

# Research Highlights

## Topic: Positive Behavior Support

Lawson, H. & Sailor, W. (2000). Integrating services, collaborating, and developing connections with schools. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 33(2), 1-22.

### BOTTOM LINE

This article focuses on three related but analytically different processes: integrating services, collaborating, and developing connections with schools. A historical perspective of service integration is given including five “waves” with each carrying its own meanings, definitions, and functions. Working definitions of integrated services and interprofessional collaboration are provided. The complexity, difficulties, and opportunities associated with school-related integration and collaboration are discussed. The authors conclude with an exploration of emergent challenges for American democracy.

### TIPS

- Have a single point of entry into all public services systems, and with private-service systems that have contracted to work with public-sector children and adults.
- Share intake and outreach procedures and criteria by all involved organizations and their professionals.
- Use clear, well-understood, and effective procedures for referral and access to services.
- Have clear and well understood criteria and procedures for monitoring progress and evaluating results.

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## KEY FINDINGS

- Historical perspective
  - ◆ Modern service integration initiatives aim to reform and transform the institution-building efforts of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
  - ◆ Industrial-age thinking and planning served as the crucible for an array of specialized, discrete, self-contained professions setting the stage for the contemporary service integration movement that began in the early 1970's.
  - ◆ In the 1970's the federal government's separate department of health, education, and welfare were characterized as fragmented and inefficient leading to ineffectively served children and families and a lack of improved outcomes.
  
- 5 waves of modern service integration initiatives
  - ◆ The first wave was formed by top-down mandates for integration in which structural changes and new policies at the top "trickle down" through top-level supervisors and middle managers, ultimately changing and improving front-line practice.
  - ◆ The second wave accompanied the reinvention of government and the devolution of authority as a result of the limitations associated with "trickle-down thinking." While some so-called full-service schools developed because of the second wave initiatives, in reality only a limited number of schools were involved.
  - ◆ The third wave began as states developed targeted service integration initiatives. This wave reflects concerns about the changing conditions of children and families, especially concerns about children's learning readiness.
  - ◆ The still-evolving fourth wave is concerned with expanding the boundaries of school improvement, and especially with incorporating school-linked services as a vital element in school improvement.
  - ◆ The proposed fifth wave, still in its infancy is a movement to develop comprehensive, neighborhood and community-based systems of care.
  
- Service integration continues to evolve and while some consensus may be developing, it and its companion concepts are still surrounded by disagreements and confusion with a continued lack of agreement on meanings and functions.
  
- Working definitions of integrated services and inter-professional collaboration
  - ◆ *Service integration* is a set of strategies by which a community seeks to ensure that all of its residents enjoy immediate, uninterrupted access to personalized and caring children, adult, and family services. Residents and professionals qualify as service providers. Service providers coordinate their efforts to address multiple needs and partner with individuals and families.

## KEY FINDINGS

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Service providers tailor their services to fit what children and families want and need. Service integration: (1) optimizes the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of each child, while supporting and strengthening families and enhancing the security and safety of their neighborhood community, (2) includes job training and supports in service of greater economic family self-sufficiency, (3) includes blended approaches to community economic and social development, and (4) promotes empowerment strategies for individuals, groups, and communities.

- ◆ *Interprofessional collaboration* entails better communication, coordinated efforts and effective cooperation among professionals. In essence, every professional working with the same child, adult, and family has to be “on the same page.” It includes seven interrelated concepts: interdependence, conditional equality, unity of purpose, shared responsibility for results, enlightened self-interest, reciprocity, and generativity.
- Connections to schools
  - ◆ Presently, some community services may be linked to schools already, but they are not necessarily integrated.
- Challenges and opportunities of school-related integration and collaboration
  - ◆ A complex change initiative is formed when integrating services, collaborating, and developing connections with schools are joined. The combined processes will improve schools, help children, support families, and strengthen their neighborhood communities.
  - ◆ Dangers present in these three processes include:
    - Professionals may become so preoccupied with these processes that they forget that the processes are strategies (means, not goals (ends).
    - Professionals may develop a “one at a time,” linear view of the change process rather than a non-linear, multi-phasic approach.
- Third-Wave Thinking
  - ◆ Third-wave thinking continues to dominate school-linked service planning and operations. This approach has inherent challenges including mutual blame and maltreatment dynamics among professions that lead to a lack of mutual understanding and ineffective collaboration.
- Three focal points:
  - ◆ Planning must focus on the relationship between school-owned and community-owned services.
  - ◆ Entire feeder patterns are a more appropriate unit of analysis than expecting just one school to provide all of the services.
  - ◆ Common principles and practices must be developed among all of the service providers.

## KEY FINDINGS

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- The “buzzword factor” and the “school factor” may make professionals’ informed choices more difficult because of multiple meanings, orientations, and functions assigned to best-practice principles.
  
- Fourth-Wave Thinking
  - ◆ Fourth-wave thinking proceeds beyond services reform and requires an understanding of interdependence patterns.
  - ◆ School improvement and renewal processes are destined to fall short of their intended aims until family and community contexts for children’s learning and development are addressed simultaneously.
  - ◆ Professions collaborate out of self-interest because no one professional or its organization can achieve its goals and meet its accountabilities without the supports of other professions.
  - ◆ The keys to educational improvement and renewal are also the keys to improvements and renewal in other child and family-serving systems.
  - ◆ Fourth-wave thinking requires educator role and responsibility change, which brings inevitable challenges.
  
- Emergent challenges for American Democracy
  - ◆ As poverty is normalized and neglected, and as profound social and economic isolation is becoming commonplace, American democracy is threatened.
  - ◆ Schools depend on democracy.
  - ◆ The work of integrating services, collaborating, and developing connections with schools is ultimately about promoting individual, family, and collective well-being, safeguarding, and strengthening democracy for everyone.

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## RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Park J., & Turnbull, A.P. (2003). Service integration in early intervention: Determining interpersonal and structural factors for its success. *Infants and Young Children, 16*(1), 48-58.

Sailor, W. (2002). Devolution, school/community/family partnerships, and inclusive education. In W. Sailor (Ed.), *Whole school success and inclusive education: Building partnerships for learning, achievement, and accountability*. New York: Teachers College Press.

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