


*Resilience, School
Connectedness, and
Academic Achievement*

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Oakland, CA



Why Resilience Matters

Resilience is...

The capacity for
healthy
development
and successful
learning in spite
of challenges.



The **BIG** Research Question for Closing the Achievement Gap:

“What are the key factors that promote
academic success among students whose
demographic characteristics and school
circumstances place them at high risk of
failure?”

-Theresa Akey
MDRC
January 2006

Resilience Research

Longitudinal developmental studies of how children and youth have transformed risk and adversity into positive youth development and school and life success.



50 Years of Resilience Research Tells Us That:

...When the focus is on supporting & empowering young people, over 70% of young people in the most challenging of life's conditions not only survive but grow into thriving adults.





Stories of Resilience...

Findings from Resilience Research

RISK ≠ OUTCOME

"Our findings and those by other American and European investigators with a life-span perspective suggest that these buffers (protective factors) make a more profound impact on the life course of children who grow up under adverse conditions than do specific risk factors or stressful life events. They appear to transcend ethnic, social class, geographical and historical boundaries."

-Emmy Werner & Ruth Smith

BEHAVIOR ≠ CAPACITY

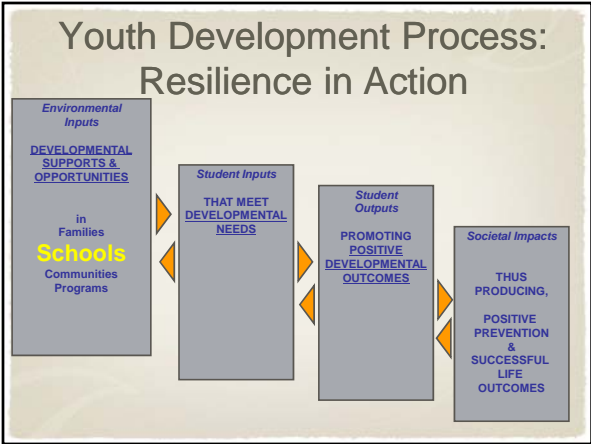
"Most of all, they offer us a more optimistic outlook than the perspective that can be gleaned from the literature on the negative consequences of perinatal trauma, care-giving deficits, and chronic poverty. They provide us with a corrective lens--an awareness of the self-righting tendencies that move children toward normal adult development under all but the most persistent adverse circumstances."

More Findings from Resilience Research

PERSONAL STRENGTHS

associated with healthy and successful outcomes

ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS & promoting development of personal strengths

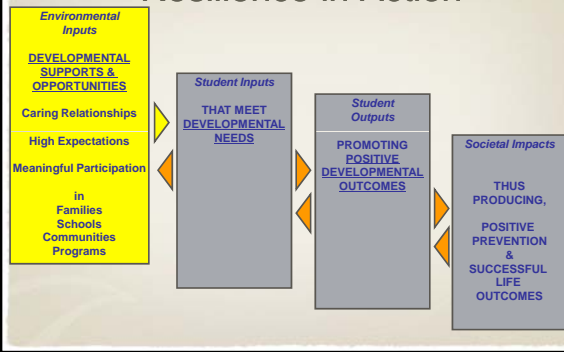


The Power of Schools

“A school can create a coherent environment, a climate, more potent than any single influence—teachers, class, family, neighborhood, so potent that for at least six hours a day it can override almost everything else in the lives of children.”

-Ron Edmonds
1986

Youth Development Process: Resilience in Action



Protective Factors Critical to Healthy Development & Life Success


CARING RELATIONSHIPS

- “Being there”
- Models caring
- Showing interest in
- Getting to know
- Compassion
- Listening/Dialogue
- Patience
- Basic trust/safe

Power of Modeling

What we **DO** speaks so loudly that what we say cannot be heard.

- James Baldwin



Protective Factors Critical to Healthy Development & Life Success

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HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Belief in youth resilience
Respect & confirmation
Challenge & support
Firm guidance
Structure/rituals
Strengths-focused
Reframing
Teaches personal resilience

Reframing: Risk to Resilience

DEFICITS	STRENGTHS
Hyperactive	_____
Impulsive	_____
Stubborn	_____
Willful	_____
Tests Limits	_____
Explosive	_____
Defiant	_____
Angry	_____
Withdrawn	_____
Aggressive	_____
Victim	_____

Teaching Personal Resilience

Helping our youth understand resilience as their personal power to see themselves and their lives in new ways.



Teaching Personal Resilience Means Challenging the 4 P's*

- ❖ Personal *"This isn't your fault."*
- ❖ Pervasive *"There are good things."*
- ❖ Permanent *"This too, shall pass."*
- ❖ Prompt *"Have patience and trust the process."*

*Adapted from Martin Seligman, *Learned Optimism*

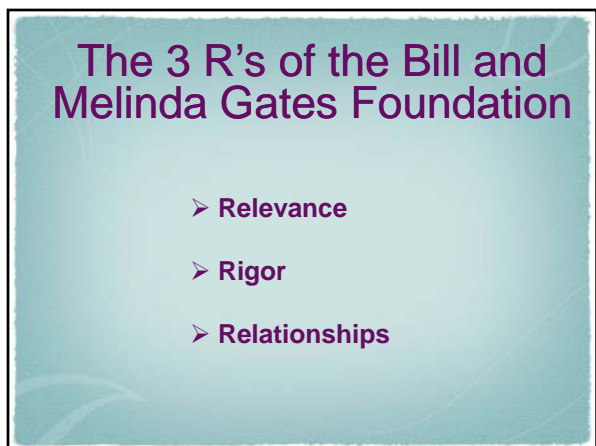
Teaching Personal Resilience: Developing an Intelligence Mindset

- ❖ All children develop a belief about their own intelligence
- ❖ A group of 7th graders who had been taught that the brain can grow (smarter) had significantly better math grades than those 7th grade students who had been trained in good study skills but believed they were as smart as they were going to be.

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success; Carol Dweck; 2007







Literature on High Performing Learning Communities

- Strong connections between students and staff.
- A set of high expectations and a rigorous curriculum to support it.
- A variety of instructional strategies that engage students and connect them to real-world applications.
- Leadership and a school culture that is mission-driven and focused on helping all students learn.
- A professional community of faculty and other staff that focuses on teaching and learning and building capacity to close the achievement gap.
- Additional supports for students who need them.

-Catherine Walcott, et al
High School Reform: National & State Trends, WestEd 2005

Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn

- ❖ Personalization of school experience
- ❖ High & clear standards
- ❖ Meaningful and engaging pedagogy & curriculum
- ❖ Professional learning communities for adults

National Research Council Institute of Medicine
National Academy of Science, 2004

Consortium on Chicago School Research

Relational trust consists of...

Caring	among	Students
Respect		Teachers
Competence		Administrators
Integrity		Parents

Promotes academic achievement

Schools with high trust levels are 3x more likely to report gains in reading & math scores.

Schools in top quartile on standardized tests had higher levels of trust.

"This is about **NOT** forgetting the people."
-Anthony Bryk & Barbara Schneider 2002

School Context, Student Attitudes & Behavior, and Academic Achievement



"The findings make clear supportive teachers and clear and high expectations about behavior are key to the development of both student engagement and perceived competence....The study also makes the case that student engagement is enhanced by learning activities that involve student to student interaction."

Teresa Akey
MDRC, Jan. 2006

Developmental Supports & Opportunities

Moving  From Risk To Resilience in all aspects of schooling

- Relationships between & among teachers, students, parents community partners
- Teacher behavior and attitudes
- Physical Environment
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Grouping
- Evaluation
- Learning Motivation
- Discipline

Rhona Weinstein, adapted by Bonnie Benard

A Simple Wisdom...

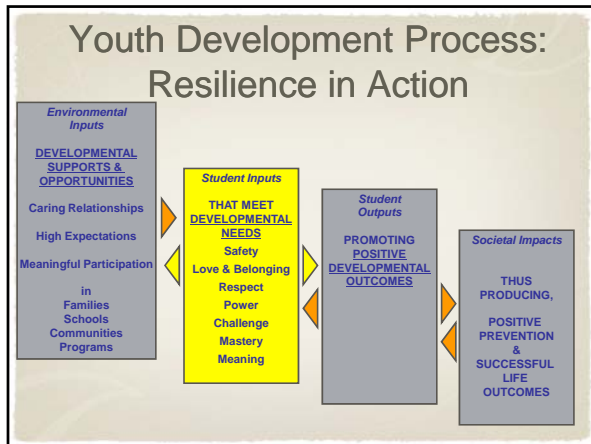
At a time when the traditional structures of caring have deteriorated, schools must become places where teachers and students live together, talk with each other, take delight in each other's company. My guess is that

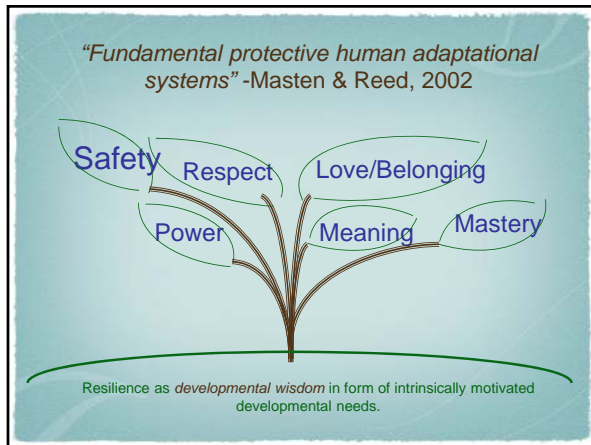


when schools focus on what really matters in life, the cognitive ends we now pursue so painfully and artificially will be achieved somewhat more naturally...

It is obvious that children will work harder and do things -- even odd things like adding fractions -- for people they love and trust.

Nel Noddings, 1988





Brain Science finds...

“Downshifted” Thinking	“Self-Efficacious” Thinking
When children feel threatened by their environments they often “downshift” their thinking to fight or flight stress responses & cannot access higher order thinking & learning.	When children experience environments that engage their sense of “self-efficacy” (i.e. innate resilience) they activate their higher-order thinking & learning & creativity.
-Renate & Geoffrey Caine <i>Education on the Edge of Possibility (1997)</i>	

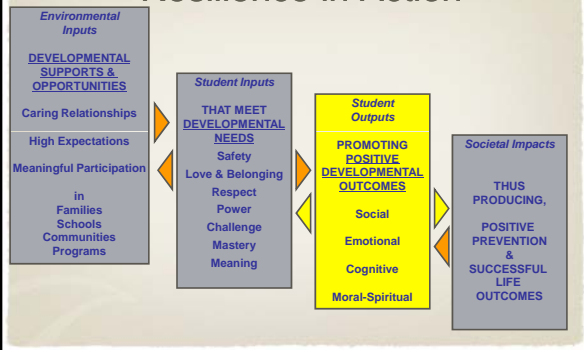
Big Question for Youth Development Practice:

"How are we meeting our students' needs?"



- Safety
- Love
- Belonging
- Respect
- Mastery
- Challenge
- Power
- Meaning

Youth Development Process: Resilience in Action



Healthy Development of the Whole Child



Healthy Development of the Whole Child

If stakeholders believe schools are responsible for developing the whole child, what needs to change?

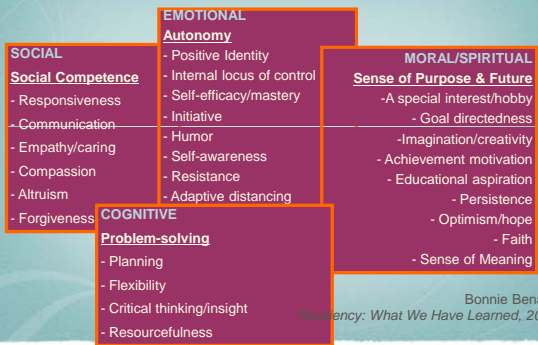
If decisions about programs started with "What works for the child?" how would resources - time, space, and human - be arrayed to ensure each child's success?

What would happen if community resources were arrayed in support of children reaching their potential as young adults?

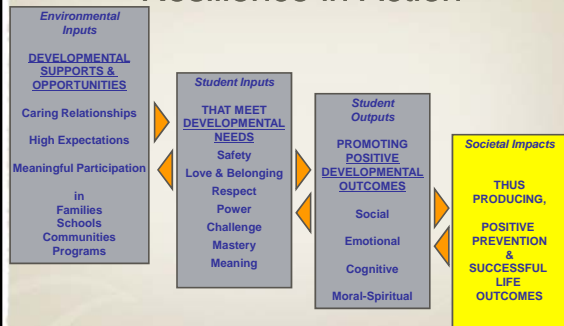
If students were truly at the center of the system, what could be achieved?

Gene Carter
ASCD Commission on the Whole Child, 2006

Personal Resilience Strengths: What Resilience Looks Like



Youth Development Process: Resilience in Action



Prevention & Education Outcomes

**Protecting Adolescents from Harm:
Findings from the *National Longitudinal
Study on Adolescent Health***

Parent/family connectedness and
perceived **school connectedness**
were protective against every
health risk behavior measure.

Michael Resnick, et al. 1997

Prevention & Education Outcomes

**School Connectedness
Constructs**

- Academic engagement
- Belonging
- Discipline/fairness
- Extracurricular activities
- Likes school
- Student voice
- Peer relations
- Safety
- Teacher Support

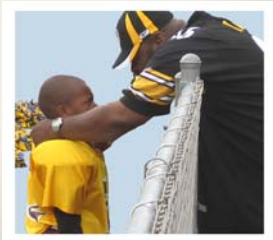
"Whether examining academic performance or involvement with a range of health behaviors, young people who feel connected to school, that they belong, and that teachers are supportive and treat them fairly, do better."

*Heather Libby,
Journal of School Health, Sept. 2004*

Prevention & Education Outcomes

***Findings from the Resilience & Youth
Development Module of the California
Healthy Kids Survey***

High levels of
perceived protective
factors in schools are
associated with lower
levels of involvement in
health risk behaviors.



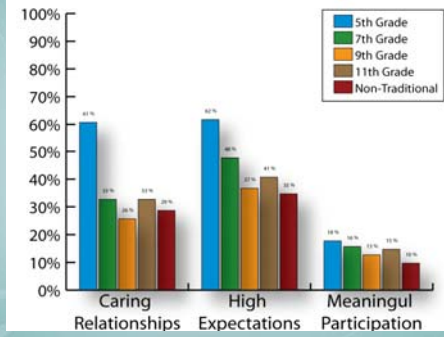
Prevention & Education Outcomes

Findings from the Resilience & Youth Development Module of the California Healthy Kids Survey

STAR test scores increased more in schools where students reported high levels of Caring Relationships at school, High Expectations at school, & Meaningful Participation in the community.



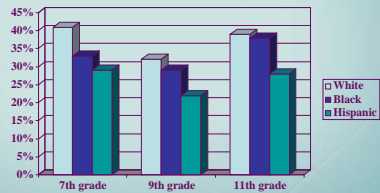
Developmental Supports & Opportunities in School Environments Across CA



*Data drawn from 2004-2006 CHKS weighted aggregate. www.wested.org/chks

Closing the Achievement Gap Means Closing the Protective Factor Gap: Caring Relationships

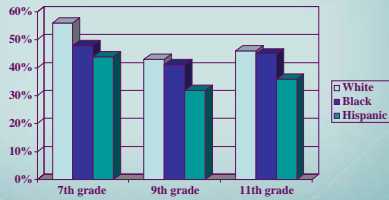
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult...
 ...who really cares about me.
 ...who listens when I have something to say.
 ...who notices when I'm not there.



2004-2006 weighted CHKS data
 700,000 students

Closing the Achievement Gap Means Closing the Protective Factor Gap: High Expectations

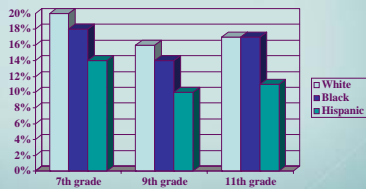
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult...
 ...who always want me to do my best.
 ...who tells me when I do a good job.
 ...who believes that I will be a success.



2004-2006 weighted CHKS data
 700,000 students

Closing the Achievement Gap Means Closing the Protective Factor Gap: Meaningful Participation

At my school...
 ...I do interesting activities.
 ...I help decide things like class rules and activities.
 ...I do things that make a difference.



2004-2006 weighted CHKS data
 700,000 students

Implications for Ed. Policy & Practice It's How We Do What We Do



Protective factors must be at the heart of schooling if we are to truly promote healthy development and school & life success.

Looking at Systems

When there's improvement, it usually isn't that the services per se were different, it's about a change in the person who delivered the service, and the way they delivered it. It became clear systems change meant changing the interactions between people in all the systems...a very different and difficult agenda.

Annie E. Casey Foundation, Don Crary,
The Key Insight, The Eye of the Storm: Ten Years on the Front Lines of New Futures

Looking at Systems

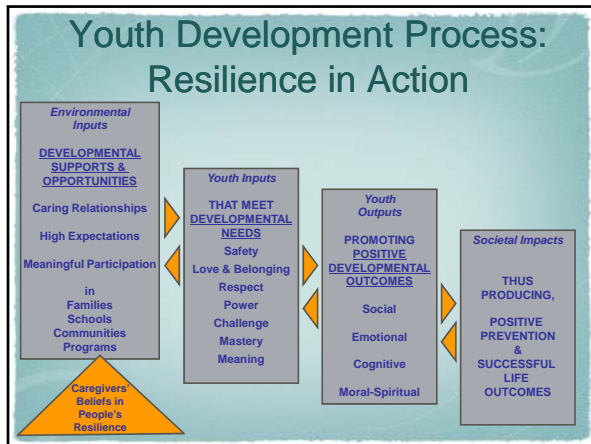
Moving to a resiliency approach requires a personal transformation of vision...the lens through which we see our world. To make systemic changes...depends on changing hearts and minds.

-Bonnie Benard, 1993

Implications for Ed. Policy & Practice Closing the Achievement Gap Starts with Educators' Beliefs




Reflection: How does an understanding of resiliency theory and practice help you see yourself, your colleagues, and your students in a new way?



Resilience Belief

"In every child who is born, under no matter what circumstances and of no matter what parents, the potentiality of the human race is born again."



James Agee
Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, 1935

The Achievement Gap

"Teachers' perceptions, expectations, and behaviors interact with students' beliefs, behaviors, and work habits in ways that help to perpetuate the Black-White test score gap."

-Ronald F. Ferguson

**Teachers' Belief:
Missing Ingredient in School Reform**

We contend that something is missing in recipes for urban reform: an underlying belief that all children can succeed and that it is the schools' responsibility to ensure that this happens....Some educators say "all children can succeed - if they make an effort"; others say "all children can succeed - if only the parents would help"; and still others, fewer in number, assert "all children can succeed - and it's my job to make sure they do...." This [last] philosophy must infuse all efforts to improve urban education.

-Wilson & Corbett
2001

**Beliefs:
Point of Intervention for Professional Development**

To restructure we must first look deeply at the goals that we set for our children and the beliefs that we have about them. Once we are on the right track there, then we must turn our attention to the delivery systems, as we have begun to do.

*Untracking is right. Mainstreaming is right.
Decentralization is right. Cooperative learning is right.
Technology access for all is right. Multiculturalism is right.*

But none of these approaches or strategies will mean anything if the fundamental belief system does not fit the new structures that are being created.

-Asa Hilliard III
1991

**Leadership Belief:
Key to Systems Change**

"...Hope, optimism, and self-belief among teachers are the vital wellsprings of successful learning and positive educational change... It is individuals who must hope, but it is institutions that create the climate and conditions which make people feel more hopeful or less so."

Michael Fullan, 1998



Resilience in Action Begins by Listening to Students

“Educational change, above all, is a people-related phenomenon for each and every individual. Students, even little ones, are people too. Unless they have some meaningful (to them) role in the enterprise, most educational change, indeed most education, will fail.

I ask the reader not to think of students as running the school but to entertain the following questions: What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered in the introduction and implementation of reform in school?”

-Michael Fullan, 1991

Youth as Partners

“We the children are experts on being 8, 12, or 17 years old in the societies of today....To consult us would make your work more effective and give better results for children. My proposal is that you make us part of your team.”

-Heidi Grande, 17
A Norwegian delegate to the Special Session on Children United Nations, May 2002

