EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

JULIA E. KOPPICH
University of California, Berkeley
MICHAEL W. KIRST
Stanford University

This issue of *Education and Urban Society* is devoted to the topic of integrated children's services. More specifically, most of the articles in this volume center on school-linked services. The concept underlying school-linked services is a rather simple one: The school becomes the "hub," or focal point, of a broad range of child- and family-oriented social services. Schools do not assume primary responsibility for these additional services, but the school acts as the organizational touchpoint to make services available, accessible, meaningful, and appropriate for children and their families.

The general topic of integrated children's services has come to occupy an increasingly prominent place on the political and public policy agenda. The reason seems relatively straightforward: "Report cards" for children and families, whether examined from national, state, or local perspectives, reveal a steady decline in the life situations for many of this nation's young people. Large numbers of American children have inadequate health care, never see a dentist, and are left to care for themselves for long hours while their parents are at work. Many others tangle with the juvenile justice system or come from abusive homes. Many of these problems are the direct result of poverty. Much of the most severe, and seemingly intractable, poverty is focused in the urban context.

A generation after President Lyndon Baines Johnson declared the nation's official War on Poverty, 20% of this nation's children remain poor. In fact, fully 40% of America's poor are children under the age of 18.

Poverty in the United States knows no racial or geographic boundaries. But the problems attendant to it have a lasting impact on children's lives.

To be sure, there is a wealth of child- and family-oriented public policy at federal, state, and local levels. But a growing body of scholarly research points to the conclusion that conventional policymaking for children, which typically results in fractionated governance—multiple programs in multiple

agencies—and unconnected funding streams—the classic categorical aid formulas—may be exacerbating rather than alleviating the problem.

Thus, although there is a network of social services for children, this system, as we discovered while researching *Conditions of Children in California* (Kirst, 1989), is plagued by three fundamental problems. The first is *underservice*. Too many children are slipping through the cracks in the social service system and receiving little or no assistance at all.

The second problem is *lack of prevention*. Most governmental agencies, because of policy preference, fiscal constraints, or long-standing tradition, have adopted a triage approach to children's services. They treat the most severe and the most manifest problems but undertake insufficient efforts to prevent problems from developing in the first place.

The third problem with the current construct of social services for children and families is *service fragmentation*. The social service system generally is composed of a series of targeted programs with overlapping or conflicting eligibility requirements and a complicated web of rules and regulations overseen by a bewildering array of seemingly autonomous bureaucracies. The state of California, for example, maintains 169 children- and youth-serving agencies overseen by 37 different state entities located in seven different state departments.

Social service agencies all-too-infrequently cooperate with one another or coordinate their efforts. Social workers rarely talk with mental health professionals, who have little time to talk with school counselors, who infrequently communicate with juvenile justice officials. Yet all of these professionals may be dealing with the same children and families. Families are forced to tell their life stories over and over to differing sets of agency representatives as they seek themselves to cobble together a package of services. As a frustrated client once remarked, trying to deal with the social service system is like trying to "dance with an octopus."

So what, the reader might reasonably ask, does all this have to do with schools? School's role is to educate, to take care, principally, of children's academic needs, isn't it? The answer is both yes and no.

Children's educational prospects, their chances for success in school, are profoundly affected by a host of nonschool factors—family support systems, opportunities for healthful recreation, the status of physical and mental health. Yet for an increasing number of this nation's children, life outside school is creating pressures and demands so intense that academic achievement in school is suffering. As any teacher or administrator knows, a child who comes to school hungry or ill or abused simply cannot learn as effectively as a child who enters the classroom free of these debilitating conditions.

The issue, then, is how to make needed social services—those kinds of assistance that can alleviate the problems that impede children's ability to learn—available and accessible. One response is school-linked, integrated services.

Advocates of school-linked services contend that the school provides the organizational context for the most sustained contact with children. Nearly all young people attend school. Moreover, there is little stigma attached to school, as there might be to other social service agencies. Schools, then, the advocates contend, provide the most appropriate setting for integrating a range of services that children need to succeed. Services might actually be located at the school site, with professionals from social service agencies "outstationed" at the school. Alternatively, a case worker, familiar with a range of services, might be assigned to the school to work with children and their families, "brokering" an array of prospective service offerings.

But the school-linked, integrated services approach has its critics as well. Some individuals continue to adhere to the philosophy adopted by the Reagan administration in the early 1980s, namely, that government services, any government services, lead to negative rather than positive outcomes for children. Proponents of this perspective argue, for example, that more school-based health clinics will lead to more pregnant teens, and more drug education will contribute to greater drug use. This approach has been widely discredited as having little empirical validity, but it continues to have its vocal adherents.

A second perspective is that espoused by former President George Bush's Domestic Policy Council. The notion here travels under the rubric of "family empowerment." Advocates of this approach argue that the way to improve conditions for children and families is not to change the location of services, as this does not force the system to change. Rather, children and families need to become more powerful consumers of services. They can be assisted in this if they are provided with government vouchers redeemable for a variety of services, such as health care. Families would then be able to purchase services themselves on the open market.

This approach has some attraction, but it is built on a series of somewhat shaky assumptions. For example, it assumes that families have adequate information about the services for which they are eligible, that the amount of the voucher is sufficient to cover the cost of the services, and that services are available and accessible.

In the growing national debate over school-linked services, the most common concern is raised by the "schools can't do it all" camp. The members of this group argue that schools have been increasingly asked to assume an ever-expanding range of noneducational responsibilities. Although they ac-

knowledge that school-linked services are not conceived as schools' shoul-
dering new social service burdens, they express the fear that school-linked
services will become yet another set of underfunded education mandates.

Those who embrace the concept of school-linked services recognize its
complexity. They, too, raise substantive questions about institutional chal-
lenges and real, or popularly perceived, barriers to an integrated services
approach. Issues to be confronted include

- Funding—Services generally are funded categorically, making collaboration
  complicated, if not problematic.
- Space—Finding adequate and accessible space for a range of services can be a
  tricky matter, especially in overcrowded urban schools.
- Confidentiality—Providers raise concerns about sharing potentially stigmatiz-
  ing information about clients, particularly minor-age clients.
- Staff training—Teachers are trained in schools of education, social workers in
  schools of social welfare, and nurses in schools of nursing. If services are to be
  collaborative, interprofessional training will need to be considered.
- Governance—Who is in charge of a coordinated services effort? If one agency
  assumes primary governance responsibility, will the other participating agencies
  consider themselves full partners? If no agency takes the lead, then where does
  responsibility for service delivery rest?

The concerns raised, both by critics and by integrated service advocates,
are real, yet so are the problems. Educators find themselves increasingly
handicapped as they attempt to create a climate for educational success for
students who, in ever-larger numbers, come to school ill equipped to focus
on academics. Big-city school districts, in particular, are plagued by the
manifestations of a set of social ills that are not of their making, but with
which they are forced to deal.

The articles in this volume do not presume to cover all of the practical and
policy considerations that swirl around the topic of integrated, school-linked
children's services. They are intended to provide the reader with a selection
of viewpoints, ideas, examples, and research findings that create a framework
for continuing discussion and debate.

The article by Soler and Shauffer describes some early integrated services
efforts and begins to outline the characteristics of effective multiagency
programs. Gardner's article offers some practical, nuts-and-bolts "do's" and
"don'ts" about planning and implementing school-linked services.

The article by Jehl and Kirst positions school-linked services as a compo-
nent of comprehensive education reform. The Kirst piece that follows de-
scribes strategies by which existing fiscal resources might be redeployed in

a system of integrated services. Smrekar's article explores the area of family-school interactions and describes the types of policies, procedures, and practices that enhance or retard the possibility of successful school-linked services.

The next two articles strike cautionary notes. Kahne and Kelley examine the underlying tensions implicit in a system of integrated services and reveal how such tensions might have an impact on program quality, efficiency, and accountability. Chaskin and Richman push the debate further by raising concerns about the appropriateness of basing an integrated services program in a single institution, such as a school, rather than using established community-based organizations as agencies' "homes."

The final article, by Chang, is an initial exploration of the important and sensitive issues of race, ethnicity, and culture and of their impact on the provision of integrated services to children and families.

Some of the articles in this volume have previously been published elsewhere, albeit in somewhat different form. A version of the Soler and Shauffer article, for example, first appeared in the *Nebraska Law Review*. The articles by Gardner, Jehl and Kirst, and Chaskin and Richman made their initial appearance in the Packard Foundation's volume, *The Future of Children*. In their original form, these articles reached an audience different from the *Education and Urban Society* reader. We believe these writings to be significant, and thus have elected to revise, edit, and refocus them for the readers of this volume.

We also recognize there are some gaps in these readings. Some potentially crucial areas in the integrated services arena remain unexplored. One of these still-to-be-researched areas is the politics of integrated services.

As policymakers pay increased attention to children's policy, the number of children's advocacy groups is burgeoning. Some of these groups promote broad-based, encompassing agendas aimed at crafting comprehensive policy for children and families. Most, however, continue to work within long-established categories, targeting their activities to particular areas of children's policy, such as child care or juvenile justice.

In addition to the growing band of children's advocacy groups, conventional education interest groups (teacher unions and administrator and school boards associations) continue to occupy their usual, and often influential, places on the policymaking scene. The sphere of concern of these groups generally is narrowly conceived as education. Yet these organizations, too, increasingly have become part of the children's policymaking mix.

Thus, there continues to be a need to "unpack" the political dynamics surrounding emergent children's policy. How do children's advocacy and

education interest groups interact? Are new coalitions being formed, or is the press for integrated policy having the unintended consequence of intensifying long-standing policy and funding boundaries? Is there, in other words, an emerging "new politics" of policymaking for children? These are topics for further exploration.

We hope the articles in this volume provide grist for the intellectual mill, stimulate thought and discussion, and prompt a deeper, more broad-based consideration of integrated children's services. It is a topic that we believe continues to deserve the sustained time and attention of educators, social service providers, and policymakers.

REFERENCE

Kirst, M. W. (Ed.). (1989). *Conditions of children in California.* Berkeley: Policy Analysis for California Education.