

Section 6: Collaboration to Enhance Resiliency

Why Collaborate?

Since it is clear that neither risk nor protective factors exist only in the school domain, school staff cannot go it alone to provide sufficient protections against risk for the youth they serve. An individual's *environment* includes the family, peer group, and community, as well as the school community. It is within this environment that community *stakeholders* can work together to reduce risk and raise resilient children.

Collaboration that occurs across agencies and within communities is an essential strategy to create the vision described by Robert Linqanti, “children, families and communities that are healthy, empowered, self-sustaining and self-helping” (Linqanti, 1992). Community-wide working alliances can build environments that focus on developing children’s strengths and competencies, rather than fixing what’s wrong with kids. When community members work together to provide children with protective factors in all domains, the outcome of such collaboration is resilient youth.

It has been said that economic, social and technological changes in American life during the past 50 years have fragmented community life, resulting in breaks in the naturally occurring networks and linkages among individuals, families, schools, and other social systems that traditionally have provided protection necessary for healthy human development” (Coleman 1987, Comer 1992, and Wilson 1987). If this is the case, then the time has come for the collaborative efforts of community members to rebuild some of those networks and linkages to work in favor of children. While we recognize that individual protective strategies, such as a single caring relationship with an adult, promote resiliency in youth, communities must work together to lessen harm and ameliorate risk to “stack the deck” in favor of children.

Collaborative school-community approaches produce the following outcomes:

- improved service delivery
- reduced fragmentation of services
- minimum duplication of efforts
- maximum use of resources
- on-going communication and support

Barriers to Collaboration

Those who have been engaged in collaborative relationships within their schools or communities know all too well the challenges involved in building working alliances. Since schools have been historically charged with the mission to educate children, school staff have typically operated independently of other community systems which serve to support youth in other areas. As students needs have increased and schools have been pressured to

“do more with less,” schools are beginning to implement collaborative approaches to complete service delivery. Models such as Full Service Schools and Integrated Service Teams have emerged as methods to deal with the interrelated needs of children.

These models and other collaboratives, such as School Advisory Councils, have taught us that collaboration requires hard work and increased time and commitment. We often think that we can provide a service better ourselves, or that it takes too much time to work with others on a strategy or plan. While this may be true in some cases, there is no replacement for the commitment that results from the ownership of a user-driven process to produce positive outcomes for children.

Some of the specific *barriers* to interagency collaboration, identified by Liguanti, Cynthia Lugg, and William Boyd, are listed below:

Turf	⇒	The overlapping and sometimes conflicting boundaries of agencies
Ownership	⇒	Degree of control, decision-making and authority
Communication	⇒	The sharing of information relevant to the process and outcome
Autonomy	⇒	Independence of individual agencies
Resources	⇒	Separate finances and budgets of individual agencies.

While these barriers are significant, they are not insurmountable. The success of a collaborative relationship begins with a common goal and commitment to the desired outcome. Once all partners realize that the nature of the problem makes it impossible for any one group to solve alone, they will begin to “buy in” to the collaborative process (Gibbs and Bennett, 1990). Interagency partnerships must focus on establishing trust and respect among the partners early in the process in order to move into any of the stages on the continuum in “interorganizational participation” (Intriligator, 1990), described on the next page.

Levels of Interorganizational Participation

The first step in building a working alliance among organizations is the clarification of the amount or level of interdependence desired by the partners. Typically this level is defined by the nature of the task or the desired outcome. Barbara Intriligator developed a continuum of interorganizational participation with **cooperation** representing lower levels of participation, **coordination** representing moderate levels of participation and **collaboration** representing a high level of participation. As a partnership moves on the continuum, interdependence among partners increases and autonomy decreases. **Table 4** outlines each of the levels and includes the defining characteristics of each of the three levels.

Table 4
Levels of Interorganizational Participation

<i>Level</i>	Autonomy	Resources	Communication	Decision-Making	Leadership
Cooperation	High	Separate	Limited	Independent	Independent
Coordination	Moderate	Shared	Moderate	Equal	Equal
Collaboration	Low	Combined	High	Shared	Shared

Collaboration can be defined as a “process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible” (Gray, 1989). This definition implies a complex, long-term project which requires a vision shared by partnering agencies. Since cooperation implies a short-term arrangement with a narrow goal, this partnership may not be strong enough to reduce multiple risk factors and enhance resiliency in youth. “Community-wide collaboration based on protective factors is not just the best way to promote resiliency; it may be the only way to create an environment sufficiently rich in protection for kids facing the enormous stresses and risks of growing up in present-day American society” (Linquanti, 1992).

Section 7: Bibliography

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Section 8: Resources

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Florida Peer Helpers Association
3141 Berridge Lane
Orlando, FL 32812
Individual Membership: \$10.00 per year

Web site:
Resiliency In Action
<http://www.resiliency.com/research.html>

Video:
“Survivor’s Pride: Building Resilience in Youth at Risk”
Attainment Company Inc.
P.O. Box 930160
Verona, WA 53593-1060
1-800-327-4269
1-800-942-3865 (FAX)

Planning Guide: Achieving Safe, Equitable, Healthy and Drug-Free Schools
and

Planning Guide: Supplemental Resources

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Appendix - Attachments

The following two attachments are the *Florida Performance Measurement System* and a sample *School Climate Profile*.

The *School Climate Profile* is our favorite survey. Multiple protective factors are included. The answers of “what should be” and “what is” provide schools the opportunity to prioritize needs and to make incremental growth in meeting those needs.

The *Florida Performance Measurement System* is a teacher evaluation instrument provided to you because of its support of protective factors in teaching. All items to the left have been shown to be effective teaching strategies/behaviors. The items on the right are viewed as providing more negative outcome.

