives after their initial grants were expended and factors that supported sustainability.

During the evaluation, SRI prepared several reports and briefs summarizing

the results at the state level. SRI also shared local information and results with each grantee on a regular basis through the following:

• *Quarterly Reports*

One mechanism for the dissemination of information was a quarterly report of service and client data. SRI developed a single-sheet, two-sided report form that recorded for the quarter and project-to-date the number of clients who had approached the local project for different kinds of services, the number of clients served and the numbers of units of different services that they received, the number of clients on waiting lists for different services, the number of referrals made for outside services, and the results of those referrals. In addition, the form reported the number of children and families served and demographic characteristics of those clients. A report for each local initiative was accompanied by a statewide aggregate compilation for comparison.

Many sites reported sharing their quarterly reports with their advisory boards to assess their accomplishments. These reports suggested program improvements and examined the amount and quality of data being submitted to SRI.

To support sites in their analysis of

Many sites reported sharing their quarterly reports with their advisory boards to assess their accomplishments.

quarterly reports, SRI encouraged them to address the following questions: (1) Does your program reach the clients you intend to serve? (2) Do the types and frequencies of services delivered match your program's goals? (3) Is there a need for services that you currently are not able to provide? (4) To what extent are clients being referred outside for services, and to what extent are follow-ups being conducted? and (5) How often do referrals result in actual service delivery?

Even among sites that used the reports, however, data were sometimes perceived as late and not user-friendly. Some sites believed that the three-month lag between the end of a quarter and receipt of a report – required by SRI to process the thousands of individual service records from 65 sites – made information too out-of-date to guide programs in a rapidly changing environment. In addition, the desire to keep the report to one page for easy dissemination to many interested parties created a form which was dense with data. This format was not practical for many people who were not used to relying on so much data.

Improvements could have been made in both timeliness and user-friendliness if the evaluation had included a component for helping sites develop the capacity to compile their own service- and client-related information. Assisting with such capacity-building activities for the 65 sites exceeded the scope of the evaluation tasks, however.

• *Evaluation Coaches*

Use of the quarterly report at the local level was supported by local evaluation “coaches,” who helped sites adapt the statewide evaluation activities to local needs. Coaches also helped sites interpret and use the information that SRI reported back. The extent to which the coach emphasized and drew on the quarterly report in working with his/her sites was a key factor in whether staff found the information useful in the program improvement efforts.

• *Annual Surveys*

The results of annual surveys of collaborative members and school staff were reported to sites for use as a self-assessment of their functioning. The surveys covered such topics as collaborative processes, levels of trust, support for Healthy Start, and integration of services into the school.

• *Reports on Outcomes*

At the conclusion of the evaluation, the outcomes were reported for participating children and families for each site. Effective local initiatives used evidence

of benefits to help marshal resources to sustain their efforts after the conclusion of their grants. These data were of keen interest to sites and were well received. The three years between the start-up of local initiatives and the site-

specific answer to the key question, “Are we helping children and families?” however, was a long wait.

• *Site Reports*

In addition to this reporting to local sites, all information on individual sites was also shared with the state-level partnership, composed of members of several state agencies and the foundation consortium. From these site reports, the state partners obtained a clearer understanding of the wide variation in local programs under the Healthy Start umbrella. Site reports also were used to help identify local collaboratives that might benefit from technical assistance or other support from the state's Healthy Start Field Office. The state partnership also succeeded in securing budgetary support for expanding Healthy Start to more sites as early evaluation findings gave indications of benefits for children and families.

• *Post-evaluation Guidebook*

After the conclusion of SRI's evaluation, CDE decided to develop an evalua-

tion that could be carried out by the local sites and still provide comparable data that could be aggregated by CDE. Local sites did not have the capacity to sustain the amount and level of information gathered through the statewide evaluation, however. SRI worked with CDE and an advisory panel of local site representatives to create evaluation requirements that would produce information that was useful to each local site and also met the California legislature's need for comparable statewide data. Everyone agreed to have all sites report on a limited number of data items and have each site choose from a menu of outcome areas one small set of data items that best fit their local goals and services. SRI wrote a guidebook that provided clear instructions on how all data items were to be measured and reported to ensure the collection of comparable and reliable data. Measures reflected commonly used practices whenever possible. In the first year of the guidebook's use, more than 120 Healthy Start grantees used it to capture baseline and follow-up data on outcomes at the school, family, and individual levels.

Extensive time and resources were required to provide quarterly site-specific data to 65 local collaboratives, but this investment was worthwhile. With access to site-level reports and coaches who could translate the findings of those reports, local staff and collaborative members had information on the strengths of their efforts and areas in which their programs might need improvement. This effort laid the foundation for a data-driven improvement process that continues today. ♦

Mary Wagner
Program Director, SRI International

Shari Golan
Senior Education Policy Analyst,
SRI International

Evaluation documents from SRI can be obtained by contacting SRI International, 333 Ravenswood Avenue, Menlo Park, CA 94025-3493. Tel: (415) 326-6200, Fax: (415) 326-5512.

Communities In Schools

The mission of Communities In Schools (CIS), formerly Cities In Schools, is to promote the connection between vital community resources and schools in order to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. Local CIS programs do this by relocating community service providers into schools to work as personalized teams serving alongside teachers, principals, volunteers, and mentors. CIS provides training and technical assistance services to help states and communities to create and maintain local CIS programs and projects. CIS training focuses on a variety of topics including, how to build a CIS partnership; managing a CIS project site; and strategic planning. Follow-up technical assistance is provided by teams of specialists in specific areas of CIS operations. ♦

For further information contact Bonnie Nance Frazier, Director of Communications, Communities In Schools, Inc., 1199 N. Fairfax Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314-1436. Tel: (703) 519-8999, Fax: (703) 519-7213. Information can also be found on CIS's Web site: www.cisnet.org

Preparing Effective Community Leaders Conference

Preparing Effective Community Leaders, Professionals, and Workers: The Third National Conference on Community Collaboration and Interprofessional Education, will be held November 5-7, in Kansas City, Missouri. Jointly sponsored by the National Interprofessional Educational and Training Network and the Together We Can Initiative, the conference will have a special focus on the work of the Local Investment Commission in Kansas City.

People who are interested in improving results for children, families, and communities through the creation of a newly skilled workforce are encouraged to attend. ♦

For more information contact the Human Services Policy Center at the University of Washington at (206) 685-7610 or by e-mail: marylj@u.washington.edu.

Evaluating New Jersey's School-Based Youth Services Program

In 1987, the New Jersey Department of Human Services created the School-Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP) with an allocation of \$6 million. This funded the establishment of the first statewide initiative in the country to integrate a range of services for adolescents in one location at/or near schools. These projects began their first full year of operation in 1988, in 29 New Jersey communities in 22 local high schools, two regional high schools, and five vocational-technical schools. There is at least one project in every county of the state, and all students at host schools can participate in SBYSP activities. Each project is managed by a lead agency, and a 25 percent local resource match is needed to secure funding.

Core school-based services include individual and family counseling; primary and preventive health services (on site or through referral); employment counseling, training, and placement; drug and alcohol abuse counseling; and recreation. Local programs enjoy substantial flexibility in how they provide services and activities in response to local needs and resources. The desired impacts of the program include improved educational and health outcomes and better economic prospects for youth, as well as reduced need for more intensive (and expensive) services. The work of local projects is enhanced by a central support team in the state Department of Human Services that links projects to a network of local providers and additional resources; this team has played a critical role in the longevity and vitality of the SBYSP projects.

Evaluation Design

Supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Academy for Educational Development (AED), a nonprofit educational evaluation and technical assistance organization, is conducting an evaluation of SBYSP that will run for three and one-half years.

Phase I: During the first phase of the evaluation, AED completed an analysis of SBYSP's evolving policy context. In addition, following visits to all sites and interviews with key project and school staff and youth, AED completed a cross-site analysis of project implementation. Data gathered during this phase were also used to articulate a theory of action in each program content-area and design a longitudinal study of student outcomes in six of the sites. SBYSP project directors helped develop both the theory of action and the outcome study design.

Phase II: During the second phase, AED is following the 1996-97 incoming ninth-grade cohort into its junior year (fall 1998) to measure outcomes for individual youth. This will entail periodic surveys of the entire cohort, review of SBYSP participation/utilization and school data, and case studies of "typical" youth at each site. The evaluators will compare SBYSP participants to nonparticipants with regard to a range of personal attitudes, situational stresses and assets, and behavioral outcomes in health, mental health, substance abuse, employment preparation, educational progress, and positive youth development.

Some of the challenges the evaluators face include:

- *Understanding the dynamic relationship between services and outcomes in a multiservice program.*

In such programs, the total "package" of services and activities varies from student to student. This complex task is rendered more difficult by variations among sites. For example, health services in one site involve referrals to local providers and assistance with transportation and scheduling, while in another, physical and psychosocial screening is provided on site, reinforced by referral to a local provider, and in a third project, primary care services are provided on school grounds.

• *Developing instruments that are comprehensive and sensitive, yet feasible to administer.*

Measuring outcomes related to the full range of needs addressed and program services and activities constitutes a challenge endemic to the evaluation of multiservice, comprehensive, or service-integration projects. Previous researchers and evaluators of single-focus studies, upon which most of our current instrumentation is built, have been able to devote entire instruments to individual or subsets of outcome indicators. However, the length and complexity of the instruments used are constrained by the class period during which a survey can be administered, since it is very difficult to mount multiple survey administrations during regular class time in a single school year. To make effective use of limited time, it is critical to remain in close contact with the practitioners concerning evaluation priorities and to use their theory of action to inform the instrument and study design.

• *Drawing comparisons that are sensitive to the factors that affect outcomes.*

Given the degree of variation among the six case-study sites and the likelihood that SBYSP users have more severe problems than nonusers, simple comparisons between users and nonusers are inappropriate. Instead, AED is using key variables on the baseline survey to select those nonparticipants who resemble program users based on a broad set of characteristics, including demographic (gender, race/ethnicity); situational (family stress, outside sources of support); personal (depression, optimism, aspirations); and preexisting behavioral characteristics (community service, academic misbehavior). ♦

Constancia Warren
Senior Program Officer, Academy for Educational Development

Anita Baker
*Senior Technical Consultant,
Academy for Educational Development*

For further information about the evaluation, please contact Constancia Warren, Senior Program Officer, Academy for Educational Development, 100 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. Tel: (212) 243-1110, Fax: (212) 627-0407.

EVALUATIONS TO WATCH

Evaluation of an Extended Services School in Boston

With funding from the DeWitt Wallace Reader's Digest Foundation, a model extended services school is being developed at the Gardner Elementary School in the Allston-Brighton neighborhood of Boston. The Gardner is a K-5 school (550 children; 31 languages spoken) which buses 60 percent of its population from across Boston. The Gardner Extended Services School (GESS) is being adapted from the model of the Children's Aid Society Schools in New York and will focus on education and career development. It will extend the school day, link the school with community agencies, and respond to the needs of two generations. A partnership among Boston College, the Gardner School staff and parents, the local YMCA, and a community coalition (Healthy Boston) is coordinating the planning and eventual implementation of the GESS.

Evaluation Design

Two evaluations will be conducted. The *process* of implementing the GESS will be evaluated by the DeWitt Wallace Reader's Digest Foundation. The *effectiveness* of the GESS will be evaluated by George Madaus of the Boston College Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation and Educational Policy.

The effectiveness evaluation reflects the Stufflebeam CIPP Model (consisting of Context, Input, Process, and Product evaluations) modified by adding strong naturalistic components. The time frame is five years and includes assessing longitudinally the inputs, processes, and outcomes of the project. The evaluation will include four phases. Each phase will examine the needs of the four target groups (children, parents, teachers, and community), the resources necessary to address those needs, the delivery of those resources to each of the four target groups, and the outcomes – intended and unintended – associated with the delivery of those services and resources. For each

evaluation question, within each phase, a rationale is provided so that target groups and participants have a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of the evaluation. The phases are as follows:

(1) *Early planning phase:*

This phase will gather needs assessment/planning information on the four populations that are the focus of the GESS effort. It is anticipated that many unforeseen issues will arise at this early stage of the project, and part of the role of the evaluators will be to help project planners deal with emerging issues. In essence, this phase of the evaluation will be responsive to the needs of the planners.

(2) *Initial project implementation phase:*

This phase is designed to answer formative questions about early initiatives/plans/processes necessary to enable each of the four target groups to reach program goals. It will also take into account the issues faced by the planners who, at this point in the process, may not have a completely clear notion of which services are effective. Thus, the evaluation team will concentrate on providing information that will guide decision making about the participants' needs, the resources devoted to providing services, and the actual delivery of services.

(3) *Full-scale project implementation phase:*

This phase, which will last several years, is designed to collect ongoing quantitative and qualitative data on the four target groups. While it is expected that the project will be more clearly defined at this stage, this evaluation is intended to provide planners with the information necessary to meet ongoing decision-making needs.

(4) *Impact assessment phase:*

This phase is designed to give funders necessary information on outcomes – intended and unintended – so that the project services can be improved, extended, evaluated, and funded in the future.

In each phase, it was deemed necessary to identify the *stated* goals, inputs,

Evaluating Communications Strategies: Learning From the Communications for Child Protection Project

process, and outcomes of the project, and then, through a process of study and inference, to delineate the *actual* objectives, goals, inputs, process, and outcomes for each of the target populations. A significant effort was made to design evaluation questions that probed the perceptions of the four target groups on the stated and *de facto* goals, inputs, process, and outcomes of this project.

For each phase it is necessary to rely on both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection in order to obtain a richer, triangulated look at the questions within each of the phases. In choosing the variables for each population at each phase, the evaluators were guided by literature reviews on what seemed to work. They designed evaluation indices and data, gathering methodologies around techniques known to maximize the richness of the information vis-à-vis the projected goals.

The long-term, continuous nature of this evaluation will provide project planners, managers, and partners with ongoing information about the program's strengths and weaknesses that can be used for program development and improvement. While the evaluation plan has provided specific details on a number of key aspects of the evaluation effort (e.g., data collection instruments, reporting plans, management plans, and budget) the evaluation has been designed to be flexible and responsive to issues that arise over the course of the project. As the project develops, additional issues not included in this proposal may arise and need to be addressed. Conversely, because issues deemed to be important at this time may eventually not be critical issues for evaluation, the program planners and their evaluation team will need to adjust and direct the evaluation as necessary. ♦

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George Madaus
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For further information on this evaluation, please contact Mary Walsh or George Madaus, Boston College Graduate School of Education, Campion Hall 309, Chestnut Hill, MA 02167. Tel: (617) 552-4710, Fax: (617) 552-1981.

Efforts to restructure human services and to enable communities to become more involved with child protection require the engagement of both the general public and policymakers. Many human-services related communications efforts suffer from a lack of careful design, however. Without a strong base in public opinion research and careful message testing and evaluation, one may settle for a message which attracts attention but has little impact on opinions or behavior.

The Communications for Child Protection Project, funded by the Stuart Foundations, is an effort to test a model of community-based communication that strengthens the linkage between public opinion and public policy. Findings from a study of the current state of media coverage show that sensationalized coverage of a few tragic events skews public and policymakers' understanding of the problems facing children and families as well as the translation of that understanding into action. The study also shows that the public is very concerned about protecting children. The Communications Project seeks to develop a communication strategy that does not just convey information or evoke emotional responses, but rather elicits changes in specific policy-relevant behavior. Examples of major project outcomes desired include agreement on an "umbrella message" for all participants to incorporate in their individual communications; the placement of tragic incidents

in context of the broad scope of the problem; a shift in emphasis from sole responsibility of government agencies to

The Communications for Child Protection Project... is an effort to test a model of community-based communication that strengthens the linkage between public opinion and public policy.

inclusive responsibility of communities and families; a shift in the balance of expenditure from investigation to prevention; promotion of public/private partnerships; increased general public focus on child protection and prevention of abuse and neglect; and an understanding of the family and community factors involved in child abuse and neglect.

The major project interventions designed to achieve those outcomes are:

- *public opinion research to understand linkages among beliefs about what constitutes abuse/neglect, views about appropriate public or private intervention, and sources of information about such issues*
- *mutually reinforcing "umbrella messages" utilized by many public and private organizations*
- *a statewide media clearinghouse to provide information on child maltreatment and its causes that can be used by journalists when high profile maltreatment cases emerge*
- *communications training for child protection professionals to understand concise messages, the role of public opinion, and importance of multiple communication channels*

• forums for journalists to provide an accurate picture of prevalence of and public attitudes toward child protection and insight into expert debates on policy and practice, and to discuss the impact of patterns of media coverage on public policy.

The University of Washington's Human Services Policy Center (UW/HSPC) is conducting the public opinion research, message testing, and evaluation components; two nonprofit service delivery organizations will design and implement the community-based communications. This partnership allows UW/HSPC to maintain a role as evaluator, while taking advantage of the ongoing presence of the service delivery organizations in the pilot communities.

Evaluation Methodology

This project intends to affect multiple audiences, ranging from concerned citizens to professionals who operate key child-serving agencies. The evaluators will combine several different sources of data, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative analysis, and process and outcome evaluations. The evaluation will also test innovations such as empaneling 30 respondents in each of the three pilot communities and providing them with Internet linkages. The evaluators will gather baseline data from general population telephone surveys, focus groups, and structured interviews with local opinion leaders and legislators representing a range of party affiliations and ideologies. These will help to determine the dynamics of public and policymaker opinions concerning child maltreatment and appropriate public or private intervention for child protection. These data will assist in the planning of communications interventions and will serve as a baseline for measuring impact.

Data from interviews with journalists, samples of reporting in major news venues, tracking of the numbers and types of infor-

mation requests made of the clearinghouse, and reactions from community panels will be used to track changes in media coverage as a result of forums and clearinghouse information. Annual population surveys, structured interviews with civic lead-

ers and policymakers, and responses from Internet panel respondents will reveal if public and policymaker opinions change as originally intended by selected messages, and whether there are observable changes in state or local public policy as a result of the communications effort.

Interviews with staff of operating partners will indicate

how their capacity to communicate through media and such community-based methods as public speaking, posters, and presentations has changed. Indicators will include their reaction to training sessions and ongoing consultation, increases in their communication capacity (including an understanding of key concepts, a familiarity with media and other communication channels, and communications skills) and their technological capacity (fax machines, press lists, Internet access, and brochures). Samples of materials distributed by local leadership groups and by various participating organizations will be analyzed to see whether they incorporate "umbrella message" themes. A review of the sponsorship of media forums and attendance by reporters and editors of print and electronic media will help to determine whether they are reaching the intended audience.

The evaluators expect to publish baseline public opinion data in the fall of 1998 and the results of the initial outcome evaluation in the following year. ♦

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Andrew Gordon
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The evaluators will combine several different sources of data, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative analysis, and process and outcome evaluations.

HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT PUBLICATIONS

Results-Based Accountability

Resource Guide of Results-Based Accountability Efforts: Profiles of Selected States (Second Edition)

This update to our 1996 resource guide describes selected states' efforts to plan and develop results-based accountability (RBA) systems. Included for each state is a description of the design of the system, collaboration efforts, and applications of the system. Also included are key contacts and documentation.

Reaching Results Briefs

These short, user-friendly summaries are designed to highlight key concepts, issues, lessons learned, and best practices in the design and implementation of RBA systems for children and families. They are designed to provide summary information on important aspects of RBA for those responsible for the development of these new systems. Currently, our series includes briefs on an RBA system overview; developing strategic plans; and defining and using indicators in an RBA system. Additional briefs will be forthcoming. Call the HFRP publications department at (617) 496-4304 for order information.

Families Matter Series

HFRP announces the publication in late October 1997 of four new reports in its FAMILIES MATTER series. The series provides a training framework for family-centered child care and its application in community colleges and child care resource and referral agencies.

In December, HFRP will publish additional volumes in the FAMILIES MATTER series on the following topics:

- twelve child care programs and their family support practices, and how those practices contribute to a training framework
- family-focused training in two-year colleges
- resource and referral agencies and how they train programs in family support principles

HFRP will accept orders for the first four reports after October 15, 1997. Look for further publication announcements on our Web site.

We regret that we cannot provide copies of the materials listed below. If you are interested in obtaining any of these resources, please contact the publisher or authoring organization directly.

Cibulka, James G., & Kritek, William J. (Eds.). (1996). *Coordination among schools, families, and communities: Prospects for educational reform.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Improving coordination among schools, families, and communities poses many challenges. This book provides information on the diverse goals of the coordinated service movement and the problems of reconciling competing goals within the movement.

Denham, Carolyn & Etzioni, Amitai. (1997, March). *Community Schools.* Washington, DC: The Communitarian Network.

This paper presents a broad-based overview of community schools and defines the integral components which support such schools and the services that they provide for children and families. In addition, the paper describes why community schools and school-linked services are necessary, how such entities are best supported, as well as what steps should be taken to ensure the survival and growth of these community services.

Gestwicki, Carol. (1997). *Home, school and community relations: A guide to working with parents (3rd edition).* Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers.

This updated edition addresses the complex diversity of families and teaching situations that exist, sensitizing readers to the pressing needs of today's families and to the importance of involving them in the educational institution that cares for their children.

Illback, Robert J., Kalafat, John, & Sanders, Daniel (1997). *Evaluating integrated service programs.*

In Illback, Robert J., Cobb, Carolyn T., & Joseph, Herbert M. (Eds.). *Integrated services for children and families: Opportunities for psychological practice.*

Washington, DC: APA Books.

The concept of integrated services represents an attempt to "re-engineer" the service delivery system in child welfare, child mental health, education, public health, juvenile justice, and related fields. This book highlights the historical, conceptual, and theoretical/empirical foundations; provides examples of the approach in a variety of practice settings; and considers issues of organizational change, training, program evaluation, and leadership. Special emphasis is placed on how psychologists can expand or enhance their practice based on these ideas.

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. (1996). *Learning to collaborate: Lessons from school-college partnerships in the Excellence in Education Program.* Miami, Florida: Author.

This report summarizes the findings of a recent study of sixteen of the partnerships between higher education institutions and public schools which comprise the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation-funded Excellence in Education Program. Using examples from the projects studied, this report presents lessons learned in project design, implementation, and evaluation. The report concludes with a summary of the implications of the lessons. Appendices provide information on the projects, summarize the lessons, and chart the special topics and issues addressed by the projects in the report.

Kelley, Carolyn & Kahne, Joseph. (March, 1995). *Designing effective school-linked service programs: Lessons from collaborative programs for children with disabilities.* *Journal of School Leadership, (5):163-182.*

This article explores recent research on school-linked service programs for children with disabilities. Deriving much of their content from experience with such

programs, the authors present findings on funding, parent involvement, and accountability issues and discuss the implications of such issues on the development and success of school-linked service programs for youth who are at-risk.

Lawson, Hal & Briar-Lawson, Katharine. (1997). *Connecting the dots: Progress toward the integration of school reform, school-linked services, parent involvement and community schools.* The Danforth Foundation and the Institute for Educational Renewal at Miami University.

In this monograph, the authors describe the relationship between school reform, school-linked services, parent involvement, and community school programs, based on observations from various schools and community outreach programs. The paper then offers examples of five different models of programs serving children and families in addition to crucial lessons learned from such initiatives. The authors emphasize the importance of integrating these services, or "connecting the dots," and conclude by proposing methods to support further integration, counter potential challenges, and facilitate development and evaluation.

Wagner, Mary, Fiester, Leila, Reisner, Elizabeth, Murphy, Dan, & Golan, Shari. (1997, forthcoming). *Making information work for you: A guide for collecting good information and using it to improve comprehensive strategies for children, families, and communities.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Good information is a valuable resource in facing the challenges of designing and implementing comprehensive strategies to improve results for children and families. This guidebook is intended to help partners in comprehensive strategies to generate good information as they try to remake services, organizations, systems, and communities. It offers principles, processes, and tools for using evaluation to focus comprehensive strategies on the shared goal of the partners – improving the lives of children and families. The guidebook

employs a “theories of change” approach to setting out the goals of a comprehensive strategy, charting a course toward meeting them, and documenting short-range, interim, and longer-term results as partnerships pursue their strategies.

Zetlin, Andrea, Ramos, Cecilia, & Valdez, Arturo. (1996, April). Integrating services in a school-based center: An example of a school-community collaboration. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 24(2): 97-107. This is an account of how an inner-city elementary school established a school-based service integration center for supporting non-educational child and family needs that influence students’ ability to function at school. ♦

Caroline Schaefer
Research Assistant, HFRP

IMMEDIATE JOB OPENING

Part-Time Newsletter Assistant for *The Evaluation Exchange* Newsletter

The Harvard Family Research Project, housed at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is seeking a talented assistant to help produce a national newsletter on the evaluation of programs and policies for young children and their families. This position offers an unusual and challenging opportunity to be part of a team helping to chart the course of evaluation in the family support field. The Newsletter Assistant will provide outreach, research, writing, and editing for *The Evaluation Exchange* newsletter. Duties will include helping to organize and conduct evaluators’ focus groups, assisting in the review of article submissions, commenting on articles, organizing a filing system for newsletter issues, writing correspondence, and conducting database searches. This is a part-time, casual position, approximately 17 hours per week, although there is a strong possibility of the job becoming full-time.

Experience/Skills: The ideal candidate will have research background, preferably with knowledge of evaluation and family support programs/policies. Strong writing skills are essential. Editorial experience very desirable. Must be highly organized and able to work independently.

Salary: Commensurate with experience.
To Apply: Please send a resume and a cover letter to: Tacy Corson, Associate Director for Administration, Harvard Family Research Project, 38 Concord Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138. No phone calls, faxes, or Internet replies please.

SPOTLIGHT

Reaching Results in Different Ways

Why aren’t government child and family programs run more like private sector businesses? Why aren’t bureaucrats held accountable for the performance of the programs that they oversee? How can state and local governments better engage citizens in working on solutions to problems facing families? Forthcoming publications from the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Project at HFRP examine how eight states are tackling these important questions.

Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, and Vermont have actively participated in our RBA study, sharing their insights and lessons learned. These states have examined key issues facing their communities and have articulated a vision of where they want their state to be. They have developed goals and are tracking progress toward achieving these goals. These states represent very different models and different contexts, and each has important insights to share with others who are in the process of designing an RBA system.

Through in-depth interviews with over 200 individuals across the eight states, document reviews, and observations, HFRP staff have identified key issues in the successful design of RBA systems. A sample of these, which will be further described in our forthcoming publications, includes:

• **Begin by engaging citizens in a strategic planning process.**

This not only contributes to stakeholder buy-in, but provides a forum for civic engagement. Individuals participating in the planning process feel ownership of the issues identified and the solutions recommended to address problems.

• **Develop strategies for effectively communicating results to different audiences.**

The states and communities most effective in sustaining their RBA efforts have multiple publications that convey

information to technical audiences and policymakers as well as to the public.

• **Make RBA data useful to multiple audiences.**

It is critical to demonstrate to individuals how they can use information for decision-making. In promoting a data-based approach to decision making, RBA systems have the potential to overwhelm users with information. Simply providing data can create frustration for people who do not quickly see how they can influence the problem. Therefore, it is important to give audience strategies to address concerns identified by RBA data.

• **Link evaluations to RBA systems.**

Having strong evaluation data in addition to RBA data can help to translate the data into information that can be useful. Evaluation data help to answer questions of why programs do or do not work and what action must be taken to improve results.

• **Identify both who is responsible for achieving results and who has the authority to achieve the results.**

This seemingly simple step is often overlooked. Frequently state agencies are held accountable for achieving results when they do not have the authority to influence the specific result. ♦

Diane Schilder
Project Manager, HFRP

The HFRP staff wishes to thank the many individuals who contributed to these insights. Current publications can be obtained by contacting our publications office at (617) 496-4304. By late 1997, we will be publishing additional RBA reports. For further information about the RBA project, contact Diane Schilder at (617) 495-9108.

HFRP's Research Results: Teacher Preparation in Family Involvement

School-linked services are one of several educational reforms that recognize that schools cannot work in isolation from students' families and communities. Research shows that family involvement in children's education makes critical contributions to student achievement and can help to build relationships between schools and communities (Henderson & Berla, 1994). However, school efforts to promote family involvement will only succeed if teachers are adequately prepared to support these efforts. A new study by the Harvard Family Research Project examines both *why* training teachers to work successfully with families is so crucial and *how* to train teachers to work effectively with parents and families.

Findings from the study reveal a serious discrepancy between the preservice training teachers receive and the types of family involvement activities they are increasingly being expected to perform in schools. In many states, teacher certification requirements do not mention working with parents or families, indicating that family involvement is often not a high priority in state certification. The study's findings also show that in states where family involvement was mentioned in certification requirements, family involvement was rarely defined.

Teacher education programs, the study shows, also lack a comprehensive definition of family involvement. They tend to focus on traditional means of family involvement (such as parent-teacher conferences) rather than more innovative ways to establish parent-school partnerships. Fewer than half of the 60 teacher preparation programs examined in the study provided a full course on family involvement. Likewise, more family involvement training existed at the early childhood level than at all other levels. Findings indicate that the challenges to preparing

teachers in family involvement include: the lack of an infrastructure to support model development and information dissemination; restrictive university and/or government policies; limited scale and resources of programs; and resistant attitudes from key actors.

The recommendations from the report focus on the development of the capacity of teacher education programs to create excellence in the field of family involvement. These recommendations include the following:

- ***Develop a national network to support teacher preparation in family involvement.***

Ideally, this would entail the establishment of an entity that would model development and evaluation, work with professional organizations to develop standards, and disseminate information.

- ***Evaluate the experiences and outcomes of preparing teachers to work with families.***

Efforts should be made at the school and district levels to assess and evaluate the family involvement practice of teachers and other school personnel.

- ***Strengthen state policy guidelines for teacher preparation in family involvement.***

This would begin with a clear and comprehensive definition of family involvement that could be used to guide teacher education programs.

- ***Make family involvement training available to elementary, middle, and high school teachers.***

This would help to address the finding that family involvement in schools declines dramatically with each passing grade.

- ***Improve the effectiveness of training through collaboration across subspecialties and disciplines.***

This could include encouraging collaboration across teacher subspecialties and between education and the fields of health and social services.

- ***Integrate training throughout teacher education curriculum rather than treating it as an isolated component.***

Integration of family involvement throughout the education curricula would both reinforce the importance of family and community in education and address concerns about excessive certification requirements.

- ***Espouse family involvement as a priority among professional organizations.***

Resistance to family involvement might be lessened if professional organizations prioritize family involvement.

- ***Sustain teachers' knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes toward families through inservice training.***

In order to sustain preservice efforts, professional development opportunities for teachers must be ongoing.

- ***Move beyond classroom-based teaching methods by offering teachers more direct field experiences working with families.***

Teacher preparation programs that use interactive and experiential methods to help students to integrate theory and practice would help to build student skills and knowledge about working with families. ♦

Karen Horsch
Research Specialist, HFRP

The report on which this article is based, New Skills for New Schools: Preparing Teachers in Family Involvement, will be available in Fall 1997. Contact the Publications Office at (617) 496-4304 for further information.

ELECTRONIC MAILBOX

Urban Education Web

<http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/families>

The Urban Education Web, run by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, is dedicated to urban students, their families, and the educators who serve them. This site offers manuals, brief articles, annotated bibliographies, and reviews of recent publications on family-school-community issues that are important to urban and minority families.

Pathways to School Improvement

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/pathwayg.htm>

This Web site, sponsored by the North Central Regional Education Lab, offers research-based information on school improvement. The Pathways site includes pages dedicated to parent and family involvement, assessment, children and youth at-risk, professional development, goals and standards, and governance/management.

California Healthy Start

<http://goldmine.cde.ca.gov/cyfsbranch/lsp/hshome.htm>

Started in 1991, the California Healthy Start Initiative brings schools, districts, health and human service agencies, local governments, nonprofit organizations, and private businesses together to develop the state's school-linked services. This Web site is sponsored by the California Department of Education and links visitors to Healthy Start resources in English and Spanish, gives a description of evaluation efforts, and provides directories of grant sites by year and region.

American Educational Research Association (AERA)

<http://aera.net>

With more than 20,000 members worldwide, AERA is the most prominent professional organization with the primary goal of advancing educational research

and its practical application. This Web site provides background information about AERA, points of contact, membership, Special Interest Groups, publications, divisions, annual meetings, net resources, and a long list of job openings across the nation.

Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI>

An office of the Department of Education, OERI provides national leadership for educational research and statistics. This Web site offers visitors information about OERI services, which include its library, multiple institutes and centers (e.g. National Institute of Early Childhood Development and Education, National Center for Education Statistics), and program-specific offices. ♦

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