ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: A GAP ANALYSIS OF THE PROVISION OF COORDINATED STUDENT SERVICES IN MARYLAND
	Michelle E. Daley, Doctor of Education, May 2019
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In many school systems, classrooms are filled with students who are performing well, but among these are students who are failing due to an array of barriers to learning. These barriers stem from external factors such as homelessness, abuse, and others, or internal factors such as mental disorders and learning behaviors. Addressing these barriers has been a concern for school systems because they impact students' ability to perform optimally.

Over the years, policy leaders across the nation have attempted to expand student support services to improve student outcomes. In some school systems, they have developed blueprints for the development and implementation of such services. In Maryland, the blueprint calls for coordinated student services teams to deliver services to support students who experience barriers to learning. There is, however, a growing sense that these teams are not performing optimally.

This study investigated Maryland's coordinated student services team members' perceptions of factors that impede or limit the effectiveness of the provision of student support services. Clark and Estes' (2008) gap analysis process was used as a framework to investigate perceived performance gaps and to understand root causes.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with coordinated student services team members from one school system in Maryland and the coordinated student services team from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Findings from this study showed that each participant perceived that performance gaps existed in the three domains of knowledge and skills, motivation, and organizational structure or practices. The most salient perceived performance gap was organizational. The second most common perceived performance gap was motivation, and the least perceived was motivation.

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: A GAP ANALYSIS OF THE PROVISION OF

COORDINATED STUDENT SERVICES IN MARYLAND

by

Michelle E. Daley

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March 2019

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Dedication

To God be the glory. I dedicate this study to my mother, Bernice A. Daley, who was my foundation. My mother instilled the importance of education in me from a young age. When I was a young girl, she taught me a poem that I kept close to my heart. "Silver and gold will vanish away, but a good education will never decay." She always taught me to reach higher for the stars and to never lose sight of my goals. Mom, thank you for teaching me that I can, I will, and I must. When I face challenges, I think back on the sacrifices my mother made for me so I can pursue my educational dreams. As my angel, she remains my everything. I kept my promise to you. I love you.

This journey is also dedicated to my daughter, Kiara Cherae; my heartbeat. My daughter brings me joy. Without her support and love, I could not have made it this far. You inspire me more than you know. Since the day you were born, I saw the strength in you that blossomed into the beautiful woman you are today. You are truly a "Tower of Strength." I thank God each day for allowing me to be your mom. I thank you for being you.

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Thirdly, to my friends who reviewed, edited, and reassured me throughout the process. I thank you all for your guidance, encouragement, and support. Words cannot express the appreciation I have for each of you. Finally, I would like to thank the members of the coordinated student services teams who trusted me enough to agree to participate in the study. Your time and honesty are appreciated.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In a perfect school, all the students would come ready to learn and achieve their fullest potential. However, on a daily basis, students are faced with a variety of problems at home, in their neighborhoods, with peers, and with personal issues that pose barriers to learning. These barriers disproportionally impact students who are economically disadvantaged and live in undesirable conditions. These students are more likely than their affluent peers to respond to learning barriers by engaging in dangerous behaviors (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1977). For example, a student who lives in a home with abusive behaviors or a neighborhood with high levels of violence is more likely to become both a victim and perpetrator of violence (Garbanzo, 1995). Students with behavior issues and emotional problems that are often caused by barriers require individualized support services (Adelman & Taylor, 2012).

Students experience barriers to learning resulting from both internal and external factors. These factors cause students to be ill-prepared for schooling. External factors include family, community, school, etc. (Smith, 2010). Internal factors include categories such as social differences, disabilities, and vulnerabilities (Howard & Catalino, 1992). Figure 1 outlines various external and internal factors that may impede students' ability to succeed academically, emotionally, and socially. According to Adelman and Taylor (2014), barriers to learning are a common concern and challenge faced by students across the country.

External Factors	Internal Factors
Examples of Internal and External Factors that Can Increase Barriers to Learning	
Community ☐ High poverty ☐ High rate of crime, drug use, violence, gang activity ☐ High unemployment/abandonment/floundering businesses ☐ Disorganized community ☐ High mobility ☐ Lack of positive youth development opportunities	**Internal Student Factors** ☐ Neurodevelopmental delay ☐ Physical illness ☐ Mental disorders/Disabilities ☐ Inadequate nutrition and health care ☐ Learning behavior and emotional problems that arise from negative environmental conditions exacerbate existing internal factors
Family ☐ Domestic conflicts, abuse, distress, grief, loss ☐ Unemployment, poverty, and homelessness ☐ Immigrant and/or minority status ☐ Family physical or mental health illness ☐ Poor medical or dental care ☐ Inadequate child care ☐ Substance abuse	
School and Peers ☐ Poor quality schools, high teacher turnover ☐ High rate of bullying and harassment ☐ Minimal offerings and low involvement in extracurricular activities ☐ Frequent student-teacher conflicts ☐ Poor school climate, negative peer models ☐ Many disengaged students and families	

Figure 1: External and Internal Factors Impacting Student Learning

Source: Adelman & Taylor, 2014

Internal and External Risk Producing Factors

In Maryland, the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) mandates that all 24

school systems must have a coordinated student services team that identifies student

needs and implements and delivers preventive and intervention services to all students,

particularly those who experience barriers to learning.

An essential part of addressing internal and external factors is identifying the

cause. External factors may stem from risk-producing conditions such as extreme

economic deprivation, low neighborhood attachment, availability of drugs and firearms, gang-related activities, community disorganization, diverse family conditions, and inadequate health care. Internal factors may stem from risk-producing conditions such as behavior and emotional problems, lack of interest in school, and manifestation of pervasive and severe psychological problems.

Students who experience behavior problems caused by internal factors direct their behaviors inward. They become isolated, withdrawn and demonstrate behaviors that can be linked to depression. Internalizing behaviors are associated with problematic internal feelings, such as anxiety, sadness, and fearfulness (Davis, Young, Hardman, & Winter, 2011). Students who experience behavior problems caused by external factors demonstrate their behaviors by acting out and disrupting others. These students are more likely than their peers to violate norms and/or engage in aggressive behaviors (Bernes, Bernes, & Bardick, 2011). For example, research shows that children whose parents are violent and have arrest records tend to become violent and get involved in trouble with the law (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006). School system support services are intended to support these students by attempting to mitigate the negative impact of these barriers on learning outcomes.

Students who experience barriers to learning often improve their overall performance when they receive effective support services. Research shows that when students are supported effectively, they demonstrate reduced disruptive behaviors and emotional distress, and show significant improvement in emotional and social skills, and

display a caring attitude and positive social behaviors (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnick, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

Fragmented Student Support Services

One of the biggest challenges to the delivery of effective support services is the ability to deliver such services in a cohesive manner (McDonnell- Pleasants & Soricone, 2014). Attempts to meet student needs with fragmented and disconnected support services result in initiatives implemented in silos, communication problems, duplicated efforts, and lost opportunities (Taylor, 2012).

For over 25 years, the fragmentation of student support services has been the focus of many policy reports and initiatives (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). Research shows that student support services are often viewed as supplemental services or operate as ad hoc services, and are delivered in a piecemeal approach (Gardner, 2005). Figure 2 illustrates fragmented services that are often provided to address student learning barriers. Fragmentation in the delivery of student support services is in contrast to the coordinated and collaborative efforts of a coordinated student services team model.
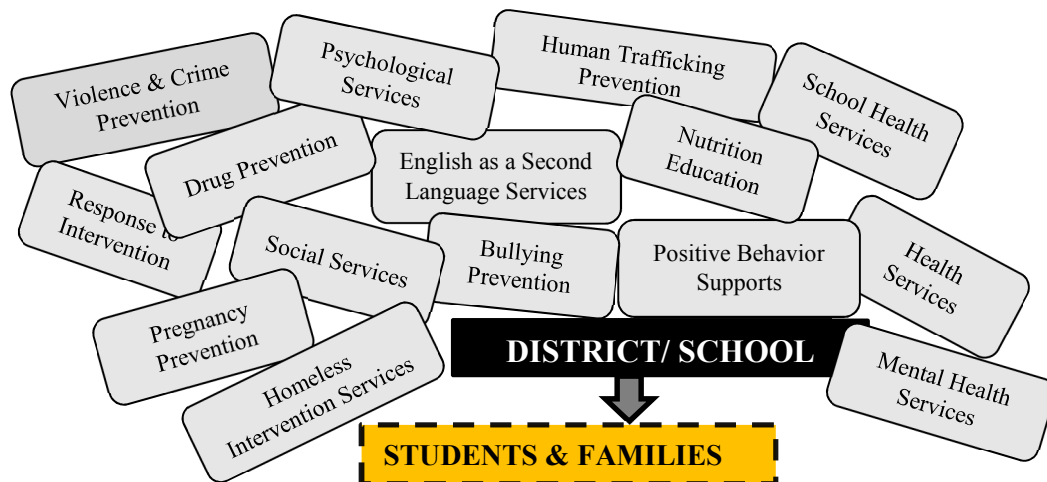
Figure 2: Fragmented Set of Student Support Services Source: Adelman and Taylor, (2014).

The Impact of Fragmented Student Support Services

Given the reality of sparse resources, the provision of student support services is often not coordinated. Therefore, effective connections are not made with schools, students, communities, or learning support staff. This can result in schools drawing heavily on meager resources (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). As a result, school systems fail to reduce barriers to learning, and students do not receive the proper supports required to achieve desired academic and behavioral outcomes. Adelman and Taylor (2012) state that school improvement planning tends to address barriers to learning in a very superficial and fragmented manner that often fails to enhance student outcomes. This fragmented delivery does not strengthen opportunities for student growth and success; it weakens the chances of successfully addressing barriers to learning.

Coordinated Student Services Team

In contrast to the traditional fragmented approach, Maryland's student services regulation emphasizes the critical need for a comprehensive, unified, and equitable systematic approach. The coordinated student services approach seeks to implement a method that is organized and structured and that identifies students' needs and links intervention practices to address barriers to learning. The goal is to enhance collaboration with school systems and community to weave together overlapping resources into a comprehensive system to adequately address barriers to learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). School systems that adapt and weave together school and community resources in a highly functional manner are often successful.

A comprehensive and cohesive approach to providing student supports includes a sense of shared responsibility for student success. This approach requires support services team members to organize a system of regular collaboration, coordination, and communication that demonstrates a shared vision to achieve the goal of improved student outcomes.

Coordinated Student Services Team Model

Developing an effective student support model begins with understanding the needs of students and the barriers that hinder their achievement. During the past three decades, Maryland has become a national leader in coordinated student services. In 1989, Maryland implemented the COMAR Coordinated Program of Pupil Services (COMAR 13A.05.05.01). The terms "coordinated program of pupil services" and "coordinated student services" are interchangeable. The COMAR mandates that all 24 school systems must have a coordinated student services team, and each team must include skilled practitioners to address students' barriers to learning.

The coordinated student services team includes a school counselor, a school psychologist, a school health services specialist, and a pupil personnel worker. The team helps meet the needs of students through efforts in six clusters of activities: improving social skills, providing mental health services, removing barriers to achievement, serving as an advocate agent, providing organizational support with schools, and positively addressing student behavior and disciplinary problems (Louis & Gordon, 2008). The coordinated student services team approach is designed to safeguard against fragmented

delivery of support services. Figure 3 illustrates Maryland's coordinated student services team model.
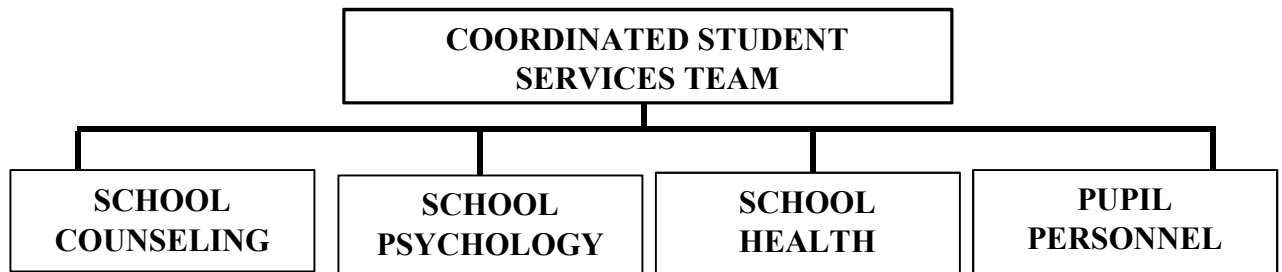
Figure 3: Maryland's Coordinated Student Services Team Model

Source: COMAR 13A. 05.05.01

The goal of Maryland's coordinated student services team model is to foster collaboration that focuses on a student health as well as personal, interpersonal, academic, and career development (COMAR, 13A.05.05.01). Each coordinated student services team member contributes different areas of expertise.

School Counselor

The school counselor is critical on an educational team. The counselor "helps all students in the area of academic achievement, personal/social development and career development" (ASCA, 2013). The services provided ensure that students become productive and well-balanced adults. School counseling services are often extended to families who may require support services. The COMAR regulation related to the school counselor may be found in Appendix A.

School Psychologist

School psychologists work to "help students succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. They collaborate with educators, parents, and other professionals to create a

safe environment for students that strengthens connections between home and school"

(NASP, 2003). The goal of the school psychologist is to prevent or remediate

educational, emotional, or behavioral problems by identifying, analyzing, and reporting

psychoeducational needs through consultation, observation, or through psychological and

educational assessments. The role of the school psychologist on the coordinated student

services team is to provide support services to students who exhibit mental health and

behavioral concerns. The COMAR regulation related to the school psychologist may be

found in Appendix A.

Pupil Personnel Worker

Like school counselors, the support services that the pupil personnel worker

provides may be extended to families. In collaboration with community partners, pupil

personnel workers provide a program in a systematic approach that uses resources from

home, school, and the community to improve the social adjustment of students. These

programs are designed to address a student's academic, personal, and physical needs by

providing comprehensive casework management. The goal of the pupil personnel worker

is to "give all students the opportunity and resources to help them succeed academically

and socially in a safe and healthy school environment" (Openshaw, 2008, p.4). The

COMAR regulation related to the pupil personnel worker may be found in Appendix A.

School Health Specialist

The goal of the school health specialist is to advance "the well-being, academic

success, and life-long achievement of students" (NASP, 2003). The integration of health

services into the framework of the school community promotes students' well-being for

learning, active collaboration with others to build student and family capacity for adaptation, self-management, and self-advocacy. As a component of Maryland's coordinated student services team, the school health services standards are linked with Maryland's Department of Health (MDH) public guidelines and standards for school health programs. The law, as noted in the Education Article, Section 7-401, states that MDH, in collaboration with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), provides assistance to school systems and local health departments in implementing these standards.

The Rationale for Coordinated Student Services Teams

The purpose of student services programs and teams is to strengthen academic achievement by working to meet their psychological and educational needs (NASP, 2004). Students may require support services because of family challenges, economic deficiencies, difficulties with academics and behavior, a lack of motivation, or health concerns. Often, these students are not engaged in the learning process and require support services to enhance their academic achievement (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007).

Each member of the coordinated student services team delivers support services by employing a collaborative and cohesive approach. The role of each member is essential to the work the team provides. The next section provides the background and history of Maryland's coordinated student services team program and model.

Background and History: Maryland's Coordinated Student Services

In 1983, Maryland established the Maryland Commission on Secondary Education Student Services and Activities Task Force. The task force was charged to

examine student activity in Maryland public schools and make recommendations to improve programs for students (Maryland State Department of Education, 1985). The task force conducted a significant study that emphasized students' needs that impact academic success. In 1985, the task force completed its findings and outlined recommendations recognizing the need for student support services in the areas of interpersonal concerns, career development, academics, health-related issues, counseling, and psychology (Maryland Commission on Secondary Education, 1985). The recommendations explicitly state that "each local school system should provide a coordinated, comprehensive pupil services program consisting of guidance, health, psychological, and pupil services" (Maryland Commission on Secondary Education, 1985, p.17). The recommendations laid the groundwork in 1989 for the implementation of Maryland's coordinated student services program team model (COMAR 13A.05.05.01).

Figure 4 illustrates the cohesive and comprehensive structure of the coordinated student services team model. The support services listed are not exhaustive but illustrates a sample of support services provided.

COORDINATED STUDENT SERVICES MODEL

SCHOOL COUNSELOR	PUPIL PERSONNEL WORKER	SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST	SCHOOL HEALTH SPECIALIST
Counseling Services	Homeless Intervention Services	Psychological Assessment	Immunization
Social Services	Drug Intervention Services	Mental Health Services	School Health Services
Behavior Services	Juvenile Court	Psychological Services	Nutrition Education
College and Career Readiness	Child Protective Services	Social Services	Clinic Services
Academic Achievement	Code of Discipline	Drug Prevention Services	Pregnancy Prevention
	Violence & Crime Prevention		Drug Intervention Services

Figure 4: Cohesive and Comprehensive Coordinated Student Service Model
Source*:* COMAR 13A. 05.05.01

Coordinated student services team members conduct needs assessments to guide

and organize procedures to deliver services that are critical to addressing barriers to

learning. These services are frequently provided in collaboration with community

partners. In addition, based on student need, coordinated student support services address

alternatives to suspension, attendance, drop-out prevention, school success, and social-

emotional learning barriers (COMAR, 13A.05.05.01).

The implementation of coordinated student services to address barriers to learning

is a common theme throughout the literature (Adelman & Taylor, 1994). It is imperative

for a well-designed policy to ensure resources to facilitate systemic improvements to

support students. If efforts are coordinated, it is more likely that the complexities of

behavioral disorders can be understood and student competencies improved (Norby, Thurlow, Christenson & Ysseldyke, 1990).

The Significance of Coordinated Student Services

A coordinated student services system of supports includes school systems and community partners collaborating to address students' needs. This approach eliminates fragmented support services and marginalized student supports (Adelman & Taylor, 2012) to engage and re-engage students. It is essential for school systems to eliminate the fragmented student support approach and implement a cohesive and comprehensive system. According to Adelman and Taylor (2008), this approach is the key to empowering students with an equal opportunity to learn.

Comparing Traditional School Services to Student Support Services

The traditional approach to addressing barriers to learning has been disjointed and ineffective. Although research shows enhancements to coordinate student services efforts over the years (Greenberg, O'Brien, Weissberg, Zins, Resnik, Frederick, & Elias, 2003), most school improvement policies and practices remain driven by the two-component framework. The two-component framework is comprised of the following: (1) instruction and curriculum; (2) management/governance, which downgrades efforts related to additional supports (Adelman & Taylor, 1998). Figure 5 illustrates the two-component framework that focuses on these domains. This framework lacks the student services component that is critical to a comprehensive model.

Two-Component Framework Shaping School Improvement Policy

Some Students & Learning Supports
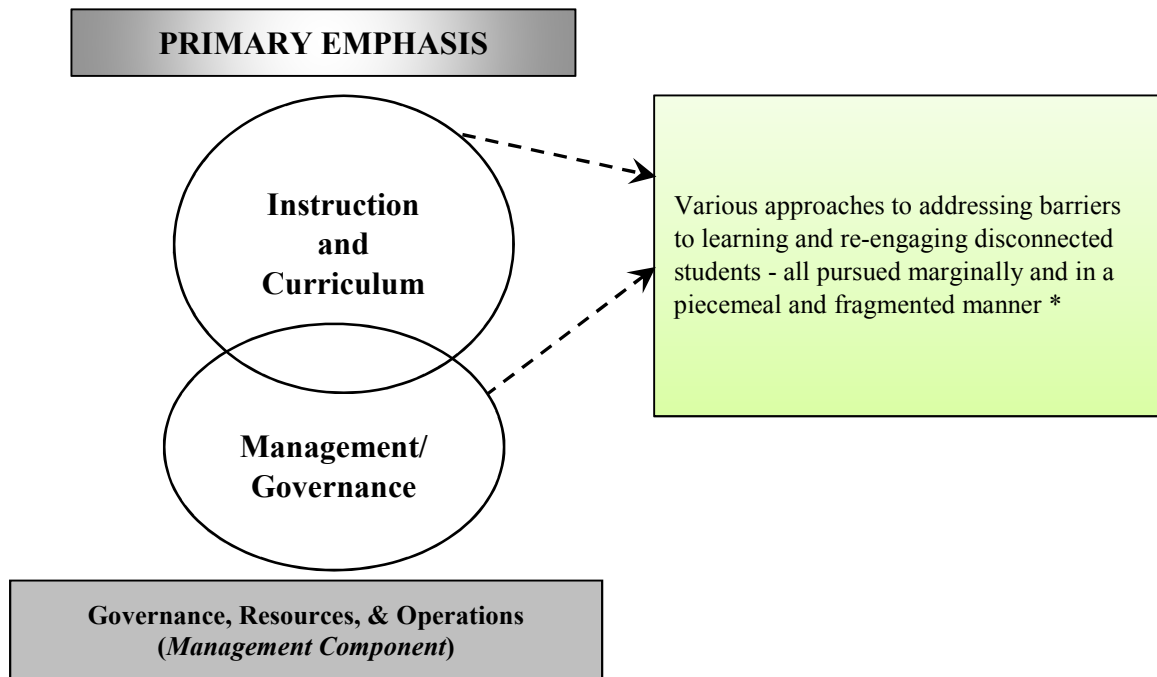
Figure 5: Two-Component Framework
Source: Adelman and Taylor, 2014

According to Adelman and Taylor (1994, 2010, & 2012), the student services

component is essential in policy and practice to the development of a comprehensive

student support approach. This approach is a three-component framework (see Figure 6).

Its objective is to address barriers that interfere with student learning and development,

and to re-engage students in classroom instruction. Despite the advantages of

incorporating this holistic support approach, many school systems fail to implement it for

numerous reasons.

**Three-Component Framework for Cohesive and
Comprehensive School Improvement**

**Instructional/
Development**

*** Learning
Support**

**Management/
Governance**

*The learning support component includes a continuum
of support services that focus on addressing barriers to
learning, healthy development, preventive practices and
emphasize on re-engaging students in the classroom and
school-wide
(Education Development Center, Inc., 2012).
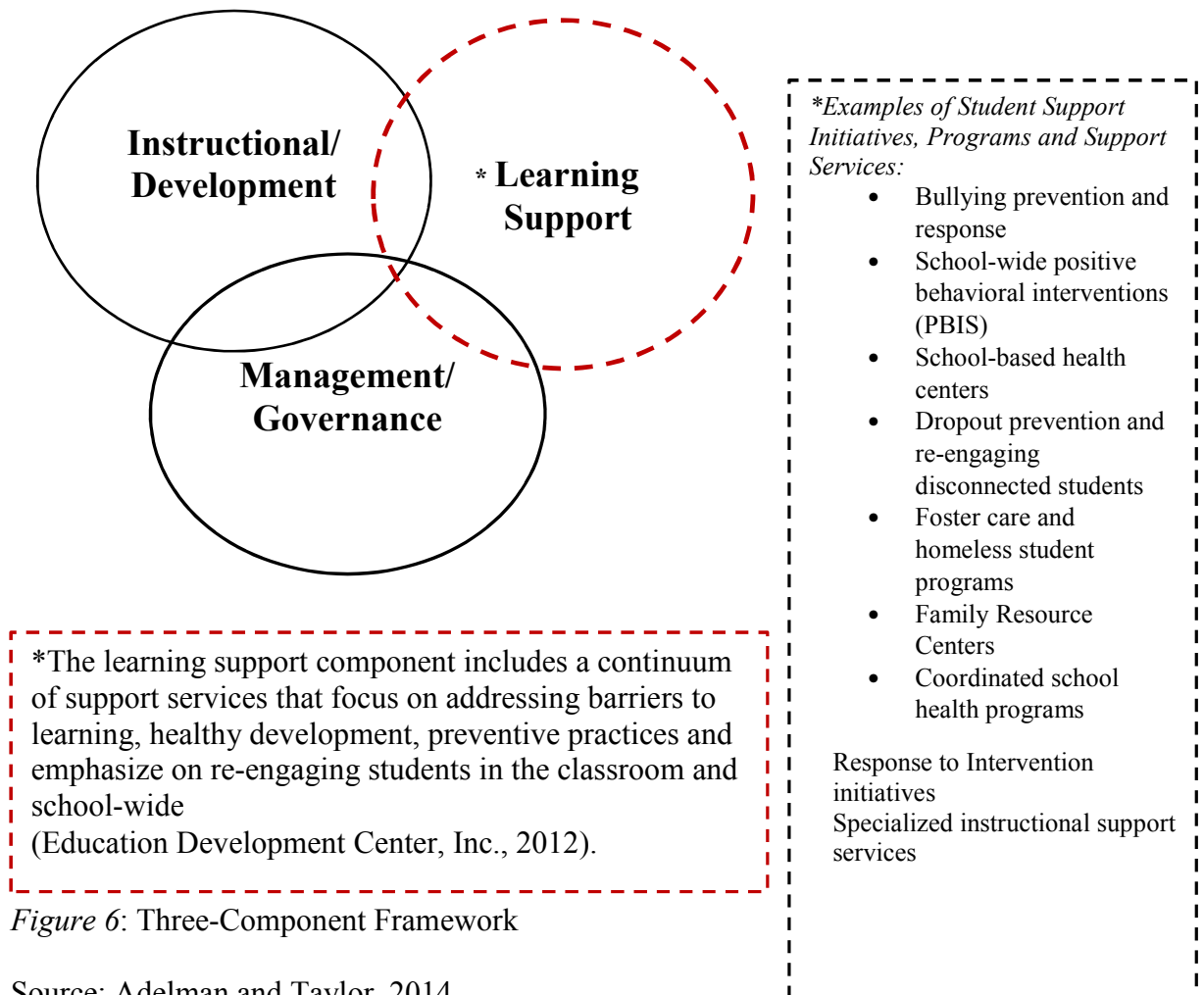
Figure 6: Three-Component Framework

Source: Adelman and Taylor, 2014

**Examples of Student Support
Initiatives, Programs and Support
Services:*
- Bullying prevention and
  response
- School-wide positive
  behavioral interventions
  (PBIS)
- School-based health
  centers
- Dropout prevention and
  re-engaging
  disconnected students
- Foster care and
  homeless student
  programs
- Family Resource
  Centers
- Coordinated school
  health programs

Response to Intervention
initiatives
Specialized instructional support
services

Impediments to Implementation of Coordinated Student Services

Identified Gaps in School Systems' Coordinated Student Services Programs

Every five years, the MSDE conducts a coordinated student services team site visit with all 24 of Maryland's school systems. The purpose of the site visit is to gain insight into the rigor of the school system's coordinated student services program and identify programmatic and professional development needs (MSDE, 2018). In addition, the site visit ensures the school system's program is coordinated, operates collaboratively, and provides services to increase student outcomes.

A coordinated student services site visit report is completed after each site visit. The report includes commendations and recommendations. Commendations underscore areas of the program that are working well. Recommendations identify gaps in services and suggest enhancements that will improve the function and outcomes of the program.

Fiscal Barriers

Many times, recommendations of a fiscal nature (e.g., hire additional personnel such as counselor or pupil personnel worker) can be challenging. The recommendations are provided to the school system's superintendent and director of student services, who then present the results of the report to each school system's local board for funding approval. If funding is denied, the suggested recommendations may not be fulfilled, which frequently results in current team members having to take on additional tasks. This increased responsibility lessens their focus on their primary duties. Other recommendations may fall into the category of program implementation, delivery of services, or required professional development.

The Ratio of Students to Coordinated Student Services Team Specialists

When school systems face financial pressures due to budget restraints, recommendation compliance may be delayed. For example, as budgets decrease, the coordinated student services specialist to student ratio can become an obstacle to the provision of support services. For instance, school psychologists are in short supply, so a recommendation to hire additional school psychologists may not be feasible due to budgetary restraints. According to the National Association of School Psychologist (NASP), the recommended ratio for school psychologists to students is one school psychologist for every 500–700 students. However, in Maryland and many other states, one school psychologist may be serving double the number of recommended students. In some states, the ratio is closer to 1: 2,000 and can be as high as 1:3.500 (Weir, 2012). Not all students require the services of a school psychologist, but the ones who do may experience delays or never receive them at all.

Like with school psychologists, there is a shortage of school counselors. School counselors play a vital role in maximizing student success by providing support services to families when needed. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a ratio of one school counselor to 250 students (ASCA, 2005). The average student to school counselor ratio in the United States is one counselor to 491 students. The highest ratio was reported in Arizona, where one school counselor served 941 students. In Maryland, the ratio is one school counselor to 371 students (ASCA, 2014). High student to school counselor ratios can impede the delivery of support services. In

Maryland, local school boards are not mandated to fund recommendations outlined in the site visit report, which means many necessary improvements are never made.

Effect of Impediments to Implementation on Coordinated Student Services

When students experience barriers to learning and are unable to receive support services, the effect is often academic disengagement. Disengagement influences negative attitudes toward academic performance, as well as impacts attendance and social behavior (Frederick, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004). Research shows that student disengagement can increase as they advance from elementary to middle to high school (Fredericks & McColskey, 2012). Disengagement from school can result in a lack of academic success, which is one of the most common factors interfering with well-being and future career opportunities (Adelman & Taylor, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated coordinated student services team members' perceptions of the factors that impede or limit the effectiveness of the provision of student support services.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Clark and Estes' gap analysis process (2008). The gap analysis process is a problem-solving approach to help improve performance by identifying performance gaps between current practice and the performance goal set by the team. The results of the gap analysis can be used to propose solutions to any identified deficiencies. Clark and Estes' gap analysis process was used as a framework to gain an understanding of each team member's perceptions about existing

performance gaps. These perceptions are significant determinants of how the team performs.

According to Clark and Estes (2008), it is imperative that change results from the systematic analysis of performance gaps and is accompanied by necessary knowledge changes and motivation adjustments. The gap analysis process was utilized as a framework to investigate the assumed causes of performance gaps between each team members' performance goals and actual performance. Root causes were identified as causal factors contributing to performance gaps.

Gap Analysis Process Framework

Rationale. Clark and Estes' (2008) gap analysis process was the most viable means to investigate the teams' perceptions of factors that impede or limit the effectiveness of the provision of services. The process was instrumental in identifying specific performance gaps between each team member's current practice and desired performance goals. The steps of the gap analysis process made it an effective tool to identify and communicate an organization's problems, goals, performance gaps, and proposed solutions to address the root causes of performance gaps. Figure 7 illustrates a flowchart of Clark and Estes' (2008) six-step process.

The Six Steps of the Gap Analysis Process

STEP 1
Identify Organizational Goals
What are the organizational goals?

STEP 2
Individual /Team Performance
What are the current practices or performance goals?

STEP 3
Performance Gaps
What is the size of the gap- between actual performance and performance goals?

STEP 4
Analyze gaps to determine causes
What are the root causes of the performance gaps?

5a. Knowledge and skill
Do they know what they are doing?

5b. Motivation
Are they doing what is required to be done?

5c. Organizational Barriers
What are the barriers in the organization? (Resources, policy, materials, process, etc.)

STEP 5
Identify Solutions and Implement
What solutions will address the root causes?
How to implement the solutions?

STEP 6
Evaluate
How to evaluate and measure the progress?

Figure 7*:* The Six Steps of the Gap Analysis Process

Source*:* Adapted from Clark, R.E. & Estes (2008). *Turning research into results*.

Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Gap Analysis Process

For this study, only steps 1–5 were used as listed below:

1. Identify clear organizational goals that define the vision for the organization;

2. Identify each team member's performance goals as clear, challenging, and current;

3. Determine performance gaps between performance goals and the actual performance by categorizing gaps;

4. Determine root causes by analyzing the gaps in knowledge and skills, motivation, and organizational barriers;

5. Propose solutions to address performance gaps.

For step 5, the researcher conducted a literature review for proposed solutions to address identified performance gaps.

Step1: Identify Organizational Goals

The first step of the gap analysis process is to identify organizational goals. Organizational goals are designed to be achieved in a specific timeframe and must be accomplished by an individual or team. Clark and Estes (2008) state that organizational goals must be specific enough to meet daily guidance and flexible enough to reflect changing conditions. Tasks performed by the team to work towards the organizational goals must be clear. Each team member must understand the goal, its impact on the organization, and its rationale.

According to Bandura (1977), effective performance improvement must start with clearly understood goals. The COMAR mandates each coordinated student services team to develop and implement a plan to outline their service program and develop a manual to include the team objectives, philosophy, and goals (COMAR, 13A.05.05.01). The manual for the MSDE and the school system were reviewed to identify the organizational goal for each team. The researcher contacted the director of student services of each team to verify that the goals were current.

Step 2: Identify Performance Goals

The second step of the gap analysis is an identification of each team member's performance goals, which are tasks that each team member must accomplish. The goals are individual and each team member determines their own performance goals. Each team member must have a clear understanding of the rationale for the task they must perform to achieve the goal, and whether they are achieving the goal.

Step 3: Determine Performances Gaps

The third step is an identification of team members' perception of the differences between their performance goal and actual performance.

Step 4: Analyze Performance Gaps

The fourth step is an analysis of team members' perception of the causes of the performance gaps identified in Step 3. Clark and Estes (2008) state that the performance gaps are in three domains: knowledge and skills, motivation, and organization. To close the performance gap, the root cause must be identified. To identify knowledge

performance gaps, this project investigated whether each team member knew why, when, what, how, and with whom they needed to achieve their individual performance goals.

To identify motivational gaps, this project investigated whether each team member chose to do the work, whether they were persistent, and whether they invested the mental effort to accomplish the goal (Clark & Estes, 2002). Motivational performance gaps were determined by interview responses.

Organizational barriers are attributed to process and procedures, organizational culture, or leadership that is not supportive of performance goals. These barriers may also include resources such as finances, time, and materials that the organization lacks to support the responsibilities of the team.

Step 5: Identify Solutions and Implements

The fifth step includes three components:

> 5A: Identify knowledge and skills solutions;
>
> 5B: Identify motivation solutions; and
>
> 5C: Identify organizational process and material solutions.

The goal for step 5A was to propose solutions that addressed the root cause for knowledge and skills performance gaps. The goal for step 5B was to propose solutions that addressed the root causes of performance gaps caused by a lack of motivation. The analysis of the motivation domain involves three indicators (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Clark & Estes, 2002, 2006):

1. Active choice: intention to pursue a goal is replaced by action;

2. Persistence: once started, continuing in the face of distraction; and

3. Mental effort: working smart and developing novel solutions.

Motivation keeps individuals moving so they can complete a task. When team members are motivated to complete their task, the work seems effortless and tasks are accomplished. Research shows that "people who are positive and believe they are capable and effective will achieve significantly more than those who are just as capable but tend to doubt their own abilities" (Clark and Estes, 2002, p. 82). Motivation is also a measure of how much effort is put forth to achieve desired or assigned goals. According to Clark and Estes (2002), an individual's motivation provides them with the goals and resources that can result in a reasonable amount of effectiveness.

The goal for step 5C was to propose solutions for root causes of perceived performance gaps caused by organizational barriers such as inadequate processes and procedures, organizational leadership, or organizational culture. The culture of an organization influences the beliefs and values of the organization. Individual's beliefs and values regarding the coordinated student services program are contingent to the success of the program and the support it receives.

Performance Gap: Knowledge and Skills

According to Clark and Estes (2008), "all organizational goals are achieved by a system of interacting processes that require specialized knowledge and motivation to operate successfully" (p. 104). To verify whether knowledge and skills performance gaps exist, it was essential to explore whether each coordinated student services team member knew how to achieve their individual performance goal. Team members may not be aware that they lack required knowledge and skills to achieve a designated goal.

Knowledge is said to be a significant factor behind sustainable advantage and the success of an organization (Jonsson & Foss, 2011; Alvesson & Karreman, 2001). If a person does not know how to achieve their performance goal, it indicates a need for job aids, training, or continuing or advanced education (Clark & Estes, 2008). The researcher reviewed each interview responses to determine whether lack of knowledge and skills was a factor in performance gaps.

Clark and Estes (2002) state that there are three indicators of concern in the knowledge domain for an organization: communication, procedures, and experience. Pintrich, Mayer, Wittrock, Raths, Airasian, & Cruikshank (2001) further categorize the knowledge domain into four indicators: factual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge, and metacognitive knowledge. The following section will define the four knowledge indicators.

Factual Knowledge

Factual knowledge is basic knowledge of facts specific to domains, contexts, or disciplines. Recalling, recognizing, and remembering are cognitive functions associated with factual knowledge (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Results from data collected and analyzed will reveal potential participants' knowledge of specific terminology, details, process, and knowledge of regulations related to the coordinated student services program and other information that contributes to the effective provision of student support services.

Conceptual Knowledge

Conceptual knowledge is the knowledge of models, structure, generalizations, classifications, theory, principles, and theories (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Conceptual knowledge represents the knowledge an individual has of a particular subject and how it is organized. This study investigated the extent to which team members possess the relevant conceptual knowledge.

Procedural Knowledge

Procedural knowledge includes knowledge of skills, techniques, methods, and criteria used to determine when to do a task (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). This study investigated the extent to which team members possess the relevant procedural knowledge to apply skills to accomplish tasks to achieve performance goals.

Metacognitive Knowledge

Metacognitive knowledge includes an understanding of self-knowledge and cognitive tasks. An individual with metacognitive knowledge considers contextual and conditional aspects of given activities and problems, which is an important characteristic of strategic behavior in solving problems (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Team members who demonstrated metacognitive knowledge can identify what skills to use and when to ask for assistance.

Performance Gap: Motivation

The second performance gap is motivational barrier. Investigating perceived performance gaps in the area of motivation can be challenging. These gaps are usually based on whether the team member chooses to accomplish the goal, the mental effort

they invest to accomplish the goal, and their persistence to reach the goal (Clark & Estes, 2008). This domain is categorized into three indicators: active choice, persistence, and mental effort (Schink, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008; Clark & Estes, 2002; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Active choice refers to making the decision to start a task. Persistence refers to continuing a task despite distractions. Mental effort refers to the degree to which an individual focus on a task or applies emphasis and energy to the task. A member of the coordinated student services team may have the knowledge to achieve a goal but lack the motivation to accomplish the goal.

Self-efficacy is the capacity for learning or performing a designated task (Bandura, 1977). A team member's self-efficacy is essential and can have an impact on goal achievement. The team member's belief could impact their motivation, personal choice, and effort invested to achieve a goal. According to Moulton, Brown, and Lent (1991), it is a powerful influence on a person's decision to achieve a task.

Active Choice

Active choice is the behavior of an individual who chooses to pursue a goal. When the behavior occurs depends on whether the individual had an option to make the decision during the goal setting process. If the individual was excluded from the process, he or she may exhibit defiance, avoidance, or procrastination behaviors. If, however, an individual was actively involved in the decision goal-setting process, even though they did not select the goal, they may choose to actively participate (Clark & Estes, 2002).

Persistence

An individual's ability to overcome distractions and maintain focus on a task to achieve a goal is persistence. To provide full attention to a goal, one must possess self-discipline not to allow distractions to obstruct him or her from achieving the goal. Clark and Estes (2008) state that when people become distracted from a task too often or for a long period of time, they tend to have a persistence problem. However, if individuals stay focused when faced with similar distractions, then he or she is persistent. This study investigated whether coordinated student services team members lack the persistence to focus on tasks required to achieve their performance goals.

Mental Effort

The final facet of motivation performance is mental effort. According to Fiske and Taylor (1991), individuals are always trying to conserve energy; it seems to be natural behavior. Individuals are motivated to use effortless thinking to do a task that is routine. If an individual can use his or her past experience to perform a task, mental effort is not required. However, if the task is challenging and requires invested time, a great deal of mental effort is required to achieve the goal (Aronson, 2008).

The gap analysis process investigated whether team members used mental effort to accomplish their individual performance goal. Mental effort may also be presented in two areas of confidence: under-confidence and over-confidence. Under-confidence occurs when a person feels he or she lacks knowledge and will fail at the task; therefore, he or she refrains from putting forth mental effort. On the contrary, someone who is over-confident may show a lack of mental effort because they may assume they can rely on

past experiences. People who are challenged by a task but are neither under-confident nor over-confident seem to invest the most mental effort (Clark & Estes, 2008).

Active Choice	Persistence	Mental Effort
Intention to pursue a goal is replaced by action.	Once started, we continue in the face of distractions.	People work smarter and develop novel solutions.

Increased Performance
Increased motivation combines with effective knowledge, skills, and work processes to result in goal achievement.
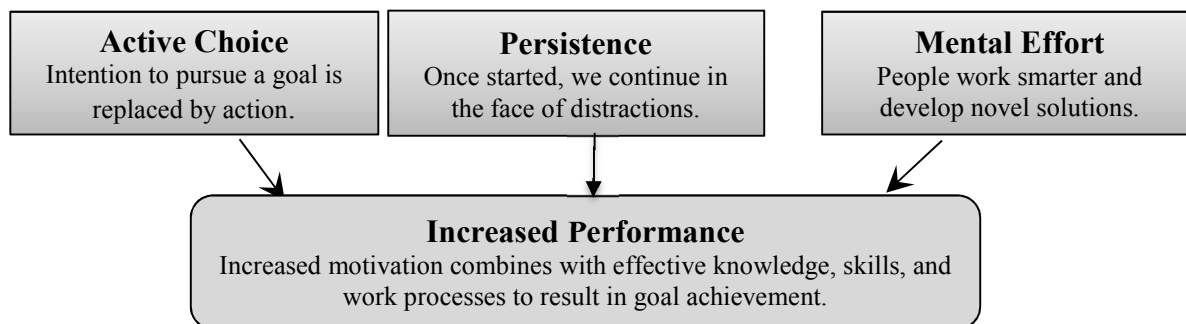
Figure 8. *Three Indicators of Motivation Performance Gaps*

Source: Adapted from Clark and Estes, Turning Research into Results, 2008

Root Causes of Organizational Barriers

The third performance gap is organizational. These barriers fall under four indicators: organizational culture, organizational leadership, work process and procedures, and resources.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is one of the major issues in education (Alverson, 2012). The culture of an organization dictates its core beliefs and values, and how the work of the organization is accomplished. It is the way people in an organization think, feel, and believe. Organizational cultures influence how individuals work together to complete tasks. The culture of the organization can be viewed as the social glue contributing to keeping the organization together (Alverson, 2012).

Organizational Leadership

The COMAR mandates a coordinated student services team must consist of skilled practitioners in four areas: school counseling, school health, school psychology, and pupil personnel. Each team is led by a director. The director of student services coordinates staff, resources, and services for the team and is responsible for additional duties that are essential in achieving the goals of the organization. Clark and Estes (2008) state that leaders must be perceived as legitimate, trusted authorities with a convincing rationale for goals to be achieved. This study investigated the ability of the director to maintain focus of the vision of the team to ensure alignment to the organizational goals.

Work Process and Procedure

Processes and procedures play a significant role in creating an orderly, resourceful, and effective organizational culture. They ensure coordination and are important for individuals to work together in the service of the organizational goals. When an organization fails to align resources, processes, and goals, the result can be confusion, inefficiency, and disappointment (Clark & Estes, 2009). This study explored organizational gaps such as inadequate work processes and procedures that could hinder the coordinated student services team from achieving performance goals.

Resources and Materials

"Resources are to a complex organization what food is to the body," (Marzano, Water, & McNully, 2005, p.59). Employees require adequate materials to perform their job, so a lack of resources and materials can lead to performance gaps. Clark and Estes

(2009) assert that organizations require tangible supplies and equipment to aid

individuals and teams as they perform tasks and procedures related to goals. Resource

deficiencies such as budgetary challenges and lack of staff can be contributing factors to

perceived performance gaps. This study investigated whether organizational barriers such

as inadequate resources and materials were evident.

Problem Statement

The goal of this study was to use the qualitative case study method to

investigate the perception of factors that impede or limit the effectiveness of the

provision of a coordinated student services team from one school system and the at the

MSDE. The study investigates the root causes of performance gaps. The qualitative case

study approach was used to gain an understanding of the perceptions based on team

members' values, opinions, and knowledge. The team members' perceptions are best

understood through qualitative means.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of coordinated student support team

members about the performance gaps that are evident in the

provision of support services?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of coordinated student services team

members about the root causes of the perceived performance gaps?

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of coordinated student services team

members about approaches that could be implemented to close the performance gaps?

Significance of the Study

Given the body of evidence supporting the need for major systematic changes in education, it is surprising that minimal attention has been given to addressing barriers to learning (Adelman, 2017). Although education reform continually evolves, school systems continue to deliver support services in an ad hoc and fragmented manner. Wiley (2005) states that although education reform remains downgraded, it is more important than ever for coordinated student services to support students learning.

As schools become more diverse, the need for support services is increasingly important. Schools are comprised of diverse student populations who experience language barriers and are from culturally and ethnically diverse families and communities. These diverse student populations often do not experience equal educational opportunities in schools (Banks & Banks, 2009).

The outcome of this study will benefit the members of the coordinated student services team. Additionally, the study provided the teams the opportunity to gain insight into performance gaps and root causes that may be limiting their effectiveness. Both coordinated student services teams may use the Clark and Estes' gap analysis process as a self-assessment tool to identify performance gaps and root causes to enhance team performance. The coordinated student services team at the MSDE may benefit from this study by using the gap analysis process during each school system's coordinated student services team site visit. The results of the gap analysis may be used to supplement

recommendations identified during the site visit. The researcher benefitted from the study by gaining knowledge on a subject of significance through the experience of conducting in-depth interviews and analyzing the data.

Limitations of the Study

This study had several limitations. First, the school system's team was from a small school system in Maryland. Thus, the data were not transferable to all 24 school systems in the state, specifically school systems that are larger in size and population. Lastly, this study relied on the reported perception of team members and may be subjected to bias.

Delimitations of the Study

The coordinated student services team regulation (COMAR 13A.05.05.01) mandates that the structure of the coordinated student services team model may include practitioners other than the mandated team members. The team may include other practitioners to address other identified needs of students in the school system. Other skilled practitioners may include an attendance specialist, a coordinator of student interventions, or a homeless specialist. The delimitation for this study was the researcher's decision to select only five members from the school system's coordinated student team. The five members include the four mandated practitioners and the director of student services. The researcher also selected only five team members from the coordinated student services team at the MSDE. This decision excluded the perceptions of performance gaps of additional team members.

Definition of Key Terms

Barriers to learning: Any component of a child's life that negatively affects learning

such as social, emotional, psychological, health, and environmental factors

(Adelman & Taylor, 2000).

*Code of Maryland Regulations (*COMAR): An official compilation of all State

regulations issued by Maryland agencies.

Coordinated Student Services Team: A team of experts mandated by the Code of

Maryland Regulation (COMAR) to provide coordinated student services in all 24

Maryland school systems. Team members include school counseling, school,

psychology, school health, and pupil personnel worker (COMAR 13A.05.05.01).

Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA): One of the first and largest deferral laws

to provide monetary support for public education (Taylor & Christ, 2015).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): The reauthorization of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the national education law and longstanding

commitment to equal opportunity for all students (USDE, 2016).

No Child Left Behind: The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2011 was an act

embodying accountability standards that require states to administer a

standardized test to measure yearly progress of all students (Educational Act,

2001).

Performance Gaps: A performance gap is the difference between the current status (now) and the desired outcome (to be). The performance gaps are attributed to three factors: knowledge and skills, motivation and organizational barriers (Clark & Estes, 2008).

Summary

In 1983, Maryland revised the academic policy to improve student academics. This revision lay the ground work for the Maryland coordinated student services team model. The revisions resulted in a need to fully understand the impact of barriers to learning and recognize the significance of implementing a coordinated student services program to address student learning. The coordinated student services model is a means to address barriers for students who are disengaged and unmotivated from learning to becoming academically, emotionally, and socially successful.

Although research shows evidence that implementing a three-component framework to include student support services improves student performance, there remains a gap in school improvement efforts to ensure students are provided support services to improved student outcomes (Adelman & Taylor, 2014). The provision of student support services and effectiveness of the delivery of the services are essential to improving student outcomes. The theoretical framework by which this research study is guided identifies performance gaps in the three domains identified by Clark and Estes (2002) as the three "big causes" (p.43) in the areas of knowledge and skills, motivation, or organizational barriers. This chapter examined causal factors of performance gaps that may impede the provision of student support services.

Overview of Dissertation

The manuscript is organized into five chapters. Chapter I provides an introduction to the study. It consists of the purpose of the study, the theoretical framework, the problem of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the benefits of the study, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Chapter II includes a literature review of the topic. The literature review consists of a thorough review related to the evolution of student support services, the coordinated student services program and model, other student support options, the gap analysis process, the reluctance to implement coordinated student services, and other relevant subtopics. Subtopics include a discussion about the three domains of the gap analysis process, an analysis of each domain, an examination of perception related to the study, collaborative teaming, and policy implementation. Chapter III includes a description of the methodology. Chapter IV includes the results of the study, and Chapter V a discussion of the results.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Many educators believe strong academic preparation alone is insufficient to prepare children to be personally and socially healthy human beings. The notion of education's mission as a holistic one serving the "whole child" is the product of this perspective. It is undoubtedly a position held by public school educators of economically disadvantaged children, and it continues to be enacted into public education policy. As societal demands change and student needs increase, it is essential for education policies to include student support services to address barriers to learning. This chapter provides a review of literature relative to the provision of student support services to address barriers in learning.

The researcher conducted numerous searches using Onesearch to explore various search engines, including ERIC, JSTOR, and EBSCO. Additionally, searches were conducted on Research Port, PsycINFO, and the Sage website. The following keywords were used for the search: gap analysis, performance gaps, barriers to learning, student outcomes, student achievement, fragmented student support services, student support services, perception, collaborative teams, education reform, policy implementation, education policy, teamwork, and coordinated student services. Literature that referenced student support services for college students was not included in this study. This study focused only on support services provided to K-12 students.

In December 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reauthorized the NCLB Act. The ESSA reaffirmed the critical need to continue the use of student support

services and emphasized that barriers to learning need to be addressed to allow more students to meet challenging state academic standards (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2010). Unlike the NCLB Act that focused on student achievement based on test scores, the ESSA includes a nonacademic indicator. The nonacademic indicator is defined as the student support approach to address barriers to learning. This is an explicit recognition that academic achievement is not the only relevant factors to student success (UCLA, 2016).

The ESSA refers to individuals who deliver services as specialized instructional support personnel (SISP). This terminology is used strategically and deliberately throughout the ESSA. The SISPs stated in ESSA mirror the members on a Maryland coordinated student services team. In the ESSA, SISPs are defined as school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers and other professional personnel such as school nurses, speech pathologists, and others involved in providing assessment, diagnosis, counseling, education, therapy, and other supports (USDE, 2015). The additional team members outlined in ESSA and COMAR allow teams to add members as needed. The additional needs may be in areas such as attendance, substance abuse, violence control, physical and sexual abuse, delinquency, and dropout (Adelman & Taylor, 2006).

The History of Student Support Services and Rationale for the Need for Student Support Services

A significance of a comprehensive system of learning supports has been paramount to the achievement of all students. The need for comprehensive student

support services to address the myriad of barriers students face has been evident for years. In the early 20th century, many initiatives occurred to ensure families and children received required support services. Events included the Industrial Revolution and the vocational guidance era, along with innovations in child labor laws, mental health, and compulsory schooling. These movements set the stage for the delivery of services in counseling, psychology, and social services in schools (Warren, 2017).

For years, policymakers and school leaders were cognizant of the need to address barriers that impede student learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2006) in school and beyond. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was authorized to provide support services to students (Crawford, 2011). Other regulations such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, which reauthorized the ESEA, strengthened these requirements. In 1989, Maryland mandated that coordinated student services teams address barriers to learning caused by factors students experience in and out of school. The next section discusses the role of the school and risk-producing factors that are addressed by coordinated student services teams.

Approaches to the Provision of Student Support Services: Areas of Intervention

School system's coordinated student support services teams can change and improve the lives of students and families. These teams play a pivotal role in providing services to support students in a safe and non-stigmatizing environment. For students who come from less-than-optimal home backgrounds and neighborhoods, the interventions they receive in school can be a pivotal point in their lives (Gross, 2008). Given that students

spend most of their day in school, it is a haven to seek support to improve performance academically, socially, and emotionally.

Addressing Homelessness Barriers with Student Support Services

When a student experiences homelessness due to family conditions, services are most likely provided to the student and the family. The provision of services should be a collaborative effort of the entire team to ensure continuity of education for the student. An example of collaborative support services delivery includes the pupil personnel worker assisting with housing and other essential living requirements such as food, clothes, and connecting the student and family with community-based resources for long-term solutions. If required based on further assessment, the pupil services worker will collaborate with community agencies and other team members to provide additional services.

In this same scenario, the school counselor provides counseling intervention and preventive services to the student and the family; the school health specialist would address health needs that have gone unmet because of the family's lack of medical insurance coverage. The pupil personnel worker secures funding for the services, which may include medical assistance. The school psychologist may address mental health issues such as anxiety, anger management, substance abuse, emotional concerns, and/or behavioral issues. The support services provided by the team integrate a continuum of services to ensure positive academic and social outcomes for the student.

Addressing Mental Health Issues with Coordinated Student Services

Students who are mentally healthy go to school prepared to learn and are actively engaged in school activities. Mental health issues such as drug addiction, suicidal tendencies, psychological and social well-being problems, and emotional instabilities affect the way a student thinks, feels, and acts. The school psychologist provides support services to students to address mental health issues that impact academics, decision-making skills, self-awareness, and positive relationships. Kessler, Chui, Demler, Merikangas, and Walter (2005) state that it is vital to provide these services in schools to improve students' psychological safety as well as their academic performance.

A national survey of school-based mental health programs indicated that a considerable number of programs provided "pull out" counseling services to students (Foster, Rollefson, Doksum, Robinson, & Teich, 2005), which often competed with instructional time. To avoid this conflict, members of a coordinated student services support team would often collaborate with teachers, students, and families for indirect services to offer strategies and accommodations to use in the classroom, at home, and in the community. To plan and implement indirect services for students, the psychologist meet with the student for an assessment of the problem, develops a plan, and shares the strategies and accommodations with the teacher, family, and student. The delivery of indirect services teaches the student techniques that can be used not only in school, but also at home and in the community.

Comparison of Coordinated Student Services to Other Student Support Services

"Teams come in many different configurations and are tasked with performing different types of functions" (Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson, 2008, p. 411). In addition to the coordinated student services team, there are various student support options to address barriers to learning. Figure 9 illustrates the student support options and components with detailed similarities and differences for each area.

Comparison of Coordinated Student Support Services to Other Student Support Services

Guideline	Coordinated Student Services Team	Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team	Student Support Team (SST)	Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)
Team Composition	Mandated by the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR, 13A.05.05.01). Team members are mandated by regulation.	Mandated by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (Gartin, Murdick, & Hilton, 2006).	Mandated by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESEA included guidelines to provide direct support and resources to address barriers to learning (Crawford, 2011).	Mandated by the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR, 13A.08.04.03).
	Based on a multidisciplinary approach.	Based on a multidisciplinary approach.	Based on a multidisciplinary approach.	Originally designed for students with disabilities; refined for school wide behavior approach (PBIS Center, 2015).
	Initiated from the need to examine student activity programs in Maryland public schools.			
Population Served	Students who experience barriers to learning originated from internal and external barriers (COMAR, 13A.05.05.01).	Student who experience barriers learning originated from a diagnosed disability from the Individual Disability in Education Act (IDEA) (USDE, 2004) Team may serve an individual student.	Students who experience barriers to learning originated from internal and external barriers.	Initially designed for student with Disabilities; refined for whole school approach (Bui, Quirk & Almazan, 2010) Team may serve an individual student, student group, or whole school.

Guideline	Coordinated Student Services Team	Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team	Student Support Team (SST)	Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)
	Team may serve an individual student.		Team may serve an individual student or student group.	
Team Structure	Mandated team members; school counselor, school psychologist, school health and pupil personnel worker.	Mandated team members; special education teacher, general education teacher, parent, personnel to interpret testing, related services personnel; student at age 16.	Mandated team members; school counselor, school psychologist, school health, pupil personnel worker, social worker, and administrator.	Comprised of a leadership team at the State, school system, and school level.
	Other team members may be included for alternative and supplemental services for students at risk.	Other members may attend the meeting at the request of the parent or school.	Other members may be included for alternative and supplemental services for students at risk.	Across all tiers, the leadership team is responsible for establishing and implementing action plans; providing support to teachers, and school-based staff (Sugai, & Horner, 2009).
Purpose	To provide a coordinated program of student services for all students, focused on health, personal, interpersonal, academic, and career development of students (COMAR, 13A.05.05.01).	Provides the opportunity for teachers, school administrators, parents, related services personnel, and student to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities (USDE, 2000).	Focuses on referral triage and care monitoring of students and families (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2011).	To ensure students have access to the most effective instructional and behavioral interventions as possible to prevent and change patterns of problem behaviors (Sugai & Horner, 2006).
			Intervenes before problem reach severity that demands evaluation for special education (Bahram & Kavaleski, 2006).	Aim to address barriers to reduce problem behaviors (Bolanda & Horner, 2006).

Guideline	Coordinated Student Services Team	Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team	Student Support Team (SST)	Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)
Collaborative Requirements	Collaboration of school and community resources are weaved together into a comprehensive system of support to effectively address barriers to learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2015).	The IEP Team collaborates with specialized related service personnel (e.g., speech language pathologist, counselor, occupational therapist, etc.) to address barriers to learning.	Collaboration of school and community resources are weaved together into a comprehensive system of support to effectively address barriers to learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2015).	Collaboration of school and community resources are woven together into a comprehensive system of support to effectively address barriers to learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2015).

Figure 9: *Comparison of Coordinated Student Services to Other Student Support Services*

Purpose of Student Support Options

The purpose of school teams is to collaborate to solve problems and provide supports to students and families. Burns, Vanderwood, and Ruby (2005) defined collaborative problem solving as "a systematic approach with which a problem is conceptualized and identified, factors that contribute to the problem are analyzed, interventions are designed, and strategies are implemented and evaluated" (p.92).

The coordinated student services team's focus is to provide a cohesive program of services for all students. It focuses on health, personal and interpersonal well-being, academics, and career development (COMAR, 13A.05.05.01). These services support teachers, students, and families. In a similar manner, the SST focuses on referral triage and care monitoring (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2011). The goal of each team is to intervene before problems reach a level that demands evaluation for special education (Bahram & Kavaleski, 2006). Although the purpose for the IEP team is similar, the structure is different. The IEP team provides the opportunity for teachers, school

administrators, parents, related services personnel, and students to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities (USDE, 2000). For all student support options, students are referred, data are reviewed, and interventions are implemented and monitored to ensure progress. The PBIS team aims to address barriers to reduce problem behaviors (Bolanda & Horner, 2006). However, like the coordinated student services team, the IEP team, and the SST, the PBIS team ensures students have access to effective instructional and behavioral interventions to prevent and change patterns of problem behaviors (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

Coordinated Student Services Team Rationale and Benefits

The structure of the coordinated student services team is built on coordination and collaboration. Collaboration generally refers to an individual or team working together to achieve a common goal (Barkley, 2014). However, collaboration can be a more complicated process of negotiating shared and competing interest. The collaborative effort of the coordinated student services team to improve student outcomes is not the result of individual accomplishment; it is the result of a collaborative team culture. School systems rely on effective teams to resourcefully solve complex problems. "Collaboration is an untidy business full of unchartered territories, ambiguities, and institutional complexities" (Johnson, 1997, p.3).

Collaboration is a critical element in implementing and sustaining the coordinated team approach to improve student outcomes. It can be the primary factor in the collaborative problem-solving process that involves stakeholders from the school and community. The assumption of collaborative problem solving is that all students can

learn. Therefore, skilled team members working together are more beneficial than individuals working alone.

Collaborative problem solving is "a systematic approach with which a problem is conceptualized and identified, factors that contribute to the problem are analyzed, interventions are designed, and strategies are implemented and evaluated" (Burns, Vanderwood, & Ruby, 2005, p.92). The coordinated student services team is grounded in a multidisciplinary team model. "Programs termed multidisciplinary may be defined as bringing a team of professionals together to understand and address a particular problem or process" (Clark, 1993, p. 220). The coordinated student services team model is composed of team members collaborating disciplines to brainstorm and effectively improve student outcomes. An essential ingredient used to build a team involves shared vision and a concerted effort of each team member to increase the team's purpose. To ensure effective service delivery, team members must understand the regulations and purpose of the team, have knowledge of resources to address students' needs, and have knowledge of how to utilize those resources to make informed decisions.

To say all teams should have perfect collaborative team practices would unrealistic. Throughout the literature on collaborative teaming, there are discussions of teams that coordinate services and set up and implement initiatives. Examples of those teams are Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS). Rather than develop a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student supports, these types of teams perpetuate the fragmentation and marginalization of this essential component of school improvement.

The Reluctance to Implement Coordinated Student Services

Educational leaders are consistently consumed by the demands to increase student and overall school performance. In recent years, education leaders have experienced growing pressures from policymakers and the public regarding student achievement (Adelman & Taylor, 2012). Each day, these leaders are faced with choices about priorities to ensure students are receiving support services. The growth of policies for support services to improve student outcomes has been accompanied by an increase in guidelines at the state and federal levels. As these guidelines undergo challenges of translation from policy to practice, there is a need for educational leaders in schools and school systems to integrate school and community to build support structures to ensure high-quality implementation and sustainability. Although there has been an expansion of support service policies to enhance school-based initiatives, including an increased number and breadth of evidenced-based programs (Gottfredson & Wilson, 2003), many school systems are reluctant to implement support services.

With limited resources across the board, decisions to provide student support serviced have resulted in services implemented in a supplemental fashion, despite the need to ensure equal education. Many school systems have elected not to incorporate learning supports in their school improvement programs. As illustrated in Figure 5, the primary focus of many school systems is instruction and curriculum, with many learning support programs operating in an ad hoc fashion (Adelman & Taylor, 2012).

In a study conducted in the Minnesota school system, findings showed students lack access to support personnel because of understaffing and underfunding (Minnesota

Department of Education, 2014). Research findings also report a significant negative

relationship between emotional exhaustion and total job satisfaction of specialized

student support personnel (SSSP). Another study conducted by Brewer and Clippard

(2002) revealed that staff burnout and lack of job satisfaction among SSSP were a few

reasons school systems did not implement student support services.

To date, few school systems have proactively integrated effective coordinated

support service programs into their schools (Adelman & Taylor, 2000; Osher, Dwyer, &

Jackson, 2002). A thorough search of Maryland's coordinated student services teams

resulted in no prior studies conducted on this topic.

Based on federal accountability requirements, school systems are expected to

maintain academic standards for all students, including those experiencing barriers to

learning. As such, school systems are faced with the challenge of improving student

outcomes in academic, emotional, and social arenas. As a result, many federal and state

initiatives, programs, and reforms have been implemented. These implementations have

left school systems with a slew of unrelated initiatives that collectively consume massive

resources without fully addressing student needs (Childress, Elmore, & Grossman, 2006).

This leaves school systems struggling to achieve and maintain reform efforts.

Summary

This chapter included a review of literature exploring coordinated student services

team and other student support services teams. Resources were cited that expound on the

provision of support services and the impact that student involvement has on retention

and populations served. The reviewed literature provided the history and current practice

that solidified the significance of a comprehensive and coordinated student services

program.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design used to address the research questions, sampling technique, procedures, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of coordinated student support team members about the performance gaps that are evident in the provision of support services?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of coordinated student services team members about root causes of the perceived performance gaps?

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of coordinated student services team members about approaches that could be implemented to close the performance gaps?

Research Design

A qualitative approach was used in this study to better understand the values, opinions, and beliefs of each team member. Shank (2006) defines qualitative research as "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (p.4). Obtaining insight into human experiences and perspective to address the research questions required the collection of various types of data.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten coordinated student services team members; five from one school system and five from the state-level team. The

qualitative method allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the perceptions of performance gaps that assert the values, opinions, and beliefs of each team member.

Data collected revealed relevant themes and developed the critical context of team members' experience. For these reasons, the qualitative case study method was the most appropriate research design. According to Yin, a case study is useful when "how or why questions are asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control" (Yin, 2014, p.10).

Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling method was used to select team members from one of the 24 Maryland school systems and from the team at the state level. The goal was to select five team members from each team. Each team member from the school system team mirrored team members from the state-level team. The aim was to construct two teams with similarly skilled professionals that represented the four mandated areas in the COMAR: school counseling, school psychology, school health, and pupil personnel. The directors of student services from each team also participated in the study. Figure 10 illustrates the structure of each team.

School System
Coordinated Student Services Team
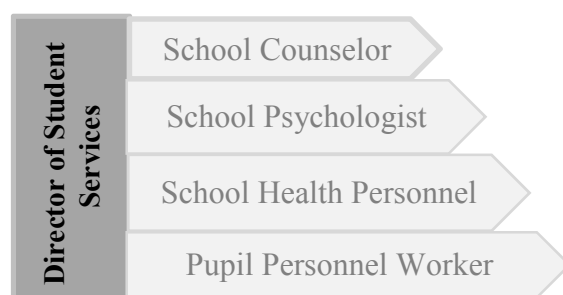
Maryland State Department of Education
Coordinated Student Services Team

Director of Student Services	School Counselor
	School Psychologist
	School Health Personnel
	Pupil Personnel Worker

Director of Student Services	School Counselor
	School Psychologist
	School Health Personnel
	Pupil Personnel Worker
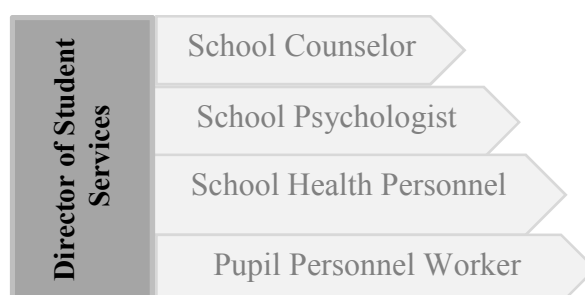
Figure 10. Structure of Coordinated Student Services Teams

As an employee of the MSDE, the researcher has access to a database that consists of the list of the coordinated student services team members across the state. After receiving the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the researcher forwarded an email to all team members in the 24 school systems, informing them of the study. The email included a link to a screening survey developed by the researcher (see Appendix B). The survey consisted of four questions to identify each participant's role on the team, the number of years they've spent as a member, the number of members on the team, and the name of the school system.

The screening survey was emailed to 205 individuals. The researcher gave the potential participants three weeks to complete the survey. A reminder email was sent two weeks after the initial email, then another two days before the deadline. During the three weeks, the researcher monitored the completion of the survey.

At the end of the three weeks, the researcher analyzed the collected data to identify team members using the following selection criteria: (1) The team member must be in one of the four mandated areas in COMAR; (2) The member must have participated in the school system's most recent coordinated student services site visit. Prior to reviewing potential participants' responses, the researcher investigated the year of each school system's most recent coordinated student services site visit. If the selection of four team members was not feasible based on the second criterion, members of a team at the time of the most recent coordinated student services team site visit occurred were selected. Each response of the screening survey was pivotal to the selection process.

Figure 11 provides the screening survey questions, the question format, and the purpose

of each screening survey question.

Screening Survey Question	Question Format	Purpose of the Screening Survey
What is your role on the coordinated student services team?	Possible Responses are: ☐ School counselor ☐ School psychologist ☐ School health personnel ☐ Pupil Personnel Worker ☐ None of the above	Potential participants must be from the mandated list of skilled professionals in COMAR 13A.05.05.01
Screening Survey Question	**Question Format**	**Purpose of the Screening Survey**
How many years have you been a member of your current coordinated student services team?	Radio button choices. The choices are: ☐ less than one year; ☐ between 1-3 years; ☐ between 3-5 years; and ☐ more than 5 years.	The goal is to identify a potential participant who was a member of a coordinated student services team during their most recent coordinated student services site visit.
How many members are on the coordinated student services team?	Drop down box ☐ 4 ☐ greater than 4	The researcher aims to mirror the number of coordinated student services team members at the school system to the number of team members at the MSDE. The number of team members at the MSDE is five. This includes the four mandated COMAR members and the director of student services.
What is the name of your school system?	Drop down box ☐ The names of all 24 school systems	The researcher will aim to select potential participants from one school system.

Figure 11. *Screening Survey for Participants*

Once the screening survey responses were analyzed, the researcher contacted each team member that met all participation criteria. Once participants were identified from the school system, the researcher forwarded a letter requesting participation to the school system's superintendent (see Appendix C). Once the request was approved, the researcher contacted each team member to confirm a date and time for an interview. The informed consent forms were forwarded via email to each team member, as well as the confirmation of the date, time, and purpose of the interview (Appendix F). The state-level team members were contacted directly. The informed consent form was forwarded to each team member, and the confirmation of the date and time and purpose of the study was forwarded as well.

Procedures

The interviews were audiotaped to capture the direct words of team members for coding and analysis. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The development of the interview questions was informed by a review of the literature on the gap analysis process, and the three domains in the areas of knowledge and skills, motivation, and organizational barriers. Interviewing several team members of each team allowed for cross-checking of information (Schensul et al., 1999). Member checking was conducted to verified data. Transcripts were emailed to team members to make edits and corrections if needed. The email informed team members that they were given two weeks to complete the process, and that a lack of response would be interpreted as the participant's willingness to proceed with the transcripts unedited.

To ensure anonymity, team members were referred to as numbers 1–10, instead of by names. The state-level team was assigned numbers one through five and the school system's team was assigned number six through ten. The data were analyzed manually. The researcher titled three large charts with categories for each performance gap: knowledge, motivation, and organizational. A separate large chart was titled "other performance gaps" to code data that did not fit in the other categories.

Each transcript was read thoroughly to get a general sense of the data. The data were then read again to obtain an overall meaning. The researcher read each interview question and each team member's response. Perceived performance gaps identified for each response were written on Post-it notes. Then the Post-it notes were placed in the applicable category on the performance gap chart. For example, if a team member stated that a lack of resources, such as funding, was a hindrance to accomplishing their performance goal, the response was placed on the organizational performance gap category. During the coding process, some codes were appropriate for more than one performance gap. For instance, if a team member stated there was not sufficient time to provide after school support services to homeless students, and team members have not explored options, this could be both an organizational and motivational performance gap because the organization has failed to implement adequate protocols on how to handle the population and the team had failed to use mental effort and persistence to address the matter.

Once perceived performance gaps are identified, an organization can address the issues to achieve its organizational goal. The perceived performance gaps may be caused

by a lack of knowledge, a lack of motivation, or a lack of organizational culture or leadership.

Instrumentation

The researcher developed a semi-structured interview instrument (see Appendix D). The three research questions were used as a guide to developing the instrument to investigate and provide insight of coordinated student services team members' experiences, beliefs, and values. According to Clark and Estes (2002), interviews provide an opportunity to learn the beliefs and perceptions into those that are directly involved with the work. The interview instrument consists of 14 questions. Questions one and two were developed to establish a rapport with participants. Question one asked participants to describe their role on the coordinated student service team and how many years have they been a member of the team. Question two asked, "What made you decide to become a member of the team?" One interview question allowed the researcher to identify participants' individual performance goals, and six questions were developed to gain a deeper understanding of participants' beliefs about potential performance gaps and the root cause of performance gaps. For example, some of the six interview questions asked:

- What are the goals/vision of the coordinated student services team?
- Which of those goals is the team doing best? In other words, tell me about the strength of the coordinated student services team.
- Which ones are they doing the least? In other words, tell me about some of the challenges for the coordinated student services team.

One question addressed research questions three to explore approaches participants perceived that could potentially close performance gaps. Four interview questions were formulated to provide additional data for research questions one and two. For example, additional questions included:

- What do you believe is keeping the coordinated student services team from being highly effective? (what is causing the gap between where you are now and where the perfect coordinated student services team should be).
- How do you know the team is being successful?

The interview instrument was developed with open-ended questions to provide flexibility to ask participants follow-up questions when needed. The questions were formulated so responses could be analyzed and categorized into the three performance gap domains: knowledge and skills, motivation, and organizational.

Data Collection

Interviews

The interviews were conducted with ten participants; five from a school system and five from the MSDE. For each team's goals to be achieved, the root causes linked to performance gaps need to be addressed. Potential solutions are presented and discussed in Chapter V. This project triangulated data collected from the interviews and the document analysis. According to Patton (1990), triangulation is a method to strengthen a study.

Interviews were conducted with each participant using the interview instrument with open-ended questions. The data for this study were collected via semi-structured interviews and document analysis of the school system's most recent site visit report documentation. Interviews were conducted in two locations: at the central office of the selected school system and the office of the Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Education Policy at the MSDE. The semi-structured interviews were informal and conversational. This allowed for flexibility and for the researcher to be responsive and ask follow-up questions for participants to elaborate on responses.

Document

The school systems' site visit reports are filed at the MSDE. The most recent report for the participating school system was obtained and reviewed. The researcher created a document analysis form (Appendix E) to document findings of the report.

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Data Analysis

</div>

Interviews

The analysis of the interview data took place in two phases. In phase one, themes related to the performance gaps were sought. In phase two, themes related to root causes of the performance gaps were explored. In both cases a thematic approach were employed. The interviews were audiotaped and manually transcribed into a Word document. Hatch (2002) states, "When the researcher transcribes the data, the researcher will be able to recognize words that a transcriber will not be able to understand, and the researchers will learn from the substance of the information" (p.113). The initial chunking process entailed using each performance gap domain to organize the data. Data

that were not relevant to the research questions and team members' experiences were eliminated. Domain #1 was the knowledge and skills performance gap. Domain #2 was the motivation performance gap. Domain #3 was the organizational barriers performance gap.

The researcher conducted a thematic analysis within each domain of participants' responses that were relevant to performance in knowledge and skills, motivation, and organizational domains. The researcher then looked for cross categories and cross cutting themes across participants' responses within the domain. In the knowledge and skills performance gap domain, two themes emerged, in motivation performance gap domain, four themes emerged, and in organizational performance gap domain, seven themes emerged.

To ensure accuracy, the researcher reviewed the data twice to verify all performance gaps were identified from participants' responses. After themes were identify, themes were analyzed to identify root causes. The identified root causes determined the lack of knowledge and skills, lack of motivation, and causes for organizational barriers that impede or limit the provision of student support services. For the knowledge and skills domain, causes were categorized by lack of factual knowledge, procedural knowledge, of conceptual knowledge, and metacognitive knowledge. Root causes for motivation performance gaps were categorized as lack of active choice, persistence, and mental effort. Root causes for organizational performance gaps were categorized as lack of culture, leadership, work and processes, and resources.

The data were reviewed several times, making notes to ensure each line was reviewed and all themes were identified. The researcher made notes in the margin to describe the properties of the content (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The data analysis process resulted in the identification of additional root causes such as lack of parental support and lack of community partnerships. These root causes are discussed in Chapter IV. Additionally, the researcher conducted a document analysis of the school system's most recent coordinated student services site visit report.

Document Analysis

The document analysis revealed evidence of performance gaps but no evidence of the root causes nor did it reveal evidence of approaches to close the gaps. The results of the document analysis are in Appendix E.

Ethical Considerations

Ensuring the ethical protection of team member was essential. Team members were informed that they were not obligated to participate in the study and that they had the option to decline to respond to an interview question or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Each team member received a copy of the signed informed consent form signed by the researcher. The consent form described that the data collected would not be shared, identities would be kept confidential, and the data would not be used for any purpose other than research. The team members were also informed that the data collected would be kept for three years in a data protected file used only by the researcher. According to Creswell (2009), it is the researcher's ethical duty to make sure

the data are maintained in a secure location and are not retrieved by anyone who might misappropriate the information.

For transparency purposes, the researcher disclosed her position as an employee of the MSDE. The researcher assured team members that the data would only be viewed by the researcher, only used for the study, and no other employee of the MSDE would have access to the data. To further ensure confidentiality, team members were informed that the researcher would use pseudonyms during the transcription of the data (Appendix B). Creswell (2007, p. 141) notes that a researcher is "protecting the anonymity of the informant by assigning numbers or aliases to individuals." Team members were also informed that there were minimal risks involved in this study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the bedrock of high-quality qualitative research (Birt, Scott, & Cavers, 2016). The researcher provided team members the opportunity to verify their interview responses through the member checking process, which is viewed as the single most important provision that can be made to bolster a study's credulity (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). After the data were collected, transcribed, and analyzed to identify themes, it was emailed to each team member to verify the accuracy of the information. They were allowed the opportunity to review, edit, delete, or revise responses to ensure the researcher accurately captured the information. The researcher informed each team member that they had two weeks to review and return the interview. It was understood that if the researcher did not receive any feedback after two weeks, then the researcher would move forward with the original transcription.

Credibility

According to Patton (1990), the credibility of the researcher is significant in qualitative research because it is the researcher who is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. For this study, the researcher utilized several steps to ensure credibility. After each interview, the researcher manually transcribed the data, and then reflected on each team member's responses to examine the effectiveness of the process. The researcher documented thoughtful comments aimed at identifying emerging patterns to inform the study. Recording reflective commentaries was vital and based on Guba and Lincoln's (1989) reference to progressive subjectivity. Progressive subjectivity provided the researcher the opportunity to monitor the construct of the study and document progress.

As an employee of the MSDE in the Student Services and Strategic Planning branch, the researcher participates as a member of the state team that conducts coordinated student services site visits in school systems. However, the researcher is not a direct member of the mandated coordinated student services team. The researcher informed team members that her relevant professional connections would not insert any judgment towards team members in the study. Additionally, to ensure credibility, the researcher conducted triangulation, a qualitative technique that involves the use of multiple procedures and data sources to corroborate interpretation of the data (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Patton, 2002; &Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Triangulating the data allowed the researcher to conduct a full assessment of the responses to the research questions.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter begins with the demographics of both coordinated student services teams. Then the results of the data analyses are presented in the following sections: (1) Summary of Perceived Performance Gaps; (2) Summary of Root Cause; and (3) Methods of Addressing the Root Cause of Perceived Performance Gaps. Subtopics are presented for each theme. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews and documents revealed that the perception of performance gaps was influenced by team members' role, experiences, and understanding of coordinated student services. The most common perceived performance gap was organizational. The second most common perceived performance gap was motivation, and the least perceived performance gap was knowledge and skills.

Develop Rationale for Becoming a Member of a Coordinated Student Service Team

The first interview question asked team members to describe their role on the team and the number of years they had spent in the position. The second question asked team members to state their rationale for becoming a member of the team. This allow the researcher to build a rapport with team members. According to Leech (2002), "Without rapport, even the best-phrased questions can fall flat and elicit brief, uninformative answers" (p.665).

Each team member described his or her role as stated in COMAR 13A.05.05. Several team members provided additional details about their role. One team member stated that his or her role allowed to "serve as a direct advocate for students and families

and for handling school-based situations more hands-on." Another team member articulated that his role is to "serve students who are disconnected from the traditional K–12 matriculation process."

The data revealed that all team members have a passion for helping students and families. According to Vallerand and Houlfort (2003), there are two types of passion for working: obsessive and harmonious. Obsessive passion refers to a "motivational force that pushes the person towards the activity," and harmonious passion refers to a motivational force that "leads people to engage in activity willingly and engenders a sense of volition and personal engagement" (p. 178). A few team members responses demonstrated how their intrinsic emotion coupled with experiences compelled their decision to become a member of the coordinated student services team. For example, obsessive passion was evident in one team member response, "I was drawn to the field to contribute to improving students; I have a passion for this work." Another team member spoke about personal challenges during her own academic career, which inspired her to help students now as an adult. Evidence of harmonious passion was also evident. One team member stated, "I was a struggling student myself, I have done a lot to help families and students; therefore, this was an easy choice of field for me." Another team member stated, "Being on the team is a passion for me, I like being in a field to help people." It was evident that these team members enjoyed working in an environment that provides support services to students and families. Another team member responded, "I desire to continue this work for as long as I can."

Table 1 illustrates each team member's role, the number of years as a member of the team, and each member's rationale for joining the team. Responses include direct quotes.

Table 1: Rationale for Becoming a Member of a Coordinated Student Services Team

Team Members	Number of years on the team	Rationale for becoming a member of the coordinated student services team
Team member one	14 years	"I've always been drawn to the field because of the contribution that you could make to the academic and behavioral support and well-being of students."
Team member two	12 years	"Being on the team is a passion for me, I like being in a field to help people."
Team member three	Three years	"I was a part of the strategic planning branch, from there I started learning things about student services. A few years later I was promoted to where I am now as a member of the team."
Team member four	Less than one year	"I started learning about student services about six years ago. I was the person who did student services for underperforming schools. When this position became available, I applied, and here I am now a member of the team."
Team member five	14 years	"I have a passion working with others, such as the community to help students and families. So coming from a school system where I was on a team, being on this team was a perfect match."
Team member six	Nine year	"Over the years I worked with agencies to provide services to kids. I enjoy serving students who are disconnected from the traditional K-12 matriculation process. This wasn't a difficult decision. I am passionate about helping children achieve."
Team member seven	Six years	"I enjoy working as a direct advocate for student and families and handling school-based situations more hands-on."
Team member eight	23 years	"I worked providing supports for students with behavior problems; to provide interventions, and to building parent relations, community relations. I served as an advocate for students and families."
Team member nine	13 years	"My passion for supporting children and participating in collaborative efforts inspired me."
Team member ten	15 years	"I have been a struggling student myself, I've done a lot to help families and students, therefore this was an easy choice of field for me."

The next section provides responses to address the second step of Clark and Estes' (2008) gap analysis process, which determines each team member's performance goal. Members were explicitly asked their intended goal as a member of the team. Their responses were used to identify perceived performance gaps. Table 2 outlines the responses.

Table 2: Intended Goals: Performance Goals

Team Members	Team members' intended goals as a member of the coordinated student services team
Team member one	"to have enough time to make a positive contribution in terms of looking at those psychological and emotional social issues that might impact the academic or behavioral performance of students in schools."
Team member two	"to be able to recognize how our discipline integrate for the good of the family and student and provide our expertise."
Team member three	"to have conversations with student services co-occur with student academic progress because in my opinion you can't have one without the other." "to have resources to perform our job."
Team member four	"to have the opportunity to problem solve and to provide some leadership with student service initiative."
Team member five	"to have the time to collaborate and provide services to families.:
Team member six	"to be able to serve children… to make sure kids are benefitting from the resources that you bring in."
Team member seven	"to be able to work proactively with staff to share the programming that we have to provide the delivery of services."
Team member eight	"I want to improve on building relationships with the parents and the community." "we are not just an entity out there that educate your child. We are all in this together and I would like to be able to build on that."
Team member nine	"to make sure we are meeting requirements of COMAR." "to make sure we are doing what we can to do for each student that is presented to this team." "to make sure schools have a better understand but not only for the individual student but may be able to relate that to other students in their building."
Team member ten	"to use all resources available to continue proving services to students and families and work closely with community members."

The performance goals were the basis on which performance gaps were identified. A performance gap is the difference between the goal and the actual performance. There were divided into the three domains: knowledge and skills performance gaps, motivation performance gaps, and organizational performance gaps. The interviews and document analysis revealed that some performance goals are being met, while others are not being met or have not been clearly identified. The data revealed repeated and similar responses, which are documented.

Perceived Knowledge and Skills Performance Gaps

Evidence of knowledge and skills gaps will derive from the following interview questions. The knowledge and skills interview questions are, "What are the goals/vision of the coordinated student service team?" "What is your intended goal as a member of the team?" "Can you identify some specific areas where you feel you are not doing well in meeting your goal on the team?" and "Would you consider these major challenges? Why?" Two themes emerged relevant to knowledge and skills performance gaps.

Theme 1: Inability of team member to respond to new situations

Knowledge is gained through experiences and familiarity. To address the perception of performance gaps in knowledge and skills, it is essential to assess what type of knowledge performance gaps exist. Any failure in a team member's knowledge and skills gap may limit the individual's ability to communicate and collaborate with the team.

The knowledge and skills of each team member are gained from specialized training and professional experiences. It is crucial for each team member to know the answers to "what," "who," "when," and "how" questions about the coordinated student services program. For this study, Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) indicators were used to validate the root cause of each knowledge and skills performance gap. The indicators are factual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge, and metacognitive knowledge.

Factual and conceptual knowledge both fall within the construct of declarative knowledge and are distinguished by their degree of specificity that best answer "what" questions (Schneider & Stern, 2010). When team members perform tasks successfully, they differentiate their ability to recognize the relationships between unknown or disconnected components of information and use relevant knowledge with little mental effort. For knowledge to be successfully applied during a task, team members are required to demonstrate mastery of factual and conceptual knowledge. Based on the criteria of factual and conceptual knowledge and a review of the transcripts, when asked to identify areas where team members are not doing well in meeting their goals, the responses revealed knowledge and skills performance gaps for teams. Team Member Four revealed a personal lack of knowledge. The team member stated, "I am new to the position, so my challenge is knowing what the limits are and what are the boundaries. How do I balance all of those things?" The team member had been in the profession for close to 30 years but had been on this particular team for less than one year. The team member had general knowledge of coordinated student services but was unsure of how to

perform the expected role on the team. The findings revealed the team member's challenge to determine when to use appropriate procedures in his or her position. This uncertainty represents a lack of procedural knowledge. This is a knowledge and skills performance gap.

Furthermore, Team Member Four provided responses that revealed the vagueness of the coordinated student services regulations. The team member stated that "components of the coordinated student services program were expanded over the years." However, no other team member made this remark. Additionally, a search of the internet and relevant documents did not reveal an expansion or revision of Maryland's coordinated student services regulation since its conception in 1989. This response serves as further evidence of a lack of procedural knowledge.

Theme 2: Inability to Work as an Effective Team Member

There is an expectation that members of a team are knowledgeable assets to the team. When asked to identify areas where team members were not doing well in meeting their goal, the responses revealed a general sense that there were discrepancies on the team. Team Member Nine initially hesitated to respond but then proceeded to state, "Certain team members have been brought into positions that should not have been here. They were brought into the position, and they do not know what they are doing." More specifically, the team member expressed that the team is "not doing as well as it should. I feel we could be doing better."

The response of Team Member Ten was similar. Team member ten stated, "Some individuals are not in the right position." When asked to elaborate, the team member stated, "Let's just say they cannot do the job and that is a hindrance." This finding revealed team members' inability to work as a capable team member, which can be categorized under the knowledge and skills performance gap.

It can be problematic for the team when team members cannot perform required tasks to achieve desired team outcomes. When a team member cannot complete the tasks necessary to accomplish a goal, the negative consequences weaken the strength of the team. Further review of the data did not reveal additional knowledge and skills performance gaps. Analysis of the responses indicated performance gaps in knowledge and skills.

Perceived Motivational Performance Gaps

Information about motivation gaps will derive from the following interview questions. The motivation performance gap interview questions are, "What are the goals/vision of the coordinated student services team? "Can you identify some specific areas where you feel the team is not doing well as it could in meeting the goals for the team? "Can you identify some specific areas where you feel you are not doing well as you could in meeting the goals on the team? "Did you ever felt discouraged about your role on the team? What did you do? "What do you believe is keeping the coordinated student services team from being highly effective? (What is causing the gap between where you are now and where the perfect coordinated student services team should be)."

Theme 1: Lack of Interest to Increase Capacity

According to Clark and Estes (2008), motivation is based on three critical areas: active choice, persistence, and mental effort. Active choice is to pursue a task, persistence is to follow through with the task, and mental effort is the energy used to complete the task. Pintrich (2003) defines motivation as a psychological system that gets individuals going, keeps them moving, and tells individuals how much effort is required to devote to a task.

Based on the review of the data, motivational performance gaps were evident for one coordinated student services team. Team Member Eight stated, "I have an interest in increasing my education." When asked what they meant by that, they explained, "Increasing my education does not mean going to class, but to enhance my collaboration skills." Furthermore, Team Member Eight indicated, "I need to evaluate myself, by asking questions such as, what could I do to support other team members? What could I have done to make sure they are on board to support the team?"

Team Member Eight's desire to make personal change was evident. Additionally, the team member stated, "I want to grow, but I seem to find myself doing things that I normally do as a regular." The team members' aspiration for growth seemed inconsistent with their lack of action to accomplish change. This finding revealed that the team member had a lack of enthusiasm for self-growth which can be categorized under the motivational performance gap.

Team Member Nine stated, "I think for me it is speaking up about everyone being respectful of everyone's opinion." When the researcher asked the team member to

elaborate, Team Member Nine stated, "There's no need to; it is exactly what I said." This response revealed the team member's inadequate desire to address team relation concerns, which can be categorized under the motivational performance gap.

Theme 2: Failure to Increase Relationship with Critical Stakeholders

Many responses indicated disconnect between staff and parents. For instance, a team member's inability to make connections with parents appeared to be a hindrance for one team. Team Member Eight stated, "It is about building relationships with parents and the community. Parents have jobs that do not allow them to attend meetings, because they may work until 5:00 pm or 6:00 pm and this issue is a major concern." The response indicated the team's failure to proactively address the concern by adjusting schedules to accommodate parents who experience difficulty attending meetings. The team failed to accommodate parents' needs, which is a lack of persistence that can be categorized under motivational performance gap. It is evident that there is a lack of collaboration between coordinated student services team members and parents. The team's inability or unwillingness to accommodate parents' schedules may prevent parents from benefitting from required support services and is counterproductive to the purpose of the team to provide support services to not only students, but also to families.

Theme 3: Lack of integration of Student Support Areas

Team Member Two stated, "There is always room for professional growth, and there are many goals I would like to improve on, but my goal now is to work more on a coordinated effort with all disciplines." The team member expressed, "I want to do a better job but have not done so as of yet." When asked to be specific, the team member

said, "I want to help other disciplines understand how my role on the team impacts other areas of the coordinated student services program." The researcher asked the member to explain what barriers they faced to achieving this goal. The team member stated, "I have not looked into exploring the barriers. It is my fault and lack of enthusiasm to do so" When team members strive to increase collaborative efforts, programmatic goals are better aligned to improve the provision of support services. This finding revealed the team member's failure to increase capacity for coordinated efforts, which can be categorized under the motivational performance gap.

Theme 4: Failure to Communicate and Collaborate

For one team, it appeared that communication does not always yield effective outcomes. Team Member One stated, "I think that sometimes we don't always take the time to get on the same page." The team member explained that the team "talks a lot, but at times the communication could be more focused on what the team wants and making sure there is a common message that makes sense." This response revealed the team's inadequate communication efforts, which can be categorized under motivational performance gap.

A minimal degree of persistence and effort can impact the performance of a team member in providing support services. The data did not reveal team members' confidence in their professional capacity to persist. The motivation performance gaps lessened or eliminated efforts on trying alternative strategies for the provision of support services. The lack of motivation demonstrated disjointed efforts which resulted in negative results

in regards to the provision of support services for students and families. Further review of data did not reveal additional motivation gaps.

Perceived Organizational Performance Gaps

Team members disclosed organizational performance gaps in several areas. The following interview questions revealed organization barriers. The interview questions are, "What are the goals/vision of the coordinated student services team", "Which ones are they doing the least? In other words, tell me about some of the challenges for the coordinated student services team" "Can you identify some specific areas where you feel the team is not doing well as it could in meeting the goals for the team?" "Can you identify some specific areas where you feel you are not doing well as you could in meeting the goals on the team?" "Would you consider these major challenges? Why?" "How do you believe these challenges are being addressed?"

Barriers within an organization can be systematic and indicative of its culture. There was overwhelming evidence that organizational performance gaps exist on both coordinated student services teams. Clark and Estes (2008) state that indicators such as work process and procedures, resources, organizational culture, and organizational leadership can contribute to organizational performance gaps.

Theme 1: Failure to Articulate Organization's Vision

The vision of an organization fosters the development of the unknown to the known and guides a team toward its goal. When team members were asked, "What do you believe is the organization's vision for the coordinated student services team," there

was a common theme amongst their responses. However, on one team, all the members agreed that a vision for coordinated student services does not exist. Team Members One, Two, Three and Four all stated that the organization either does not have a vision for the coordinated student services team, or they are not aware of it. Team Member One indicated, "I do not believe there is a vision for the coordinated student services team, but I do believe there is a goal for our team." Team Member Two stated, "As a team, I believe there is a vision, but the organization does not have a vision for the work of the coordinated student services team." Team Member Three responded, "That is a difficult question. Currently the organization is in a place where there is no a strategic plan." Also, the team member stated, "It is difficult to figure out what the priorities are for the organization for the coordinated student services team."

"As I talk about this," Team Member Three expressed, "it seems unreal that this organization does not have a vision for the work we do." The team member expressed interest in being a part of a process of making the vision a reality. The team member stated, "I want to be a part of writing that strategic plan, whether it is a small piece or whatever. I want the student service voice to be included." It is a message the team member desired to share with others. Team Member Three also mentioned the need to elevate the voice of coordinated student services to others who are not familiar with the program. The team member stated, "I will try to raise that voice to a level so when decisions are made, student services is involved."

Team Member Four responded, "Put that under the organizational barrier. I think the team has a vision, but I do not think the organization has a vision for us." According to Clark and Estes (2002), in the absence of clear goals, people tend to focus on tasks they deem essential instead of working to achieve the organizational goal. Without a vision, there is no goal for the team to work towards, no opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses to improve student outcomes.

A unique finding was evident for team members Five through Ten. Unlike team members One through Four, who all explicitly stated there was no vision for the team, members Five through Ten did not feel the organization lacked a vision. Instead, they responded based on their experiences and understanding of coordinated student services. Team Member Five stated, "It is in COMAR that there should be a coordinated effort." Furthermore, Team Member Five explained, "We all work with advocates, as well as other different agencies. These folks know who the people are that we provide support to and know how to bring in resources." The team member continued, "I am not sure if the 7th floor [superintendent's office] knows about coordinated student services. It is going on despite them."

Team Member Six's response appeared to voice a sense of frustration and being overworked: "If a student is experiencing a behavior difficulty, call student services. If a parent is upset, call student services. It is like we are saturated with situations that come up that school feels they cannot handle. We are expected to come in and provide those additional resources." Team Member Seven mentioned that the vision "is to be a problem solver, to solve everybody's problem, just to fix it." Team Member Eight stated, "The

vision of the team is to play a more active role than what the team is playing now." Team Member Nine articulated, "The vision is to provide services to children." The pattern of a perceived organizational vision for coordinated student services continued with Team Member Ten stating a similar sentiment, "Just provide support services." Though they all had a vision in mind, it is important to note there was no one unified vision that had been made clear by the organization.

The lack of a clearly stated vision for both teams illustrates the lack of clear expectation the state and school system have set for the teams. These responses were consistent among team members and revealed a failure of the organization to implement or communicate a unified vision for the program. This observation is categorized under the organizational performance gap. A search of websites and documents did not reveal an organizational vision for either teams. The search revealed a mission statement for the school system but no mission statement for the state team. While most organizations have a mission statement, very few are accompanied with additional measurable goals (Rueda, 2011). This implication will be discussed in detail in Chapter V.

Theme 2: Organizations are More Reactive than Proactive

When team members were asked to identify specific areas where the team was not doing well in meeting goal for the team, Team Member One expressed a concern that the team does not have protocols in place to address critical issues. For instance, the team member stated, "School shootings have increased nationwide over the past few years. Tragically, there was a horrific school shooting in Parkland, Florida, and after that a

school shooting occurred in a school system in Maryland." The team member explained that after the unfortunate incident in the school system in Maryland, the state decided it needed "to be more assertive regarding school safety efforts." The team member explained, "We had to put aside a lot of long-term projects, critical work we should be doing to work on school safety initiatives." Furthermore, the team member expressed that this was an example of how "the work can become more challenging because things should be in place to be proactive." Team Member One further expressed, "One of the challenges is a lack of time to be reflective or to be proactive to identify goals for a specific crisis." The team member stated that they feel most of their work is "intervention oriented or crisis oriented. The data explicitly revealed the absence of defined supportive protocols that creates difficulty in addressing sensitive issues that severely impacts the provision of support services for staff, students, and families.

Work policies and procedures are the responsibility of an organization. Since the organization has no policy in place to address significant issues such as school shootings, the organization failed to develop a proactive strategy to keep schools safe. When an organization expects team members to perform their daily responsibilities while also rapidly developing policies and protocols in response to incidents, this expectation hinders the provision of support services.

When school shootings or other traumatic events occur, the response of support service teams is critical. They must be prepared in advance. These responses revealed the organization's failure to implement policies centered on school safety concerns, which

can be categorized as an organizational performance gap. Also, the response revealed inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team, which can also be categorized under the organizational performance gap.

Theme 3: Lack of Organizational Resources to Work Effectively as a Team

Resources such as time, staff, and funding are all required for an organization to be successful. When an organization fails to align resources with goals, the result can be confusion, inefficiency, and disappointment (Clark & Estes, 2009). Each year during Maryland's General Assembly legislative session, the coordinated student services team is assigned numerous legislative bills to address the needs of students across the state. According to Team Member Two, "The coordinated student services team is responsible for a majority of the legislative bills that are assigned to the organization." The team member stated, "I do not want to say that the coordinated student services team gets more work than any other divisions, but for instance, during the legislative session, a bulk of the bills come to the coordinated student services team." The team member stated that some of the issues are that "we are doing a lot more work with way fewer resources," and that can be "challenging and stressful." This response revealed inadequate resources to meet the needs of team members, which was categorized as an organizational performance gap.

Other team members mentioned challenges that exist because of the lack of resources. Team Member Three stated, "Budget cuts have created problems for the team." The team member explained, "I have seen positions eliminated or not filled for an extended period of time. That placed the team in a predicament that left some feeling that

no one seems to care." The team member elaborated, "School safety is one of the things Maryland sees as one of the pillars of coordinated student services. Therefore, not filling a position that was vacant is a void that caused other team members to fill those shoes." As a result, the team member explained, "The team was tasked with responsibilities they were not familiar with, hoping to do their best to perform requested tasks." When the organization makes the decision to eliminate or not fill a position on the team that leaves a gap. This finding revealed the lack of value the organization has for the work of the coordinated student services team, which can be categorized under the organizational performance gap.

Furthermore, Team Member Three stated, "from the standpoint of administrative support for our team, when there is no administrative support, our specialists cannot go out and deliver technical assistance. Program monitoring has an impact when team members are expected to do administrative work and go out in the field to deliver services as well. I think those challenges are major." The consistent findings were the lack of time for team members to focus to collaborate and deliver support services and the burden of responsibility and obligation to complete administrative tasks. These findings revealed inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team, which can be categorized as an organizational performance gap.

Team Member Three expressed that "the administration changeover has been a major challenge for the organization." The team member explained, "We have had quite

a few changes over the past few years. I think we have had, like, four superintendents in five years." The team member explained, "Instead of being on the ground and delivering services, team members spend a lot of time teaching and explaining things that we do, which has an impact on program monitoring and implementation." With four different leadership regimes in a short period, the team has not been able to build momentum or deliver services consistently. According to Team Member Three, "the struggle is making sure that information is communicated up and down, so people understand coordinated student services."

The consequences of frequent administrative changes in leadership has resulted in a lack of commitment and proactive steps to that has defines a deficiency in the supportive culture for the organization. The findings revealed two gaps: (1) a deficiency of organizational leadership knowledge; (2) inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team. Both findings can be categorized as an organizational performance gap.

A consistent pattern that emerged for both teams was the lack of resources. Several team members from the school system team mentioned that socio-economics is a concern that perpetuates gaps between schools and parents. Several team members from the state team described that sometimes "the team struggles with having the resources they need to be effective, and that can be difficult." Team Member Seven stated, "Being in a rural area of the state, there are sometimes limited resources." This response revealed inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team, which can be categorized under the organizational performance gap.

Team Member Three described that one specific area where team members could use improvement is "providing more technical assistance on a multi-tiered system of support [MTSS] across the key student services areas." The researcher asked for clarification of MTSS. The team member explained, "MTSS is designed to address the needs of students at varying levels of intensity, including universal, intensive, targeted." The researcher asked, "What is preventing the team from providing more technical assistance?" The team member articulated, "There is not enough time and staff, which is frustrating." This response revealed inadequate resources to meet the team members' needs, which can be categorized under the organizational performance gap. Team Member Five stated, "There are some challenges team members face, and those challenges are not enough time and others' lack of understanding of student services." The researcher asked the team member to clarify "others' lack understanding." The team member stated, "Upper leadership has no clear understanding of student services." Team Member Five elaborated, "When leadership does not understand what student services are, you do not value student services." This response revealed two gaps: (1) inadequate resources; (2) deficiency of organizational leadership knowledge. Both gaps can be categorized under the organizational performance gap. In contrast, Team Member Four stated, "There were no areas that require improvement. I feel we are moving well to meet our goal in our section and our branch."

Team Member Three stated, "In a smaller system, you wear a lot of different hats. In a larger school system, there may be much staff in many departments that would be able to handle many different matters." In a small school system for instance, team

member number six from the school team mentioned "If a parent complains about something, they direct the complaint to the director for a resolution, so depending on the volume of calls that come in, it can be time-consuming and sometimes it will take a director's eye off the ball when you're supposed to supervising." This response revealed inadequate resources to meet team needs, which can be categorized under the organizational performance gap.

Team Member seven stated, "The only thing I can think of is time. We are a smaller district, and there are many things under us." Furthermore, the team member explained that at times there is "difficulty to make sure things are delegated for the right amount of time and that everything is being done well." This response revealed inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team, which can be categorized under the organizational performance gap. Team Member Ten stated, "For me, it is dealing with the lack of time to do so much work in a short period." The team member went on to say, "When you try to give quality work in a short period that can be difficult." This response revealed inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team, which can be categorized under the organizational performance gap.

Team Member Three mentioned that the organization's priorities are a significant concern. The team member stated, "A lot of the things the organization sees as a priority don't always align to what the team sees in student services as a priority." When everything is classified as a priority, it does not always mean it's an emergency." The team member stressed that things are "placed on the priority list because somebody in upper leadership says it's a priority for them." The team member articulated that many

times these "so-called priorities compete with one another, and that depends on which leader it comes from."

"This message can be confusing," stated Team Member Three, "and it sometimes pulls a team in different directions, and that can be difficult for the team." For instance, the team member mentioned that "there was a big push on heroin and opioids from the governor's office." This big push resulted in "a task force that convened and the governor's office moved from policy to action with no support. Team member number three from the state team stated, "I had to chair a command center for the entire organization with no additional resource behind this position."

When leaders do not take ownership in providing a support system to meet new duties for the team and the same expectations are placed on the team, the results are usually a negative impact on the teams' daily work. According to the Team Member Four, from the state team "The team had to take a team member from another position, which is one of the pillars of student services, outside of the four areas of COMAR, because the organization felt this was important at one time." "That is an example," explained Team Member Three, "where priorities compete." The team member explained:

> If the organization is saying heroin and opioids are the number one priority, fund it. Give us a position, but don't expect the person that was recently hired to do school completion and alternative programs and dropout prevention to now do that work, but then tell the team that school completion and dropout prevention is just as important as everything else.

This response revealed inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team, which can be categorized under the organizational performance gap.

Team Member Four stated, "We are part of a vision for the organization and we are not valued. When you're not valued, then it is hard for people to put resources into the team." This response revealed inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team, which can be categorized under the organizational performance gap. Team Member Seven stated, "On a rare occasion, a team member does not understand why a decision is being made." The team member explained, "Some team members only see decisions from a 5,000-foot view when you have a leader who sees it from a 30,000-foot view." The team member further explained, "That can be problematic when members do not know why a decision is being made." When asked what they thought caused the gap, the team member replied, "It could be a lack of communication or a lack of understanding, which may occur when people only see things that only impact them, and not how it will impact other people and the trickle-down effect." This response revealed inadequate communication protocol in place for desired team outcomes, which can be categorized under the organizational performance gap.

Team Member Two stated, "Although we have the four core disciplines that are required, the team is doing a lot more work with way less resources, and that can be challenging and stressful." This response revealed inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team, which was categorized under the organizational performance gap. Team Member Three stated, "The weakness of our team is always resources." This response

revealed inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team, which was categorized under the organizational performance gap.

Team Member Four stated, "As a team, there is a lack of staff. We are willing to kick in when we can to support each other, but right now we have some serious lack of expertise in some areas that are significant." This response also revealed inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team, which was categorized under the organizational performance gap.

Team Member Seven stated, "There are limited resources being in a rural area, and always having to explain the importance of the services that support students. It gets tiresome teaching people about how important of student support service" The researcher asked the team member to explain the term "buy-in." The team member stated, "At times it seems we are explaining to other school system staff what student services is, but more importantly how significant student services is to the success of many students." The team member expressed, "It gets tiresome." This response revealed two perceived performance gaps: (1) inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team; (2) a lack of an assessment of the significance of the coordinated student services team. Team members Nine and Ten both stated similar responses:

"We don't have enough resources and that is a problem." These responses revealed inadequate resources to meet the needs of the team, which was categorized under organizational performance gap.

Theme 4: Organizational Leadership Does Not Support the Culture of Coordinated Student Services

A team cannot function without the necessary supports. Team Member Four stated, "I think the weakness of the team is the lack of support from upper leadership, so we can make sure things get done in our shared vision when the vision is not necessarily shared above us [at the state superintendent's office]." This response revealed a deficiency of organizational leadership knowledge, which can be categorized under organizational performance gap.

Team Member Six stated that "coordination was a barrier for the team." The team member explained that "the team has grown so fast delivering support services that there was no time to step back and make sure things are being done with fidelity." This finding revealed the organization's failure to implement opportunity for the team to self-monitor, which can be categorized under organizational performance gap. Team Member Two stated, "There may be a knowledge deficit or not be enough knowledge base to know that we are an effective team." The team member further explained, "I guess maybe there is a misalignment between the leadership and the people on the ground, and that comes back to effective communication."

Additionally, Team Member Two stated, "I think it's again a lack of understanding of what we do, and that's at the higher level of leadership." The team member made it clear that the direct leader of the team understands coordinated student services, but it is "getting the high-level leadership to understand." These responses

revealed a deficiency of organizational leadership knowledge, which can be categorized under organizational performance gap.

Theme 5: Organizations Do Not Value Parental Input or Participation

Building a rapport and making connections with stakeholders requires effort and effective communication. Team Member Eight stated, "There are struggles in building relationships with parents. I've talked to parents who say they feel that folks make them feel that they are better than them. It seems like two different worlds." Team Member Eight then gave examples of how parents claim they have been made to feel inferior because they work in a factory, for instance, or don't have nice suits and advanced degrees. Furthermore, the team member stated, "While the relationships with the students are fine because team members see them every day, it is sometimes difficult for team members to connect with parents." The organization has failed to implement a protocol for parents to eliminate the negative perceptions of the staff. This response revealed the teams' inability to develop a rapport with parents, which can be categorized under organizational performance gap.

Theme 6: Lack of Process or Structure to Monitor Team Effectiveness

When asked, what do you believe is keeping the coordinated student services team from being highly effective and causing the gap between where you are now and where the perfect coordinated student services team should be, Team Member One explained, "I do believe that in order to be more effective, we would have to communicate differently. If we communicated about our process from time to time and

 how we are operating as a team and engage in an exercise to see what we can do better, that would probably make us better."

Team Member One explained, "there is a gap, and it's a major concern for the team." The team member articulated, "It is good that you are asking these questions. I do not think we ask ourselves that question often. There are individuals on the team who do have different skills or different perceptions of how we should do something or have a different way of approaching something." The team member reported that "such differences may cause conflicts at times. Even though the team accomplishes the work, getting the work done does not means everybody is happy with the outcome." This response revealed the failure of the organization to implement a process to monitor team progress, which can be categorized under the organizational performance gap.

Team Member Eight stated, "I think we need more resources in terms of professional development for folks involved with the team." The team member mentioned that the team "would benefit from getting out to other teams and being able to see how other folks are dealing with things." The researcher asked if the team has explored this opportunity. The team member stated, "No, the team has not looked to stop spinning our wheels and looking into best practices so we can focus on similar matters…. It does not make sense." This response revealed a lack of proactive measures for professional development to produce the desired outcome, which can be categorized under the organizational performance gap.

Theme 7: Lack of Capacity to Increase Structured Opportunity

When team members were asked to identify areas where team members were not doing well in meeting their goals, a common theme was the need for professional development opportunities. Team Member One stated, "I am not doing as well as I would like to be. I would like to be more proactive about my goals." The team member further expressed, "I have a desire to be more involved with developing policies that would be more supportive of students and schools in a preventative way." The team member explained what is preventing them from achieving their goal: "There are too many things we are doing and no opportunity." This response revealed the organization's failure to provide professional development opportunities for growth, which can be categorized as an organizational performance gap.

In the next section, Table 2 illustrates performance gaps from the interviews and recommendations from the school system's most recent coordinated student services site visit report. Recommendations were identified as program and professional development needs that exist on the team. The documented themes were understanding the comprehensive needs of students, utilizing resources in the school and community, focusing on the mission statement, and understanding the processes in place that influence services for students. One of the school system's overall recommendations were to continue identifying strategies to address challenges that hinder the delivery of services.

The perceived performance gaps from interviews with the coordinated student services team at the school system were aligned with the gaps documented in the school

system's site visit report. The most common performance gap identified was organizational. There were 25 perceived organizational performance gaps, five motivational performance gaps, and two knowledge performance gaps.

Root Causes

There were multiple root causes for several perceived performance gaps. For instance, in the organizational performance gap domain, the perceived performance gap inadequate resources to meet the need of team members was noted 15 times; however, each performance gap had a different root cause. Details will be provided on the most salient root causes in this section. For knowledge and skills, the most salient root cause was the team members' lack of procedural and factual knowledge regarding the nature of their work. For motivation, the most salient root causes were team members' lack of active choice and persistence to initiate processes or practices to effectively communicate and collaborate with families. For organizational, the most salient root causes were lack of resources in the form of time, staff, and leaderships' devalue knowledge of coordinated student services.

Root Cause: Knowledge and Skills

In the area of the knowledge and skills performance gap, the findings were divided between procedural and factual categories. Factual knowledge is the basic knowledge of facts specific to context, domain, or disciplines. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) state that recalling, recognizing, and remembering are cognitive functions associated with factual knowledge. A team member with procedural knowledge knows how to apply their knowledge to a task. According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001),

procedural knowledge is not the ability to use the procedure, but rather the knowledge about the procedure. The general root cause of knowledge and skills performance gaps was isolated to specific individuals on each team.

Inability to work as a capable team member. Team members with inadequate knowledge and skills can be detrimental to the collaborative efforts of a team. Several team members stated that other team members were lacking knowledge and skills in their role. One team member stated the deficiencies "create barriers in meetings when a person is recognized as not doing their job and get others to do the job for them." The root cause of this knowledge and skills performance gap is the failure of the hiring of individuals who are not sufficiently knowledgeable of their role. This root cause creates unintended barriers for the team in achieving performance goals. The root cause is also a lack of procedural knowledge, which can be categorized as team members' limited capacity to perform effectively in their role.

Root Cause: Motivation

According to Clark and Estes (2002), identifying motivational performance gaps can be complicated because it must be assessed whether the individual or team chose to work towards the goal, whether they were persistent until it is achieved, and whether they invested enough mental effort to accomplish the goal. Although team members may have the knowledge to achieve the team goal, unless each team member is motivated to initiate and persist in the task, efforts will be ineffective.

Increase relationship with critical stakeholders. The coordinated student services team at the school level and the state level includes critical stakeholders who are

the team members, students, teachers, and parents. Several team members stated

concerns with relationship between team members and parents. "It is about building

relationships with parents and the community", state one team member. Data also

revealed team members were aware that parents were unable to attend meeting due to

work schedules. Despite this knowledge, team members failed to initiate supportive

systems to address the disconnect among team member and parents.

The response indicated the team's failure to proactively adjust their schedules to

accommodate parents who experience difficulties to attend meetings required to benefit

from supportive services for their student and family. The team members' inability stem

from a lack of time and resources, but more importantly a lack of motivation. Not one

team member who expressed a concern regarding the disconnect with parents, mentioned

alternative attempts to address the issue. Although the researcher requested a rationale for

how the issue was being addressed, team members could not justify the lack of

motivation. The data revealed clear evidence that team members need to improve

relationship with parents. The root cause of this performance gap is the inability of team

members to devote time to adjust programming and schedules to meet the needs of

parents, which can be categorized as a lack of active choice and persistence.

Inability to communicate and collaborate. The data revealed inadequate

communication efforts among team members. According to Team Member One, "We

talk a lot, but we do not take the time to focus on our communication." A team member

from the school system mentioned, "communication is an issue, speaking up to say what

is needed to make the communication work is what I know I don't do well. Maybe what I

say won't work, I'm just now sure." Communication and collaboration are two of the

three components of the coordinated student services teams; the third component is

coordination. Communication is critical for the team and is required to meet the mission

of a team. The teams' communication must be focused, purposefully thoughtful, and

consist of team member actively engaging to reach a specific goal. The deficiency of

communication revealed a root cause of lack of mental effort due to team members'

unwillingness to work hard to understand each other. The cause could also be a

knowledgeable issue if team members lack effective communication skills.

Root Cause: Organization

In addition to knowledge and skills and motivation performance gaps, the data

revealed overwhelming evidence of deficiencies in organizational resources, materials,

processes and procedures that adversely affected the performance of coordinated student

services teams' performance. These deficiencies are entrenched in the culture of both

organizations at the school system level and at the state level. The deficiencies prevent

the alignment of policy to desire efforts of team members to implement and perpetuate

progression of the provision of coordinated student services.

Organizational barriers can limit or impede the provision of student support

services. The primary sources for organizational gaps are based on materials, work

process and procedures, value stream and value chains, and organizational culture. When

there is a lack of efficient and effective work processes and resources, an organizational

problem exists. An organizational problem such as issues with policy, procedure, or lack

of facilities can hinder the achievement of a goal (Clark & Estes, 2008).

Failure to articulate the organization's vision. Through the organizational lens, the data revealed collective gaps where organizational vision was lacking. Interviews and document analysis revealed that neither the state-level nor the school-level team had an identifiable vision. Team members expressed that this was a determining factor for some of the challenges experienced. For example, one team member from the state-level team mentioned challenges of getting the right message to leadership because there have been "quite a few changes over the past few years, with four superintendents in five years." The root cause may be due to the transition of four different leadership regimes in a short amount of time. Constantly adjusting to and updating the new superintendents made progress and group cohesion challenging. Other team members mentioned the lack of organizational work processes, lack of organizational culture, and resources as contributing factors to the gap.

Organizational culture. According to Rueda (2011), value refers to the importance one attaches to a specific task. According to Clark and Estes (2002, p. 107), "The most important work process in all organizations is the culture because it dictates how we work together to get the job done." The root cause is unproductive work processes and procedures that can hinder achievement.

Organizational Leadership. An effective leader increases capacity by asking questions and seeking answers, as opposed to solely giving directions. The data revealed that on one team, leaders exhibited a lack of knowledge of what certain members of the coordinated student services team does. Lack of knowledge about what the team does,

how to run the team, and how the team handle challenges. This lack of organizational

leadership knowledge can be a challenge to the performance of the team.

Resources. The lack of resources was identified as the most common cause

contributing to gaps within the organization. Resources were identified as inadequacies in

time, staffing, and funding, which all limit the effectiveness of the team. When gaps in

knowledge and motivation were not evident, organizational barriers impede team

performance. The root causes are often inadequate time, ineffective work processes and

policies, and misaligned assessment of the significance of the coordinated student

services program. With the identification of limited resources as the prevalent cause, the

process of allocating resources require the school system and state-level organizations to

prioritize resources by increasing supports in some areas and decreasing supports in

others.

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Methods to Eliminate Performance Gaps

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Research question number three examined the perceptions of coordinated student

services team members about approaches that could be implemented to close the

performance gaps. The data from the interviews revealed the following approaches that

are being used. Following the responses to the interview, the data from the document

analysis is provided.

Interview Responses

Team members were asked to describe how they believe challenges on the team

are being addressed. Team members gave a variety of techniques they believed would

address or eliminate performance gaps. Most responses centered on hiring additional

staff, facilitating cross delivery of services when there are vacancies, attempting to connect work with the community and families, and teaching organizational leaders about the significance of coordinated student services.

Team members Five and Ten stated that hiring individuals is an approach to eliminate the performance gap. Team Member Three stated, "In my role, I try to take a layer of the burden off team members having to deal with every single issue from upper leadership. The team member elaborated, "I do so by taking on a lot and making sure the right messages get to the right people." Team Member One stated that there was uncertainty whether the gaps were being met. The team member stated, "To be honest, I'm not sure they are being addressed as a team." For example, the team member stated, "Different team members have different skills, and I feel we should use those skills to try to get the task done, but I don't believe that we do that." The team member elaborated, "The team does not meet together that often to talk about issues and concerns. I feel that is a major challenge." The researcher asked, "Do you think that that is a hindrance?" The team member replied, "Yes, the way the team is organized, one mandated coordinated student services team member is on the safety and climate team, and other three mandated team members are the student services team" COMAR states that all four mandated members must work to coordinated services. "The problem," remarked Team Member One, "is the team communicates collaboratively only when certain issues arise." It appears that the team member feels that they do get the work done but not in the most effective and efficient way.

Team Member Ten stated, "The challenge is to keep up with the work and with the amount of manpower." When teams experience vacancies, the delivery of services or technical assistance is either delayed or not accomplished. The team member stated, "We were at a low, and eventually we went through a hiring phase …. People are being hired, but we have to make certain the people hired are knowledgeable." Team Member Three stated, "I am working as hard as I can to make sure that my leadership style insulates the team from some of the things that are happening above my head. A lot of that is messaging and communication." The team member stated, "I try to take a layer of the burden off team members by taking on a lot and making sure the right messages get to the right people."

Team Member Four stated that we address the gaps by "learning how to cross deliver services." For example, "when a specialist leaves a position, we learn to fill the void as much as we can." Team Member Five stated, "We try to hire individuals as soon as possible so the work does not fall too far behind." Team Member Four stated, "I don't know all the processes. I go to someone who knows, and I try to learn from them." The team member stressed that "I try to make sure I am clear about my role and I am clear about another person's role." Team Member Five stated, "I think the gap is being addressed right now by getting people on board." Team Member Six stated, "We are conducting a series of professional development workshops to support team members." Team Member Seven stated, "We put supports and a manual in place." Team Member Eight believes that the gaps are addressed "through leadership and professional development." Team Member Nine stated, "One way is that before school starts,

principals and officials go into the community." Team Member Eight stated, "We meet when we can to address any issues and through professional development when they can happen, so I guess we try to address them the best we can."

Methods to Eliminate Performance Gaps as Revealed by the Document Analysis

A review of the school system's 2014 coordinated student service site visit report yields the following approaches to the provision of support services:

- Recognizing the need for accountability and using data on the management of the pupil services program;

- Conducting panel discussions to highlight the collaboration and coordination of the array of services and programs offered;

- Using the School Wide Information System data system to identify students, service, and trends;

- Holding monthly school counselor meetings to foster communication between school counseling staff.

There were additional interview questions that yielded comprehensive results that were not captured by the original research questions. These questions may be used for future research. The questions and responses may be found in Appendix I. Chapter V will present recommendations for solutions to close the gap in performance.

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Limitations of the Study

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Since there was no documented vision for either teams, it was difficult to determine the accuracy of perceived performance gaps and root causes because there was

no common identified goal. It was challenging to determine whether the lack of vision impacts the provision of student services for both teams.

Another limitation is related to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. It should be noted that research shows there is a limitation of self-report instruments to assess participant knowledge and skills accurately. According to Patton (2002), there are few valid and reliable instruments to measure particular phenomena or outcomes such as perceptions. Multiple measures, including qualitative measures such as interviews with each coordinated student services team (Appendix D) and the document analysis (Appendix E), strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

Summary

In summary, this chapter presented the findings of root causes for the perceived performance gaps in all three domains: knowledge, motivation, and organizational. The perceived performance gaps exposed deficiencies that challenge the capacity of both teams in the provision of coordinated student services. In the area of perceived knowledge gaps, the knowledge of each team member was significant because it is required to ensure efforts are coordinated and that collaboration occurs. The lack of team motivation impacted service delivery, especially in the area of communicating and coordinating with critical stakeholders. If used correctly, collaboration yields positive results, but it can be detrimental if misused.

The performance gap provides opportunities for self-growth and team growth. When gaps are evident, the team is limited to accomplishing desired goals. For example, a lack of organizational vision impacts team members' ability to develop a

comprehensive plan to address student needs. In Chapter V, the findings are discussed.

The chapter concludes with implications of the study and recommendations for future

research.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Introduction

When members of a team perceive that performance gaps exist, the performance of the team is affected. This chapter discusses the findings from Chapter IV and provides solutions to guide the coordinated student services team to close perceived performance gaps. The findings were clear and consistent across the three themes: knowledge, motivation, and organizational. The root causes disclosed for each perceived performance gap were analyzed to verify the type of gap. To accurately recommend solutions to address the gaps, it is best to determine the root cause. For example, for knowledge gaps, limitation of knowledge and skills, it is best to determine whether the gap is a lack of factual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge or metacognitive knowledge. The recommended solutions were obtained from the literature review.

Factual and Procedural Knowledge Gaps

This study revealed team members' factual knowledge and procedural knowledge gaps. A gaps in factual knowledge is a lack of knowledge of specific details and terminology comprised of essential elements an individual must know to be familiar with a subject (i.e., technical terms). Procedural knowledge is the ability to perform steps in a process. According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), procedural knowledge is specific to a particular discipline or subject. Procedural knowledge is not the ability to use the procedure, but rather the knowledge about the procedure. Members of the coordinated student services team must be cognizant of when and how to use appropriate procedures

based on their role in the team. (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). A member of the coordinated student services team must demonstrate procedural knowledge to a level of automaticity, with little or no conscious thought (Marzano, 2003). When a team member is not prepared to contribute their specific role as an expert to communicate, collaborate, and coordinate to effectively support services, the team member's lack of professional accountability impacts the purpose of the coordinated student services team.

Motivational Gaps

Motivation is an internal nudge that keeps us moving and determined to accomplish tasks to reach our goals. Unmotivated individuals tend to blame others for their poor performance, are indifferent to change, and lack persistence and energy to accomplish tasks (Clark & Estes, 2009). Motivational factors impact behaviors in active choice (initiating a task), persistence (continuing a task despite distractions), and mental effort (acquiring new knowledge; Clark & Estes, 2002). For example, in this study, when team members were faced with barriers that prevented them from conducting meetings with parents, the data revealed that the team failed to demonstrate persistence. As team members faced this challenge, methods could have been explored to ensure parents can take advantage of support services. For example, the team members could have arranged to provide evening meeting sessions after school, meeting sessions on a Saturday morning, or use technology such as Skype. The failure of the team to explore these option may imply lack of motivation. However, these tasks require extra work for team members who are already overworked and understaffed. These solutions would require more work. It may be less that the team are not motivated or unwilling to put in

mental effort, but it is more likely that these things are not feasible because of already strained resources and limited time.

Organizational Gaps

No vision. Establishing specific goals in the workplace is essential because it reduces ambiguity about what will be attained (Lock & Latham, 2002). Just having a policy in place does not change the behavior of individuals who are attempting to achieve a common goal. To guide the work of coordinated student services teams, a clearly stated vision is required. Through the interview process with members from both teams, it was evident that a vision for the coordinated student services program did not exist. The majority of team members disclosed that they have a shared vision for their team, but they were not aware of an overall organizational vision. A review of the literature emphasized one critical attribute of a team is to focus on a common goal and a clear purpose (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Harris & Harris, 1996). When an organization sets a goal or a vision, it provides a systematic guide for an explicit impact on the performance of the organization. For each team to produce positive outcomes, the organization must provide a realistic and precise vision. Such goals lead to higher performance than do ambiguous goals (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Studies have consistently shown that to improve positive behavior and boost team performance, it is imperative to set specific and challenging goals (Ordonez, Schweitzer, Galinsky & Bazerman, 2009). The most salient finding for both teams was a lack of organizational vision. Team members from both teams conveyed a sense of disappointment in their organization's failure to implement or communicate a vision.

The researcher conducted an extensive search for a vision statement for both coordinated student services teams; however, no vision statement could be found. Although there was no identified vision, the members believed their team had a vision. This belief was based on their experience and perception of coordinated student services. As a result of the lacking vision for both teams, perceived performance gaps reported cannot be measured for accuracy or relevance.

Organizational leadership. Leadership failure has been, for the most part, considered only from the perspective of leaders exhibiting too few positive behaviors (Amabile, 2004). The data from this study revealed a range of value for coordinated student services from the leader's perspective; from low to high. The low expectation data was based on the knowledge deficiency and value for the work of the coordinated student services program. It is clear the organization leaders' behaviors might not only fail to achieve high levels of positive outcomes, but might also result in less favorable assessments of the leadership and negative outcomes for the teams. The high expectations data was based on team members' expected to do their jobs plus the duties of the vacant positions. Some of team members said they could not fully focus on their job because they were busy doing other things. For example, helping with school safety initiatives.

Leaders can influence the actions of others and are responsible for sharing the vision of the organization to yield intended positive outcomes. Leadership is the process "in which an individual influences other group members toward the attainment of group or organizational goals" (Shackleton & Shackleton, 1995). The absence of leadership results in confusion, anarchy, and disorganization leading to wasted opportunities, decay

and sometimes destruction. These behaviors can result in team members' dissatisfaction, which may impact team performance.

Team members from one team explicitly stated that their leader had a vision for their team. Hackman (2002) states that the likelihood of team effectiveness increases when a team has a compelling direction and enabling structure, operates within a supportive organizational context, and has expert coaching. The team leader does not bear the sole responsibility for executing the tasks for the team, but instead the leader helps create and maintain the conditions that enable team effectiveness (Hackman, 2002).

Resources. Resources are things (physical and abstract) that are necessary for an individual to do their job and are required for organizations to achieve their goals. A lack of resources highlights deficiencies within an organization. According to Clark and Estes (2002), the lack of efficient and effective organizational work processes and resources may discourage the most motivated, knowledgeable, and skilled person in the organization. The data analysis revealed that nine of the 10 team members stressed that a lack of resources created challenges for the team. Challenges caused by a lack of resources lead to confusion and frustration.

Organizational Culture. The second most common identified gap was organizational culture. *Webster's Dictionary* defines culture as "a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization (Merriam-Webster). For a better understanding of how the organizational culture can affect performance gaps, there must be an understanding of the unwritten guidelines of the organization, its structure, mission and vision, policies, and leaders. Such goals and structures must be considered as

potential challenges to meeting the goal of closing performance gaps. For coordinated

student services team members to achieve performance goals and organization goals,

value must be placed on their performance tasks, and each team member must believe in

his or her capability.

Maryland's coordinated student services teams have been in existence for 29

years. The inadequacies of organizational culture for both teams is a systematic concern,

a problem with the organization's infrastructure as well as a lack of organizational efforts

to improve team performance. The teams' operational practice and shared values that

exemplify norms guide the behaviors and attitudes of individuals within the school

system and at the state level (Baumgartner and Zielowski, 2007).

The data also indicated that team members tackle issues as they arise because

there is no proactive way to address concerns. Due to a lack of long-term processes in

place, when an issue occurs, it is dealt on the spot. There seems to be no sense of

permanency; it's a Band-Aid mentality, which goes against the purpose of the

coordinated student services program.

Organizational Leadership. Leaders influence the culture of coordinated student

services teams by determining expectations of practice aligned to meet the organization's

goal to yield higher performance standards. Each coordinated student services team has a

director who provides guidance and structure for their team. For this project, the team

leader was the director of student services. The organizational leader was the

superintendent of the school system. For the state-level team, the state superintendent or

other stakeholders in leadership positions were the organizational leaders. According to

Hancott (2017), a leader adds value to the organization by making the leaps across the

organization to join boundaries while remaining focused on the vision, ensuring others

are committed. The data revealed that upper leadership, as stated by team members, has

failed to show the value of the coordinated student services team and the knowledge of

what the team is and what they do. The services delivered by the team are essential to

improving student outcomes and supporting families with students who experience

difficulty in school. Challenges could range from academic to mental health to

homelessness.

Making Sense of Change Management

When team members are unsure of their vision for coordinated student services,

they tend to set goals that lower expectations that they are capable of achieving. Research

shows that people tend to adjust their level of effort to the difficulty of the task

undertaken (Locke & Latham,1991). A search on the web and documents for a vision for

the coordinated student services program for the school system and the state level teams

were not located. Documents that were reviewed included the student service manual and

the 1989 pupil services manual for the state coordinated student services team that was

published when the program initiated. A search of Maryland's coordinated student

services team website did not reveal a vision or mission statement. For the school system,

the website revealed a mission statement that states, "The office of student services

assists each student to complete their program of study by providing academic, behavior,

and social-emotional support to students who require alternative educational

programming, mental health and wellness services and behavior support programs." With

no documented vision for either team, it is evident that team members have created their own vision, either individually or collectively. An organization's vision and mission statements impact an individual's performance and expectation. According to Darbi (2012), vision and mission statements have been strongly considered as a necessary aspect of the process of strategic management for various types of organizations.

According to Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor, national researchers and task force members who participated in the implementation of the coordinated student services program, despite the support and guidance provided, it seems that almost 30 years later, there are still significant gaps that begin with the lack of vision.

An organization's mission statement provides the day-by-day process, while the vision statement provides the long-term blueprint for the direction of the organization. Organizations encounter changes on a consistent basis, but the challenge is how to manage the changes whether they are negative or positive. Change management is the function that coordinates complex processes and efforts of people and organizations to accomplish the desired outcome by utilizing available resources proficiently and effectively. Research shows that about seventy percent of large organizations fail by wasting time, resources, and money (Balogun, & Haily, 2008). Many times, these changes fail due to lack of support for the change or resistance to the change because of inadequate resources such as budget (Keller, Meany, & Ping, 2009). According to Knoster, Thousand, and Villa (2000), managing complex change influential theory in change management illustrates five essential elements of an organization. Those elements are vision, skills, incentives, resources and an action plan.

The Human Response to Managing Complex Change

|					
Vision	+ Skills	+ Incentive	+ Resources	+ Action Plan	= **Change**
■	+ Skills	+ Incentive	+ Resources	+ Action Plan	= **Confusion**
Vision	+ ■	+ Incentive	+ Resources	+ Action Plan	=**Anxiety**
Vision	+ Skills	+ ■	+ Resources	+ Action Plan	=**Resistance**
Vision	+ Skills	+ Incentive	+ ■	+ Action Plan	=**Frustration**
Vision	+ Skills	+ Incentive	+ Resources	+ ■	=**False Start**
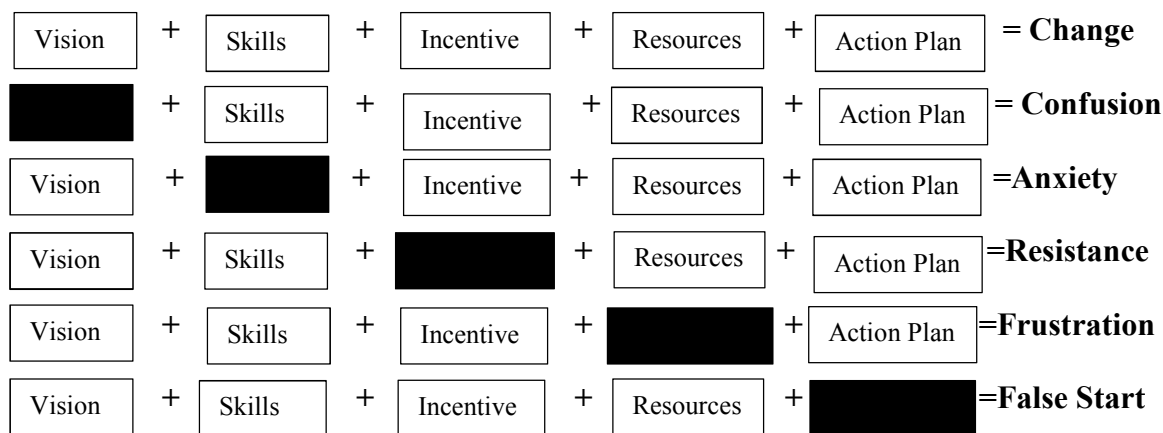
Figure 13: *Managing Complex Changes*

Adapted from Knoster, T., Villa R., & Thousand, J. (2000). A framework for thinking about systems change. In R. Villa & J Thousand (Eds.), Restructuring for caring and effective education: Piecing the puzzle together (pp. 93-128). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

organization and one of the five elements is missing from the process, the result varies depending on the missing element. For example, when a vision is missing from an organization that implements an initiative, the result is confusion.

Proposed Solutions

This section prioritizes root causes and provides proposed solutions to problems caused by gaps in knowledge and skills, motivation, and organizational barriers. The benefit of a gap analysis was to identify performance gaps and root causes that can lead to solutions. There were gaps evident in each performance gap domain. This study revealed three salient gaps within one performance gap domain. The three performance gaps were knowledge and skills, motivation, and organizational barriers. The goal of the recommended proposed solutions is to strategically target and address the root causes to improve the provision of student support services.

Solutions for Knowledge and Skills Root Causes

The proposed solutions for knowledge and skills gaps are within two of Anderson & Krathwohl's (2001) categories: factual and procedural. The following are recommendations to address the knowledge gaps:

- Increase communication efforts among team members to ensure common goals.

- Increase and maintain communication between leadership and team members.

- Implement weekly or bi-weekly meetings between the director and coordinated student services team members. Before a new team member joins the team, ensure the individual is knowledgeable about assigned tasks and expected outcomes. The director should meet with the team member periodically to outline the vision for the task.

- According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), one strategy leaders can use to prepare for change is to imagine situations before they occur.

Empirical research and identified root causes show that open communication may prove useful in improving coordinated student services teams. Open communication is essential to ensure the team is aware of the common goals of the organization. According to the *Webster's Dictionary*, "Communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system, signs, or behavior." Open communication is characterized by respect, intent, trust, and collaboration (Deming, 1982). When achieved, open communication can contribute to the effectiveness of the

coordinated student services team. A study conducted by Lewton and Rosenthal (2004) asserts that relational, social, and organizational structures contribute to communication failure that underscores the results revealed in the knowledge and skills domains as well as the organizational performance gap domain. Effective professional communication and team collaboration is the result of "good communication that encourages collaboration and helps prevent an error that greatly enhances outcomes (Daniel, 2008)." The success of a team is determined by and specific to the role and performance of the team members that contribute.

Solutions for Organizational Root Causes

Inform leadership

The leadership at the school level and state level will be informed of the findings and proposed solutions. The leadership at the school system level is the local superintendent and the director of student services. At the state level, it is the state superintendent, the deputy superintendent, the assistant state superintendent, and the director of student services. At the state level, the data revealed that numerous changes in leadership created challenges for the coordinated student services team. The changes resulted in a lack of knowledge for the purpose of the team, its essential role, and the effort needed to promote student success. The challenges the team encountered are not due to a lack of team effort or ability, but rather due to the constant change in leadership style, which stymied service delivery and growth.

The type of leadership style plays a pivotal role in the success of an organization. Bolman and Deal (2003) identified four distinctive frameworks from which people view styles of leadership.

The Four Frame Leadership Model is:

Structural: This frame requires a precise definition of the organization, including responsibilities, rules, policies and procedures, goals, and specialized roles. This frame can be bureaucratic but can be useful when alignment and clarification issues permeate the organization.

Human resources: The human resources frame values people and the work they do each day. The focus is to find ways for people to get the job done while they are feeling good about their accomplishment.

Political: The political frame requires that leaders understand the political climate of their organization. This frame involves the building and maintaining of coalitions, negotiating, and finding acceptable compromises.

Symbolic: This frame requires a visionary leadership style that brings the personal aspect to the organization. Cause and effect relationship become very important in this frame.

Both coordinated student services teams fall within the four-frame model. The failure of both organizations to implement or communicate a vision falls within the structural and political frame. Addressing the lack of vision through the structural frame lens would move coordinated student services teams toward alignment with an overall

organizational goal for the program. Sy (2005) states that constant communication of

mission goals helps minimize discord and clarifies lingering ambiguity because constant

communication serves as a beacon in aligning goals to objectives.

Create a Vision

To ensure barriers are not impeding or limiting the team's performance, both

organizations must provide and clearly communicate their vision for coordinated student

services. The vision must be clear, concise, and align with the team goals.

Increase Communication and Collaboration to Accomplish Desired Goals

A collaborative approach is often helpful and provides focused communication to

ensure team members are working toward common goals. Collaborative solutions can

often include revising work schedules, examining and strategically delegating work,

bringing in additional support from another section of the branch or another division,

redistributing work, eliminating tasks, or a combination of these solutions. Sometimes

there is no easy solution and the workload persists; however, engaging in this process

often reveals various possibilities.

Strengthen Team Capacity

Teams at the state and school system are repeating tasks and processes with no

vision or strategic plan. To increase collaborative efforts and team members' knowledge,

each organization should conduct a periodic gap analysis to investigate performance gaps

and identify procedures that would enhance the team's performance. Also, each

organization should develop a process for the teams to incorporate opportunities to reflect

on the outcome of tasks and debrief. This practice would increase communication and

ensure team members are working towards a common goal. The failure to initiate these processes could pose the following questions: "Does the coordinated student services team coordinate?" and "How can the state-level team critique a school system for accuracy when the state and school teams do not have a vision for coordinated student services?" The lack of vision implies there are no standards to work toward.

Implications

In Maryland, there are no processes and procedures in place for new team members to teach them to be productive. Individuals who are interested in working in education, whether at the central office level or the state level, should have more training on how to function as a part of a coordinated services team. Professional development sessions should teach individuals how to collaborate and coordinate efforts to meet team goals. When individuals are left with no guidance, they create their own goals, which may or may not conflict with the original goal of the team.

Recommendations for Practical Applications

The researcher recommends a full gap analysis should be conducted before each school system site visit to determine whether performance gaps exist. The results of the gap analysis should be included as part of the site visit process. The school system team should have the opportunity to address performance gaps and make recommendations on how they will eliminate the gaps with the support of the state team. The gap analysis should be a survey administrated on an online platform such as Survey Monkey for easy data analysis, tracking, and sharing.

A gap analysis should also be conducted with all members of each coordinated student services team to investigate the perception of all stakeholders, (e.g., alternative suspension specialist, and school safety specialist). Due to time limitations, this study focused on the four core mandated members of the coordinated student services team stated in COMAR. To capture a global perspective and holistic view of challenges that exist on coordinated student services teams, a full analysis must be conducted.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study needs to be replicated for other school systems to identify other performance gaps. Further studies would confirm or deny whether similar findings are present in different environments (e.g., school-based coordinated student services teams) and different geographic areas on the state. Additionally, a study should be conducted to determine the impact of coordinated student services on the academic, emotional, and social performance of students.

Teacher college preparation programs should include instruction on how to be a coordinated services team member. It is essential to encourage college and university teacher programs to ensure new team members are not only skilled within their field, but also skilled on collaboration, coordination, and communication, which are critical elements of being a productive team member. Ongoing professional development should be offered for coordinated student services team members. Therefore, there is a need for studies examining the educational needs of coordinated student service members. These studies could help inform the development and administration of appropriate professional development opportunities.

Conclusion

This study may be used as an example to inform school systems and state agencies of how to identify performance gaps to address deficiencies that may limit or impede the provision of support services. The process should not solely focus on coordinated student services, but be used to support the performance of other teams that provide services to students and families (e.g., individualized education program teams, and student support teams).

This study provides a framework for both coordinated student services teams to examine their perceptions, which affect the effectiveness of service delivery and student outcomes. The primary barrier to the coordinated student services teams was lack of organizational supports. With the identification of this barrier, the teams have a unique opportunity to address the perceived gaps in knowledge and skills, motivation, and organizational barriers. If these barriers are analyzed and addressed, the provision of support services to can be more meaningful and impactful.

Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor, primary developers of the coordinated student services model and prominent researchers in the area of coordinated student services, have a vision for the program as a comprehensive continuum of community and school programs to address barriers to learning. This study captured the current state of a coordinated student services team in a Maryland school system and at the state level. The results showed that the perceptions of the team members go against Adelman and Taylor's comprehensive unified vision.

There are talented people working hard to help students. They are making a difference in how services are being delivered. However, there is not a system in place to measure the results and determine the accuracy of the provision of services. Given the body of evidence supporting the need for systematic changes in education, it is puzzling that there is minimal attention to transforming schools' approach to addressing barriers to learning. Simultaneously, given the culture of marginalization and devaluation of support personnel in school improvement policy and practice, it is not surprising that such personnel at state, district, and school planning tables tend not to be present to discuss these issues. Unfortunately, this ongoing practice ensures that very little attention and effort is given to create fundamental systematic changes in how support services are conceptualized and delivered. That is why studies such as this one are important.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Mandated Members of a Coordinated Student Services Team

School Counselor

The role of the school counselor, as noted in COMAR 13A.05.05.02 contribute

services intended to help students:

> (1) demonstrate personal and academic growth; (2) make appropriate educational and career decisions: and (3) have a productive interaction with others.
> (2)

The school counseling program is provided during the elementary and secondary school years that shall encompass the following goals:

> (1) Facilitate personal and academic growth so that the student will: (a) understand all facets of the school environment, (b) understand individual rights and responsibilities, (c) demonstrate effective study skills, and (d) engage in appropriate classroom behavior; (2) Encourage the development of educational and career decision-making skills so that the student will: (a) comprehend aptitudes, interests, and experiences as they relate to individual career development; (b) apply the steps of decision making to any situation; (c) develop an approved 4-year high school plan of study; (d) analyze various careers that are appropriate to an individual's aptitudes, interests, and experiences; (e) Identify appropriate career opportunities; (f) select the most relevant educational or vocational training programs; (g) formulate and appropriately modify a personal career development plan; and (h) demonstrate useful employment-keeping skills; (3) promote the development of interpersonal skills so that the student will: (a) understand the effect of one's behavior on others; (b) demonstrate effective, interpersonal communication skills; and (c) possess the knowledge and skill for resolving interpersonal conflict.

Pupil Personnel Worker

As noted in COMAR 13A.05.05.03, the pupil personnel program provides

interventions to meet a student's needs that may include:

> (1) consultation with school staff and parents; (2) assumption of a liaison role between home, school, and community; (3) home visits; (4) evaluation of social and educational adjustment; and (5) assistance
> (2)

with the implementation of laws and regulations pertaining to rights and responsibilities of students.

The regulation states the pupil personnel program shall encompass the following goals and sub goals:

> (1) assist in optimal health development so that the student will: (a) identify health problems that are interfering with academic achievement, (b) be aware of appropriate community agencies and organizations that provide health care and services, (c) be provided assistance in obtaining basic physical and personal health care needs, (d) understand the effect of appropriate nutritional habits and instruction in the home, school, and community,(e) participate as needed in programs designed to prevent or remediate potential health problems (that is, parenting education, drug and alcohol abuse), (f) understand the importance of good safety habits in the home, school, and community, (g) understand rights and appropriate responsibilities as related to health, and (h) have a greater awareness and understanding of physical development; (2) assist in optimal personal development so that the student will: (a) develop the ability to recognize and solve problems in the home, school, and community, (b) articulate personal feelings and attitudes on the values and beliefs that are characteristic of a democratic society, (c) understand an individual's rights and responsibilities in the home, school, and community, (d) identify unique talents, interests, academic skills, and personality traits that lead to more positive contributions in the home, school, and community, and (e) be aware of appropriate community agencies and organizations that assist in developing coping skills and improving self-esteem; (3) Assist in optimal interpersonal development so that the student will: (a) assume responsibility and accountability for behavior in relation to others in the home, school, and community, (b) Be aware of school and community resources and services that help remediate behavioral adjustment problems, (c) Demonstrate effective communication skills in the home, school, and community.

School Psychologist

As noted in COMAR 13A.05.05.04, the school psychological program of interventions to meet a student's needs may include:

> (1) consultation with school staff and parents on issues involving psychological principles as applicable to program and curriculum development, the learning process, and student development; (2) group or individual counseling with a student or parents; (3) consultation

with private and community resources and the school to integrate psychoeducational data for student adjustment; and (4) staff development activities to help apply psychological principles to education.

The school psychology program shall encompass the following goals and sub goals: (1) assist in optimal health development so that the student will: (a) be aware of his or her own level of well-being, (b) be aware of states in which a student deviates from psychological well-being, (c) recognize and develop appropriate psychological attitudes conducive to appropriate physical and personal care habits, (d) develop constructive attitudes toward sexuality, (e) understand the importance of optimal mental health, (f) develop psychological skills that foster optimal mental health, (g) Understand the psychological states that lead to chemical abuse, and (h) be aware of the psychological means of coping with chemical abuse; (2) assist in optimal personal development so that the student will: (a) describe, accept, and respect his or her personal feelings and attitudes, (b) understand the psychological components of how values and beliefs are formed, (c) describe, accept, and respect the student's uniqueness, (d) Attain positive feelings and place into perspective any negative feelings, (e) use decision-making skills in increasingly complex situations, and (f) develop and maintain appropriate coping skills; (3) assist in optimal interpersonal development so that the student will: (a) be aware of the effect of his or her behavior on others, (b) develop a sense of civic and social responsibility, (c) demonstrate effectiveness in interpersonal communications, (d) demonstrate skill in managing conflict, and (e) demonstrate responsible behavior as either a member or a leader of various groups; (4) assist in optimal academic development so that the student will: (a) be aware of academic abilities and limitations, (b) be aware of the academic linkage between past, present, and future experiences on the student's lifestyle, (c) be aware of the programs and services offered within the school, (d) develop educational plans, modified as necessary, that are consistent with personal characteristics and career decisions, and (e) understand psychological motivations for not attending school regularly; (5) assist in optimal career development so that the student will: (a) understand the relationship between personal characteristics and career decisions, (b) analyze personal attributes and determine career options, and (c) analyze the psychological aspects related to purpose and commitment in the workplace.

Appendix B: Team Members for Coordinated Student Services Team Participants

Maryland State Department of Education	School System
Team member one	Team member six
Team member two	Team member seven
Team member three	Team member eight
Team member four	Team member nine
Team member five	Team member ten

Appendix C: Invitation Email to Participants

Good afternoon,

This email is a request for your potential participation in a study as part of my doctoral degree in the Urban Education Leadership program at Morgan State University, School of Advanced Studies Leadership and Policy under the leadership of Dr. Glenda Prime.

The study will focus on the role of coordinated student services teams and the ongoing mission to provide support services to students. I will be collecting data on coordinated student services teams as defined in the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.05.05.0l.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 30 minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. To ensure individuals meet the requirements to participate in the study, please click this link https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MLVBPDJ to take a brief four question survey. If requirements are met, the researcher will contact you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at midal1@morgan.edu or phone at ██████ ████.

Thanks,

Michelle Daley

Appendix D: Interview Instrument

Thank you for spending this time with me and your willingness to participate in the project. Your time is appreciated. Thank you for allowing me to record this interview. The interview will allow you to share your views as a member of a coordinated student service team. The interview will take about 30 minutes. Your input and comments will be invaluable. As stated on the informed consent form, your identity will not be shared in this research.

1. Describe your role on the coordinated student services team and how many years have you been a member of the team?
2. Tell me about what made you decide to become a member of a coordinated student services team?
3. What are the goals/vision of the coordinated student services team?
4. Which of these goals is the team doing best? In other words, tell me about the strength of the coordinated student services team.
5. Which ones are they doing the least? In other words, tell me about some of the challenges for the coordinated student services team.
6. What is your intended goal as a member of the team?
7. Can you identify some specific areas where you feel the team is not doing well as it could in meeting the goals for the team?
8. Can you identify some specific areas where you feel you are not doing well as you could in meeting your goals?
9. Would you consider these major challenges? Why?
10. How do you believed these challenges are being addressed?
11. Did you ever felt discouraged about your role on the team? What did you do?
12. What do you believe is keeping the coordinated student services team from being highly effective? (what is causing the gap between where you are now and where the perfect coordinated student services team should be).
13. How do you know the team is being successful?
14. Do you believe different team members have different goals for the team?

This concludes the interview. As stated at the beginning of the interview and on the informed consent form, your identity will be kept confidential. Thank you for your time.

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

In order to decide whether or not you should agree to be a part of this study, you should understand enough of its risks and benefits to make an informed judgment. This process is known as informed consent. This consent form gives you detailed information about the research study. Once you understand the study, if you still wish to participate, you will be asked to electronically or manually sign this informed consent form. The form should be returned to the researcher at midal1@morgan.edu. If you have any questions about the form, you may call ███████████.

Title of Study:
From Policy to Practice: A Gap Analysis of the Provision of Coordinated Student Services in Maryland.

Name & Contact Information of Student Researcher
Michelle Daley
Cell: ███████████   Email: midal1@morgan.edu

Purpose of the Study: The objective of this research is to investigate coordinated student services team members' perceptions of the factors that impede or limit the effectiveness of the provision of student support services.

Duration: My participation in this study will include a 30-minute interview.

Procedures: During the course of this study, I will be asked to respond to open-ended questions developed by the researcher on the topic of discussion.

Potential Risks/Discomforts: There will be no risks in this study.

Potential Benefits: Potential participants will benefit from the study. Anticipated benefits will include a belief of reward for supporting the research. Participants may gain self-awareness, insight, and clarity about performance discrepancies. This study will also contribute to participants' understanding of the impact of performance gaps regarding the provision of student support services. The researcher will gain knowledge on a subject of significance through the experience of conducting in-depth interviews and analyzing the data for the results.

Confidentiality: Reports from this study will not be shared. The identity of individuals will be kept anonymous. Details that might identify participants from the school system, such as the location of the school system and the names of each participant will not be shared. Identity of the participants from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) coordinated student services team will not be shared. All interview responses

will be kept confidential. Your name or identity will not be linked in any way to the research data. Team member numbers will be used to secure your identity. ONLY the researcher will have access to the data. The data will secure for three years in a secured protected file.

Right to refuse to withdraw: I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may refuse to participate, or I may discontinue at any time.

Permission for audio-recording: I understand and consent to have my interview audiotaped.

Individuals to contact: You may ask any questions you may have. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher by phone at █████████ or by email at midal1@morgan.edu.

The researcher will give you a copy of this signed and dated form for your records.

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by signing below. All of my questions regarding this form or this study have been answered to complete satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research.

I understand that by signing my name, I am signing this form and therefore am providing informed consent to participate in this study.

_____   _____
Print Name   Researcher's
Signature

_____   _____
Signature   Date

_____
Date

Appendix F: Document Analysis Form

Research Questions:

 X   What are the perceptions of coordinated student services team

members about the performance gaps that are evident in the

provision of support s   ervices?

_ _   What are the perceptions of coordinated student services team

members about root causes of performance gaps evident in the

provision of student support services?

____   What are the perceptions of coordinated student services team

members about approaches that could be implemented to close the

performance gaps?

The perceived performance gaps and root cause are supported by evidence from the

school system's most recent coordinated student services site visit report. The evidence

outlined supports the following two research questions. The research questions are:

1) What are the perceptions of coordinated student services team members about the

performance gaps that are evident in the provision of support services?

2) What are the perceptions of coordinated student services team members about

root causes of performance gaps evident in the provision of student support

services?

The evidence from the site visit report are:
- The need to develop program evaluation that reflects system-wide,

comprehensive pupil services data to guide the delivery of services and address the school system's needs.

- The need to develop central office coordinated Student Support Team (SST) through staff development and training to identify strategies to address challenges that hinder the delivery of services to students.

- The need to develop a strategic plan to increase staffing to improve the current ratios of pupil personnel workers, school counselors, psychologists, and school social workers to students and ways to further coordinate student services across special education and student services at the central office.

- Increase linkages to promote central office services to school teams including intervention strategies, program resources, and home-school-community connections.

- Maintain strong interagency support and partnership for the provision of school health services.

- Conduct a gap analysis of career development competencies being taught in the classroom and by school counselors; and use the Maryland Career Development Framework as the basis for program development to fill the gaps in program delivery.

- Allocate time to celebrate successes and to identify strategies to address challenges that hinder the delivery of services to students.

- Demonstrating strong interdisciplinary collaboration to meet the needs of the students to involve parents in the college and career process.

- Provide a copy of the SST plan to parent/teacher to assist with buy-in and follow through.

- Collaborate with community partners to identify services for parents and students goals relative to: achievement, graduation, discipline (in-school and out-of-school suspensions), healthy students, and attendance.

2. What are root causes of the perceived performance gaps of the coordinated student services team? <u>There was noted evidence of root cause for noted gaps were documented in the site visit report.</u>

3. What are the perceptions of coordinated student services team members about approaches that could be implemented to close the performance gaps? <u>There was noted evidence of approaches to address identified gaps.</u>

Appendix G: Highlighting Strengths for Coordinated Student Services Teams

The desired outcome of a team is contingent on the contribution of each team member. The next section does not respond to the research questions, however, it provides additional information about the teams' perception of whether different team members have different goals for the team, communication, coordination, and collaboration, team members' intended goals as a team member, the perception of a successful team, the measure of success, and leaders' perception of the team's assets. These areas highlight the strengths of the teams.

Different Team Members; Different Goal

There was a common thread amongst team members from both coordinated student services teams; all ten team members believed that if different team members had different goals for the team. When asked if different team members have different goals for the team, many team members stated, "yes, it is a good thing." Team member number six summed it up by stating, "I don't think it's a bad thing. I think that it's a good thing. If five different people come to the table with five different goals to engage in a conversation to see what the commonalities in the five goals, and you can pull positive elements from their goal, and put into the teams' goal to move forward, that's great." Table 3 outlined the responses from both coordinated student services teams.

Table 3: Different Team Members, Different Goal

Team Members	Do you believe different team members have different goals for the team?
Team member one	"Yes, I do. I think that people think differently about their role on the team, I think overall we do have a cohesive team."
Team member two	"I don't think it is an intentional bad thing. It can be a great thing."
Team member three	"I think it's a good thing."
Team member four	"As a specialist, your vision is about your specialty, it's not a bad thing."
Team member five	"I don't think they are different, they just have different approaches."
Team member six	"I don't think they are different goals, but sometimes they have their own perspective on how to get things done. That not a bad thing, it is ok."
Team member seven	"I think they can be different, but I think the vision and message are the same."
Team member eight	"Yes, but I think it's a good thing sometimes. Being on the same team, we should be able to come to a common ground that we are looking at the same goal."
Team member nine	"No, I think we all have the same goals."
Team member ten	"I think we all have the same goal."

Communication, Coordination, and Collaboration

Communication with and involvement of team members is an essential element of the coordinated student services team. Team member one expressed that the team "communicates very well with each other." Furthermore, the team member believes that the team tries to make certain that "communication is accurate and up to date." Research

shows that an essential factor of a successful team is open communication and positive feedback which involves discussing problems or issues and trying to offer constructive help to resolve matters that serve group needs (Harris & Harris, 1996).

The data also revealed that team members made efforts to determine how to obtain a better assessment of students and families in and outside schools and with the support of agencies and the community. For example, one team member explained, "that as a team can get a thorough overall background, finding out about a student of what is needed and what the student need help with." The team member elaborated that those findings "are a blessing" because the team finds out that the student has concerns, and the team would never know that the student needs help because they never ask." "We get to know about students' parents, know about where they came from, know about some of the trauma they are going through." The data gave a general sense that the team explores ways of getting an overall view of essential things that affect the student; whether negative or positive that can be used to support the student and the family.

The Perception of a Successful Team

When team members were asked, how do you know the team is being successful? Team member one stated, "we get excellent feedback from individuals the field, and they appreciate the support that has come from our team regarding some of the issues that they are dealing with." Additionally, team member number one stated, "when the folks that we represent share that they feel that we are making a difference for them." Team member two, "we know we are successful when there is continued support for the team, and clear effective and concise communications from other specialists." Team member two

elaborated stating, "the measure of success is that we can see the fruits of our labor positive outcome of what we do." Team member three stated, "when I am able to get the right messages to go up and down the chain, and the team has time and the manpower to go out and do student services visits to provide technical assistance." Team member four stated, "an understanding of the vision and mission of the team when it is written, and we see it. When people understand that we are not an afterthought we are partners in this." Team member five stated, "I think the folks that we have such as the directors, and assistant superintendent in the past were very supportive, they listen to us if we had a major concern." Team member six stated, "for a successful team, it takes being deliberate about examining processes to make sure they get the intended outcomes." Team member six elaborated, "for example, it's making sure we do a better job of having our processes, being more deliberate, and that comes with training; professional development, communications." "I will give you another example that I strongly believe is essential," stated the team member. "our graduation rate was pretty low in respect to the rest of the state at one time. What we had to do was to increase the amount of data the principals receive. Therefore, we started collecting and analyzing more data to see where students were, which lead to some programs being put in place to increase the promotion rate; therefore, increasing the graduation rate. So I think we were successful at doing that over a period. Subsequently, the team had our focus on disproportionally, I know its state law, but before that, we were monitoring how African American student performance against White students and those are the two largest groups we have in our school district. Currently, the rate has significantly increased because programs the team

collaborated, we worked together to coordinate services that benefitted both populations; we saw a steady incline that started closing the achievement gap." Team member even stated, "everyone has to understand their purpose. When you talk about coordinated student services you provide supports to fix things right away for the family and student."

The Measure of Success

Team members were asked, "what do they believe is the measure of success for the team." Team member eight stated, "putting the student and the parent in a situation where they would be successful; not only in the school but also at home." Many times students may experience a lot of overlapping factors inside and outside of the school that impacts them academically, emotionally and socially. These factors test the team coordinated efforts in addressing those factors, not only for the study but also for the family. Team member further stated, 'right now the measure of success would be for the team to find out things such as if some child might not eat that evening, and if things are going on inside the home, and make sure that we are not only looking at when they come to school. When we talk about success, we are aware that there are major factors that have an impact on what is going on with that student and even with that parent." Team member nine stated, "I think a lot of it depends on an effort of everyone to be equal, everyone to be respectful of everyone's opinion, and to work collaboratively." Team member ten stated, "ideally it is seeing that the numbers of students referred to student services are getting those services."

Leaders' Perspective of Assets

It is imperative that the leader of a team understands his or her tasks and how they interconnect with each team member's role to achieve the organization's goal. The director of each coordinated student services team expressed their perception of strengths of the team members on their team. One director stated that one the strengths of the team is "our personnel, they have a passion for children." The director further expressed "another strength is the increased number of support services over the years." The other director described one of the main strength of the team is "the very diverse and specialized team members." For instance, the director stated, "these are professionals who are specifically certified to deliver support services, being highly specialized is one; then diverse two." The director explained, "although the disciplines sound different when you say them, they work together to provide quality technical assistance to school systems."

The goal of the director of a coordinated student services team goes beyond coordinating resources and processes for the team. The director ensures team members are providing support services to achieve the ultimate goal which is the success of the student.

Summary of Assets

Maryland has been at the forefront with coordinating student services to address barriers to learning. Collectively, the coordinated student services team at the state and the school system fosters a culture of high expectation providing support services to students and families. Team members from both teams shared valuable assets. The

consistent emerging theme revealed a positive team environment built on the foundation of effective coordination, communication, and collaboration. Team member five articulated, "when you have a coordinated effort, you have many different elements working with that family, child, teacher, and with the community." Team member one stated that the team is "best at communicating with each other and working together on common goals." Team member four stated, "the team works well together, and they do their best to coordinate major projects and initiatives." A few team members believed that the "relationships, consistency, and knowledge are strengths for the team. When the researcher asked one team member to elaborate on these factors, the team member mentioned, "it is about knowing the community we serve." "We know our students, we know our community, and they know us."