

AN EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY A
SMALL RURAL KANSAS SCHOOL DISTRICT

A Thesis by

Edwin A. Ruffle

Master of Education, Wichita State University, 2009

Bachelor of Arts, Wichita State University, 1999

Submitted to the Department of Counseling, Educational and School Psychology
and the faculty of the Graduate School of
Wichita State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree of
Master of Education

December 2009

© Copyright 2009 by Edwin A. Ruffle

All Rights Reserved

AN EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY A
SMALL RURAL KANSAS SCHOOL DISTRICT

The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education with a major in Educational Psychology.

Randy Ellsworth, Committee Chair

Linda Bakken, Committee Member

Kim McDowell, Committee Member

DEDICATION

To all the students I had the pleasure to teach during my seven years as a science teacher for
USD 349 Stafford, Kansas

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Mary Jo Taylor for asking me to do this evaluability assessment, and to Dr. Randy Ellsworth and the other members of my committee, Dr. Linda Bakken and Dr. Kim McDowell, without whose patience this manuscript might never have been produced.

ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in the form of an evaluability assessment to help a small rural Kansas school district make the most of available resources and to improve psychological services provided based on input from administrative stakeholders and school staff. The basic evaluability assessment was designed from work described by Whorley (2004). Included in this investigation were the services provided by the district's special education cooperative and the school's staff. First, the program's objectives, goals, and strategies were identified by administrative stakeholders and assessed for evaluability. Then, a program logic model was constructed to use as a blueprint for developing and managing future program activities. Next, the program's budget was determined and evaluated based upon the content of the program's objectives and goals. This was done so that a sense of reality could be obtained regarding attainment of the goals. Teachers were also given access to program goals and asked to comment on the effectiveness of past attempts to reach them. Finally, agreement was sought on immediate adjustments to program strategies and for the provision of future evaluations. The results indicate the district has a well-funded psychological services program but most of its goals were either unattainable or could not be assessed in an economical fashion. Therefore, it is the opinion of this researcher that the psychological services provided by this district are not evaluable at this time. Several suggestions are made as to what stakeholders may do to in order to make the program evaluable. The importance and the burden of evaluation efforts for small districts is also discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
USD 349 Stafford, Kansas Psychological Services	2
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
Description of Small Rural Schools	6
Description of Psychological Services in Small Rural Schools	10
Description of Psychological Services Nationally	11
How Differences in Needs are Managed	13
Getting a Handle on Psychological Services Programs: Evaluability Assessment	14
Step One-Involve Intended Users	16
Step Two-Clarify Program Intent	17
Step Three-Explore Program Reality	17
Step Four-Reach an Agreement on Changes to the Program Design	18
Step Five-Explore Alternative Evaluation Designs	18
Step Six-Agree on Evaluation Priorities and Intended Uses of Evaluation information	19
Chapter Summary	20
III. METHODOLOGY	22
Study Setting	22
Description of Stafford, Kansas and USD 349	22
School Psychological Services: Stafford, Kansas USD 349	25
Participants	27
Instruments	28
USD 349 Stafford, Kansas School Psychology Services Evaluability Assessment	30
Procedures	
Step a-Involve Intended Users	30
Step b-Clarify Program Intent	30
Step c-Explore Program Reality	31
Step d-Reach an Agreement on Changes to the Program Design	32
Step e-Exploring Alternative Evaluation Designs	32
Step f-Agreement on Evaluation Priorities and the Intended Use of Evaluation Information	32
Staff Survey	33
IV. RESULTS	34
Logic Model for Psychological Services	34
Financial Resources	35
Human Resources	37
Professional and Staff Resources	37
Community Resources	39
Other Institutional Resources	40

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont.)

Chapter	Page
Program Activities	41
Counseling Services	42
Psychologist Services	44
Family Therapist Services	46
Student Improvement Teams	46
Outcomes	48
Short-Term Goals	48
Long-Term Goals	52
V. DISCUSSION	54
Thesis Objective 1: Program Goals and Objectives	54
Thesis Objective 2: Availability of Program Resources	56
Financial Resources	56
Human Resources	57
Thesis Objective 3: Program Logic Model	58
Thesis Objective 4: Evaluability of Psychological Services	58
Evaluability Summary	59
Future Evaluations	60
Generalizability	62
Limitations and the Future of Research	62
REFERENCES	63
APPENDICES	67
A: Stakeholder Interview Questions	68
B: Teachers' Psychological Services Survey and Results	70
C: Results of Open-Ended Teacher Survey Questions and Comments	77
D: Program Goals Identified by Program Stakeholders	90

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Comparison of Geographic, Demographic, and Racial Population Characteristics of Stafford and Wichita, Kansas	24
2.	2007-08 USD 349 Stafford, Kansas Enrollment by Race, Free and Reduced Lunch, and Special Education	25
3.	Survey results of “Rate the program according to how well you feel each goal is addressed.”	49

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Flowchart Used in Constructing a Logic Model for a Successful Program	16
2.	Logic Model for Psychological Services Provided by Stafford, Kansas USD 349	35

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ NOMENCLATURE

CSHP	Coordinated School Health Program
ESSDACK	Educational Services and Staff Development Association of Central Kansas
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IES	Institute of Educational Sciences
KCSL	Kansas Children's Service League
KSDE	Kansas State Department of Education
NASP	National Association of School Psychologists
NWC	Northwest Central region of the United States
SCKSEC	South Central Kansas Special Education Coop
USCB	United States Census Bureau
USD	Unified School District
U.S. Dept. of Ed.	United States Department of Education

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Small rural school districts are unique environments that do not necessarily exhibit the stereotypical conditions one would expect to find based upon an analysis of national school data. This means that school psychological service providers in these areas must tailor program objectives, goals, and strategies to meet the sometimes-vague needs of their clients. In a recent article concerning best practices in providing psychological services to rural schools, Beebe-Frankenberger (2008) introduces the basic considerations as follows:

It is important to remember that there is great and rich diversity in the specific characteristics of rural areas across America, and it is critical for effective practice of school psychology to be based not only on best practices but also on the unique characteristics of the rural setting in which services occur. (p.1786)

Often hindering efforts of rural school psychology service providers are the realities of obtaining the needed resources. For instance, applying formulas based upon normalized nationwide data cannot properly identify an appropriate budget for the program of an individual school district. Although the argument can be made that these procedures are necessary to distribute funds fairly, such formulas cannot take into account the many factors that influence the emotional health of students in a specific rural environment. Instead, each individual rural school district must take the initiative to identify its needs, design program strategies, seek out supplemental resources as needed, and evaluate the success of the designed program.

The fact that small rural school districts are such unique places imposes restrictions on research aimed at collectively describing them and presenting widely accepted solutions to

problems encountered by the psychological service programs they employ. Large-scale best practices studies of such programs may not describe the conditions present at some schools; therefore the resulting recommendations may not apply to all rural schools. Instead, a viable alternative is for a single school district to employ psychologists capable of performing program evaluations that address local specific situations and problems (Beebe-Frankenberger, 2008).

Recently the author of this thesis (a school psychology major) was presented with a unique opportunity to assist a small rural school district (Unified School District [USD] 349 Stafford, Kansas) in determining if it could indeed evaluate its own local school psychological services to determine the quality of the services provided. The local school superintendent agreed to collaborate with the author in performing an evaluability assessment (Owen, 2007) of the local school psychological services. Thus, the present study takes the form of an assessment of the potential for evaluation, or evaluability, of a small rural school district's psychological services program, a program that has never before been evaluated. It is the author's intent to describe a process by which this small district's school psychological services program, that has had little exposure to the evaluation process, can begin to describe their needs and evaluate their own program.

USD 349 Stafford, Kansas Psychological Services

Administrators seeking to identify strategies with the potential to improve the efficiency and outcomes of their programs commonly refer to models, or programs with a history of success. Finding such a reference model might best be accomplished by evaluating an existing program serving a population of high-risk students, a program where reality and necessity drive the desire for change. Stafford, Kansas Unified School District 349 (USD 349) was first proposed as a rural model for coordinated school health programs (CSHPs) by Cornwell,

Hawley, and St. Romain (2007) who expressed a desire for additional quantitative research that might support the effects of CSHPs within rural communities. A CSHP brings together educational and community resources to create a network of comprehensive healthcare in a community where it might not otherwise be available. USD 349 Stafford, Kansas began the multiyear process of developing a CSHP in 2001. As part of their CSHP, Stafford targeted four specific health areas in need of improvement. Among the areas identified for inclusion was the school psychological services program. The two main reasons cited for including these services in the CSHP initiative were the county's demographics, and research by Slade (2003) which suggests a severe shortage of mental health services in small, rural, and Midwestern schools. To address the lack of mental health care, USD 349 Stafford, Kansas created a health services program that involved (a) hiring a family therapist one day per week, (b) using technological resources to provide video links to mental health professionals at the University of Kansas, (c) beginning the teaching of parenting classes, (d) holding staff in-services, and (e) instituting a variety of additional initiatives targeting specific health-related goals.

Whereas USD 349 Stafford, Kansas has put significant effort into improved health care, through a model psychological services program, it has yet to conduct a systematic evaluation of its efforts. Its one preliminary attempt was not particularly useful, for as Cornwell et al. (2007) point out "In the absence of a pre-CSHP assessment, the degree of the district's improvement can only be estimated, which is a limitation of this study" (p. 605). In addition, the one preliminary evaluation did not include any provision for collecting data that could be used in future evaluations. This is important because the ability of an evaluation to support program outcomes is dependent on the existence and accessibility of data.

Thus, the potential existed in USD 349 Stafford, Kansas to conduct an evaluability assessment to determine the potential for evaluating the district's CSHP. Evaluability assessment traces its origins to the 1970s and Joseph Wholey and his colleagues (e.g., Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004; Owen, 2007; Wholey, 2004) and as Fitzpatrick et al. note, evaluability assessment is a process for "facilitating communication between evaluators and stakeholders, for determining whether a program is 'evaluable,' and for focusing the evaluation study itself" (p. 182). Thus, an evaluability assessment *is not* an actual evaluation of program outcomes. An evaluability assessment places an evaluator in the position of helping those responsible for a program to engage in a systematic pre-evaluation planning process, which becomes "an end in its own right" (Owen, 2007, p. 194). Wholey (2004) explains that evaluability assessment calls for comparing and contrasting the expectations and assumptions of key program personnel with the reality of current activities and the outcomes that are occurring or are likely to occur. Evaluability assessment also seeks to determine if future data regarding the program's performance can be obtained at a reasonable cost and what type of future evaluation would be most beneficial. While USD 349 Stafford, Kansas has a program of psychological services currently in place, it has not had a rigorous evaluation even though it has received some external funding through the CSHP. The district superintendent asked the author to help develop an evaluation plan for the program to foster program improvement, or in essence, conduct an evaluability assessment for the program. In other words, can the Stafford, Kansas CSHP program "be described in sufficient detail to make it amenable to monitoring or impact evaluation" (Owen, 2007, p. 43)? As such, the specific objectives of this thesis were:

1. Identify, as possible, current program goals and objectives based upon input from stakeholders.

2. Identify, as possible, USD 349 Stafford, Kansas resources currently available to meet program goals and objectives.
3. Develop a program logic model based upon currently available data and input from stakeholders and staff members.
4. Determine the evaluability of the psychological services program.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Small isolated rural school districts represent unique social environments. They are unique because they consist of a limited number of people often subsisting on limited economic resources in settings that often vary considerably in demographic characteristics. These small, unique, rural societies have both negative and positive effects on the emotional health of students educated in their schools. Such communities often possess a sense of togetherness but, frequently, limited resources can cause a narrowing of perspectives, specifically in regard to economic and educational opportunities. Whether or not togetherness works in the favor of students being educated in rural schools depends upon the specific social characteristics found in each school. Therefore, the amount of emotional care needed in each school district depends upon the unique balance between negative and positive factors present in any individual district. In order to properly serve isolated rural school districts, school psychology professionals must make an effort to identify their specific needs and design and evaluate programs accordingly (Beebe-Frankenberger, 2008).

In the remainder of this chapter, literature will be reviewed covering (a) the nature of small rural schools, (b) rural and national school psychological services, (c) evaluation of school psychological services, and (d) the definition and role of evaluability assessment and school psychology services.

Description of Small Rural Schools

The most important characteristic of rural schools affecting psychological services is likely to be their size. A report written for the United States Department of Education by Provasnik, KewalRamani, Coleman, Gilbertson, Herring, and Xie (2007) provides a large

amount of data on the demographic, outcomes, and resource characteristics of city, town, suburban, and rural schools. According to Provasnik et al., rural schools typically have a student body of 200 students or fewer compared with more than 400 students for suburban schools. These data relate well to other information collected by Provasnik et al. regarding student-to-teacher ratios suggesting that smaller rural schools must pay for a teacher who is teaching four fewer students than a teacher in a suburban school. This situation is beneficial for learning because teachers have fewer students to concentrate their efforts on and students can get more one-on-one attention from them. Provasnik et al. (2007) indicate that low student-to-teacher ratios may be a major reason why rural teachers report being more satisfied with their jobs than suburban teachers except in regards to salary.

On the negative side, however, low student-to-teacher ratios also suggest that rural schools would have to spend more money per pupil in order to provide the same quality of education as suburban schools. However, Provasnik et al. (2007) report that rural schools actually spend nearly \$1000 less on average than suburban schools. Rural schools compensate for the lack of funds caused by lower enrollments and a lower student-teacher ratio by paying teachers less. This trade-off may cause problems when hiring professionals to perform psychological services. It is much easier for a school with an enrollment of 600 students to pay for a counselor and a school psychologist than it is for a school with an enrollment of 150 students. All high schools, small districts included, are encouraged by their State Board of Regent's and State Board of Education's standards to offer a minimum number of classes, which means they must hire a certain number of teachers or face obsolescence.

On average, rural schools have 15% of students living below poverty level versus 13% for suburban schools (Provasnik et al., 2007). However, average statistical values do not

characterize the conditions in each individual school. Larger schools contain students whose parents represent a larger cross section of the socioeconomic spectrum. The larger population serves as a buffer against extreme economic conditions. Small isolated schools are more likely to exist in homogeneous low socioeconomic communities that cannot properly fund psychological services. Stronger evidence of possible economic discrepancies comes from the fact that rural schools receive only 39% of their operating funds from local sources versus 52% for suburban schools (Provasnik et al., 2007). This suggests that some rural schools are not even close to being self-sustaining and may provide only the minimum psychological services dictated by state, federal, and private grant funding agencies. Psychological services may be at risk, especially in lower socioeconomic, isolated rural schools.

Another interesting difference between rural and suburban schools is the lowered expectations experienced in rural districts. A large number of Americans would likely be alarmed to hear that 10.6% of rural parents feel a high school education is enough for their children; a figure twice as high as that of suburban parents at 5.3% (Provasnik et al., 2007). The differences in expectations, of course, continue for all levels of education. It would be inappropriate from a political perspective, and implausible from a physiological perspective, to suggest that this difference is due to the innate abilities of students in each locale. Instead, the data presented by Provasnik et al. (2007) seem to support the hypothesis that rural life in America has never demanded higher levels of education. For example, whereas a higher education would benefit a farmer or rancher, it would not prove as cost effective as using information handed down from generation to generation that is based on practical working knowledge of specific conditions.

The history of the value of education in rural America is seen in its elders, as 33% over the age of 65 did not graduate from high school compared to 24% in suburban areas (Provasnik et al., 2007). The reality of the brain drain phenomenon is especially harmful to students if they accept that lower local standards for education are ubiquitous. If many of these students will be leaving their traditional rural home, they must have the educational skills that will allow them to be successful. The question these matters raise for school psychological services is one of need. Do lower educational expectations mean there is a greater need for services in rural areas, or does the lack of aspirations translate into less stress on children that diminishes the need? The answer may depend upon the goals the individual district has for its children and psychological services program. If the district expects to help more students graduate or attend college the need may be greater. If it only expects to keep students emotionally healthy while they are attending the district's schools the need could be lower.

The next fact considered is the extent to which psychological services are currently being provided in rural schools, and the data collected support a somewhat surprising answer. In terms of the ratios of students to counselor, students to social worker, and students to psychologist, rural schools appear to be doing an excellent job of providing psychological services. All of the above ratios are, on average, lower in rural schools than in suburban. For example, one rural psychologist serves 524 students on average while a suburban psychologist serves 1,075 students on average (Provasnik et al., 2007). However, these data are problematic. First, they do not include data from schools that have no such service provider. Second, the data would better reflect the services provided if they were presented in terms of the number of hours actually spent providing services. Were the data to take into account the fact that rural service providers spend more time on the road, and considering the fatigue that comes with traveling, the data

might reflect more equity. Additionally, if one was able to factor in the number of students in schools without psychologists the ratio of number of rural students to provider may jump even more dramatically. It is also likely that many rural psychologists work more than forty hours per week to make up for lost time. This is a fact that further complicates any attempted comparative analysis.

The suggestion here is that the above data are of limited use in school districts with demographic characteristics so unique that stereotypical profiles may not apply. Similarly, the stereotypical image of impoverished America often includes an urban setting with minority constituents; however, many rural towns with white, homogeneous populations battle poverty and remain largely ignored.

Description of Psychological Services in Small Rural Schools

Fagan and Wise (2000) describe the helping role of a school psychologist in a five-part model advocating student assessment, consultation, training, research, and intervention. As the enrollment in special education classes has increased, so has the student assessment role of school psychologists. The increasing demands on psychologists to assess students for placement in special education, identify special needs, and construct appropriate interventions has made individual counseling a low priority for psychologists. Consequently, the need for professional counselors has grown. Sadly, the need for counseling is seen as growing even more in the near future as society attempts to address the issue of weapons-related violence in public schools. Not surprisingly, an increased need for counseling is seen in lower socioeconomic communities where economic disadvantage is often coupled with the paternal absence. Pupils of low socioeconomic, single-parent households are considered *at risk*, and districts with a large proportion of such students have an increased need for counseling services. This increased need,

coupled with the fact that small districts are more likely to consist of a homogeneous population, makes data on student-to-counselor ratios misleading to those responsible for allocating resources for psychological services.

Unfortunately, monetary resources and available personnel sometimes restrict the delivery of comprehensive services to clients in small rural areas in spite of the National Association of School Psychologist's Standards for the Provision of School Psychological Services (NASP, 1997; NASP, 2008). The NASP standards advocate delivery of comprehensive services, availability of supervision of school psychologists, program evaluation, follow through by psychologists on their recommendations, accountability, and non-bias assessment. Any of the preceding standards can be easily denigrated if the resources available to the service provider become scarce. NASP also recommends the goals, objectives, guidelines, and strategies of a psychological service provider be clearly stated and reflect the needs of the population served. If the provider has met this standard, a formal evaluation should be easy to execute and corrective measures that make the most of limited resources can be made. However, schools with an increased demand for services may find their resources limiting. Thus, they are faced with a choice. Either they fail to deliver, or they find alternate resources that are inconsistent from year to year. Logically, it follows that inconsistent resources may lead to inconsistent goals and delivery methods, which in turn, makes conducting formal evaluations difficult.

Description of Psychological Services Nationally

Despite the problems in making comparisons, it is necessary to provide the reader with a reference point so that judgments regarding services available at USD 349 Stafford, Kansas can be made. In 2005, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES, 2005) reported that for the school year 2003-2004, among elementary schools that had them, there were, on average, 0.7

psychologists per school and 483 students per psychologist. Only 17% of elementary schools had full-time psychologists but 69% had at least a part-time psychologist. At secondary schools, there were 0.7 psychologists per school and 902 students per professional. Of these schools, 25% had a full-time psychologist and 64% had at least a part-time psychologist. Social workers were found at a rate of 0.5 per elementary school and 450 students per professional. Of all elementary schools, 14% had a full-time social worker while 41% had at least a part-time professional. At secondary schools, there were 0.5 social workers per school and 807 students per professional. Twenty percent of schools had a full-time social worker while 41% had at least a part-time individual. School counselors were found at a rate of 1.1 per elementary school and 372 students per professional. Of all elementary schools, 54% had full-time counselors whereas 78% had at least a part-time counselor. At secondary schools, there were 2.7 counselors per school and 321 students per professional. School counselors are more prevalent here as 91% have full-time professionals and 96% have at least part-time individuals. It must be emphasized that these statistics do not reflect which kinds of schools, rural or suburban, have professionals; therefore, making generalizations using these data is difficult. One must consider that small rural schools deal with their lack of resources in unique and adaptive ways. For instance, psychologists like S. Dryden (personal communication, September 10, 2007) often work through special education cooperatives and serve two or more schools. The fact that rural psychologists must spend time on the road commuting between schools makes it difficult to use the above data for evaluative purposes or district-to-district comparisons.

USD 349 Stafford, Kansas currently has access to one school psychologist, provided by the South-Central Kansas Special Education Cooperative (SCKSEC), who is shared with two other school districts in the county. This psychologist is also on emergency call to other south-

central Kansas districts. The district employs one full-time high school counselor and the middle/elementary school counselor is shared with another district. There is no social worker available.

How Differences in Needs are Managed

Regional differences in school psychology practices do exist. In a nationwide survey conducted in 1997, Hosp and Reschly (2002) found that psychologists in the northwest central region of the United States (NWC, including Kansas) spent approximately 4 hours a week more administering assessments than psychologists in the northeast and mid-Atlantic coast states. In an apparent effort to compensate, NWC psychologists spent fewer hours in intervention and consultation. NWC psychologists were also more likely than psychologists in other regions to use low-inference, systematic methods and are less likely to use projective or visual-motor methods. The authors suggest this reflects a greater compliance with current educational reforms on the part of NWC psychologists that may make them more adaptable. Whatever differences exist should reflect regional needs rather than national trends, and the same is true of local school psychology practices. It is easy to base program objectives on trends, but program efficacy depends on the level of congruity between program objectives and local needs. The program must also show a commitment to achieve those goals regardless of restricted resources.

In addition to the restrictions imposed by lack of funding, rural schools may also experience a shortage of trained and accredited personnel. In order to address staff shortages some schools turn to independent contractors whose services have characteristics as unique as the clients they serve. Problems may arise when administrators with little psychological training quickly enter into contracts with providers to fill a need and inadvertently end up lowering program expectations. Brown, Gibson, & Bolen (2000) conducted a survey of North Carolina

public schools and found that the schools expected contracted psychologists to help complete triennial or initial evaluations on time and little else. They did not expect contracted psychologists to perform follow-up services, consult with teachers and parents, or construct intervention plans. Other reasons given for obtaining contractual services were cost effectiveness and personnel shortages. To sum, the motivation for acquiring contracted services was to meet legal requirements in the most cost-effective manner rather than to increase the quality of services. Even worse, 19% of the schools were satisfied with hiring contracted psychology professionals with less than state certification which further compromises the quality of services. Many rural school districts, like USD 349 Stafford, Kansas deal with the shortage of trained personnel by obtaining services through a cooperative like SCKSEC.

Getting a Handle on Psychological Services Programs: Evaluability Assessment

Evaluability assessment has a long history. It arose out of concerns raised about the many evaluations of social programs conducted at the federal level during the 1960s and 1970s. Concerns were raised about many federal evaluation efforts in terms of whether everything involved in federal programs could be evaluated, whether all questions that could be asked should or should not be pursued, whether evaluation costs were likely to get out of line, or whether results could actually be obtained in time to be used for program improvement (e.g., Horst, Nay, Scanlon, & Wholey, 1974; Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1991). Such concerns led Horst et al. (1974) to conclude that

there is little evidence to show that evaluation generally leads to more effective social policies or programs. On the contrary, the experience to date strongly suggests that social programs have not been as effective as

expected and have not improved in performance following evaluation. (p. 300)

To combat these concerns and issues, Wholey (2004) and others developed a process referred to today as evaluability assessment but which has also been conducted under such names as preassessment of evaluability, pre-evaluation design, accountability assessment, and exploratory evaluation, among others (Shadish et al., 1991). Wholey (2004) describes evaluability assessment

as a form of market research that assesses the demand for information that might come from various possible evaluations, assesses the feasibility of various evaluations, and helps match evaluation supply with demand by helping select designs for evaluations that are feasible, relevant, and useful. (p. 33)

According to Wholey (2004), a program is evaluable if its stakeholders agree on program goals that are achievable, and if data regarding program performance can be obtained at a reasonable cost. There must also be agreement on how the results of an evaluation would be used. If stakeholders are unwilling to make positive changes in the program as suggested by the outcome there is little to be gained by evaluation. Evaluability assessment utilizes a comparative analysis of the expectations and assumptions of program stakeholders to construct a logic model that serves as an explanation of program goals, function, and structure. The logic model is typically provided in the form of a flowchart as shown in figure 1. This figure also gives the reader an idea of the various aspects of a program considered in the model and lists a few basic assumptions of successful programs.

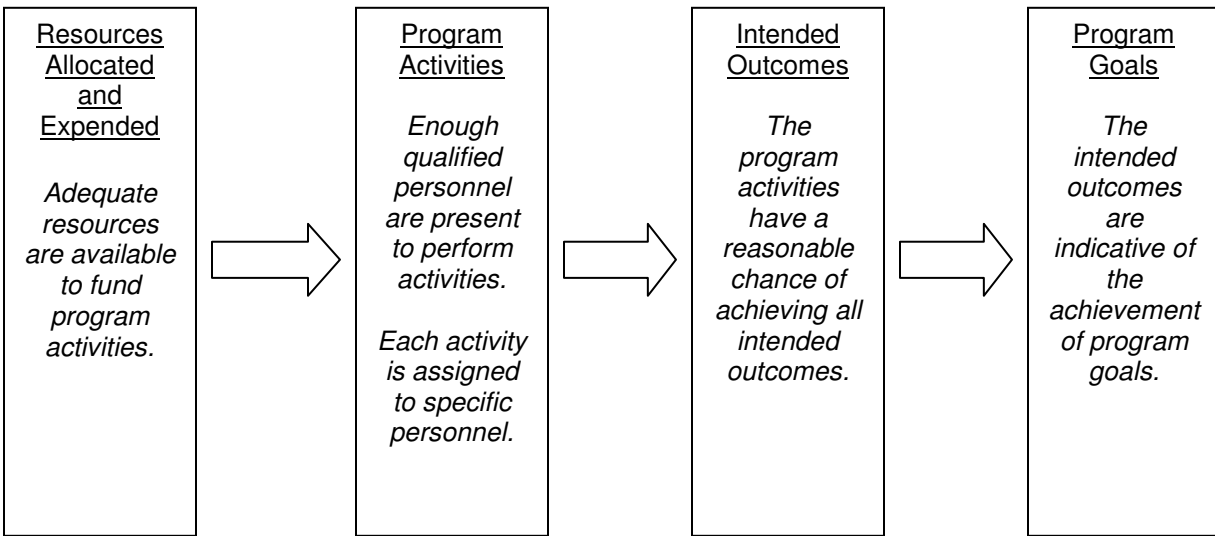


Figure 1. Flowchart Used in Constructing a Logic Model for a Successful Program

The expectations of stakeholders included in the analysis must relate well to the financial and logistical reality of performing current program activities and achieving intended outcomes.

Finally, a determination is made on how a reasonable evaluation could be conducted.

Wholey (2004) suggests six key steps be performed during an evaluability assessment.

Each of these steps is briefly described below.

Step one—Involve intended users. This is especially important in an evaluability assessment. Any other form of evaluation might find evaluators operating in isolation from the managers, policymakers, and other program staff so that an impartial assessment can be achieved. However, one of the goals of evaluability assessment is to unify the program goals, priorities, and expectations of all stakeholders so that adjustments in activities can be made to achieve specified outcomes. This could be an issue in the present study because not all providers fall under the direct supervision of the USD 349 Stafford, Kansas’s superintendent. Therefore, it is possible that some stakeholders are unaware of, or unable to, identify the activities of all

providers and the relationship of these activities to desired program outcomes. By involving all stakeholders in the identification of program objectives, goals, and activities, a path by which they could lead to desired outcomes should become clear allowing for the identification of changes that make the program more efficient and effective.

Step two—Clarify program intent. A well-designed program includes a list of goals and objectives used by program administrators to design activities capable of achieving desired outcomes. In essence, these goals and objectives define the intent of the program. Not only must the intended goals be clear and concise to all stakeholders, but they should also include a way to assess their attainment. According to Wholey (2004), vagueness may be a deliberate attempt by stakeholders to leave the door open to political compromises that may be necessary in order to obtain resources. Indeed, the lack of consistent funding and personnel available to small rural schools makes this likely as program goals are constantly modified to reflect conditions set forth in a new grant or perhaps by a change in service provider personnel. Whatever the reason for the change in the program, a regularly scheduled evaluation is perhaps the most practical way to clarify the program's intent and to get staff members back to working on unified goals.

Step three—Explore program reality. Measuring program performance can be a costly and time-consuming task. In addition, some program goals may be too lofty and unattainable. For these reasons, program reality must be examined early in the evaluation process. For instance, "helping the children" is a commendable goal but is too vague to be evaluated. This goal must be broken down into multiple statements that are related to program activities and restated in terms that are more specific. From these goals, stakeholders are advised to pursue only the ones that are evaluable or risk not having the data to justify the program's existence or to hold staff members responsible. Helping the children may mean seeing to it that each child has

a good job or is attending college one year after high school graduation. Unfortunately, measuring this outcome would involve creating difficult definitions and require intensive investigation. On the other hand, data are readily available from many states' Boards of Education on violence in schools, attendance rates, and state assessments to name a few, all of which cost little in terms of money and time to collect and reflect the fact that children have been helped.

Step four—Reach an agreement on any needed changes in the program design. The first three steps of evaluability assessment are likely to bring out conflicts on several fronts. First, stakeholders may discover to their dismay that the expected program goals are neither evaluable, achievable, or are simply unknown to the staff. Second, it may be increasingly obvious that some of the activities performed during program administration are of little help in achieving the desired outcomes. Last, and perhaps most important, evaluability assessment may bring to light the need for additional resources. The need for such resources is also a factor in determining program reality, and the availability of resources may dictate changes or cutbacks in delivery. For these reasons evaluability assessment forces stakeholders to reconsider program design and brings about the desire for change.

Step five—Explore alternative evaluation designs. At the end of evaluability assessment, a plan should be in place for future evaluations that measure the extent to which goals have been achieved. There are many such designs and the one chosen depends mostly on reality. No such evaluation will occur if it is too costly or too time-consuming. Some things Wholey (2004) recommends be considered when planning for actual future evaluations include ensuring

- appropriate data can be collected,
- relevant data analyses can be completed,

- the likely cost of such data collection and analysis is reasonable (dollar costs and costs in terms of the time of evaluation staff, program managers and staff, and clients),
- the evaluation can be completed in an appropriate time interval,
- political and bureaucratic costs are negligible, and
- the evaluation results will be used. (p. 41)

Step six—Agree on evaluation priorities and intended uses of evaluation information.

Evaluations are undertaken for many reasons, not the least of which is accountability. Any plans for a future evaluation must be agreed upon by all stakeholders and may address any of the following questions:

- Which activities are successful and efficient and which are not?
- Should further funding be sought, and from where?
- What type of psychological service professional is needed and which are expendable?
- Which of the client's needs are being met and which are not?

There may certainly be others and, as a group, stakeholders must determine what information they need from the evaluation and how the information will be used.

In a recent review of evaluability assessments conducted between 1986 and 2006, Trevisan (2007) provides an excellent summary of the history of this approach and documents how, during the 1990's, evaluability assessment seemed to decline in popularity, due in part to the popularity of using program logic models, a major product of evaluability assessment, as an independent evaluation strategy. He goes on to point out, however, that over the past ten years federal agencies have increased their demands for accountability from the administrators of the programs they sponsor. This is seen as the major cause for a recent increase in published reports containing references to evaluability assessment. In sum, poorly designed programs tend to have

ill defined or unrealistic goals, diffuse activities, and no provisions for collecting data to be used in evaluating the program's ability to attain its goals.

Chapter Summary

In general, there are both positive and negative aspects in regard to education in small rural school districts. The positive aspects may include a sense of belonging, small class sizes, and more individualized attention (Provasnik et al., 2007). The negative aspects may include a lack of, or inconsistent resources and less emphasis on the value of education. These characteristics, in combination with other unique social characteristics found in small, isolated, homogeneous populations suggest that small rural districts are likely to be unique places with unique problems. The uniqueness of such school districts may make it difficult for federal and state policymakers to meet the psychological needs of students in these districts. Instead, each district must take responsibility for identifying its own problems and instituting systems-level changes to address them (Beebe-Frankenberger, 2008).

Small school districts have often risen to the challenge of meeting the psychological needs of students by enlisting the services of professionals hired by special education cooperatives and by hiring other independent providers (Brown et al., 2000). While these arrangements are undoubtedly beneficial for all, it is difficult to tell if the ideals set forth in NASP's best practices guidelines are being maintained and if a given program is truly serving its students. Revealing the degree to which a program conforms to these guidelines requires the practice of program evaluation. There is much to consider before undertaking a formal evaluation. For one thing, formal evaluations can be difficult to carry out unless the program in question has purposeful, agreed upon activities that drive it toward unambiguous goals and objectives. In addition, program evaluations can also be costly and time-consuming. Careful

planning for future evaluations may help reduce these costs. Overall, evaluation is an important process because psychological services programs that do not maintain a built-in system of evaluation may have difficulty responding to environmental changes and gradually lose their effectiveness. It is also noteworthy that obtaining grants to sustain such programs often requires evaluation planning. Before undertaking a formal evaluation, however, program stakeholders must know that the program can be successfully evaluated. If the assumptions described above do not apply, it would be a waste of time and money to continue with a formal evaluation. It is for these reasons that an evaluability assessment of the Psychological Services Program of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas is conducted. The methods of evaluability assessment are described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter provides a context for the evaluability assessment that this study undertook. Topics covered include both a *Participants* and *Procedures* section. The *Participants* section provides brief descriptions of the participants from (a) Stafford, Kansas, (b) Stafford Unified School District 349, and (c) the district's school psychological services program. The steps the author took in order to complete an evaluability assessment of the district's school psychology services program are included in the *Procedures* section.

Study Setting

Description of Stafford, Kansas, and USD 349. USD 349 Stafford, Kansas operates out of three buildings in the town of Stafford, Kansas. One building houses the administrative offices, preschool, and a learning center where adult or remedial education classes are held. One large single building serves the town's elementary, middle, and high school students while another building, located downtown, is used by a charter school. Data from the year 2000 census (USCB, 2000) indicate that Stafford is a town of 1,161 people of which 96% are white, 29% are over the age of 65, 12% have a bachelor's degree or higher, 16% live below poverty level, and 5% have no telephone service. The median value of an owner occupied-house is \$23,400 with 48% of the homes being built in 1939 or earlier. Data presented in Table 1 further depict the unique demographic characteristics of the town by comparing it with national figures and its closest urban neighbor Wichita, Kansas. Wichita is approximately 80 miles east-southeast of Stafford. Two things stand out about Stafford in this comparison. First, Stafford is racially homogeneous and, second, its typical household structure deviates somewhat from the traditional. Specifically, of all families with children under 18, traditional married families in Stafford represent 6% fewer

of the total households than nationally and 6.2% fewer than the total households in the urban Wichita area. Instead, one-parent households are slightly more common.

Unified School District 349 Stafford, Kansas serves a 242 square mile area of eastern Stafford County (KSDE, 2006). Enrollment data for the 2007-2008 school year present the most recent available demographic data (see Table 2). Total enrollment is 284 children with 58.8% qualifying for free or reduced lunches. Of all students, 23.2% are enrolled in special education. While 96% of the town was classified as white in 2000, the 2007-2008 school enrollment shows only 86.6% of students are white, 6.7% are Hispanic, and 6% are of mixed race. Other races represent less than 1% of students enrolled.

Table 1

Comparison of Geographic, Demographic, and Racial Population Characteristics of Stafford, Wichita, and the United States

	Town of Stafford, Kansas	City of Wichita, Kansas	United States
Total number of people	1,161	422,301	281,421,906
Urban	0.0%	100%	79.0%
Rural	100.0%	0.0%	21.0%
White	96.0%	78.2%	75.1%
Hispanic	3.5%	9.6%	12.5%
African American	0.1%	9.7%	12.3%
Native American	0.9%	1.1%	0.9%
Asian	0.0%	3.5%	3.6%
Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Other race	1.5%	4.4%	5.5%
Multi-Ethnic	1.6%	3.1%	2.6%
Households with one or more people under 18 years	26.7%	43.8%	36.0%
Married-couple families with children under 18 years	62.9%	69.1%	68.9%
Male householder; no wife present with children under 18	8.6%	7.4%	6.8%
Female householder; no husband present with children under 18 years	27.1%	22.5%	23.2%
Non-family households; male householder with children under 18 years	1.4%	0.7%	0.8%
Non-family household; female householder with children under 18 years	0.0%	0.3%	0.8%

Note. From United States Census Bureau (USCB, 2000).

Table 2

2007-08 USD 349 Stafford, Kansas Enrollment by Race, Free and Reduced Lunch, and Special Education

Category	Number of Students	Percent of Students
Total enrollment	284	100.0%
Special Education	66	23.2%
Free Lunch	122	43.0%
Reduced Lunch	45	15.8%
White	246	86.6%
African American	0	0.0%
Hispanic	19	6.7%
Native American	20	7.0%
Asian	0	0.0%
Multi-Ethnic	17	6.0%

Note. From Kansas State Department of Education (2007).

School psychological services: USD 349 Stafford, Kansas. When the CSHP was first established in 2001, the psychological services program of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas consisted of two full-time counselors, and one part-time psychologist. In 2002, a family therapist was hired to hold one-on-one sessions with as many students as possible one day per week. As of the 2007-2008 school year, there is one full-time counselor working in the high school section of the building while the elementary-middle school counselor has been assigned additional duties in

another district, reducing her time at Stafford to three days per week. The school psychologist is employed by the SCKSEC and is also responsible for serving the other two Stafford County school districts. The family therapist continues to work for the school district one day per week even though funding for the original CSHP grant has ended. He is now supported through Title I funding, section 1002d, targeting at-risk populations which is provided by Public Law 107-110, also called the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 2007b).

Prior to 2001, best practices compelled the school counselors to address the students' personal-social, educational, and career domains as mandated by the Kansas School Counselors Association in collaboration with the Kansas State Department of Education (Tompkins, Freden, & Henley, 1997). After the CSHP was funded, a specific set of goals and objectives were written to help counselors focus on issues deemed critical to the local environment.

Although the school psychologist and the SCKSEC acknowledge the goals and objectives written into the CSHP grant, the SCKSEC is concerned with meeting the requirements set forth in public laws such as 102-119 known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. To meet these requirements the school psychologist's first priority is testing and placement of referred individuals so that a free appropriate public education is available to all citizens of Stafford County. Furthermore, the school psychologist position is subordinate, not only to the SCKSEC director, but also to all three district superintendents and their principals.

After being hired by Stafford, Kansas USD 349, the family therapist has also been active in refining the original program to help parents understand which services are available and to comprehend the dynamic relationship between students and their environment. In fact, the most current description of the psychological services offered by USD 349 Stafford, Kansas can be found online in a podcast delivered by the therapist (Feril, 2007). Like the two school counselors,

the therapist is subordinate only to the superintendent of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas and its principals.

Participants

The evaluability assessment involved communications with the major stakeholders of the psychological services program at Stafford, Kansas USD 349. Outside of government mandates, the stakeholders making major policy decisions included the superintendent of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas and the SCKSEC director. Each represented a different institution serving the pupils of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas, meaning the activities and goals under each person's control were different. The SCKSEC supplies the school district with a school psychologist and, when needed, physical and occupational therapists. Whereas the physical and occupational therapists provide important services, they have not been deeply involved in policy decisions at Stafford. The psychologist, however, is perhaps the mental health professional who is most deeply involved in providing services directly to the students of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas and therefore was included in the evaluability assessment process.

Within the school district itself, four major stakeholders have provided primary psychological services and consequently influence policy. Included in persons interviewed for this assessment were the school nurse, who not only screens the students she sees for possible psychological issues, but is also a liaison between the school and outside institutions. The family counselor hired by the district to counsel and provide therapy to students has qualifications not always found in school psychological services programs. The service and input he provides likely effects policy in a unique way. The elementary and high school counselors are the psychology professionals called upon first should a situation involving behaviors arise. This

being the case, the evaluation of school psychological services weighed their input heavily. Input from teachers also weighed heavily since they deal with students everyday for extended periods.

The negotiated agreement between The Stafford Teachers Association and The Board of Unified School District No. 349, Stafford Kansas (2008) for the 2008-2009 school year provides a starting teacher with no experience and a Bachelors Degree a salary of \$31,511. The district's highest salary level provides a teacher with 28 years of experience and a Bachelor's Degree plus 90 hours of graduate level college credit a salary of \$47,441. Although they are not mental health providers, teachers often find themselves in the position of being the first to respond to a student who has need of care. The amount of support they receive while trying to responding to this need should make them well aware of the psychological service program's weaknesses and strengths. At the very least, they should know if students need more care, or are benefiting from the care they receive.

The above educational professionals were called upon to provide information and to participate in the evaluability assessment. As in any ongoing investigation, the author of this study could not be aware in advance of how much input would be required of each of the above mentioned individuals, or if their input would be needed at all. Information collected during this process determined who provided further input, all of which is reported in the results section. Similarly, there are several methods of data collection, or instruments, that could be used, only some which will be mentioned here.

Instruments

What has been said of participants also applies to instruments, which is to say the information collected during the process determined which instrument was appropriate for use. The objectives of the initial meeting with the superintendent of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas were

to explain evaluability assessment and to begin cataloguing program goals, objectives, and activities. For further clarification, similar interviews were held with other stakeholders as the importance of their input became clear. A list of questions posed to stakeholders in these early meetings is included in appendix A. After the initial individual meetings, stakeholders met in groups to reach agreement on which objectives should be the focus of future evaluations and what purpose a future evaluation might serve.

Since input from a large group of teachers was needed, the author chose to create a survey that revealed their perception of program issues. Fortunately, all USD 349 Stafford, Kansas faculty and students from the sixth grade on up are issued laptops, therefore, an Internet survey proved to be an efficient way of gathering data of this type. The survey was voluntary with a total of 26 teachers, paraprofessional educators, and other certified staff members opting to participate. Respondents were asked to identify their role as a staff member. Although this question was optional all 26 respondents answered. The complete survey including responses can be found in appendix B. The survey was constructed to obtain information on all major program activities including services provided by the counselors, the psychologist, the family counselor, and student improvement teams. Information on the teachers' impressions of the program's goals and resources was also collected.

Smaller groups of program personnel contributed through focus groups and individual interviews were used extensively. The purpose here was to gather qualitative data that would help to clarify and describe the current program rather than collecting quantitative data as would be necessary for a formal evaluation.

USD 349 Stafford, Kansas School Psychology Services Evaluability Assessment Procedures

The sequence of steps used during this proposed evaluability assessment were modeled primarily on a description of steps by Whorley (2004). These specific steps include (a) involve intended users, (b) clarify program intent, (c) explore program reality, (d) reach agreement on any needed changes in program design, (e) explore alternative evaluation designs, and (f) agree on evaluation priorities and intended uses of evaluation information.

Step a—Involving intended users. The initial step of the evaluability assessment began late in the summer of 2008 with meetings of the school psychological services stakeholders and key personnel being held to identify program goals, activities, and the various ways currently being used to measure attainment of the agreed upon goals. Included in the list of stakeholders interviewed were the superintendent of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas, high school principal, high school counselor, elementary and middle school counselor, school nurse, a special education teacher, the independent family therapist contracted by USD 349, the attending school psychologist who is employed by the South Central Kansas Special Education Cooperative (SCKSEC), and the SCKSEC director. A list of example questions adapted from Wholey (2004) used during stakeholder interviews is included in Appendix A.

Step b—Clarification of program intent. Also necessary in the early stages of evaluability assessment was a review of documents that could have dictated the inclusion of specific goals. In this case, an application for Federal assistance to support the CSHP, which was accepted by the U.S. Department of Education and contains specific needs, goals, activities, and anticipated outcomes relating to the school's counseling program was examined. Despite the fact that the main grant had expired, smaller grants received as recently as June of 2008 helped fund a few minor activities. Therefore, it was expected that the goals and objectives contained in the Federal

grant would be important to the psychological services goals and objectives in the future. The mandates set forth in the CSHP grant have evolved somewhat which made negotiations necessary. Evidence of the evolution of these early goals into current program goals came from the podcast delivered by the family therapist (See Feril, 2007). The podcast was viewed as an important program document and was included in the analysis. While the original grant application includes a projected budget for the delivery of services between 2001 and 2005 these funds are no longer available. Detailed information on current program funding was obtained by reviewing the superintendent's budget reports.

Meetings with stakeholders and other staff continued individually, in groups, and via e-mail until sufficient agreement was reached on the principle program paradigm. A significant amount of negotiating occurred because professionals employed by separate institutions provide services at USD 349 Stafford, Kansas. In order to receive input from the USD 349 Stafford, Kansas instructional staff, an Internet survey was constructed that listed the agreed upon goals and objectives. Teachers were asked to comment on the goals and objectives and provide input regarding the effectiveness of current activities.

Step c—Explore program reality. Next, a preliminary logic model (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2004) was constructed based upon the results of initial meetings and was analyzed for consistency between program goals, activities, the reality of possible outcomes, and the measurability of those outcomes. This was followed by more meetings during which provider specific goals were paired down to include only those that pertain to the program as a whole. Other meetings were aimed at agreeing on the plausibility of program goals, how best to measure them, and whether or not the agreed upon measures would be useful in future analyses.

Step d—Reaching agreement on changes to program design. Further meetings centered upon the possibility of changing program activities as suggested by a review of the initial logic model. Discrepancies between the logic model and current activities were marked for elimination so that future evaluations might be capable of accurately justifying the program and supporting its efficacy. Essentially, the program stakeholders had to decide if it was more prudent to perform future evaluations based upon the current program or make changes to accommodate information brought to light by the logic model.

Step e—Exploring alternative evaluation designs. These communications explored optional evaluation designs. Evaluability assessment is a clarificative design typically used when stakeholders are trying to create a new program or refine an existing one. In the future, USD 349 Stafford, Kansas’s stakeholders may want to answer questions regarding the efficacy of its psychological services program, whether it is being implemented as intended, or if it is reaching its intended population. Each of these questions, and many others, can be answered using different evaluation models and approaches. For a list of potential evaluation models see Stufflebeam (2001).

Step f—Agreement on evaluation priorities and the intended use of evaluation information. The final step of evaluability assessment involved reaching an agreement among stakeholders as to the use of future evaluation information. This is an important consideration when choosing an evaluation strategy. However, according to Owen (2007) this decision is more dependent upon the evaluation audience and organizational characteristics than on strategies. More specifically, agreement was needed on evaluation priorities and how the future use of this information will impact program performance.

Dissemination of the final evaluability assessment is to occur at a USD 349 Stafford, Kansas Board of Education meeting late in the summer of 2009. Recommendations to be presented are aimed at strengthening and focusing the current psychological services provided by USD 349 Stafford, Kansas. The stakeholders, including the Board of Education, have the option of accepting or rejecting the recommendations pertaining to the goals and activities, logic model, and the future formal evaluation plan. In the next chapter, the results of these evaluability assessment procedures are described.

Staff Survey

In order to obtain the input of Stafford, Kansas USD 349's faculty, a survey was constructed. Teachers were asked if they would like to identify themselves so that the survey administrator could contact them and conduct individual interviews. Ten of the 26 respondents supplied their names and four specifically asked to be contacted for further discussions. Of these, three respondents were interviewed. These discussions took one of two general directions. One respondent wished to explain that she did not feel qualified to answer the questions but was encouraged to do so anyway. The remaining two respondents expressed enthusiasm at the prospect of uncovering more information regarding district's success in pursuing current psychological services policy and wanted more data that might help them be more successful in resolving problems involving emotionally challenged students. All three were seeking support in providing student services. Results of the survey are discussed below in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Logic Model for Psychological Services

As McLaughlin and Jordan (2004) explain, “A logic model is a plausible and sensible model of how [a] program will work under certain environmental conditions to solve identified problems” (p. 8). The logic model for psychological services developed by the investigator for USD 349 Stafford, Kansas consists of potentially identifiable resources, activities, and outcomes as shown below in Figure 2. The data used to construct the logic model came from personal interviews with the district superintendent, administrators, district and non-district psychological service providers (e.g., the director of the SCKSEC and the psychologist who serves USD 349), and faculty of Stafford, Kansas USD 349. This chapter presents the logic model and examines in detail how components in the logic model were identified and ultimately how the logic model led to evaluability assessment conclusions about psychological services in Stafford, Kansas USD 349.

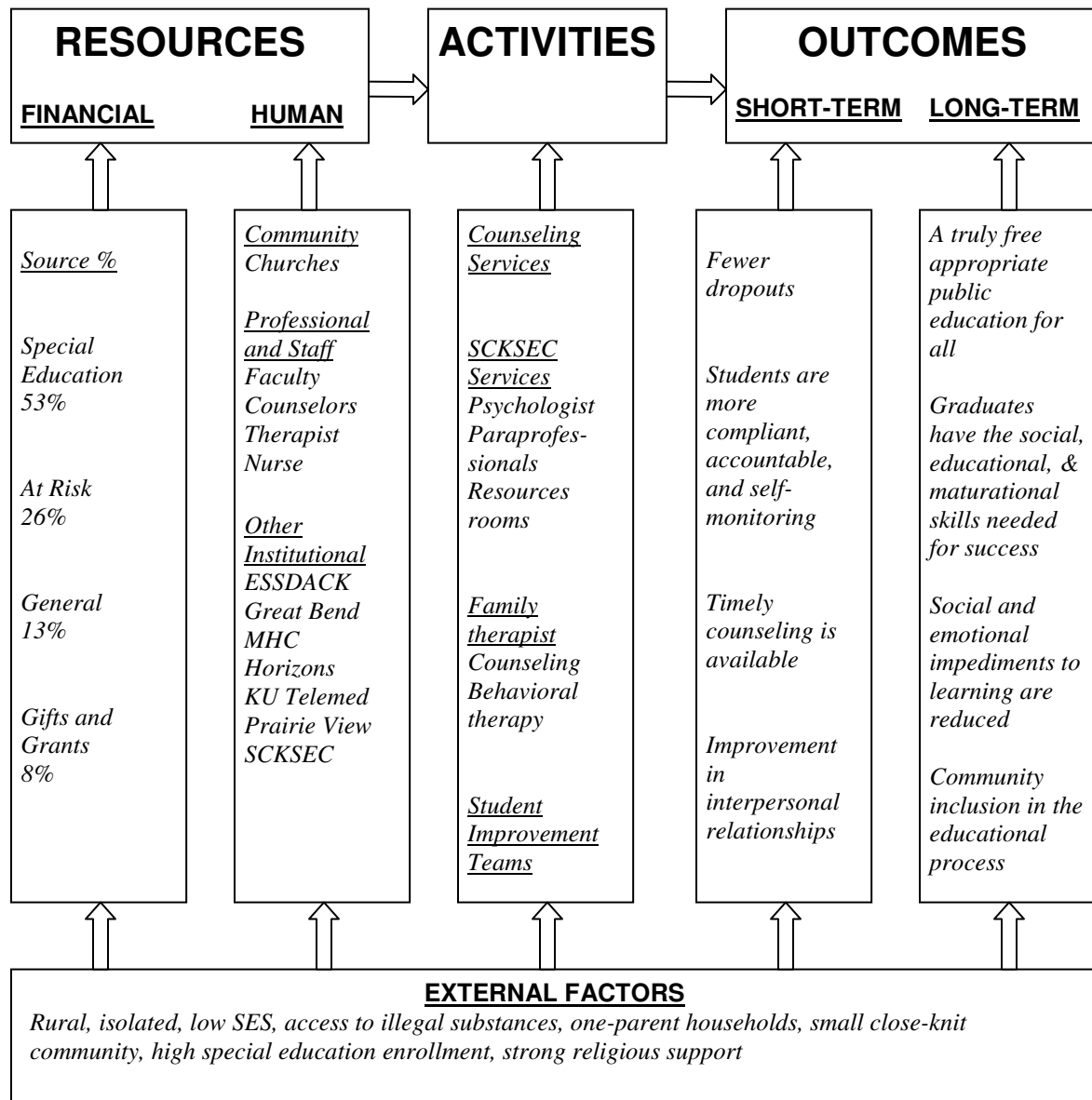


Figure 2. Logic Model for Psychological Services Provided by Stafford, Kansas USD 349

Financial Resources

The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE, 2008) provides online documentation of each school district’s budget information. However, the year 2008-2009 budget data had not been published online as of this writing but was provided by USD 349 Stafford, Kansas and is

reported here (Taylor, 2008). Deciding which funds constitute the psychological services program's budget was a point of contention in meetings with the district superintendent; however, the following budget items reveal a substantial input of funds used to support various student support services. State and local resources supply \$143,528 for the district's general fund to pay for certified and non-certified student support personnel. Special education was also allotted \$587,911 from the general fund, which includes a balance forward from 2007. The district's at-risk fund of \$293,186 originates from the supplemental fund, local resources, and includes a balance forward. USD 349 Stafford, Kansas also takes advantage of available grant money as is evident by the procurement of \$85,579 to pay for an after-school program, which certainly seems needed in a low SES area with a high incidence of one-parent families.

The superintendent also explained that the district's two counselors are paid through the general fund, and most of the special education allotment is forwarded to SCKSEC to pay for professional services delivered by psychologists, resource room teachers, paraprofessionals, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and to cover administrative costs. Although detailed use of the at-risk fund is unavailable some of it is used to pay for the district's family therapist and is available to fund other services and equipment related to the psychological services program.

The total budget for psychological services at USD 349 Stafford, Kansas appears to be roughly \$1,110,204. This figure was arrived at by extrapolating information from the budget supplied by the district superintendent (Taylor, 2008) and may be somewhat conservative as other funds may also contribute in a less direct way. For instance: parent education is budgeted \$51,348 from local and state contributions to the general and supplemental funds. Certainly, parenting classes impact students' psychological well being; however, this is more difficult to

classify as being psychological in nature when compared to psychological testing or counseling. Professional development could (and likely does) allocate some of its \$26,921 budget toward educating teachers on psychological matters such as managing the behavior of various student groups, crisis management, special needs students, and others. Including these figures in the psychological services budget would raise the total to \$1,188,473. Considering the ambiguity involved, the annual psychological services budget of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas is described as between \$1.0 and \$1.2 million.

For any organization to achieve its goals it must have enough resources to continue pursuing them through unforeseen adversity; this includes adequate funding and personnel. When staff members were surveyed and asked, “Do you feel USD 349 has enough resources (i.e. money and psychology professionals) to meet the needs of its students?” 21.7% said “yes,” 39.1% answered “no,” and another 39.1% marked “not sure.” While there was a tendency for the faculty to say these resources, money included, are not sufficient, there were just as many who were not sure. There was also no clear tendency when the respondents were broken down into subgroups of teacher, paraprofessional, or other. The data do reflect a strong need for psychological services at Stafford, Kansas USD 349, but the high number of staff members answering “not sure” probably reflects a lack of familiarity with the services provided and the budget.

Human Resources

Professional and staff resources. Several types of educational and health care professionals play a role in maintaining the psychological well being of students in public schools. What follows is a list of professionals who contribute to the psychological services program at USD 349 Stafford, Kansas in some way. It is by no means an exhaustive list of all

personnel working in Stafford schools. This information was provided by the district to all employees in the 2008-2009 Staff Directory (Meggars, 2008) and was discussed with stakeholders.

According to the district superintendent's administrative assistant, as the 2008-2009 school year began, there were 290 children enrolled in Stafford, Kansas USD 349. To serve these children, Stafford employed twenty-five regular education teachers for a student to teacher ratio of 11.6:1 (Meggars, 2008). The district also employs three administrators, three learning center instructors (adult education and high school completion support), two assistant or student teachers, one full-time and one part-time counselor, one nurse, one part-time instructional coach, one after school program director, and one part-time family counselor working one day per week. In addition to personnel hired by the school district, the SCKSEC provides Stafford with several on-campus personnel, including fifteen paraeducators, four resource room teachers, one adaptive physical education instructor, and one preschool teacher. The SCKSEC also provides part-time access to two speech clinicians, one psychologist, one gifted teacher, and is responsible for providing other health care professionals such as occupational and physical therapists. The Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL) also has two teachers and a teaching assistant working for the Head Start program at the Stafford campus. The KCSL also provides a family advocate for the Stafford area.

When the USD 349 Stafford, Kansas teaching staff was surveyed, they were asked the following rhetorical question. "Suppose you just received a large federal grant allowing you to hire one of the following at USD 349. Which professional would you hire? Give your first and second choice." The choices were another counselor, school psychologist, therapist, or a social worker. Of the 25 respondents, 11 indicated another counselor as their first choice and three said

another counselor would be their second choice. Eight respondents said a therapist was their first choice and nine indicated this as their second choice. The results for social worker, and school psychologist were the same with three each indicating these two positions as first choice and 6 each indicating these two as their second choice. The responses indicate the staff feels another counselor or therapist would be better able to contribute to the needs of students, but it may also reflect the fact that faculty members are more familiar with the services these two positions provide.

Community resources. According to Beebe-Frankenberger (2008), one of the most positive aspects of rural living is the closeness felt among the majority of the community members. This closeness may be necessary to help counter the effect of being isolated, away from psychology professionals that are easily accessible in urban districts. When asked how much community support the school district receives, the high school counselor described the small business people, farmers, truckers, and other long-time community members who serve on the board of education's seven seats. This is a position that seems to carry a substantial amount of prestige in this small community and suggests that the school is indeed the cultural center of the town. Other tangible evidence of the contributions made by community members can be seen upon inspection of the classrooms. There are dry erase notepads bearing the letterhead of the pizza parlor on Main Street and coffee mugs advertising the local electrician's services.

A discussion with Stafford's City Clerk M. Ruffle (personal communication, November 23, 2007), regarding the people who operate the local government and business institutions in Stafford, Kansas, revealed perhaps the best evidence yet of the strong support USD 349 receives from the community. It seems as though the majority of the town's local leaders either serve on the school board, a school related committee, or make periodic donations to Stafford, Kansas

USD 349. This relationship between local leaders and the city appear to be reciprocal. To begin, the town's mayor is the high school social studies teacher, a middle-school teacher and a substitute teacher also serve on the town counsel as does the superintendent's husband, and the city clerk is the wife of the high school science teacher. The fact that teachers are commonly found among the town's leaders, and the participation of community business leaders in school activities support the conclusion that the community views the school as one of its greatest assets and would therefore be very supportive of any efforts to improve its school psychological services program.

Other institutional resources. Interviews with the high school counselor, family therapist, and school psychologist produced a list of institutions that the district's psychological services program regularly utilizes to provide students with access. There is, of course, the SCKSEC that supplies the district with special education personnel, psychology and other health professionals, and other related services. This relationship is almost seamless with resource room teachers, paraprofessionals, the gifted instructor, and psychologist performing their functions as if they had been hired by the school district itself. Also operating seamlessly on the USD 349 Stafford, Kansas campus are the two KCSL personnel who run the head start program.

Another organization that operates in harmony with USD 349 Stafford, Kansas is the Educational Services and Staff Development Association of Central Kansas (ESSDACK). ESSDACK is a regional professional development institution that works with Central Kansas school districts to keep teachers up to date on the latest instructional and behavioral methods. Though not thought of as a psychological services organization, it can provide training in this area by providing lecturers trained in the field to speak at school in-services.

Fortunately, for isolated rural schools like Stafford, one of the major universities is helping to provide access to highly trained health and psychology professionals. The Kansas University Telemed program allows specialized psychologists and psychiatrists to see patients in these areas via computer-to-computer connection. This allows students access to professionals that they would likely not see because of the hardship involved in traveling great distances. At the time of the stakeholder meetings, this program was greatly underutilized. It was agreed that only 2-3 students had used the program effectively in its first year and the reason seems to be lack of public exposure. As word of the program spreads through the community an increase in use is expected.

A few private regional mental health facilities were also mentioned in meetings with the high school counselor and school psychologist. The following institutions have been used by USD 349 Stafford, Kansas psychological services personnel as referral recipients and are within one hour's drive of the school building. The Center for Counseling and Consultation is located forty miles away in Great Bend, Kansas, and Horizons Mental Health Center in Pratt, Kansas is only twenty-six miles away. Horizons also maintains a facility 43 miles away in Hutchinson, Kansas. Another large mental health care institution in the area is Prairie View whose closest center is 42 miles away in Hutchinson.

Program Activities

Discussions with administrators and psychological service providers led to the identification of four major program activities: counseling services, services provided by the SCKSEC, the family therapist services, and student improvement teams (SIT). Each of these services is discussed below.

Counseling services. According to the high school counselor, USD 349 Stafford, Kansas currently supplies grades 6 through 12 with one full-time counselor and kindergarten through 5th grade with one part-time counselor. She noted, however that, as the availability of district funds fluctuates, so to does the amount of time counselors are allowed to spend with students. In other words, counselors may be assigned part-time teaching duties during years in which enrollment is down. When enrollment is high, they are assigned to full-time counseling duties. Yet, even during years in which they are assigned as full-time counselors, they are asked to help with administrative duties that reduce the amount of time they spend actually counseling students.

School district staff were questioned about the district's counseling services on the staff survey. One question asked how well they understood the role of school counselors, to which 23% indicated "a little," 54% responded "mostly," and 23% said "very well." One comment was registered that is of particular concern here: "I think they have a lot more things to deal with than just being a counselor." This comment seems to reflect the statement made earlier by the high school counselor about being asked to help with administrative tasks.

When survey respondents were asked how often they had private conversations with counselors regarding students, 8% said never, 23% marked 1-5 times per year, 31% indicated 6-10 times per year and 39% responded that it was more often than 10 times per year. This suggests USD 349 Stafford, Kansas counselors are highly sought after sources of information and help. If the counselors were overburdened in their workload, one would expect the faculty to perceive slowness in their responses to requests for solutions. When asked to "Describe the speed at which counselors address the problems you bring to them" only 4% indicated slowly, 39% said moderately, and 58% said counselors responded quickly. Fast response times do not necessarily indicate that the counselors are not overburdened; rather, it may simply mean that

problem solving is a priority for counselors. Additional comments provided by respondents brought up questions regarding the role of teachers in counseling students. One paraprofessional educator wrote, “I usually report any concerns to the student’s primary teacher and/or the resources room teacher.” Student-to-teacher ratios are small at Stafford. This could mean teachers have more free time to serve as problem solvers for children. If this is true, Stafford children may be better served than children in larger schools are. Comments to other questions, however, suggest some children at USD 349 Stafford, Kansas are not getting enough help even though their problems are obvious.

When asked to “. . . rate the overall effectiveness of the counselor's suggested solutions to your problems with students” 27% indicated “slightly effective,” 50% said “moderately effective,” and 23% responded “very effective.” Comments from two respondents to this question were indicative of possible shortcomings in the way problems are handled. One respondent wrote, “I wish for more follow through . . . sometimes they don’t really listen to the teacher as to what is really going on,” and another writes, “. . . I’m wondering how effective can they really be if they only have a five-or ten-minute conversation with a student once a week.”

Using an open-ended format respondents were also asked to, “Please describe any problems you have in using the school’s counseling resources and suggest solutions to them. If you are happy with these resources please explain why.” Overall, there were 15 positive comments regarding the performance of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas’ counselors, and three negative performance comments. Some of the comments were of a constructive nature with eight suggesting that the counselors’ job performance suffers due to time constraints, and three comments suggesting better communication could improve counseling services.

When asked, “If you were the administrator in charge of USD 349, what would you do to improve the counseling services?” respondents continued to comment on time constraints and the availability of counselors. The complete responses are included in Appendix B.

The data and comments collected regarding counseling services at USD 349 Stafford, Kansas seem to describe an overburdened system. This is somewhat difficult to reconcile given that during the 2007-2008 school year the student-to-counselor ratio at Stafford was approximately 203:1 (KSDE, 2007). This is substantially lower than the 372:1 national ratio for elementary schools or the 321:1 for secondary schools reported by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES, 2005) just four years ago. This comparison suggests that one or more of the following hypotheses regarding Stafford, Kansas USD 349’s counseling services are correct. a) There is a greater need for counseling services at USD 349 Stafford, Kansas than in most school districts. b) Counselors at USD 349 Stafford, Kansas are currently performing functions and providing services in addition to what counselors in most other district do. As for hypothesis a, demographic data discussed earlier in chapter 3 (KSDE, 2007; USCB, 2000) suggest this is favored; however, information to test hypothesis b is beyond the scope of the current research and should be considered in future evaluations.

Psychologist services. The psychologist who serves USD 349 Stafford, Kansas is employed by the SCKSEC and not the district. Interviews with the psychologist established that his main role at the school is testing individuals for program placement and performing related services such as communicating results with parents and staff. He rarely has time for counseling (except in emergencies) which may contribute to the problem counselors at Stafford seem to have in handling their workload.

Because the school psychologist who serves Stafford is not employed by USD 349 it seems reasonable to assume that teachers and other staff members are less familiar with this service than with counseling. In order to better judge if this is indeed the situation, the investigator asked all respondents if they were familiar with the responsibilities of the psychologist that serves USD 349 Stafford, Kansas. One respondent (4%) indicated he/she was not sure who the question was referring to, 15% knew who the psychologist was but knew little about his responsibilities, 58% said they were somewhat familiar with a school psychologist's responsibilities, and the remaining 23% responded that they were quite familiar with a school psychologist's responsibilities.

There is no everyday psychologist to help with counseling duties in times of great need. Because of this, the investigator asked respondents to comment on how they would like to see the psychologist spend his time if he had more time in the building. Of the 26 respondents, 23 took the time to write an open-ended response to this question. Out of all responses, 14 mentioned working one-on-one with troubled students. Sadly, this is something the psychologist from the SCKSEC has little time to do. Considering national data on the number of students served, this is not surprising. During the 2006-2007 school year, the USD 349 Stafford, Kansas psychologist, who serves all three districts in Stafford County, served 1,039 children whereas the national average reported by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES, 2005) for 2003-2004 was one psychologist for every 483 elementary students and 1 for every 902 secondary students. The problems this discrepancy may cause are likely to be compounded by the amount of time he spends traveling between districts, and by the increased incidence of at-risk students found in the USD 349 Stafford, Kansas environment. These data may also be used to support hypothesis 2 discussed under counseling services above. Without an on-site psychologist available to

contribute as a counselor during periods when students seem to be suffering from an unusually large number of everyday problems, there may be no one else to help handle the extra load.

Family therapist services. Unified School District 349 Stafford, Kansas is attempting to compensate for its large at-risk student population by hiring a therapist to counsel students and provide behavioral therapy one day per week. Survey respondents were asked, “How many days per week do you feel this service is needed?” Only 12% felt the current 0-1 day per week was sufficient while 35% indicated the therapist needed to work 2-3 days per week and another 35% said 4-5 days per week were needed to serve all students. The remaining 19% of respondents knew nothing about the service or how it is used. Perhaps most surprising is that 5 of 26 respondents knew little or nothing about this service even though it is mentioned on the district’s website, but there would seem to be little reason to advertise a service that, according to the comments, is needed so badly yet offered only 1 day per week.

Student improvement teams. Teams consisting of a few teachers, an administrator, a psychological services staff member, and in some cases parents, have been used since the 1970s as a part of a problem-solving process to handle students with challenging academic and behavioral problems in Kansas. Similar teams in other states may use different names but the Kansas State Board of Education calls them Student Improvement Teams (SIT) teams. In NASP’s new *Best Practices in School Psychology V*, Kovaleski and Pedersen (2008) describe the original purpose of these teams as being that of a pre-referral service to screen students for consideration for special education, and if possible, to identify alternative solutions. Kovaleski and Peterson (2008), however, now recommend a more rigorous data driven form of SIT team called the data analysis team (DAT) where members use data and research-proven methods in a problem-solving approach. Any recommendation for special education testing is to be based, in

part, upon the student's response to the research-proven interventions initiated by the team. Since this kind of problem-solving team is now recommended as *Best Practice* the current research seeks to characterize Stafford's current SIT program and predict any barriers to success that may occur as it updates its current program.

To determine the staff's familiarity with the SIT process the survey asked, "Generally speaking, how well do you feel you understand the role of a SIT team member?" To which 31% of respondents answered "very well," 46% indicated "fairly well," 19% said "a little," and only 4% admitted to knowing nothing at all. Of the six respondents who answered "not at all" or "a little," four were teachers and two were paraprofessional educators. A related question asked, "Under most circumstances, would you feel comfortable initiating a SIT team for a student?" Responses were 77% yes and 23% no. Of the 23% who answered no, three were teachers and three were paraprofessional educators or other staff members. These results indicate some lack of knowledge of the SIT process that could easily be corrected by an in-service program.

Inquiry into the efficacy of the current SIT format began with the question "How effective do you feel the SIT process has been at USD 349?" to which 8% of respondents said it was "not effective," 46% indicated "slightly effective," 39% marked "moderately effective," and 8% felt it was "very effective." This question seemed to raise some amount of ire as twelve comments were registered. All comments are listed in Appendix C, although some have been abbreviated due to redundancy and to protect the anonymity of the respondent. Of the twelve comments registered, nine contained remarks indicating that the SIT process at USD 349 Stafford, Kansas is either not being used often enough or team recommendations are not being followed-up. This would explain the low marks received for program efficacy.

The survey also asked, “How often should a SIT team meet to discuss a child who is experiencing on-going difficulties for which solutions have been hard to identify?” Of 23 teachers answering the question 61% indicated “every two weeks,” and 39% recommended “once per quarter.” There were several comments to this question as well, all of which are listed in Appendix B. Teachers and other faculty appear to be recommending that one team meeting be held for each student every 2- 9 weeks depending on the severity of the problem. Unfortunately, as reported above, this does not appear to be happening. Three of the respondents made comments suggesting that time constraints are a factor contributing to the possible poor performance of the SIT process at Stafford, Kansas USD 349.

A final open-ended question asked, “Please explain any problems you have with the SIT process and suggest solutions below.” The following is an excerpt from one of the comments. “I understand that there have been 4 students referred to the SIT team this year and nothing has been done . . .” All substantial comments are listed in Appendix C. The survey results point to problems with the SIT process that should be addressed immediately, and will be discussed further in chapter 5.

Outcomes

Short-term goals. Several meetings were held with the district superintendent, high school counselor, school nurse, family counselor, and school psychologist to determine program goals. Unfortunately, there were never more than three of the aforementioned stakeholders able to meet at any one time. Therefore, most of the original program goals were identified from two separate sources. The school nurse was the first to identify program goals by referring the researcher to the CSHP grant that first supplied money to hire the family therapist. The family therapist was next to suggest program goals by referring the researcher to a podcast on the school

website (Feril, 2007). These goals were combined into one document and presented to the district superintendent and high school counselor at a meeting in the spring of 2008. During the meeting, the goals were pared down into the twenty goals shown below in Table 3. All of the goals identified are of a short-term nature.

Teachers were asked to rate the amount of success the district is having in meeting the district's current goals for the psychological services program as identified by program stakeholders early in the evaluation process. These goals are listed along with the response results in Table 3. One goal "Students feel safe within the school environment," was rated as being addressed with much success by 39% of respondents. The goal "Students have resources to assist them in making decisions" was rated as being addressed with much success by 31% of respondents. This would appear to be a reflection of the positive "closeness" attributes of the rural environment. This closeness results in a non-threatening environment caused by the corresponding availability of supportive personal relationships that serve as emotional resources.

Table 3

Survey results of “Rate the program according to how well you feel each goal is addressed”
(N=26)

Goal	Does not or weakly addresses this goal	Addresses with limited success	Addresses with moderate success	Addresses with much success	This goal does not need to be addressed	Not sure
Adverse effects of negative playground environments are reduced.	11.5%	15.4%	19.2%	7.7%	0.0%	46.2%*
Adverse effects of negative classroom environments are reduced.	7.7%	23.1%	34.6%	15.4%	0.0%	19.2%
Adverse effects of negative home and family environments are reduced.	11.5%	53.8%	11.5%	0.0%	0.0%	23.1%
Bullying is reduced.	3.8%	46.2%	34.6%	7.7%	0.0%	7.7%
Each student has a career plan.	23.1%	3.8%	38.5%	7.7%	0.0%	26.9%
Student anger issues are reduced.	7.7%	46.2%	34.6%	0.0%	0.0%	11.5%
Student aggression is reduced.	11.5%	30.8%	38.5%	3.8%	0.0%	15.4%
Student depression is reduced.	3.8%	46.2%	19.2%	3.8%	0.0%	26.9%
Poor social skill development is reduced.	15.4%	38.5%	26.9%	3.8%	0.0%	15.4%
Adverse effects of abuse are reduced.	8.0%	40.0%	12.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%
Students have access to appropriate mental health care.	3.8%	34.6%	26.9%	15.4%	3.8%	15.4%
Students feel safe within the school environment.	0.0%	15.4%	38.5%	38.5%	0.0%	7.7%
Interpersonal relationships between students are positive.	3.8%	34.6%	38.5%	11.5%	0.0%	11.5%
Students have resources to assist them in making decisions.	3.8%	11.5%	42.3%	30.8%	0.0%	11.5%
Students respect their community.	11.5%	34.6%	30.8%	7.7%	0.0%	15.4%
Students respect each other.	7.7%	50.0%	30.8%	0.0%	0.0%	11.5%
Students handle disputes without violence.	7.7%	26.9%	34.6%	19.2%	0.0%	11.5%
Student drug/alcohol abuse is reduced.	11.5%	34.6%	11.5%	3.8%	0.0%	38.5%
Peer pressure to smoke is reduced.	3.8%	30.8%	23.1%	7.7%	0.0%	34.6%
Parents learn effective parenting skills.	11.5%	42.3%	19.2%	3.8%	0.0%	23.1%

Note. *Modal scores are in bold print.

From the perspective of teachers, the district has been less successful in addressing several other program goals. Addressing the adverse effects of negative home and family environments may be one outstanding example with a full 65.3% of respondents saying the district addressed the goal weakly or with limited success. The strong feelings teachers have regarding the environmental factors with which they must deal might best be summed up by the following quote made by a respondent after answering an earlier question regarding the efficacy of the SIT process, “I understand the idea behind a SIT team, but kids are products of their environments. We can’t do anything to modify the homes from which they come. The only true way a kid can overcome a negative environment is recognize this fact and then choose to change. That is hard to do when it is the only thing with which they are familiar.” This statement reflects the frustration the staff of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas is feeling and suggests this goal is unattainable.

Other goals with which the district seems to struggle to address include reducing bullying, student anger issues, student depression, poor social skill development, students respecting each other, and teaching parents effective learning skills. One respondent commented, “As far as parenting skills, often times it’s not the right parents in the program” a remark that seems to indicate those who need help often do not seek it. In reality, correcting the parenting skills of all parents is too much to expect of the program providers of Stafford, Kansas USD 349.

Still other goals proved hard for the staff to characterize when it comes to determining the effects of the district’s efforts. More than 30% of respondents indicated they were not sure how well the goals “adverse effects of negative playground environments are reduced, adverse effects of abuse are reduced, student drug/alcohol abuse is reduced, and peer pressure to smoke is reduced” were addressed. The inability of the staff to characterize the district’s success in

reaching these goals could be an indication that the district is unable to generate, access, and review data that address these goals in an economical fashion. If this is true, then the district will be unable to clarify these issues in a manner that will help direct the district's future activities.

In all, the survey shows the modal scores for half of all the identified goals as falling into the categories of "addresses with limited success" or "does not or weakly addresses goals."

Because of the problems the school has in attaining its goals, the cost of pursuing them, and the diffuse nature of the goals, the researcher asked the district superintendent to consider a new set of goals. The new set was identified by considering the twenty original goals and by holding individual meetings with as many stakeholders as possible. Meetings with the director of the SCKSEC, the high school counselor, the high school resource room instructor, and the family counselor produced statements that could possibly be used as new goals. Other providers and staff were asked for input but did not respond or simply agreed with remarks that had already been noted. Each provider interviewed was asked to restate in general terms what the program was trying to accomplish. Similar statements were combined which left the following four short-term goals:

1. There will be fewer dropouts every year or none at all.
2. Students will be more compliant, accountable, and self-monitoring.
3. Timely counseling is available to all students.
4. There will be an improvement in the interpersonal relationships of all students.

The new set of goals are meant to be more concise, attainable, and more economical to evaluate by using existing data.

Long-term goals. With the exception of the following phrase that comes from the CSHP grant proposal, "The social and emotional impediments to learning are reduced" the stakeholders

of the psychological services program of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas did not seem to have a unified vision for the future. Therefore, every provider, including many teachers and the director of the SCKSEC, was approached and asked, “If you had but one overall goal for the psychological services of Stafford, Kansas USD 349, what would it be?” In all, three different answers were obtained. The director of the SCKSEC said, “That’s easy. To provide a truly free appropriate public education for all.” The high school counselor remarked, “Graduates have the social, educational, and maturational skills needed for success.” In addition, both the school psychologist and family therapist agreed that the community must be included in the educational process if improvements in the psychological functioning of students are to occur. Therefore, the researcher recommended that the district superintendent adopt the following four statements as long-term goals, to which the district superintendent agreed.

1. A truly free appropriate public education is provided for all.
2. Graduates have the social, educational, and maturational skills needed for success.
3. The social and emotional impediments to learning are reduced.
4. The community is included in the educational process.

Once again, the nature of these new long-term goals makes it easier for USD 349 Stafford, Kansas’s stakeholders to find existing data with which to evaluate them and they are attainable.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Stakeholders in the psychological services program at Stafford, Kansas USD 349 requested an evaluation to identify program strengths and weaknesses so that improvements could be made. Since the program was not properly prepared for a formal evaluation, the author opted instead to perform an evaluability assessment to help stakeholders develop a logic model that would make future management and program evaluation easier. This model is intended to help them make improvements in program activities that will enhance their ability to gain valuable information for future evaluations. This chapter will review the results of the objectives of this thesis and discuss steps the district may take in order to prepare for future formal evaluations of the school psychological services program in Stafford USD 349.

Thesis Objective 1: Program Goals and Objectives

One of the first concerns in evaluating the school psychological services in Stafford USD 349 was whether there was any consensus within the district on what might be considered the goals of the program. Initial meetings with program administrators and key providers led to the identification of twenty potential goals. These goals, listed earlier in Table 3, were presented to teachers of Stafford USD 349 to rate the amount of success the district was having in meeting these goals. Only two of the twenty goals were rated by more than 30% of the staff as being addressed with much success. Poor program performance may be a cause of these low ratings, or, the goals/objectives identified may not be proper ones for the program. Buy-in to well understood program goals/objectives by all stakeholders did not seem to be present. As Wholey (2004) states, a program is evaluable if there is "... a reasonable level of agreement on program goals and performance criteria" and there is "...some likelihood that the goals will be achieved."

Neither of his two criteria seem to be well met for the psychological services program in Stafford USD 349.

The logic model presented in the current research suggests a new set of goals that come from statements made by stakeholders. However there is currently no evidence to indicate these goals are agreed upon by all stakeholders. The fractionalized nature of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas' current program goals may reflect the lack of communication among providers working for separate institutions. It was, in fact, impossible to get every provider together for a single stakeholder meeting. The attention the providers give to the various needs of their students is commendable and reflected a strong interest in their client's welfare. However, what seemed to be lacking was an overall sense of what the program, as a whole, was trying to accomplish. In order for the psychological services program at USD 349 Stafford, Kansas to become evaluable there must be agreement among district stakeholders and those employed by the SCKSEC on specific goals and objectives the program is trying to accomplish.

Another problem with the possible program goals/objectives the author was able to tease from some stakeholders is the question of whether they are *achievable*. In fact, the teachers' assessment of the rate at which the district is currently meeting these possible goals could be seen as an indicator of the difficulty the district will have of ever meeting these goals. Indeed, goals such as *the adverse effects of negative home and family environments are reduced* would require extensive resources and effort. On the other hand, goals such as *timely counseling is available* may be more easily specified and accomplishable.

Ultimately, to be able to evaluate the psychological services program in USD 349, Stafford Kansas, the district and collaborating personnel must engage in processes that will allow them to reach consensus on a set of goals/objectives for the program and what indicators

(measurable outcomes) can be reasonably assessed to determine if program goals/objectives are being met. Once a consensus on these goals and objectives is reached, the potential for successful evaluation efforts exists.

Thesis Objective 2: Availability of Program Resources

The ability to identify both the financial and human resources available for a program is a key to evaluative understanding of how program goals/objectives may be accomplished. In the case of Stafford USD 349, it seemed to the author that providing psychological services in the district required a relatively complex combination of resources, both in- and out-of-district. Being able to describe a cohesive program of services involving multiple providers will be a challenge for any future evaluation.

Financial resources. During stakeholder meetings, it was immediately clear that funding for psychological services was a district priority. The current \$1.1 million budget is sustainable through federal, state, and local educational allocations that are provided annually. The one possible exception is the \$85,500 needed to maintain the after-school program. This program is supported by a federal grant renewable through the 2011-2012 school year. After that, it is expected to be self-sustainable. Whether or not it will be sustainable and how this might be a factor in future evaluations remains to be seen.

USD 349 Stafford, Kansas appears to divert a fair amount of its current monetary resources into providing services that contribute to the psychological well being of its students. The current budget and enrollment figures suggest that an average of \$3793.10 per student will be spent on providing psychological services this year. However, the fact that USD 349 Stafford, Kansas has limited control over how it allocates its funds may detract from psychological services program evaluability. The \$587,911 USD 349 budgeted for special education represents

at least half of the district's psychological services budget and most of this amount goes to the SCKSEC to help pay for its service providers and administrative costs. Since these funds are no longer under the control of USD 349, it would be erroneous to suggest that district stakeholders are responsible for using them to achieve district specific goals unless there is an agreement between both organizations on what goals this funding is expected to achieve.

Human resources. Literature published by Barbopoulos & Clark (2003) and Beebe-Frankenberger (2008) suggest that accessibility to psychological health care providers has long been an issue in rural areas. However, this issue may not be as serious for USD 349 as it is for districts even farther west in Kansas. Stafford is only 82 miles from Wichita State University and 103 miles from Fort Hays State University, two schools with programs that train school psychologists and social workers.

The number of psychology professionals available to USD 349 is not far out of line with national averages, yet staff members would like to see the therapist, psychologist, and the counselors spending more time counseling students. This suggests additional needs for counseling services at USD 349 Stafford, Kansas, and it may be that one full-time and one-half time counselor are simply not enough to meet the needs of the students. The district has already acknowledged this issue and has responded by hiring a family therapist; however, the problem persists.

Comments recorded on the staff survey reveal their perception that time constraints keep the district's providers from giving the best possible psychological care. These comments echoed statements made by stakeholders during interviews. For instance, the school psychologist complained on three occasions about the time constraints he experiences. One school counselor complained that other duties were keeping her from spending much-needed time with students,

and the other said she had no time to participate in program evaluation due to time-constraints. Issues of staff time and how much can be devoted to student psychological services is another issue that must be resolved before future evaluation efforts are undertaken.

Thesis Objective 3: Program Logic Model

Information for the logic model came mostly from interviews with the superintendent of USD 349, the high school counselor, the family therapist, the school nurse, the director of the SCKSEC, and by examining budget records, and the CSHP grant application. The input of each stakeholder was noted and combined into a preliminary document that was far too large and disorganized to be of use to stakeholders. Therefore, only elements that were useful in describing the program were retained. The final model was reviewed with the district superintendent and included for consideration of program evaluability in the current document. While this model has components that may help program stakeholders understand logically the services they provide it requires much additional input and collaboration and agreement among stakeholders to reach an adoptable model. Once stakeholder consensus is reached on a logic model, it should become the driving force for future evaluation efforts.

Thesis Objective 4: Evaluability of Psychological Services

In its present state, it would be difficult to formally evaluate the psychological services provided by USD 349 Stafford, Kansas. As this study began, the program fit Trevesan's (2007) description of a poorly designed program. It was difficult for the author to find consensus on program goals, coordinated activities, and provisions for collecting data to be used in evaluating the program's ability to attain its goals. The district began work on addressing some of the weaknesses identified early in this investigation before this paper was completed, but much work remains before the program is ready to be subjected to a formal evaluation.

Evaluability summary. Currently, enthusiasm over the need for program evaluation and willingness to participate is insufficient to support a formal evaluation at USD 349 Stafford, Kansas. Some providers are quite interested in finding ways to measure the impact of their services on the children of Stafford, whereas others, perhaps accurately, suggest the measurements needed require great effort and would yield minimal results. Furthermore, because teachers feel more time needs to be spent counseling students, it seems irrational to some to divert a large number of resources toward evaluation efforts. Nevertheless, data driven program evaluation needs to be the guiding force for making improvements in the psychological services program. Five things to consider when writing goals and objectives for an evaluable program are as follows:

1. Program personnel need to feel as though they have a significant amount of control over the degree to which program goals and objectives are achieved. Morale will likely suffer if personnel feel the program activities they are responsible for have little effect on the outcomes being measured.
2. Key personnel should understand how evaluators assess program goals and objectives. This will help them design program activities that are effective and focused.
3. The resources being provided to meet the goals of the objectives should be sufficient and consistent or success will be fleeting at best.
4. A well-planned and efficient evaluation of the new goals should be implemented immediately.
5. Baseline data should be recorded as soon as the goals and objectives have been adopted and subsequent data should be easily obtainable.

Future evaluations. There are two main reasons why USD 349 Stafford, Kansas will likely benefit by preparing itself for future evaluations. First, the district serves a population of youths who are considered to be at high risk for educational failure. These children, perhaps more than others, have constantly changing physical, emotional, and social environments; therefore, they need psychological services that are self-monitoring and dynamic. Simply put, success may depend upon the ability of stakeholders to make prompt and effective changes to the program by staying atop of recent trends. Effectively managing such a program may require constantly checking data that reflects the local environment so that necessary corrections to program activities can be made. Second, the past decade has seen an increasing demand for accountability in education. Since Stafford has an extraordinarily high demand for psychological services, it may benefit by asking for gifts, grants, and awards to supplement its budget. It is likely that administering these grants will require conducting program evaluations in order to assure the funding institution that their money is well spent. It follows, then, that granting institutions may be more likely to offer funding to programs with a history of program evaluation rather than accepting promises from programs with no such history.

The high costs of labor and data collection are seen as the most likely reasons for not undertaking evaluation. Internal methods that use inexpensive, immediately available data do exist. For more details on this type of evaluation method, administrators are referred to Cousins and Earl (1992). The following suggestions, taken from Cousins and Earl (1992), highlight the characteristics of organizations that use internal evaluation methods successfully.

1. The most important characteristic of organizations that successfully utilize internal evaluation is that they value evaluation. Evidence cited by Cousins and Earl (1992)

suggests that organizations that do not value evaluation tend to make haphazard, random decisions based mostly upon political concerns rather than facts.

2. Organizations that utilize internal evaluations successfully tend to be more willing to provide the time and resources necessary for evaluation, and the likelihood of benefiting from an evaluation increases as the amount of resources diverted the process increases.

Realistically, however, the investment of time and money required for an evaluation of USD 349 Stafford, Kansas needs to be kept to a minimum so that resources for activities are not reduced as a result. The district would be well advised to carefully consider both of these opposing realities before instituting any evaluation procedure.

3. An organization that is committed to its own growth and learning, as well as that of its students, would be a good candidate for internal evaluation methods. The faculty, administrators, and service providers of USD 349 would need to be committed to learning how to make systems changes in the way they handle the psychological services they provide to students.

4. When personnel given key roles in the evaluation process are motivated to fulfill the role internal evaluation methods tend to be successful. These personnel are required to monitor program activities, analyze data relevant to the program, and must learn how to make decisions that will assure the program's success. Some employees may balk at the expectation that they must master new skills and change their way of dealing with problems. Evaluation personnel can be prepared for this by developing motivational strategies capable of converting such employees over to an evaluation mindset.

5. Organizations that carry out internal evaluations accept that the technical skills required for data collection and interpretation take time and effort to master. Patience is needed as key personnel attempt to master the skills necessary for a successful program.

Generalizability; The psychological services provided by USD 349 may serve well as a model for many small rural districts; however, the unique circumstances found in other districts likely calls for solutions to problems not found in Stafford, Kansas. Because of this, the kinds of services and the way they are applied in Stafford schools may not generalize well to other districts. What will generalize well is the use of evaluability assessment by any psychological services program. Evaluability assessment is a tool that all school districts can use to describe their current services, assess program needs, and begin making changes to meet the unique needs of their clients.

Limitations and the future of research. Unified School District 349, Stafford, Kansas is a unique school district conscientiously seeking help in providing the best possible service program for its unique student population. By asking for and allowing this evaluability assessment it has taken the first step toward creating an environment of evaluation that may make it more successful in finding funding, and will allow it to continuously update its program activities for the benefit of its students.

The most questionable aspect of the current research is the relationship the author has as a teacher for the district. While this familiarity made it easy to identify problems within the organization, it also removed the possibility of a completely objective evaluability assessment. For this reason, it is recommended that USD 349 Stafford, Kansas look to outside support sources in its quest to define and reach consensus on the goals and methods of providing the best possible psychological services to its students.

REFERENCES

List of References

- Barbopoulos, A., & Clark, J. (2003). Practicing psychology in rural settings: Issues and guidelines. *Canadian Psychology, 44*(4), 410-425.
- Beebe-Frankenberger, M. (2008). Best practices in providing school psychological services in rural settings. In A. Thomas, & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology V: Vol. 5* (pp. 1785-1808). Bethesda, MD: The National Association of School Psychologists.
- Board of Unified School District No. 349, Stafford Kansas. (2008) *Negotiated agreement between the Stafford City Teacher's Association and the Board of Unified School District Number 349 Stafford, Kansas*. Unified School District 349: 318 E. Broadway, Stafford, KS., 67578
- Brown, M., Gibson, R., & Bolen, L. (2000). Contractual school psychological services: Prevalence and practices. *Psychology in the Schools, 37*(4), 333-337.
- Cornwell, L., Hawley, S., & St. Romain, T. (2007). Implementation of a coordinated school health program in a rural, low-income community. *Journal of School Health, 77*(9), 601-606.
- Cousins, J., & Earl, L. (1992) The case for participatory evaluation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 14*(4), 397-418.
- Fagan, T., & Wise, P. (2000). Roles and functions of school psychologists. In *School psychology: Past, present, and future* (2nd ed.) (pp. 105-156). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Feril, C. (2007, October 16). Mental_Health_Services.MP3. *USD 349 website*. Podcast retrieved January 5, 2008, from <http://stafford.ks.schoolwebpages.com/education/components/docmgr/default.php?sectiondetailid=478&fileitem=64&catfilter=26>
- Fitzpatrick, J. L., Sanders, J. R., & Worthen, B. R. (2004). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. Boston: Pearson.
- Horst, P., Nay, N., Scanlon, J., & Wholey, J. (1974). Program management and the federal evaluator. *Public Administration Review, 34*(4), 300-308.
- Hosp, J., & Reschly, D. (2002). Regional differences in school psychology practice. *School Psychology Review, 31*(1), 11-29.
- Institute of Education Sciences (IES). (2005). *Context of elementary and secondary education*. Retrieved October 10, 2007, from <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2007/section4/table.asp?tableID=727>

Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). (2006). *Current operating expenditures as defined by the United States Census Bureau*. Retrieved November 22, 2007, from <http://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=HqO%2Ff5ttStY%3D&tabid=1976>

Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). (2007). *Organizational statistics*. Retrieved February 23, 2008, from http://www3.ksde.org/cgi-bin/dist_rpt_yrs?org_no=D0349

Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). (2008). *Budget at a glance 2007-2008: 349-Stafford*, Retrieved September 6, 2008, from <http://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=F82%2fMX5i4QA%3d&tabid=1932>

Kovaleski, J., & Pedersen, J. (2008). Best practices in data-analysis teaming. In A. Thomas, & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology V: Vol.5* (pp. 115-129). Bethesda, MD: The National Association of School Psychologists.

McLaughlin, J. A., & Jordan, G. B. (2004). Using logic models. In J. Wholey, H. Hatry, & K. Newcomer (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (2nd ed., pp. 33-62). San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.

Meggars, D. (2008). *2008-2009 staff directory: Stafford community Unified School District No. 349, Stafford, Kansas*. Unified School District 349: 318 E. Broadway, Stafford, KS., 67578

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). (1997). Standards for the provision of school psychological services. *School Psychology Review*, 26(4), 677-693.

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). (2008). Guidelines for the provision of school psychological services. In A. Thomas, & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology V: Vol. I* (pp. xxxi-xl). Bethesda, MD: The National Association of School Psychologists.

Owen, J. M. (2007). *Program evaluation: Forms and approaches*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Provasnik, S., KewalRamani, A., Coleman, M.M., Gilbertson, L., Herring, W., & Xie, Q. (2007). *Status of education in rural America* (NCES 2007-040). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Shadish, W., Cook, T., & Leviton, L. (1991). *Foundations of program evaluation: Theories of practice*. London: Sage.

Slade, E. (2003). The relationship between school characteristics and the availability of mental health and related health services in middle and high schools in the United States. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 30(4), 382-392.

Stufflebeam, D. (2001). *Evaluation models*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Taylor, M. (2008). *Completed 2009 Budget: State of Kansas budget form USD-E*. Topeka, KS: Kansas State Department of Education

Tompkins, A., Freden, S., & Henley, T. (1997). *Kansas comprehensive school counseling program best practices: An addendum to the model and guidelines*. Topeka, KS: Kansas State Department of Education.

Trevisan, M. (2007). Evaluability assessment from 1986 to 2006. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 28(3), 290-303.

United States Census Bureau (USCB). (2000). *Year 2000 census*. Retrieved November 17, 2007, from http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFFacts?_event=ChangeGeoContext&geo_id=16000US2067775&geoContext=&street=&county=stafford&cityTown=stafford&state=04000US20&zip=&lang=en&sse=on&ActiveGeoDiv=&useEV=&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&submenuId=factsheet_1&ds_name=DEC_2000_SAFF&ci_nbr=null&qtr_name=null®=null%3Anull&keyword=&industry=

United States Department of Education (U.S. Dept. of Ed.). (2007). *Title I — Improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged*. Retrieved June 15, 2008, from <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html#sec101>

Wholey, J. (2004). Evaluability assessment. In J. Wholey, H. Hatry, & K. Newcomer (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (2nd ed., pp. 33-62). San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are your goals for the program?
2. What major activities are conducted by the programs?
3. Why will those activities achieve the program goals?
4. What program activities do you perform?
5. Why will your activities achieve the program goals?
6. What resources are available to the program?
7. How many (or which) staff are available to the program?
8. What is the program's budget?
9. What is the source of funds?
10. What evidence is necessary to determine if these goals are met?
11. What happens if the goals are not met?
12. How is the program related to local priorities?
13. What budget data (records of costs) is available? How often are they collected? How is this info used? Does anything change based upon this data?
14. Are there records of services delivered? How often are they collected? How is this info used? Does anything change based upon this data?
15. Are there records of service quality? How often are they collected? How is this info used? Does anything change based upon this data?
16. Are there any records of service outcomes? How often are they collected? How is this info used? Does anything change based upon this data?
17. What major problems are you experiencing?

18. What results have been produced to date?

19. What accomplishments are likely in the next two to three years?

*Adapted from Wholey (2004)

APPENDIX B

TEACHER' PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES SURVEY AND RESULTS

1. If you wish to identify yourself to Mr. Ruffle, please enter your name below. (optional)

	Response Count
	10
answered question	10
skipped question	16

2. Would you like to discuss the survey with Mr. Ruffle?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	20.0%	4
No	80.0%	16
If yes, when is your free period?		3
answered question		20
skipped question		6

3. Please describe your role as a staff member at USD 349 by checking the box by each title that applies. (This is important information, however, if you feel it compromises your anonymity skip it.)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Elementary Teacher	15.4%	4
High School Teacher	46.2%	12
Middle School Teacher	30.8%	8
Other Staff Member	15.4%	4
Paraprofessional Educator	19.2%	5
answered question		26
skipped question		0

4. How many times during the school year do you have private conversations with school counselors regarding problems with students?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Never	7.7%	2
1-5 times	23.1%	6
6-10 times	30.8%	8
More than 10 times	38.5%	10
Comments (optional)		4
answered question		26
skipped question		0

5. This question pertains to any and every counselor you have worked with at USD 349 over the past two years. Describe the speed at which counselors address the problems you bring to them?

	Response Percent	Response Count
They don't respond	0.0%	0
Slow	3.8%	1
Moderate	38.5%	10
Quickly	57.7%	15
Comments (optional)		4
answered question		26
skipped question		0

6. This question also pertains to any and every counselor you have worked with at USD 349 over the past two years. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the counselor's suggested solutions to your problems with students?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Not effective	0.0%	0
Slightly effective	26.9%	7
Moderately effective	50.0%	13
Very effective	23.1%	6
Comments (optional)		2
answered question		26
skipped question		0

7. Based upon information you have gathered through verbal and written school communications, and also through your own observations, how well do you feel you understand the responsibilities of the school counselors?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Not at all	0.0%	0
A little	23.1%	6
Mostly	53.8%	14
Very well	23.1%	6
Comments (optional)		2
answered question		26
skipped question		0

8. Please describe any problems you have in using the school's counseling resources and suggest solutions to them. If you are happy with these resources please explain why.

	Response Count
	24
answered question	24
skipped question	2

9. If you were the administrator in charge of USD 349, what would you do to improve the counseling services? Consider all possibilities and list your suggestions below.

	Response Count
	22
answered question	22
skipped question	4

10. School psychologists have a role that is closely related to that of school counselors but is traditionally quite different in regards to responsibilities. How familiar are you with the responsibilities of the school psychologist that serves USD 349?

	Response Percent	Response Count
I am not sure who you are talking about.	3.8%	1
I know who you are talking about, but I know little about what a school psychologist does.	15.4%	4
I am somewhat familiar with a school psychologist's responsibilities.	57.7%	15
I am quite familiar with a school psychologist's responsibilities.	23.1%	6
Comments or questions for Mr. Ruffle (optional)		3
answered question		26
skipped question		0

11. If the USD 349 school psychologist had more time in the building, how would you like to see this time spent?

	Response Count
	23
answered question	23
skipped question	3

12. USD 349 provides a licensed family therapist one day per week to both counsel and provide behavioral modification therapy to students. How many days per week do feel this service is needed?

	Response Percent	Response Count
0 to 1	11.5%	3
2 to 3	34.6%	9
4 to 5	34.6%	9
I know nothing about this service or how it is utilized.	19.2%	5
Comments or questions for Mr. Ruffle (optional)		5
answered question		26
skipped question		0

13. Student Intervention Teams (SIT) are used to initiate a process that identifies students with physical or emotional impediments to learning. The team also engages in problem solving to help remove those impediments. How effective do feel the SIT process has been at USD 349?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Not effective	7.7%	2
Slightly effective	46.2%	12
Moderately effective	38.5%	10
Very effective	7.7%	2
Comments (optional)		12
answered question		26
skipped question		0

14. Generally speaking, how well do you feel you understand the role of a SIT team member?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Not at all	3.8%	1
A little	19.2%	5
Fairly well	46.2%	12
Very well	30.8%	8
Comments (optional)		1
answered question		26
skipped question		0

15. Under most circumstances, would you feel comfortable initiating a SIT team for a student?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	76.9%	20
No	23.1%	6
Comments (optional)		9
answered question		26
skipped question		0

16. How often should a SIT team meet to discuss a child who is experiencing on-going difficulties for which solutions have been hard to identify?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Every two weeks	60.9%	14
Once per quarter	39.1%	9
Once per semester	0.0%	0
Once per year	0.0%	0
Only once	0.0%	0
Comments (optional)		9
answered question		23
skipped question		3

17. Please explain any problems you have with the SIT process and suggest solutions below.

	Response Count
	17
answered question	17
skipped question	9

18. Below is a list of goals identified by members of the USD 349 psychological services program. Rate the program according to how well you feel each goal is addressed (see page 49 for results).

19. The amount of success any psychological services program has in bringing about positive change is directly proportional to the amount of communication between the school, parents, and the community as a whole. Parents and community members must buy into the need for change and be willing to participate. In the box below, please submit ideas that may help USD 349 psychological service providers convince the Stafford community that change is needed.

	Response Count
	13
answered question	13
skipped question	13

20. Do you feel USD 349 has enough resources (i.e. money and psychology professionals) to meet the needs of its students?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	21.7%	5
No	39.1%	9
Not sure	39.1%	9
Comments (optional)		6
answered question		23
skipped question		3

21. Listed below are some psychological service professionals that participate in the administration of psychological services nationwide. Also included is a brief description of the role each plays in providing these services. Suppose you just received a large federal grant allowing you to hire one of the following at USD 349. Which professional would you hire? Give your first and second choice.

	First choice	Second choice	Rating Average	Response Count
Counselor- available daily to provide students with primary care	78.6% (11)	21.4% (3)	1.79	14
School psychologist- in charge of services, provides evaluation, counseling, and research	33.3% (3)	66.7% (6)	1.33	9
Social worker- advocates for children and families in interactions with schools and the courts	33.3% (3)	66.7% (6)	1.33	9
Therapist- provides behavior modifications and counseling	47.1% (8)	52.9% (9)	1.47	17
		Comments (optional)		4
		answered question		25
		skipped question		1

22. Would you like to be a member of a focus group that discusses school psychological services related issues? If so, answer yes below and enter your name on question 1, or send an e-mail to Mr. Rufle.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	12.0%	3
No	88.0%	22
	Comments or questions for Mr. Rufle (optional)	2
	answered question	25
	skipped question	1

APPENDEX C

RESULTS OF OPEN-ENDED TEACHER SURVEY QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Comments and answers to open-ended questions appear in italics below questions. Comments that were repetitive or benign have been omitted.

4. How many times during the school year do you have private conversations with school counselors regarding problems with students?

I usually report any concerns to the students' primary teacher and or the Resource Room teacher.

Special Education and the Counselor Office communicate at IEP meetings and many times throughout the year.

Mostly when other students come to me with a problem that they don't want to go to Mrs. Dickson about it.

I take various concerns to the counselor. I believe the only way to create a better educational climate is to address student's problems as soon as possible.

5. This question pertains to any and every counselor you have worked with at USD 349 over the past two years. Describe the speed at which counselors address the problems you bring to them.

I wish for more follow through...let teacher know a brief run-down of their visit so we know what to look for. Sometimes it is just right. Sometimes they don't really listen to the teacher as to what is really going on.

I know some of the counselors try, but I'm wondering how effective can they really be if they only have a 5 or ten minute conversation with a student once a week?

I've talked with Carl Farrell (family therapist...if you include him as a counselor) about several students regarding behavior and/or ways to get their attention. He has been

extremely helpful with suggestions...and they have been very effective. I've also gone to Kim Volker about little incidents with student attitudes and conflicts.

The counselor works with our troubled students and reacts quickly to new problems that are brought to her attention.

6. This question also pertains to any and every counselor you have worked with at USD 349 over the past two years. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the counselor's suggested solutions to your problems with students?

I think they have a lot more things to deal with than just being a counselor.

I have spent a great deal of time working with the counselor to get help for troubled students.

7. Based upon information you have gathered through verbal and written school communications, and also through your own observations, how well do you feel you understand the responsibilities of the school counselors?

I think they have a lot more things to deal with than just being a counselor.

I have spent a great deal of time working with the counselor to get help for troubled students.

8. Please describe any problems you have in using the school's counseling resources and suggest solutions to them. If you are happy with these resources please explain why.

Sit in on classes where problem behaviors occur regularly.

I do think our counselor is very overworked. I feel that we need more counselors to adequately cover all of the needs of the students.

I have not had any problems with the counseling services.

Time.

Our school counselor and I speak almost daily about dealing with students.

I don't have any problems with the counseling resources. I feel that I can talk to the counselors about things that I hear and know about students and their families. Being in a small community makes it easier.

I feel that I can talk to the counselors about things that I hear and know about students and their families. Being in a small community makes it easier.

I am happy with the resources as I always get a timely response and/or suggestions.

Yes, good material but can only get when the door is open.

I would imagine that with the amount of time they have, they do a pretty good job. so many things are not to be shared. Sometimes, we are out in right field and it would help if a few things were known rather than not. It is possible to understand a student a little bit better if you know some of the unknowns.

For the most part I think our school counselor does a great job. There are times when I don't feel like the suggestions are working or that follow up is not carried out. I think our counselor does a great job with juniors and seniors pushing them in the right decision making skills such as colleges and job shadowing.

Over all I am very pleased with our counselors. I have dealt with one of them many of times and felt that she did a great job. Sometimes I feel there

isn't enough hours in the day for her to get to all the kids. She needs someone to do the paper work for her since we have so many kids at our school that need her help.

No problems.

[Counselor's name] being here half the time is a problem. I think it is a problem for her and the staff.

Overall, they do a good job. However, there are times when I feel they involve themselves in situations that don't SEEM to need involvement.

Also, sometimes threats are made that are inappropriate or not carried through.

Sometimes the reactions to my suggestions were like they thought I had no idea of what I was talking about.

I think that all of them are doing their best, but I do not think that there is enough time in the day for everything.

My question is, if you aren't seeing any results with the counselor and everyone you talk to for advice tells you to go to the school counselor, then who do you go to?

The only resource I have some philosophical differences with is the gifted program and the number of students in the program.

The counselor has responded rapidly whenever I have had a question, suggestion, or concern.

Some of the problems students are having could be solved easier by being informed.

The main problem is that she is not available on Mon., Tues., and Fri. afternoon.

They are very helpful when you need anything and very willing to find out the information that you need.

This counselor has done a much better job of meeting students' needs than the previous counselor. I have never had a problem with the counselor.

I don [sic] think that there is enough time in the day for everything.

Resources???

9. If you were the administrator in charge of USD 349, what would you do to improve the counseling services? Consider all possibilities and list your suggestions below.

More training for staff in dealing with behavior problem children.

I would have a counselor for career and academics and than a different one for personal and family situations.

Not have the counselor take on discipline issues . . .

Give the high school counselor more time!! The counselor should NOT be handling discipline problems.

I pass on this one.

Nothing that I can think of.

I suppose if funding was available allow the counselor to work more with students in need.

Make them more available.

First, I am not sure how much students use the counseling resources. The method of counseling is when the student knows they have a problem.

They are then willing to share all information because of trust. I can't really answer this because of my first year here and because of the principal being new.

Be on top of failing students sooner. (Before the students feel hopeless.)

Either less paper work or someone to help her with it.

I hope administrators are better trained and educated than I am in this matter. Therefore, I do not feel qualified to offer suggestions.

I would bring [counselor's name] back to Stafford full-time. Maybe she could pick up some of the P.E. classes again. That way she is always in the building when she is needed.

Do parents know what resources we have?

Possibly find more outside resources to utilize to lessen the load of the counselors.

Scheduling parent involvement with discipline.

I have worked with two counselors. The difference in the work ethic of both dictated the effectiveness of the counselor office.

One is not to overload the counselor with other duties. Administration must pull their load and not just dump it on the counselor.

I would have her here 5 days a week all day long!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

10. School psychologists have a role that is closely related to that of school counselors but is traditionally quite different in regards to responsibilities. How familiar are you with the responsibilities of the school psychologist that serves USD 349?

The school psychologist is a member of the special education team, a valued source of information concerning the students, families, and community.

I haven't had many encounters with [psychologist's name] (I believe he is the school psych.). The only thing I know that he does is to help run test for qualifications for special education.

I only see the psychologist during IEP meetings.

11. If the USD 349 school psychologist had more time in the building, how would you like to see this time spent?

the students in the classroom . . .

Being available when a situation arises . . .

Communication with the parents.

A home-school intervention is necessary if the student is going to make progress.

Meeting with students and parents of repeat behavior problem children regularly.

I would like more contact with the teachers.

With kids, not paperwork.

Working with the many identified troubled students—mostly everyone.

Strategies to help the students in need. Follow-up time and perhaps more frequent meetings and/or contacts between IEPs.

Needs to really get to know the students instead of telling us what to do after giving them a test for just 15 minutes. and then is an authority. Needs to ask questions of teachers and really listen to what we have to say.

Having an open door so that when students need to visit, it is now and not later.

I'm not that familiar with what he does, but I think any one on one student time would be valuable. Many of our families cannot afford services outside the school, so a school psychologist is very valuable for our students and their families.

Helping our many students who have no support structure at home.

Parent and family sessions.

12. USD 349 provides a licensed family therapist one day per week to both counsel and provide behavioral modification therapy to students. How many days per week do feel this service is needed?

We have so many kids with so many issues that I feel we should have someone available either full time or close to it. The decline of the family structure and the unwillingness of parents to take responsibility for their children are things that have affected Stafford in a huge way. Because of this, I think we can use all the help we can get in this area.

Lots of need probably not used enough

Provided the student is actually benefiting from the therapy, I would think a child would need to be seen at least 2 times a week in the beginning for real behavior modification to work.

Does this seem to meet the needs of the students?

All this is news to me!!!

13. Student Intervention Teams (SIT) are used to initiate a process that identifies students with physical or emotional impediments to learning. The team also engages in problem solving to help remove those impediments. How effective do feel the SIT process has been at USD 349?

The past four years there has not been an active SIT team!! . . .

I feel that there is [sic] students that need to be review by a SIT team and are not being reviewed.

I have not been involved or discussed the SIT.

There again, sometimes the whole thing is taken out of the teachers hand and teachers are not really listened to. Parents need more of an opportunity to share instead of listening to the team talk among themselves. More time to really explain what the team is talking about.

I think some things have happened this year that were not taken care of like they should have been. . .

. . . I have not seen a SIT team meeting called in several years.

I don't think I've been in one SIT team meeting this year. . .

I think the younger they can be identify problems the better.

I understand the idea behind having a SIT team, but kids are products of their environments. . .

I know a student that has needed a SIT for 2 years and the counselor keeps dropping the ball. . .

I think we need more of them sometimes. . .

The SIT team worked hard for several years. However, the past two years, it has not followed the guidelines set by the state for its implementation. . .

14. Generally speaking, how well do you feel you understand the role of a SIT team member?

I have been a member of the SIT team since its inception at SHS.

15. Under most circumstances, would you feel comfortable initiating a SIT team for a student?

Need more information about SIT.

I don't even know who is on the SIT Team. No one has recommended a student in several years and many of the original teachers on the team no longer work at Stafford.

I am not sure what all their responsibilities are.

I would serve on a SIT team, but I do not feel it is my place to initiate it.

I'm all about doing everything we can to help kids. However, I must go back to the whole environment thing. That is just so difficult to overcome.

I wouldn't have a clue how to do that.

In my position, I deal with the students referred, recommended, then evaluated. I'm not in daily contact with the general education population.

I have initiated several SIT teams for students in previous years.

16. How often should a SIT team meet to discuss a child who is experiencing on-going difficulties for which solutions have been hard to identify?

The parents and students have to take the primary responsibility.

Depends on the student and the situation. It can become as burden if we would meet too often.

Unless I don't know what a SIT team is, it should meet as often as necessary.

Depends on the student and how often they need to be re-evaluated.

Our teachers are so busy with their teaching---I don't know how they get this all worked in.

Don't overdo it, but meet often enough that the team is "up to snuff."

As needed, but teachers are under time constraints also and they should be compensated for their time and efforts.

Unless you find out that you need to meet sooner.

Students need a group of teachers who care about him/her to keep the student on track.

17. Please explain any problems you have with the SIT process and suggest solutions below.

The SIT team is comprised of overworked and underpaid teachers. Time is a factor. The team means well—then sort of forgets about the situations.

Our school district has not been using it. We need to get back to the correct process.

Time

I understand that there has been 4 students referred to the SIT team this year and nothing has been done. . .

If you really have a problem, nothing can really be done for months the way it is written now.

When we used to have SIT team meetings I always felt like there was not enough follow up.

I think it should start younger.

Carry through; a procedure for checking on the student.

The past two principals have not understood how the SIT team is to work and haven't had the necessary meetings to implement plans for students.

20. Do you feel USD 349 has enough resources (i.e. money and psychology professionals) to meet the needs of its students?

I have neither the experience nor the direct contact to make that judgment.

But, people don't want to admit to having a problem. So if there was more, would they use it? Right now our problem is home.

With the situations we have here, there can always be more services available as long as funding is available.

I think the number of students who have emotional problems is increasing. That means we need more professionals to meet those needs.

Since we have the highest population of special needs students in the state, we do not have enough time or resources to handle all of their needs on a daily basis.

21. Listed below are some psychological service professionals that participate in the administration of psychological services nationwide. Also included is a brief description of the role each plays in providing these services. Suppose you just received a large federal grant allowing you to hire one of the following at USD 349. Which professional would you hire? Give your first and second choice.

All of these services would be valuable in our district, but you only gave me two choices.

With sufficient monies I would cover all these bases.

I don't have a good feeling about social workers.

I think it is extremely important to have someone here every day that is available to talk with students. I would love to see [counselor's name] here every day. It is nice the days

she is here to send students over to her when they are having a bad day for whatever reason. They have been many times when a student has something troubling them and I'm not able to talk one on one with them to help them out. Students here have SOOOO many things going on in their life outside of school and they need someone that they can trust that will be there for them when they need them. It breaks my heart when a student comes to me needing to talk with [counselor's name] (or someone) and I have to ask them if they can wait for another day or 2 when [counselor's name] is here.

A counselor is vital to all students, but a trained therapist, who could help students understand that their behavior needs help, would be a great asset.

APPENDIX D

PROGRAM GOALS IDENTIFIED BY PROGRAM STAKEHOLDERS

1. Adverse effects of negative playground environments are reduced.
2. Adverse effects of negative classroom environments are reduced.
3. Adverse effects of negative home and family environments are reduced.
4. Bullying is reduced
5. Each student has a career plan.
6. Student anger issues are reduced.
7. Student aggression is reduced.
8. Student depression is reduced.
9. Poor social skill development is reduced.
10. Adverse effects of abuse are reduced.
11. Students have access to appropriate mental health care.
12. Students feel safe within the school environment.
13. Interpersonal relationships between students are positive.
14. Students have resources to assist them in making decisions.
15. Students respect their community.
16. Students respect each other.
17. Students handle disputes without violence.
18. Student drug/alcohol abuse is reduced.
19. Peer pressure to smoke is reduced.
20. Parents learn effective parenting skills.