



Community Schools: A Rationale and Results Framework

Research Rationale

Creating the six conditions for learning creates positive results for students, families, and communities. When schools work together with families and the community, young people have the resources and opportunities they need to succeed academically, physically, socially and emotionally. In addition, these conditions also build safe and supportive communities. The community schools framework, in short, ensures that students and their communities succeed.

Exhibit 1 (pictured below) lists the conditions for learning and the results they should create. Indicators used to measure whether the results are being met are shown on the far right-hand column of the chart. The next section of this report briefly explains and provides the research background for these indicators. Indicators are categorized into the six results that stem from the six conditions for learning, as listed below.

CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING	RESULTS	INDICATORS
Early childhood development is fostered through high-quality, comprehensive programs that nurture learning and development.	Children Are Ready To Enter School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Immunization rates ♦ Blood lead levels ♦ Parents read to children* ♦ Children attend early childhood programs* ♦ Receptive vocabulary level ♦ Families connected to support networks/services
The school has a core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students.	Students Succeed Academically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Standardized test scores ♦ Students demonstrate competencies via multiple modes ♦ Graduation rates ♦ Dropout rates ♦ Teacher attendance rates
Students are motivated and engaged in learning—both in school and in community settings, during and after school.	Students Are Actively Involved in Learning and the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Attendance rates ♦ Suspension rates ♦ Truancy rates ♦ Students reporting feeling connected to the school* ♦ Percent of students engaged in and contributing to community* ♦ Homework completion rates*
The basic physical, social, emotional, and economic needs of young people and their families are met.	Students Are Healthy Physically, Socially, and Emotionally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Percent of students demonstrating social and personal competencies* ♦ Percent of students demonstrating well-being on a range of health indices (e.g., immunizations, obesity, vision, hearing, asthma, STDs, pregnancy, substance abuse)* ♦ Students have access to good nutrition*
There is mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents, families, and school staff.	Students Live and Learn in Stable and Supportive Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Percent of families whose basic needs are met* ♦ Student mobility rates ♦ Percent of students reporting relationship with caring adults* ♦ Incidence of bullying* ♦ Incidence of school vandalism*
The community is engaged in the school and promotes a school climate that is safe, supportive, and respectful and that connects students to a broader learning community.	Families Are Actively Involved in Children's Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Percent of families who report involvement with children's education* ♦ Percent of families who participate in parent teacher conferences* ♦ Percent of families who report positive interactions with school* ♦ Percent of teachers who report positive interaction with families*
	Communities Are Desirable Places to Live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Employment/employability rates* ♦ Rate of participation in adult education programs* ♦ Rate of participation at school events* ♦ Percent of residents with health insurance ♦ Neighborhood crime rates



Result: Children are Ready to Enter School

Indicator: Immunization rates

Immunizations protect children from vaccine-preventable diseases that can cause students to be absent from school and limit children's ability to achieve academically.¹

The measles epidemic of the early 1990s, for example would have been preventable with more widespread immunization of children in the U.S. A 1992 report of the National Vaccine Advisory Committee pointed out that the majority of the cases of measles occurred among un-immunized preschool children who came primarily from minority communities in inner cities [15]. That report indicated that the principal cause of this rise in childhood measles was that children had not received immunizations on time.²

Indicator: Blood lead levels

Elevated levels of lead in the blood adversely affect children's cognitive development. Data from the Centers for Disease Control show that the average blood lead levels in children have decreased eighty percent since the late 1970s. While many of the sources of lead contaminants are no longer used in new constructions, the primary remaining sources of childhood lead exposure are deteriorated leaded paint and the soil and dust it contaminates in old housing. Elevated blood lead levels have remained more common among low-income children, urban children, and children living in older housing. The CDC recommends local screening efforts to determine blood lead levels of children in given communities.³

Indicator: Parents read to children

Children who live in homes where reading and writing are common and valued tend to develop literacy skills with more ease than children who do not. Children especially benefit when parents read to them at an early age. The Child Trends Data Bank summarizes the benefits of reading to young children in this way: "By reading aloud to their young children, parents can help them acquire the prerequisite skills they will need to learn to read in school. Being read to has been identified as a source of children's early literacy development, including knowledge about the alphabet, print, and characteristics of written language. In addition, shared parent-child book reading during children's preschool years leads to higher reading achievement in elementary school."⁴

¹ "School Readiness: Helping Communities Get Children Ready for School and Schools Ready for Children," www.childtrends.org

² "Healthy Children Ready to Learn: An Essential Collaboration between Health and Education," Antonia C. Novello, Christopher Degraw, and Dushanka V. Kleinman; *Public Health Reports*, Vol. 107, 1992, www.questia.com

³ "Blood Lead Levels in Young Children --- United States and Selected States, 1996—1999," *MMWR Weekly*, December 22, 2000, Centers for Disease Control, on www.cdc.gov

⁴ Child Trends cites Catherine E. Snow, M. Susan Burns, and Peg Griffin (Eds.) *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, National Research Council; in "Parsing the Achievement Gap: Baselines for Tracking Progress," Paul Barton, *Policy Information Report*, Educational Testing Service, on www.ets.org



Low-income and immigrant households may face significant challenges to exposing children to literacy.⁵ In low-income or homes of recent non-English speaking immigrants, families may not be able to afford books, not have time to read to children, or parents may not be proficient English readers themselves.

Indicator: Children attend early childhood programs

Early education is an important contributor to children's readiness to learn in schools. Research shows that children's brains develop rapidly before age three, significant support for the position that very young children need education rather than only custodial care. High quality early education programs have produced short-term gains in cognitive functioning and longer-term gains in school achievement and social adjustment, research has shown. Studies by the University of Wisconsin and the Rand Institute indicate that early interventions produced significant positive results, especially among disadvantaged children. Such results included, improved school achievement, lower grade retention, fewer special education courses, and reduced crime. The positive effects of developmental preschool last into adulthood, according to a 2001 report of the Chicago Child-Parent Center. The study, which focused on low-income, mostly African-American children, found that compared with similar children who had not participated in the preschool curriculum, participants had higher educational attainment up to age twenty. Participants also stayed in school slightly longer and were more likely to graduate from high school.⁶

Indicator: Receptive vocabulary level

The preschool years are a time of rapid brain growth and cognitive development. An essential part of this period is to lay the foundation for vocabulary knowledge and development. Research has shown that possessing a strong vocabulary is an important component of effective communication, and plays a vital role in reading comprehension.⁷ The words that a child knows by the time he begins literacy education in primary school are a significant indicator of the level of success that he will have when learning to read.

Hart and Risley's seminal study found that children enter school with significant differences in vocabulary level. These differences were directly correlated with children's economic class and were found to be accurate predictors of a child's level of literacy later in life.

Indicator: Families are connected to support networks & services

Within neighborhoods, families support one another and are supported in a variety of ways. Neighborhoods develop their own social capital by the informal networks by which families look out for one another and work together toward common goals such as health and public safety.

⁵ "School Readiness," www.childtrends.org

⁶ "A Summary of the Research Rationale for *Making Connections*' Outcomes and Indicators," *Making Connections*, August, 2003, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, www.aecf.org

⁷ "Expressive and Receptive Vocabulary Skills Related to Story Comprehension in Preschool Children," Stephanie Glasney, *NICHD study*, 2000, <http://dscholarhsip.lib.fsu.edu>



Formal services join these informal networks to promote family well-being. Health services are one such example necessary to children's and families' health and well-being. Research indicates that women in low-income neighborhoods have less access to prenatal and neonatal care, accounting for the significantly greater rates of infant mortality and lower infant birth weights in lower-income communities. Physical inaccessibility and inability to pay for treatment are primary reasons why low-income families do not receive the medical care that they need. A recent study by the Open Society Institute found that low-income Maryland residents are accumulating deep debt from medical treatment; to cope, residents are delaying medical treatment or denying themselves continual care. Other studies support this conclusion⁸

Childcare services are another of the many support services important to families' success. A large pool of research has linked childcare services to employment outcomes. A recent survey of low-income Los Angeles parents identified childcare as the most frequent barrier to employment. Over sixty percent of parents surveyed identified childcare services as an important priority for helping them to remain economically self-sufficient. Yet, due to supply and to cost factors, working parents had a difficult time obtaining quality childcare. Poor families, those earning less than \$14,000 per year, spend an average of twenty-five percent of their income on childcare, according to the Census Bureau. In 1997, the government estimated the proportion of eligible low-income children receiving federal childcare subsidies at roughly ten percent; most preschool and early education remains privately funded, however.⁹

Result: Students Succeed in School

Indicator: Standardized test scores

Standardized test scores measure a student's academic performance against that of a normed group. By demonstrating what a student knows, standardized tests can indicate the successfulness of a school's curriculum. While high scores point to academic achievement, standardized test scores measure only a limited range of knowledge; also, such scores do not project a student's academic potential.

Standardized tests measure a students' mastery of the basic skills needed for academic success. This is not to say that standardized tests are the most precise tools to measure all that a student has accomplished in school or how he/she will perform academically in the future. Another limit of such tests is that they do not measure social and other non-academic competencies which attribute to a student's long-term success.

⁸ "Summary of Research Rationale," *Making Connections*

⁹ Ibid



Indicator: Students demonstrate competencies through multiple modes

Standardized tests measure only a limited range of students' knowledge. Through such alternative assessment systems as student portfolios and long-term interdisciplinary projects, students demonstrate a broader depth of knowledge than that which they could show on a standardized exam. Using alternative assessment systems, educators can monitor what students learn via their multiple intelligences. Portfolio-based assessment, for example, allows students to demonstrate their personal, civic, emotional, social, and intellectual growth, as well as academic learning.¹⁰

Indicator: Graduation rates

Graduation rates indicate academic success, as they mean that students have sufficiently mastered K-12 curriculum to move on from grade 12. Attainment of a high school diploma is a significant indicator of success later in life, especially among poor and minority students. High school graduates have been shown to attain higher rates of employment and higher earnings than those who did not complete high school.¹¹

Indicator: Drop-out rates

Research has shown that high school dropouts have higher unemployment rates and lower earnings than high school graduates.¹²

Indicator: Teacher attendance rates

In a 1998 study of student academic performance based on attendance, the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) found that,

students attending classes with high teacher attendance rates scored an average of two to three NCE (normal curve equivalent) points higher than students attending classes with low teacher attendance rates Although students attending classes with high teacher attendance rates scored significantly higher in Reading, Mathematics and Language compared to students attending classes with low teacher attendance rates, the strength of association (correlation) was quite low between teacher attendance rate and student performance on the Stanford 9.

Student attendance rates, especially when paired with teacher attendance rates, were found to be a more accurate predictor of students' academic success than teacher attendance rates alone.¹³

¹⁰ The Rural School and Community Trust, 2003.

¹¹ Peng, 1985, in "Paths to High School Graduation or Dropout: A Longitudinal Study of a First-Grade Cohort," Margaret E. Ensminger and Anita L. Slusarcick, *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Apr., 1992), pp. 95-113

¹² Ibid

¹³ <http://tusdstats.tusd.k12.az.us/planning/resources/document/aa/att97.htm>



Result: Students are Actively Involved in Learning

Indicator: Attendance rates

Students who attend class regularly achieve higher academic results than those who do not. The 1998 TUSD study again demonstrates this fact, finding that students with higher attendance rates achieved significantly higher scores on Stanford 9 achievement exams than students who were absent more often.¹⁴

Indicator: Truancy rates

When students are not in school, they are not learning and will likely not achieve academically. When they are out for too long, students fall behind in their studies; and, if they are out long enough, they may never be able to "catch up". Chronic absences signal disengagement from school and further distance students from school.

According to a Colorado Foundation for Families and Children report, chronic truancy leads to "further disengagement from school, from teachers, and ultimately lead to serious anti-social behavior like juvenile delinquency."¹⁵ The report goes on to explain, "the cycle begins with early truant behavior that leads to later school suspensions, expulsions, and delinquency. Unexcused absence is our first, best symptom of student problems that lead to poor outcomes. If we are to re-engage students, the trajectory that begins with truancy (office referral, suspension, expulsion, dropout, and delinquency) must be broken. Schools must be more aggressive in their efforts to curb and eliminate truancy as the first step in breaking this cycle."¹⁶

Indicator: Suspension rates

Suspension rates account for a significant percentage of students absent from school everyday. Suspension, however, perpetuates a cycle of truancy and exclusion that can hinder student success. The Colorado Foundation for Families and Children study explains that,

schools typically discipline students' misbehavior by excluding them. This sends a message to students, who are often already struggling, that they are in fact not wanted. This "push out" model of discipline tends to make a bad situation worse. Clearly, if students are a threat to others they need to be isolated, but students who exhibit threatening behavior make up only a small fraction of the out of school youth population. Today over 20% of school suspensions across Colorado are for truant behavior (Colorado Foundation for Families and Children, 2002). Sending a student home for not coming to school provides little or no intervention to the underlying causes of the absences and is counterproductive to the educational process. A predictable negative cycle of behavior is becoming very clear and requires immediate attention. The cycle begins with early truant behavior that leads to later school suspensions, expulsions, and delinquency.¹⁷

¹⁴ see figure 2, <http://tusdstats.tusd.k12.az.us/planning/resources/document/aa/att97.htm>

¹⁵ <http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/26.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://www.schoolengagement.org>

¹⁷ <http://www.schoolengagement.org>



Indicator: Percentage of students engaged and contributing to community

School is an ideal place to connect learning to the real world of students' communities. For students to be most successful, they must have the opportunity, to learn in a real-world context and to apply their learning to real problems in their communities.

Recent national surveys reflect the opinion that involving students in more real-world learning experiences would greatly improve student outcomes. Of those students (ages thirteen to nineteen) surveyed, ninety-five percent said opportunities for more real world learning would improve their school¹⁸ Among adults surveyed, ninety-two percent favored emphasizing real world learning in schools, including work study, community service, and vocational courses.¹⁹

Research backs up these opinions. Studies have linked student engagement with positive academic, civic and moral, personal and social, and work-related outcomes. Of forty-eight schools using the "environment as an integrating context for learning" (referred to as the EIC model), data shows that EIC students in ninety-two percent of schools scored higher on standardized tests than their peers in traditional programs. Classroom behavior problems were reduced by as much as ninety-five percent and overall attendance increased in the more-inclusive EIC setting.²⁰ A separate survey of service learning students announced that participants reported significant increases in their feelings of connection to their communities, of connection to their schools, and of civic responsibility.²¹

Indicator: Students reporting feeling connected to the school

Research indicates that feeling connected to school and community can have a variety of positive effects on young people. According to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (known as "Add Health"), of students in grades seven through twelve, weak bonds with a caring family and school are the best predictors of risky behavior for youth. Bonds with family and school rank ahead of race, income, and family structure in determining the likelihood that youth will experiment with harmful behavior such as sex at a young age and drug and alcohol use. As one health education researcher notes, "When adolescents feel cared for by people at their school and feel like a part of their school, they are less likely to use substances, engage in violence, or initiate sexual activity at an early age. Students who feel connected to school also report higher levels of emotional well being."²²

¹⁸ The Horatio Alger Association, in *Community-Based Learning: Engaging Students for Success and Citizenship*, p. 2

¹⁹ The Educational Testing Service, in *Community-Based Learning*, p.2

²⁰ The State Education and Environment Roundtable (SEER), in *Community-Based Learning*

²¹ "Heads, Hearts and Hands: The Research on K-12 Service Learning," S. Billing, *Growing to Greatness* (National Youth Leadership Council, 2004), in *Community-Based Learning*

²² "Promoting School Connectedness," in "Youth Development Programs Show Success in Reducing Risky Behaviors," Clea McNeely, James M. Nonnemaker, and Robert W. Blum, *NASBE* (National Association of State Boards of Education) *Policy Update*, www.nasbe.org



Indicator: Homework completion rates

While the value of homework has been questioned in recent years, studies have found that homework “substantially benefits” student achievement in high school, and also benefits younger students to perhaps a lesser degree and in different ways. For students in middle grades, homework boosted academic achievement by about half as much as it did for high school students. The study found that students in the lower grades may not earn higher grades because they complete homework; rather, elementary students benefited most when homework developed their organizational and study skills.²³

Result: Students are Healthy: Physically, Socially and Emotionally

Indicator: Percentage of students demonstrating social and personal competencies

Students who are socially and emotionally healthy are productive members of their families, communities, schools, and society. Social and emotional competencies include students’ knowledge of self-worth; the abilities to handle daily tasks, and to set and achieve goals; and positive relationships with others, according to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

In addition to students’ personal well-being, CASEL’s research reveals that students’ social and emotional capacities affect academic performance in a variety of direct and indirect ways. Social and emotional education programs in schools have been shown to enhance students’ preparation to learn and ability to succeed. Students who have learned these emotional and social competencies have grasped how to effectively manage emotions that can interfere with learning, the motivation to persevere after academic failures, the ability to cooperate in peer groups and to set and work toward academic goals. Instruction of social and personal skills has been linked to better attendance and graduation rates; reduced suspension, expulsion, and grade retention rates; and higher achievement in math, language arts, and social studies, compared to students who do not demonstrate such skills.²⁴ CASEL research has also found that the average student enrolled in a social and emotional learning program (SEL) ranks at least ten points higher on achievement tests than SEL non-participants.²⁵

²³ Black, 1996; Paulu, 1998; in “Increasing Student Engagement and Motivation: From Time on Task to Homework,” Cori Brewster and Jennifer Fager, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, www.nwrel.org

²⁴ “The Scientific Base Linking Prevention Programs to Academic Achievement,” Zins, J., in “Underage Drinking too Costly to Ignore,” *The Challenge* (a publication of the US Department of Education)

²⁵ “No Emotion Left Behind,” Timothy P. Shriver and Robert P. Weissberg, *The New York Times*, Op-Ed, August 16, 2005, www.nytimes.com



Indicator: Percentage of students demonstrating well-being on a range of health indices (immunizations; obesity; vision; hearing; asthma; STDs; pregnancy; substance abuse)

High-risk behaviors related to health contribute to the leading causes of death and physical, emotional, and social problems in young people. Poor health as the result of insufficient medical care in early childhood, along with high-risk behaviors in adolescence, set the stage for unhealthy physical, social, and emotional development for youth.

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) monitors the categories of priority health-risk behaviors and the general health status of U.S. youth. Data provided by the YRBSS states that seventy-one percent of all deaths among 10–24 year olds in the U.S. result from motor vehicle and other accidents, homicide, and suicide. Results from the 2005 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) indicates that, during the thirty days preceding the survey, many high school students had engaged in behaviors that increased their likelihood of death from these causes: 9.9% had driven a car or other vehicle when they had been drinking alcohol; 18.5% had carried a weapon; 43.3% had drunk alcohol; and 20.2% had used marijuana. In addition, during the year preceding the survey, 35.9% of high school students had been in a physical fight and 8.4% had attempted suicide.²⁶

Substantial social problems among youth also result from unintended pregnancies and STDs, including HIV infection. During 2005, a total of 46.8% of high school students had had sexual intercourse; 37.2% of sexually active high school students had not used a condom the last time they had sex; and 2.1% had injected an illegal drug.

Among adults aged 25 years and older, 61% of all deaths result from two causes: cardiovascular disease and cancer. Many of the risky behaviors associated with these diseases were initiated during adolescence, YRBS research shows. During 2005, a total of 23.0% of high school students had smoked cigarettes during the 30 days preceding the survey; 79.9% had not eaten >5 times/day of fruits and vegetables during the 7 days preceding the survey; 67.0% did not attend physical education classes daily as children; and 13.1% were overweight.²⁷

Over the last decade, the prevalence of many health-risk behaviors among high school students nationwide has decreased. However, many high school students continue to engage in behaviors that place them at risk for the leading causes of mortality and morbidity. While the prevalence of many health-risk behaviors varies across cities and states, the YRBS recommends that more effective school health programs and other policy and programmatic interventions are needed throughout the nation to improve healthy outcomes for youth.²⁸

²⁶ “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – U.S. 2005,” in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, CDC, www.cdc.org

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid



Indicators: Students have access to good nutrition

To promote healthy physical and mental development, it is essential that students consume a variety of healthy foods and engage in physical activity everyday. The diet and exercise patterns established in youth not only determine health in a student's childhood, but will set the stage for his or her life-long health habits. From infancy to adolescence, it is particularly important that children consume enough iron, calcium, protein, and other nutrients to ensure their healthy physical growth and development. Urban and low-income students, often do not have access to the fresh, nutrient-rich foods and sufficiently varied diets that they need to be healthy.

As the prevalence of adults who are obese or overweight increases, so too does its prevalence among children and adolescents. Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES 1999), indicate that approximately twenty-five percent of American adolescents between the ages of twelve and nineteen can be described as overweight, or at risk of being overweight. Studies show that twenty to forty percent of American youngsters are physically unfit.²⁹ Overweight and obese children and teens are much more likely to become overweight or obese adults. These children also have greater risk for high cholesterol, high blood pressure, bone and joint problems, poor self-esteem and other health, social and psychological problems.³⁰

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend at least sixty minutes of moderate and vigorous physical activity five or more days per week for children ages five to twelve, and at least thirty minutes of similar activity five days a week for adolescents. Dietary guidelines encourage children age five and over to consume a diet moderate in total fat (thirty percent or less of calories) and low in saturated fat (ten percent or less of calories).³¹

Result: Students Live In Stable and Supportive Environments

Indicator: Percentage of families whose basic needs are being met

When families can not afford to feed, clothe or house themselves, students suffer. Without these basic needs taken care of, children can not live comfortably and are therefore unready to learn.

Hunger and insufficient nutrition have been linked to low test scores, for example. One study found a significant association between achievement test scores of inner-city kindergarteners and the deviation of these children's

²⁹ "Child and Adolescent Nutrition," *Background on Nutrition, Health, & Physical Activity During Childhood and Early Adolescence*, May, 2004, International Food Information Council, www.ific.org/nutrition

³⁰ "Institute of Medicine Report: Progress in Preventing Childhood Obesity: How Do We Measure Up?," Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Television Health Series, September, 2006, www.rwjf.org

³¹ Ibid



weight from the normal weight for children of that age and gender.³² In addition, iron-deficiency anemia, which is twice as common in poor children as in wealthier children, has been shown to affect cognitive ability. When dietary deficiencies were addressed in some experimental studies, children given vitamin and mineral supplements showed significantly improved test scores.³³

The poor academic performance that has been linked to nutritional deficiencies has also been tied to unstable or unsuitable housing. One study found that children whose families received housing subsidies were less likely to have abnormally low weights than were children whose families were on waiting lists to receive such subsidies. Authors of this study noted that Bureau of Labor Statistics show that families who receive housing subsidies spend a higher proportion of their incomes on food than do eligible families who do not receive housing subsidies. Thus housing subsidies, allowed needy families to redirect more of their incomes to nutrition, sparing their children the damaging effects of nutritional deficiencies.³⁴

Stabilized housing arrangements may also impact students' academic achievement. When housing is affordable in low-income communities-- through housing subsidies, for example--families may be able to afford apartments with more adequate space for children to study or do homework. With affordable, adequate housing, families should need to move less often, thereby also reducing the rate of student mobility, another important indicator of academic success.³⁵

Through their community partnerships and public services, community schools can address the needs of their families in ways that traditional schools can not, to ensure that students are prepared to perform to their full potential.³⁶

Indicator: Student mobility rates

Information provided by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) has determined that "student mobility has a negative impact on educational achievement for students and schools, creating an achievement gap between mobile and non-mobile students. Frequent relocation interrupts regular attendance, continuity of lesson content, and the development of relationships with teachers and peers. In addition, high student mobility has a slowing effect on basic skills acquisition, creating a long-term risk of school failure and dropout."³⁷

³² Karp, Martin, Sewell, Manni, and Heller, 1992, in "Out of Balance: Our Understanding of How Schools Affect Society and How Society Affects Schools," Richard Rothstein

³³ Neisser et al., 1996, in Rothstein

³⁴ Meyers, et. al, 1995, in Rothstein

³⁵ Rothstein

³⁶ *Inside Community Schools*, Dryfoos, Joy and Maguire, Sue

³⁷ Biernat & Jax, 2000, www.ncrel.org/policy



Quantitative data support this analysis. "Forty-one percent of highly mobile students are low achievers, compared with twenty-six percent of stable students. The more frequently a child changes his/her school, the greater the threat to academic achievement. Furthermore, according to the U.S. Government Accounting Office (1994), children who change schools more than three times before eighth grade are at least four times more likely to drop out of school. Another study found that successive school changes result in a cumulative academic lag—students who move more than three times in a six year period can fall one full academic year behind stable students" ³⁸

Indicator: Percentage of students reporting stable relationships with supportive adults

Stable relationships with caring adults protect youth from negative influences. In schools, supportive relationships with teachers and other adults have been proven to foster student success. "Meaningful interaction between adults and youth builds mutual respect and provides young people with mentors and positive role models."³⁹ In addition, "school programs with positive teacher-student relationships – particularly ones that help the students feel connected to a learning community have successfully reduced the dropout rate."⁴⁰

Studies have shown that mentoring enhances students' emotional and social development. Youth who participate in mentoring programs have shown significantly more positive attitudes toward school, the future, the elderly, and helping behaviors in general, than students who are not mentored. Participants in programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters reported feeling more trust in their parents and communicating better with them-- as well as feelings of better emotional support from friends-- than other non-mentored students reported.⁴¹

Research has shown that adult mentoring in work-based learning programs, for example, has boosted students' academic achievement. Students who spent more time with adult mentors at the workplace had higher grade point averages and better attendance than students who spent less time with adult mentors.⁴²

Indicator: Incidents of bullying

Studies have found that "well-implemented efforts to engage the school community in conflict resolution, peer mediation, and direct teaching of social skills and self-management strategies have had positive effects on students' social skills and behavior."⁴³

³⁸ Kerbow, 1996, www.ncrel.org/policy

³⁹ Bernard, 1996; in *Making the Difference*

⁴⁰ Fine, 1986; Whelage and Rutter, 1986; in *Making the Difference*

⁴¹ "Mentoring a Promising Strategy for Youth Development," Susan M. Jekielek, M.A., Kristin A. Moore, Ph.D., Elizabeth C. Hair, Ph.D., and Harriet J. Scarupa, M.S., *Child Trends Research Brief*, Feb. 2002, www.mentoring.ca.gov

⁴² "Schools-to-Work," Hughes, in *Community-Based Learning*

⁴³ Derzon and Wilson, 1999; Dwyer and Osher, 2000; in *Making the Difference*



Indicator: Incidents of school vandalism

A 2002 article in the American School Board Journal linked school vandalism to estrangement between students and their schools. "In a 1998 NIJ (National Institute of Justice) report examining crimes and crime prevention, the University of Maryland's Denise Gottfredson focused on school-based crimes and concluded that "disorderly" schools -- those with disorganized leadership, poor school climate, and few resources dedicated to school improvement -- contribute to student vandalism and other crimes.

But Gottfredson also found that schools in the most disadvantaged communities can "influence their own rates of disorder" and create well-run schools with little crime. "The way schools are run," she wrote, "predicts the level of disorder they experience." Schools where administration and faculty work together to solve problems and plan for change "presumably absorb change" better and have less disorder. Schools with clear expectations for students "signal appropriate behavior" and control students' behaviors informally, without resorting to thick rule books. Perhaps most important, Gottfredson found that schools in which students "feel as though they belong and that people in the school care about them" experience less disorder and less crime."⁴⁴

Result: Families Are Actively Involved In Their Children's Education

Indicator: Percentage of families reporting involvement with children's education

"Students whose parents stay closely involved in their educational progress throughout elementary and high school are more likely to stay in school and to enter and finish college."⁴⁵ It has also been shown that "families are best able to improve their children's life chances when they create a home environment that encourages learning, express high but realistic expectations for their children's achievement and future careers, and are involved in their children's school and community."⁴⁶

Indicators: Percentage of families participating in parent-teacher conferences

Research has shown that the relationship between parents and teachers can improve both children's behavior and their academic achievement. When parents actively participate in their child's school and interact with their child's teacher, they gain a greater understanding of the expectations that schools have for students and learn how they can enhance their own child's learning at home, according to a study of 1,200 New England urban students.⁴⁷

⁴⁴"The Roots of Vandalism," Susan Black, The American School Board Journal, July 2002, <http://www.asbj.com>

⁴⁵ Eagle, 1989; Epstein, 1992, in *Making the Difference*

⁴⁶ Henderson and Berla, 1994, in *Making the Difference*

⁴⁷ Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro and Fendrich, 1999, in *Making the Difference*



Indicator: Percentage of families reporting positive interactions with the school

Families feel more capable of contributing to their child's education when his/her school makes efforts to build cooperative, respectful relationship between the school's staff and families. Studies show that when the school frequently communicates with parents and offers them meaningful opportunities to be involved, parents feel more connected to their child's school. In one such study, each of nine middle schools showed that a school's sense of community is strengthened when a principal acts as an effective leader and when teachers communicate effectively with parents about their students' progress.⁴⁸

Indicator: Percentage of teachers reporting positive interaction with families

Student success also relies on the positive interaction of teachers with students' families. A study by Larueau showed that teachers tend to have higher expectations of students whose parents are more involved in schools; the same study also found that children whose parents are more involved tend to earn higher test scores.⁴⁹

Result: Communities Are Desirable Places To Live

Indicator: Employment rates/employability

Research indicates that families of low-income workers experience less hardship than families of the unemployed, despite the demands of working a low-wage job. In a comparison of unemployed families and low-wage workers who are or have been on welfare, for example, studies found that the workers were more likely than the unemployed to be able to afford their rent/mortgage, telephone, medical and grocery bills.

Employment benefits the neighborhood at large, as well as individual families. Research on African American males, for example, links a concentration of jobless males in a neighborhood to a negative effect on the educational outcomes of its students.

Welfare employment studies have found that job instability is associated with personal crises, substance abuse, and mental health problems. A series of welfare employment studies have demonstrated that support services, specifically health insurance and formal childcare, promote stable employment. Research on the general population of low-income workers finds that Jobs Initiative participants with low job retention tend to be high school dropouts with a difficult commute or have recently received welfare. This study by Abt finds that job retention is ultimately highest with participants who receive a combination of support services and hard and soft-skills training.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Belenardo, 200, *Making the Difference*

⁴⁹ Larueau, 1987, *Making the Difference*

⁵⁰ "A Summary of the Research Rationale for *Making Connections*' Outcomes and Indicators," p.1-2



Indicator: Rate of participation in adult education programs

According to a report published by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, a recent longitudinal study of adult literacy learners in Tennessee found that adult education had a variety of positive outcomes on participants' lives, including an increased employment rate, increased self-esteem and increased community participation. After a year of enrollment in an adult literacy program, participants in Tennessee increased their rate of employment from 32% to 48%. In light of the various benefits of adult education, this study recommends that "rather than taking workforce preparation as an isolated objective, adult basic education needs to be seen as a process through which participants gain skills and confidence, enabling them to be truly productive members of the modern society, as workers, citizens, and family members."⁵¹

Indicator: Rate of participation in school

Studies have documented that family participation in school is a major determinant of student success. "No matter what the demographics, students are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, attend school regularly, have better social skills, graduate and go on to post-secondary education when schools and families partner," said Karen Mapp, Ed.D., a leading education researcher on school, family and community partnerships.⁵²

Research findings link family participation in education to a variety of positive outcomes for students: higher student test scores, grades, and graduation rates; better school attendance; increased motivation and student self-esteem; lower suspension rates; lower rates of drug and alcohol use; decreased instances of violent behavior; and greater enrollment in post-secondary education. Parents also benefit when their participation in schools increases. Their communication and relations with students and teachers improves, as does their attitude toward school personnel. Parents can improve their own self-esteem and levels of education through participation in their children's schools. Finally, teachers also profit when parents are more involved in schools, as they are better able to communicate with parents and students, and gain community support as a result of family involvement.⁵³

Indicator: Percentage of residents with health insurance

A Commonwealth Fund study in 2000, found low and moderate-income urban residents without insurance have less access to needed medical care than insured residents with similar incomes.

Uninsured residents were less likely to have a regular source of medical care, to have visited a physician within the last year, and more likely to have delayed or foregone needed care in general.

⁵¹ "Changes in Learners' Lives One Year After Enrollment in Literacy Programs: An Analysis from the Longitudinal Study of Adult Literacy Participants in Tennessee," Mary Beth Bingman, Olga Ebert, and Michael Smith, *NCSALL REPORT #11*, December 1999, <http://www.ncsall.net>

⁵² "Parenting 101: Family Involvement Equals Student Achievement," Warlene Gary, *Guidance Channel E-Zine* (www.guidancechannel.com)

⁵³ *Ibid*



This study illustrates the stark contrast between the experiences of the insured and uninsured. For example, forty percent of uninsured residents in Detroit and sixty-one percent in Los Angeles report having no regular source of care, compared with only six percent and eight percent, respectively, of their insured counterparts. Among nearly all the cities surveyed, the uninsured were twice as likely not to have visited a physician.

While states now have expanded opportunities to cover eligible uninsured children and their families under Medicaid and the Federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), cities and counties have limited ability to address their residents' lack of access to employment-based health insurance.

While long-term efforts may increase the proportion of residents working and the proportion of employed full-time, the Commonwealth report cites, cities and counties may lack the resources or authority to require small employers to offer health benefits or to mandate that employers make their employees' share of health insurance premiums affordable for moderate- and low-income workers. In the absence of universal coverage, moderate- and low-income urban residents will continue to experience barriers to needed health care. Cities and counties will bear the responsibility of providing for at least their minimum needs.⁵⁴

Indicator: Neighborhood crime rates

A neighborhood's crime rate is an essential indicator of its overall social and economic health. High rates of crime indicate a lack of economic opportunities in a community as well as weak social bonds between community members. As neighborhoods become unsafe, residents and others have little incentive to invest in the community. Residents of a crime-ridden neighborhood do not experience a community, as they distrust their neighbors and do not believe in the possibility of community initiatives.

High crime neighborhoods have a particularly damaging effect on youth. Research has shown that youth in unsafe neighborhoods suffer when their adult role-models are fearful and distrustful. To increase students' faith in their own communities and to rebuild communities destroyed by crime, concerted crime-prevention must be made alongside community-building efforts.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ "Disparities in Health Insurance and Access to Care For Residents Across U.S. Cities," E. R. Brown, R. Wyn, and S. Teleki, The Commonwealth Fund, August 2000, www.cmwf.org/publications.

⁵⁵ Moore, Mark H. 1999. *Security and community development*, in Ronald F. Ferguson and William T. Dickens, eds., *Urban problems and community development* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings), www.solutionsforamerica.org