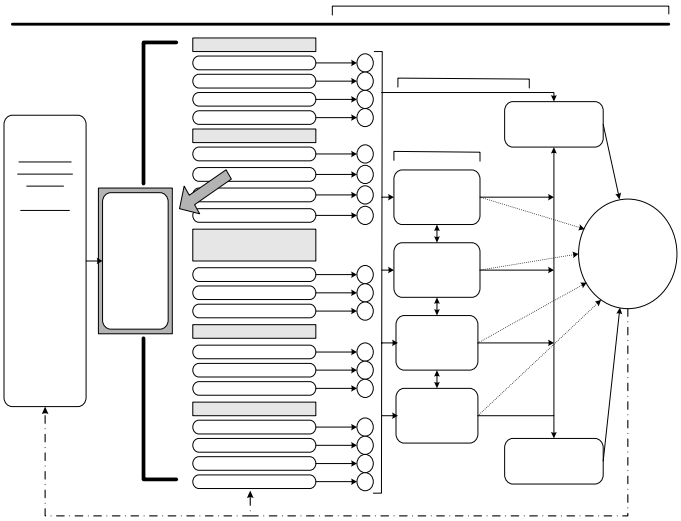
Designing Successful Programs and Services

Introduction



As a result of your conditions and resources assessment, you have identified individual, family, school and community conditions that potentially represent barriers to student achievement, healthy development and success in school. Together with your partners, you also mapped out the various resources available in your school community and identified potential gaps in programs and services. In this chapter, and in subsequent chapters, we talk in detail about how you can design successful programs and services with your partners that address the conditions underlying student learning. This is a critical component within the Ohio Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement (OCCMSI).

Five core program and service components are the defining features of (and the drivers for) the Ohio Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement (see Figure 1.3). A growing amount of research supports their individual and collective contributions to school improvement. These core components are:

1. Academic learning: models, strategies and practices involving classroom instruction, tutoring, school climate interventions, academic enrichment and curriculum alignment;

2. Youth development: models, strategies and practices including after-school programming, mentoring, leadership groups, social recreation and other youth programs;

3. Family engagement and support: models, strategies and practices including parent education classes, parent/teacher organization activities, family resource centers and support for learning at home;

4. Health and social services: models, strategies and practices such as mental health, primary care, health and nutrition education, physical education and related supports; and

5. Community partnerships: models, strategies and practices targeting higher education, faith-based organizations, business partnerships, service learning and other community building strategies.

Each component is described in some detail in a special chapter. Each chapter follows the same developmental progression. We define each component. We then present research-supported design principles and strategies. Then we identify predictable barriers to implementation, and we also provide "barrier busting strategies" (i.e., strategies you can use to minimize their effects).

Clearly, each component is different and even unique; and that is why we devoted a special chapter to each. On the other hand, these five core components are alike in this fundamental way: Some of the same theoretically-sound, research-supported principles serve as drivers for their success. In other words, these five core components rest on a common conceptual and empirical foundation. Key program design principles and strategies comprise part of this common foundation. This chapter presents these common concepts and principles for quality programming.

Overarching design principles and strategies for successful programming

Essentially, quality programming is quality programming. Identifiable, generic principles and strategies apply to all five components: academic learning, youth development, family engagement and support, health and social services, and community partnerships. The design principles and strategies presented in this chapter are derived from a growing body of research on programs of all kinds. Most of this research focuses on programs that work – programs that produce good, predictable results and do not yield unintended, undesirable consequences.

You will want to use these principles and strategies and practice them in your present programs and services in schools, community agencies and neighborhoods. When you are successful at implementing these strategies, the school, students, parents and families will benefit. In today's accountability-rich environment, this kind of success is not only important, it is vital to your continuing support and resources.

Table 4.1 lists research-supported design principles and strategies for successful, results-oriented programs. You will see similar tables in several of the chapters that follow.

Table 4.1: Overarching design principles and strategies for successful programming

Principle	**Definition**
Structural considerations	
Results-oriented	• Programs are tailor-made to achieve specific results with targeted populations; staff know that merely offering programs and services is not enough and hold themselves accountable for desired results
Logical	• The best programs benefit from strong, solid intervention logic; they work to assure that needs are related to services and outcomes
Comprehensive	• Programs address risk factors, strengths and aspirations, while simultaneously building competencies

Table 4.1: Overarching design principles and strategies for successful programming	
Principle	**Definition**
	• Programs target multiple systems (i.e., families, schools, communities and peers) and reinforce consistent messages across settings • Programs develop linkages and communication networks across systems (school-to-home, family-to-school, etc.) • Programs use multiple strategies to accomplish their goals
Evaluation-driven	• Evaluation methods and frameworks guide the program from the start, data-based decision making is the norm and data are used for learning, development and continuous improvement
Theoretically-sound and research-supported	• Program designers consult relevant theory and research when they make program decisions; as a result, programs have strong theoretical justifications, are supported by research and, where warranted, represent an evidence-based, best practice • Staff may adopt model programs and curricula that are already known to be effective at addressing the identified needs
Implementation considerations	
Varied teaching and learning methods	• Programs involve varied, research-supported learning experiences and teaching methods that are interactive, experiential, engaging and address multiple learning styles • Lessons also provide opportunities for direct application of newly learned skills within real-life settings
Sufficient dosage	• The program's frequency, intensity and duration are sufficient to achieve desired results • Follow-up booster sessions are included as needed
Implementation fidelity	• The program is implemented in the way in which it was originally designed; for example, the program's time requirements (how much time, how time is distributed) are not altered, and program staff know they cannot make random changes without risking results
Well-trained staff	• Staff support the program and ensure implementation fidelity • Staff are well-trained, valued and supported • Staff meet highest qualification required for licensure in their respective professions
Shared ownership and leadership	• Participants have a genuine "say so" in program design, implementation, and improvement; they're viewed as partners, not as dependent, ignorant clients, and they become the program's best advocates, recruiters and supporters
Targeted and strategic	
Personalized to meet individual needs	While programs often target groups or populations, each individual receives special treatment and has access to special opportunities as needed; every person feels special; no one is lost in the crowd
Appropriately timed and placed	• Programs are started early enough to have an impact, are sensitive to

Table 4.1: Overarching design principles and strategies for successful programming	
Principle	**Definition**
	the developmental needs of the participants (i.e., age, stage of life cycle, etc.) and are offered by the right providers and in the right places to facilitate participation
Underlying values	
Culturally competent	• Programs are tailored to the cultural norms and values of the participants, and staff make every effort to include targeted persons in planning, implementation and evaluation • Programs take into account the special features of the local neighborhood community and the sponsoring organization
Family-supportive and -centered	• Programs are designed to support and strengthen families and in recognition of their needs and aspirations • Programs for kids operate in close consultation with parents, and staff make special efforts to recruit, involve and engage parents as participants and partners
Self-determination and minimal intrusion	• Programs do not decrease the likelihood that people will help themselves and each other, nor do they interfere with parents' efforts to raise their children • Program providers strive for the "least intrusive intervention" (comprehensive enough to meet needs, but selective and limited to the needs and problems at hand)
Empowerment-oriented	• Programs help develop the capacities of individuals, groups and families to help themselves and each other, and to gain access to the services, supports and resources they want and need
Strength-based	• Program builds from participants' strengths and assets, incorporating strategies that allow participants to experience success and esteem
Relationships and affect	
Positive relationships and bonding	• Programs promote strong interpersonal relationships among participants, staff, volunteers, etc. • Programs promote bonding and connections with others and institutions in order to facilitate the adoption of positive norms and values
Meaningful and enjoyable	• Programs need to be enjoyable (as viewed through the eyes of the participants) • Programs also include meaningful activities that are valuable to the participants both inside and outside the program • Important incentives such as food, entertainment, lotteries, games, etc., should be included to help recruit and retain participants

Table 4.1: Overarching design principles and strategies for successful programming	
Principle	**Definition**
Engaging staff	• Staff have qualities essential for effective programming such as genuineness, empathy, communication skills in presenting and listening, openness, willingness to share and help, ability to make participants feel welcome and included, dedication, flexibility, humor, accountability and credibility

From: Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002; ash & Anderson-Butcher, in press; Anderson-Butcher, in press; Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnick, & Elias, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2002; Nation et al., 2004; Kumpfer & Alvarado, 2003; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998; Weissberg et al., 2003.

Table 4.2: Check list of overarching design principles and/or strategies for successful programs
☐ Program is designed to create intended results
☐ The logic behind the program makes sense as the services link to outcomes
☐ Program uses multiple strategies to accomplish its goals (comprehensive)
☐ Program is evaluation-driven and continuously improved upon
☐ Program is research-supported and theoretically-sound
☐ A variety of teaching and learning strategies are used
☐ There is sufficient dosage
☐ The program is implemented the way it was originally designed
☐ Staff are well-trained in the program design
☐ Participants have a "say so" in how the program is structured and implemented
☐ Program is tailored to meet individual needs
☐ Program is appropriately timed and located
☐ Program is implemented in culturally competent ways
☐ Program is family-centered and -supportive
☐ Strategies foster self-determination and personal control
☐ Participants are empowered
☐ Participants' strengths are built upon in the program
☐ Positive relationships and bonding are created
☐ Program activities are enjoyable and meaningful to participants
☐ Staff are engaging

Researched-based programs

You need to consider adopting and implementing model programs that have been identified through research to be effective at producing intended outcomes for youth and families. There has been a trend towards the adoption of evidence-based programs and strategies within various settings that support youth and families. As such, several lists have been generated that overview model or effective programs which have been

researched extensively and found to be effective at creating outcomes. The theory is that outcomes for youth and families will be more likely to occur if something that is shown to work is implemented.

When you attempt to use research-based programs and strategies, you will quickly learn that you need to adapt them to fit your local participants and settings. As you review the other programs and curricula, including the research related to them, you will need to keep four things in mind: (1) Understand which components of the programs have been empirically tested and have resulted in positive outcomes; (2) If a certain program does not meet your populations' needs, look for another theoretically-sound, research supported program that does or contextualize the program to meet your needs; (3) Ensure the program or curriculum is implemented with fidelity; and (4) Evaluate your program to determine your needs for learning and improvement and also whether you are able to achieve the outcomes you want and need.

Table 4.3: Places to find model, research-based programs

- Blueprints Violence Prevention
  http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/
- Youth Violence: Surgeon General's Report
  http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/report.html
- Preventing Crime: What Works
  http://www.ncjrs.org/works/
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools: Department of Education
  http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/9900statereport/index.html
- HIV/AIDS Prevention Research Synthesis: Centers for Disease Control
  http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/hivcompendium/HIVcompendium.htm
- SAMHSA Model Programs
  http://modelprograms.samhsa.gov/template_cf.cfm?page=model_list
- National Registry of Effective Programs
  http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/SMA04- 3906/ii.asp
  Safe and Sound: An Education Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs
  http://www.casel.org/progrevfr.htm
- What Works Clearinghouse
  http://www.w-w-c.org/
- Council for Excellence in Government
  http:///www.excelgov.org/displayHybrid.asp?keyword=prppcsHome&keywordMult=prppcsInterventions
- Promising Practices Network
  http://www.promisingpractices.net/
- International Campbell Collaboration
  http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/Fralibrary.html

Using program logic models

Logic models have emerged as very helpful tools in planning effective programs. A logic model is a plausible and sensible organizing device for your planning and implementation. A logic model helps you identify all of the essential parts of a program, how they fit together and how participants in your program will benefit, i.e., what they had and needed when they first joined the program and the outcomes yielded by the program in relation to participant "inputs."

A logic model is a simple graphic representation of the content, structure and flow of your program strategy designed to address a community condition. Included are assumptions, intentions, inputs, activities, outputs and desired immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes. They require some intensive thought and work. However, the benefits they yield justify the front-end investments they require.

For example, they help you organize your thinking and incorporate relevant research. They guide you through the process participants will follow and they require you to identify progress indicators (intermediate/immediate outcomes) and desirable, longer term outcomes. They also require you to think through the conditions and principles needing to be in place for the program to be effective. Most logic models include the following components:

Conditions and resources assessment

You'll want to identify the social and academic conditions your program will address. (See the conditions and resources assessment chapter.) You should consider student and family strengths and weaknesses and available or potential program, school and community resources available to address student and family needs and conditions. Your conditions and resources assessment should help you answer the following questions:

- Who do we need to serve?
- Why does this population need programs and services?
- Do you need to accommodate different sub-sets of the population in need?
- Are there special groups in your population that may need different services?
- How will the participants be different as a result of the programs and services?

Program assumptions

Then you'll identify the theoretical assumptions you are making to support your program activities. In this component, you need to be explicit about why you think your program activities will lead to desired outcomes by answering the following questions:

- What does the research say about what type of program meets the needs of this population or problem?
- Does the program logically meet the needs of the clients?
- Is the program designed around the best practices that are known to be effective?

Program resources

Here you'll identify the resources you will need to run your program. Resources here are broadly defined and may include things like finances, staff, settings, volunteers, equipment, supplies and contracted services. You also may need to consider any constraints that may limit or circumscribe your program such as ethical issues, laws, regulations and funding requirements.

Program activities

You'll then want to describe program activities. These are the things you do, the services you offer or the links you make to services for students and their families. For example, you may conduct tutoring sessions, provide recreation opportunities, conduct home visits, provide in-service training about educational enrichment to teachers, etc.

It is important to understand the above four steps and components are the ingredients of your program – they form the basis of your daily actions and activities. The next four components help you define your program accountabilities. They will help you know if you did what you intended to do and if you reached your intended results:

Program outputs

Outputs are the direct products of service activities and are usually measured as volumes. These measures are sometimes referred to as process measures and might include things like the number of tutoring sessions you provided, the number of recreation opportunities provided, the number of home visits conducted, the number of in-service training sessions to teachers provided, etc.

Program outcomes

Immediate outcomes are those produced closest to the service. They may include student or parent gains in knowledge, changes in attitude, acquisition of skills, revised values or modified intentions that are directly linked to the your program strategy.

Intermediate outcomes are the sustained behavioral impacts of your program effort. Sustained behavioral change is crucial to producing good long-term outcomes.

Long-term outcomes are generally measured at the school or community level. In the OCCMSI, long-term outcomes would include measures of children succeeding in school and being prepared for a successful transition to adulthood.

Once again, developing a program logic model has many benefits. It helps to structure your critical thinking about program assumptions, intent, structure and accountabilities. It helps to communicate about your program with staff and stakeholders, and helps to keep you focused. Finally, it is indispensable in the identification of the evaluation data you need to collect.

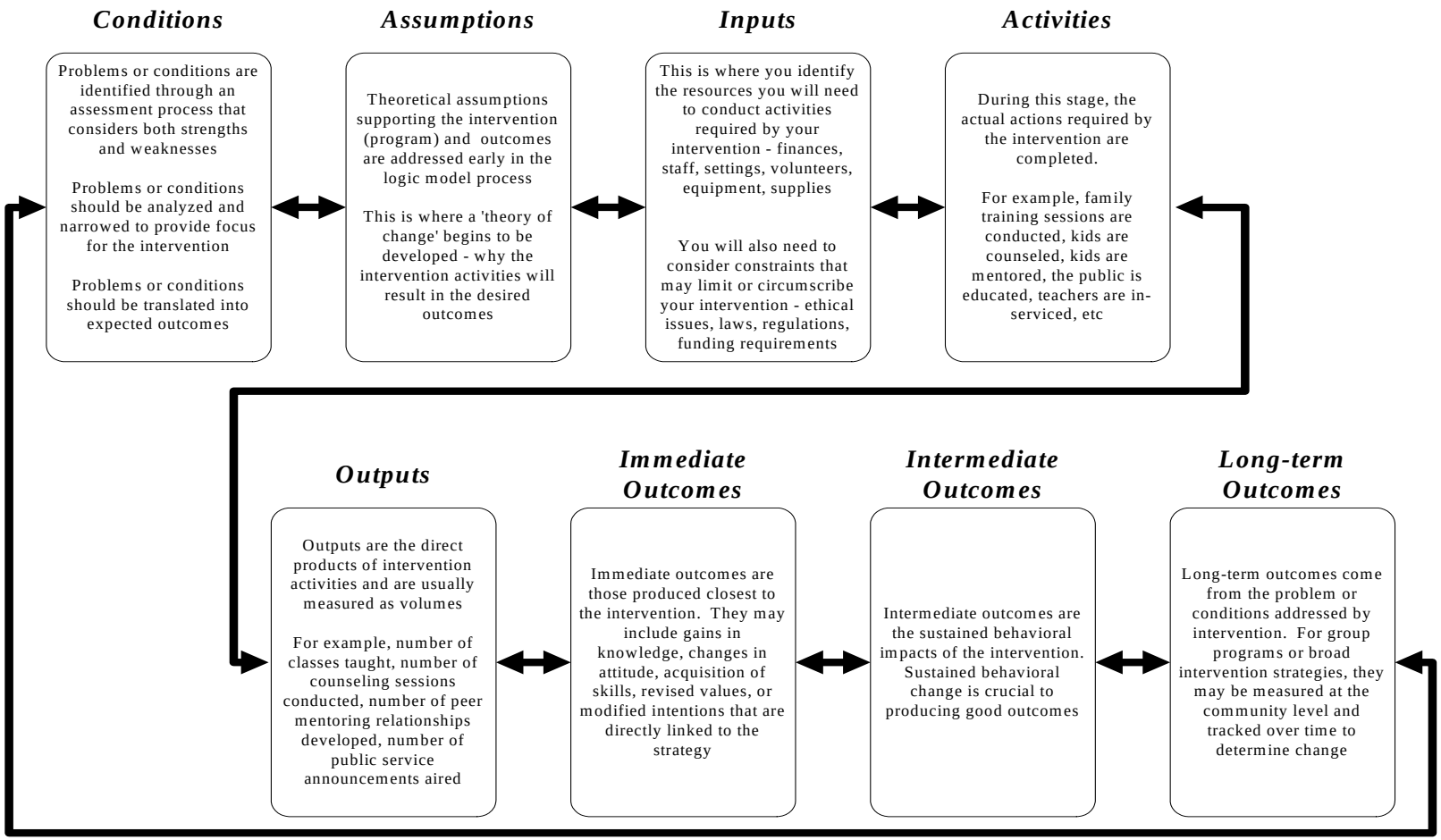


***Figure 4.1**: Basic logic model components*

Figure 4.2 presents an example of an actual program logic model developed in a school. The model has been recast slightly to fit the school improvement framework and some of the detail from the original has been dropped due to space considerations. The program reflected in the model is a mentoring program. It was developed in response to two needs – a low percentage of second graders reading at grade level and high-school students in a career-tech program that have poor attendance and also struggle with reading. A key assumption underpinning the model is that high school students can actually improve their own reading skills by working with younger students.

The model also shows how various resources combine to support the program. It uses 21st Century Community Learning Center funds plus matching funds from area business. It also includes a partnership with Big Brothers/Big Sisters to provide training and supervision for the mentors. Further, details about how the program will be provided are identified. It is a 24-week program with a one-on-one meeting between mentors and mentees occurring once per week for 45 minutes. The high school students keep a journal about their experiences and the elementary students have reading progress checked every six weeks.

Various levels of outcomes are shown. Both the mentors and mentees are expected to gain in reading skills and proficiency. Further, it is expected that both groups will have improved attitudes toward reading. Finally, all of these efforts are aimed at school success for both groups and a successful transition to adulthood for the older students.

Activity oriented programs vs results oriented programs

Programs may be categorized into a two-part classification: (1) Activity-oriented programs and (2) Results-oriented programs. Most of your time and effort must be directed toward results-oriented programs.

Activity-oriented programs typically involve free and directed play at all levels. The focus is on the activity rather than on the results that you expect from the activity. Activity-oriented programs include basketball, family events, school assemblies, community festivals and arts and drama. These activity-oriented programs are fun and enjoyable for the participants.

Results-oriented programs target improvements or changes in the participants' knowledge, attitudes, awareness and/or behavior. Programs are designed to help participants learn, improve and change in positive ways. Results-oriented programs are intentional interventions with anticipated outcomes. Research provides the program's rhyme and reason. The main idea behind results-oriented programs is to make sure the program and the strategies and activities you are providing correspond to the problem you are trying to solve.

Moving from an activity-oriented perspective to a results-oriented one will require intentional planning and thoughtful implementation by program leaders. The key is to strike a good balance between results-oriented programs and activity programs.

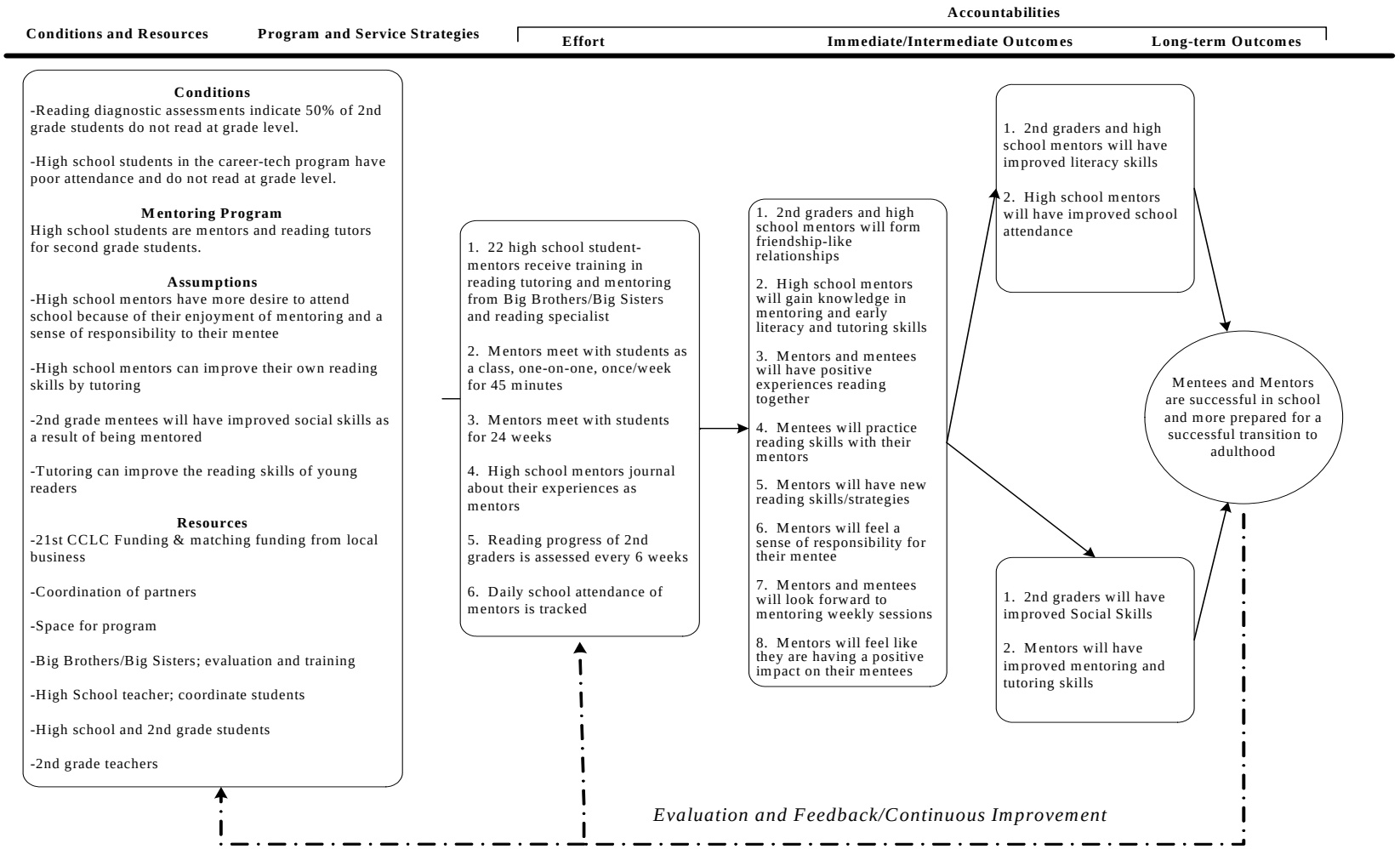


***Figure 4.2**: Example of a program logic model*

Attracting and retaining participants

It is important that you also pay critical attention to designing strategies within your programs that focus on the successful recruitment and retention of participants. Participants are unlikely to benefit from quality program designs if they are not present enough to reap program benefits.

Successful recruitment

Every program designer faces this question: How will we attract and recruit the participants who will benefit from our programs and services? Program magnets are the attraction and recruitment mechanisms for participants (Lawson, Anderson-Butcher, Barkdull, & Byrnes, 2000). They get “people in the door," a fundamental first step in developing every successful program. Common program magnets include:

- Activities offered are of interest;
- Program fits personal goals (i.e., want to discipline my child more appropriately, need to belong. have a desire to help others);
- Friends attend;
- Have some already established relationship with the program staff;
- Program participation is a requirement (i.e., parent requires youth attendance, child welfare system requires parent attendance);
- Support for program involvement (i.e., teachers encourage student involvement, employer provides time-off for community service); and
- They receive a referral to the program.

Successful involvement and engagement

Unfortunately, attendance at the program’s first session does not necessarily mean individuals will continue to participate on an ongoing basis. Once individuals have been successfully recruited, it is essential that program leaders understand how to engage and retain participants once they have started the program.

Program *hooks and glue* anchor participants to the program and keep them there (Lawson et al., 2000). *Program hooks* are retention mechanisms that also engage participants. *Glue* refers to the social bonding mechanisms that keep participants coming back for more (i.e., relationships with others, social networks, etc). Common program hooks and glue include:

- Relationships with others involved in the program (i.e., participants and staff);
- Participants experience a sense of belonging to a peer group or institution (i.e., social bonding; “feels like family”);
- Program activities are engaging;
- Program continues to fit personal needs and goals;
- Program is a safe and fun place to be; and
- Receive continued support for involvement via encouragement, incentives and rewards (i.e., teachers encourage involvement; employers offer paid time-off).

When participants keep coming because they are "hooked" and "bonded," the program already has started to have some beneficial effects. For example, youth often need to be involved in any program that is meaningful and enjoyable, and some need to develop friendships with other participants. Most activity programs are designed with these needs in mind.

Results-oriented programs require additional strategies and mechanisms to achieve desired outcomes. Many have detailed specifications regarding what you need to do to get these outcomes. The outcome production mechanisms and strategies are vital to your success. Our general design principles described earlier in this chapter, in fact, reflect some of these important outcome production mechanisms and strategies. For example, results-oriented programs pay strict attention to things like staffing skills and credentials, the amount of program exposure necessary to increase the likelihood of positive impact (dosage), personalization of the experience with a strengths-based orientation and the use of personalized teaching and learning technologies that match a student's unique needs in program design.

Obstacles to recruitment and retention

There are common issues related to the design, management and implementation of programs that often impact recruitment, retention and quality programming. Essentially, program staff must ask the questions: Did we make mistakes when we designed and implemented this program? Have we implemented the program in accordance with the research and the program's specifications? These *design flaws* (Lawson et al., 2000) will deter participants from engaging in your program.

Table 4.4: Barriers and minimizing strategies

Barrier: Common design problems	**Minimizing strategies:**
• Lack of clear vision • Unclear roles and responsibilities for staff and others involved in the program (i.e., principals, teachers, etc.) • Inappropriate expectations for staff and others involved in the program (i.e., principals, teachers, etc.) • Pay and benefits for staff • Sustainability • Program is not implemented in the way it is designed to operate • Ineffective or non-existent training for staff • Lack of communication and coordination • Individuals involved do not truly understand the program's purpose or intent	• Design programs in response to identified needs and desires; "know where you are going and what is going to get you there" • Be clear and realistic about roles, responsibilities and expectations for stakeholders • Secure stable financial support for the programs • Provide additional incentives and rewards for staff (i.e., flexible work schedule, etc.) • Create program logic models • Provide training and support for staff in program design and implementation • Hold program staff accountable for program implementation and effectiveness • Ensure programs are coordinated and communication channels exist • Socially market the program, its goals and expected outcomes

Final thoughts

This chapter was structured to provide you with generic building blocks for successful programs. In addition, the section on logic models provided a practical way of designing results-oriented programs. Designers of successful, solid programs follow a results-oriented planning sequence, they incorporate research-supported design principles and strategies, they use activities to get to results and they have systems in place that help engage and retain the participants.

Finally, as we discussed in the introduction, we describe in some detail the critical components necessary for our approach to school improvement: *academic learning, youth development, family engagement, health and social services and community partnerships.* Each of the following five chapters follows the same developmental progression. First, we define each component. We then present research-supported design principles and strategies. Finally, we identify predictable barriers to implementation, and we also provide "barrier busting" strategies – strategies you can use to minimize their effects.

In the appendix, we also provide you with a self-assessment tool that helps guide your thinking about designing and implementing successful programs and services. These core components will serve as key building blocks within your school improvement efforts.

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