

# Making a difference for every child:

Addressing the needs of our most vulnerable students

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# Leaving Children Behind in the USA

- 1 out of 5 children in poverty
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> highest poverty rates among advanced nations
- 1/3 uncovered by health insurance
- 80% poor children not enrolled in quality pre-school
- 80% of Black and Latino children in “failing schools”
- Many children unsupervised after school

# Why equity matters: California's Students

**3 out of 5  
Students  
are  
Low-Income**

**1 out of 5  
Students  
are  
English Learners**

**3 out of 5  
Students  
are  
Black or Latino**

# What We Know:

Certain students are at greater risk of failing

- Teen mothers
- English language learners, recent immigrants (late arrivers)
- Undocumented children – unaccompanied minors
- Children in foster care
- Children of incarcerated parents
- Over-age middle school students
  - Under-prepared high school students - low literacy skills, low credits



# Schools can't address challenges related to poverty alone



# Understanding the nature of risks

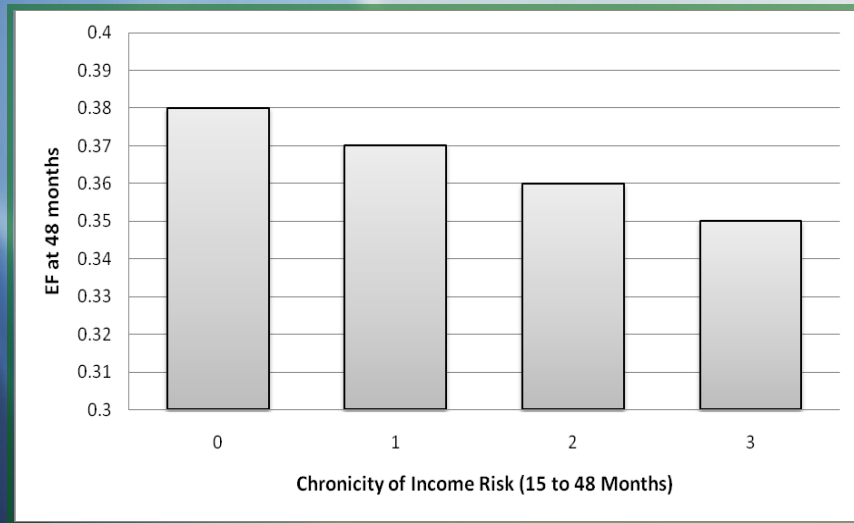
- We tend to locate the risk in the child rather than the environment
  - Troubling assumptions
  - Truancy study – illness, lack of transportation, work influence attendance
- Underlying causes: Systemic failures in the ways society and schools respond to student needs
- **Normalization of failure** - Must find ways to increase support for schools serving large numbers of disadvantaged students

# Students from households in distress

- Tend to receive less support at home and may act out more in school
- Often provided ineffective support at school
  - Assigned least effective teachers
- Often fall further behind despite interventions
- Behavior problems may overshadow academic problems
- Punishment generally does not help change behavior
- Schools struggle in finding ways to promote resilience



# Toxic stress impacts learning



Children exposed to higher levels of poverty for longer periods of time have greater difficulty with

- Attention
- Working memory
- Inhibitory control

Increasing evidence for the ‘toxic stress’ hypothesis –

- Stressors associated with poverty increase wear and tear on cardiovascular and HPA axis-> hypothesized to be “biomediator” of impact on brain development and function



# Trauma exposure in military vs. urban Detroit

Type	Ohio National Guard	DETROIT
Combat	46.5% (n = 1151)	10.9% (n = 146)
Fire/explosion	31.9% (n = 790)	--
Rape/sexual assault	10.1% (n = 251)	19.1% (n = 256)
Shot or stabbed	8.3% (n = 205)	15.7% (n = 210)
Held captive	0.6% (n = 15)	6.1% (n = 82)
Mugged/badly beaten/ threatened w/ a weapon	38.2% (n = 946)	38.4% (n = 515)
Transportation accident	30.1% (n = 744)	31.0% (n = 416)
Other accident	18.4% (n = 456)	17.1% (n = 229)
Natural disaster	17.5% (n = 433)	21.5% (n = 288)
Sudden unexpected death	70.6% (n = 1747)	79.5% (n = 1068)
Caused injury/death	12.4% (n = 307)	--
Witnessed death/human suffering	54.0% (n = 1337)	36.2% (n = 486)
Learned of other's illness/injury	76.3% (n = 1889)	73.6% (n = 988)

# To change outcomes we must ask the right questions

- Achievement and Development are related:
  - Who is teaching our most vulnerable students?
    - Are they well trained? Do they receive adequate support?
  - When do signs of trouble first appear?
    - How should we target our interventions?
  - What are their unmet needs?
  - How do we develop effective support systems?

# Schools often provide ineffective forms of support

- Damaging effects of labeling - Special Ed and Remedial programs
  - Self fulfilling prophecy
  - Social construction of disability
- Normalization of Failure - Patterns of success and failure have been in place for a long time and persistent challenges generate complacency
- Programs designed to “help” often show little evidence of effectiveness
  - Little focus on quality control
  - Insufficient evaluation

# Flawed Discipline Practices

- Discipline practices emphasize exclusion and humiliation
  - Tend to target students who are behind academically and who are “at-risk”
  - Exclusion practices tend to reinforce and exacerbate academic deficiencies
  - Over reliance on suspension even when there is little evidence of its effectiveness
- Increased reliance on law enforcement
  - criminalization of school misconduct
- Teachers role in relation to student discipline has been reduced



# Placing Equity at the Center

Freedom



# Making equity central

- Equity requires a willingness to address gaps in opportunity
  - Addressing the academic social, material and emotional needs
  - Recognizing that they learn in different ways and at different paces
- Schools need community partners to pursue equity
  - Universities, hospitals, CBOs, churches, etc.
- Stay focused on outcomes – academic and developmental

# Community Schools

A community school is a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities.

Center for Community Schools, Washington DC

Types - Beacon schools, Comer model, full service schools

# Harlem Children's Zone





# Reactive vs. Preventative Discipline Practices

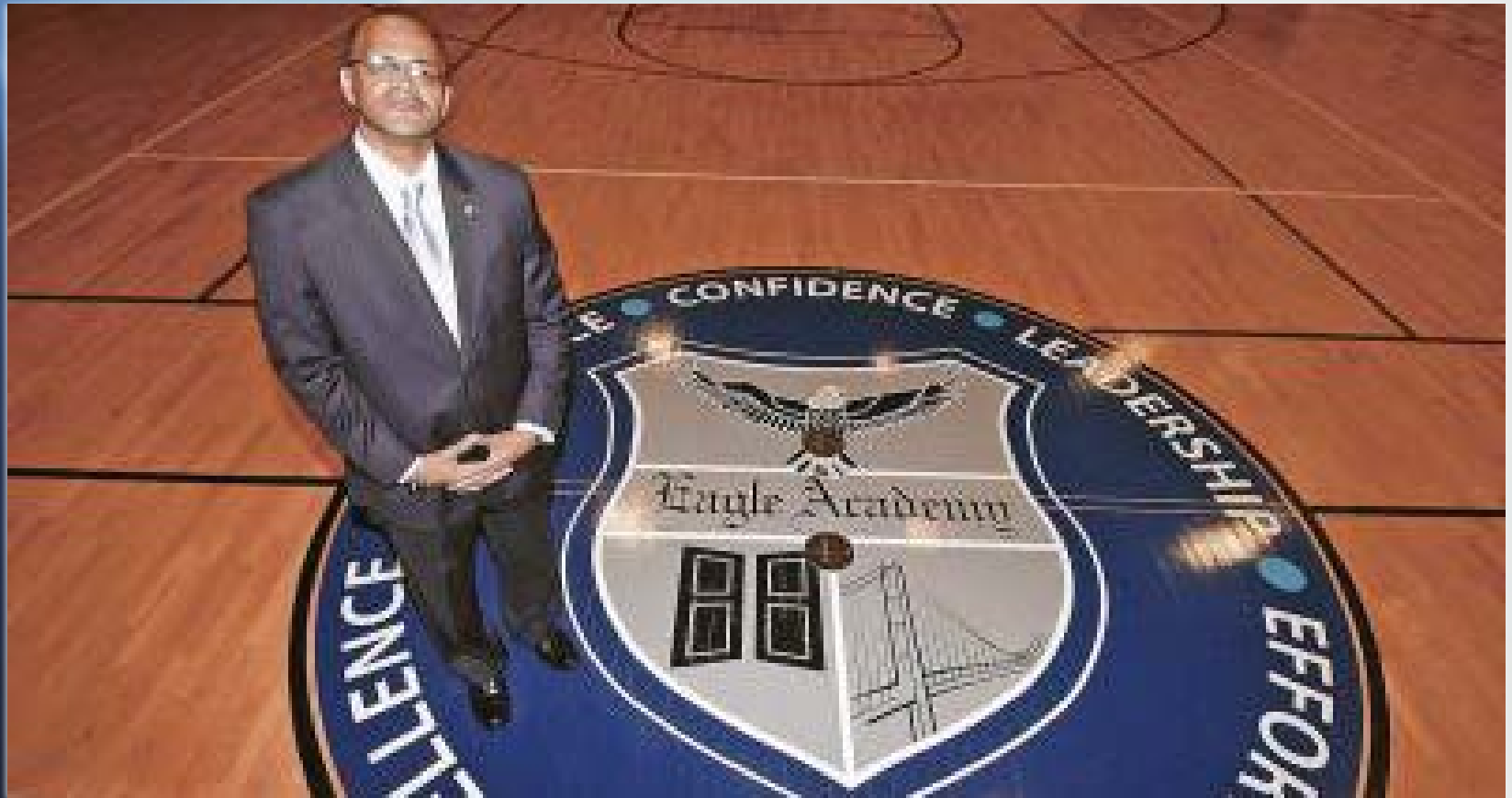
## ■ Reactive

- Rely heavily on isolation and exclusion
- Engage parents after behavior problems are exhibited, not before
- Focus on behavior infractions while overlooking underlying causes
- Fail to respond to early indicators of serious behavior problems

## ■ Preventative

- School values and norms are clearly articulated and actively reinforced
- Character and ethics treated as central to school mission
- Discipline addresses causes of behavior problems
- Interventions and punishments are designed to reinforce ethical behavior and reconnect students to learning

# David Banks – Founder of Eagle Academy



# Engaged learners at Eagle





# Extended Learning at Eagle Academy





# Agency vs. Grit

## Grit

- Hard work, persistence, may not be enough
- Ignores contextual barriers
- Individual attribute
- Hard to measure except after outcomes are achieved

## Agency

- Rooted in critical thinking
- Recognizes barriers and strategizes to confront
- Involves help seeking, social capital
- Can be collective (schools can have agency)

# Strategies that work

- Help students to develop concrete plans for the future early
  - Involve students in counseling about college early
  - Engage parents in advising
- Build stronger ties between adults and students
  - Effective use of extracurricular activities
  - Develop small learning communities
  - Pro-active mentoring
  - Utilize every teacher as an advisor
- Design systems to identify at-risk students and to intervene early
  - Target at-risk youth with mentors, jobs, and services
  - Utilize after-school and intensive summer school programs

# Build community and focus on relationships to promote resilience

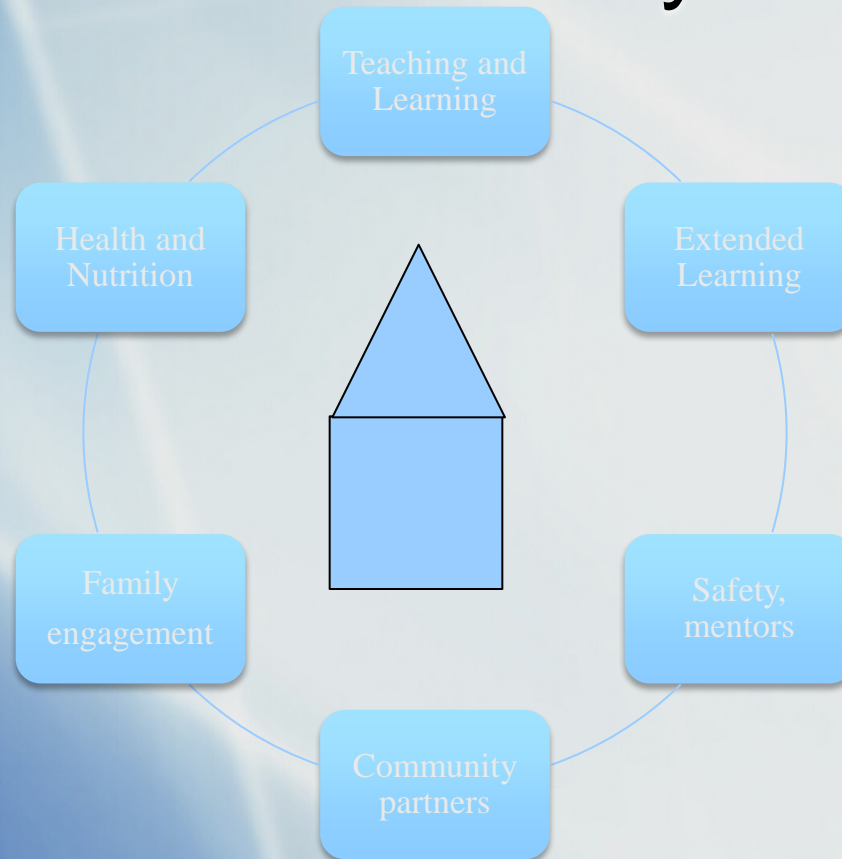
Communities and schools can make big difference by investing in universal preschool.

School leaders (and teachers, students) can actively capitalize on classic neuroscientific finding: The “social buffer” hypothesis –

- The presence of supportive adult dramatically reduces
  - biological stress response as well as experience of anxiety for individuals facing major challenge or stressor



# We Need A Holistic Vision to Guide Social Policy





# November 8 and 9



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