



# The Fish Versus The Fisherman

Annemarie M. Grassi, Ph.D.







# **Why Do Our Kids Struggle to Succeed?**

**Understanding the Barriers and Inequalities in our Education System and Beyond**



# Identifying the Barriers to Success

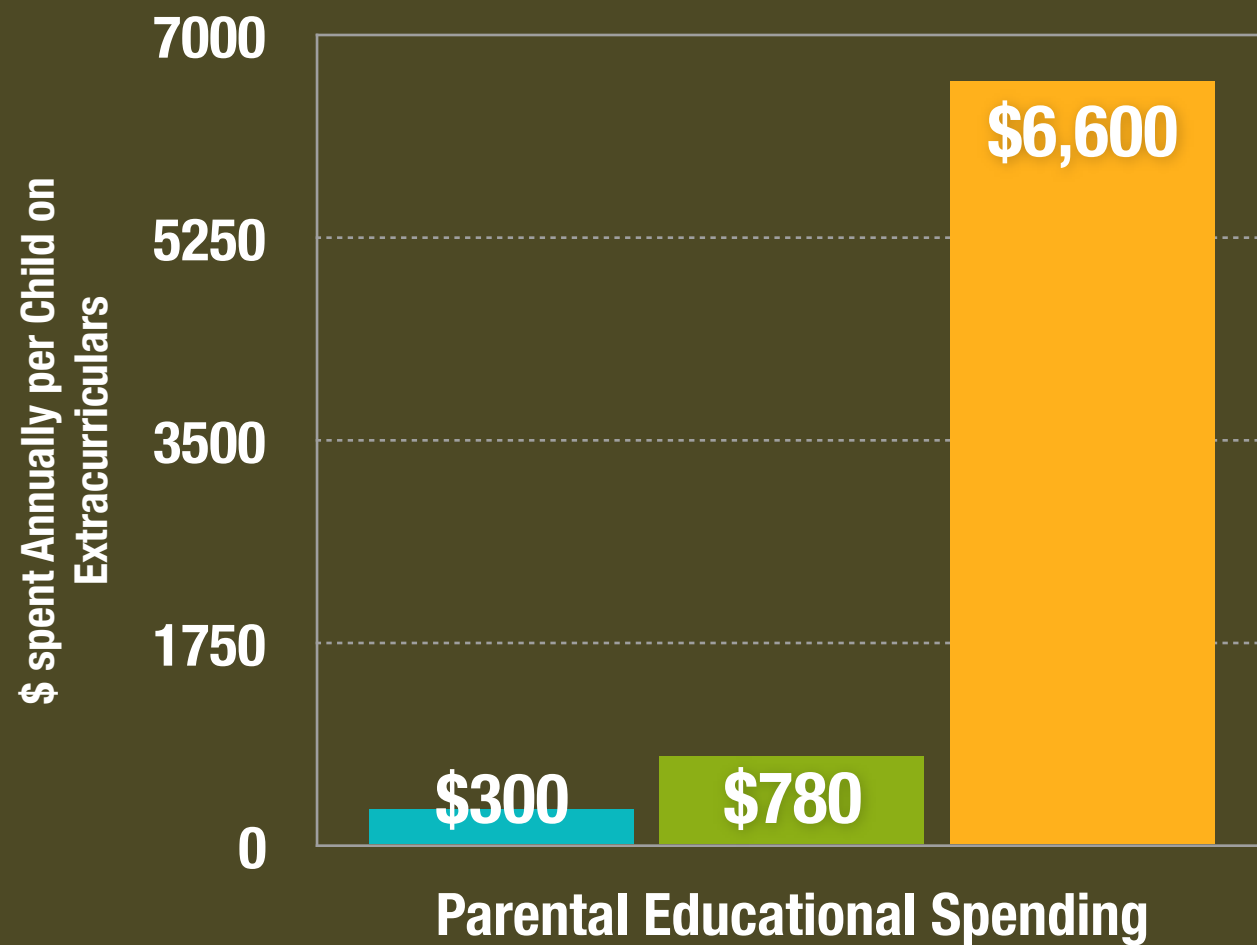
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# Inequalities in Educational \$\$

## Family Household Income

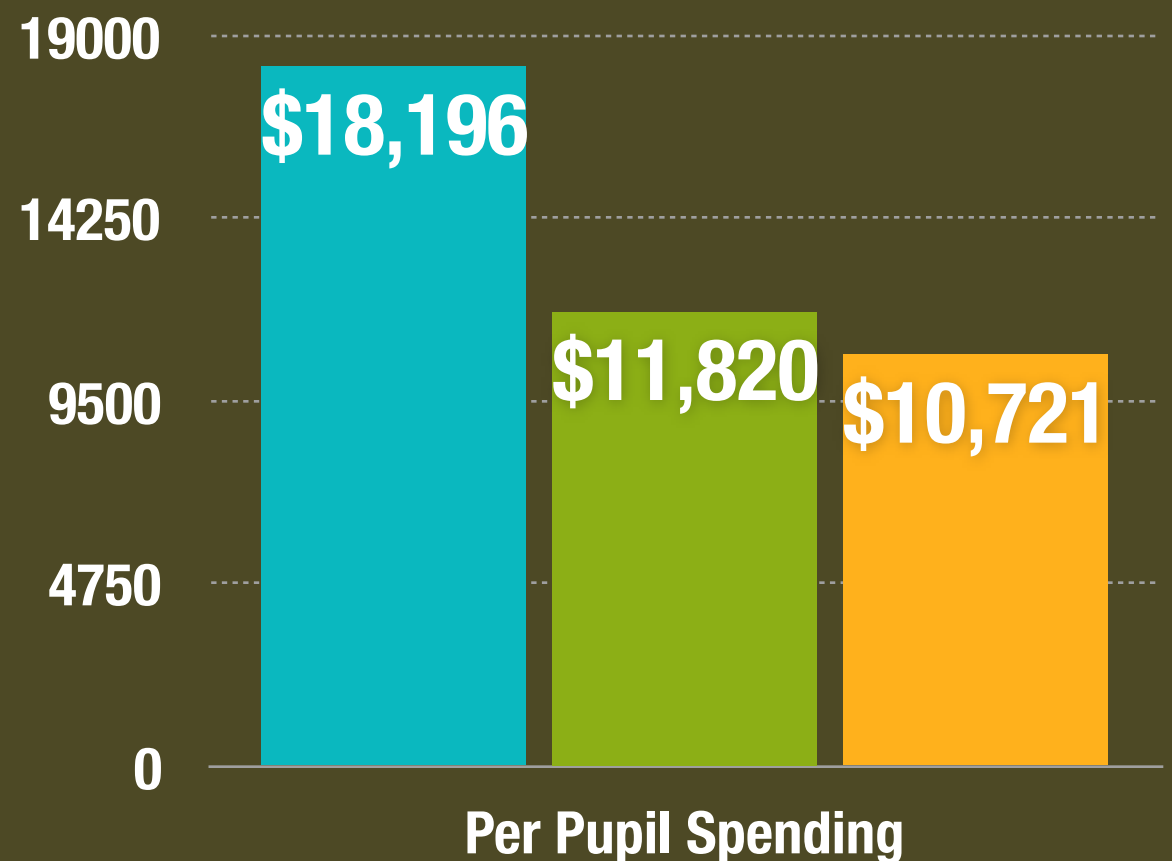
■ <\$20K ■ \$50K - \$70K ■ >\$150K



Source: US Department of Labor

## School District

■ Orange ■ CMSD ■ Euclid



Source: Ohio Department of Education State Report Card



# Inequality in Education @ Home

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- **AFFLUENT/EDUCATED**  
(Putnam, 2015)
  - Nurture, affection, warmth, active involvement, and reasoned discipline. Aim to raise autonomous, independent, self-directed children with high self-esteem
- **LESS EDUCATED/POVERTY**
  - Focus on discipline and obedience and conformity to pre-established rules.

# Inequality in Reinforcement

	Professional Class	Working Class	Poor Class
Encouragements	166,000 (6:1)	62,000 (2:1)	26,000 (1:3)
Discouragements	26,000	36,000	57,000



# Great Reading Resources

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**Our Kids: American Dream in Crisis -  
Robert Putnam**

**Unequal Childhoods - Annette Laureau**

**\$2 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in  
America - Kathryn Edin & H. Luke  
Shaefer**



# Traditional Approaches to Catching Fish

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- Meeting Immediate Needs
- Providing a safe space for the time
- Focusing only on how kids feel, not what they can achieve
- Focus on outputs over outcomes
- Focus on “good work” not “great impact”



# Where it All Began...

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Building a Framework







# The Secret Sauce

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- There are NO Short Cuts...
- It Takes Grit...
- Must be willing to get into the Ring...
- Must be willing to take BIG Risks...
- You Must Never Give Up!

# Holistic Approach to Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

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**Strong Relationships**

**Family Engagement**

**Duration and Intensity  
of Programming**

**Focus on Social  
and Emotional Growth**





# Strong Relationships

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Strong relationships between youth and adult mentors plays a significant role in the academic and social achievement of youth and might therefore be more also serve an important role in a youth's social network.



# Strong Relationships

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**What do strong  
peer-adult  
relationships look  
like?**





# **Strong Partnerships**

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# Family Dynamics

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- Children In Poverty:
  - The children of professional families heard 19 million more words than the children of working class parents and;
  - 32 million more words than the children of parents on welfare. - Putnam, 2015
- 72% of middle-class children know the alphabet when starting school, as opposed to only 19% of poor children - Putnam, 2015
- Growing evidence indicates that children who grow up in poverty are at high risk for elevated levels of cortisol and toxic stress - Travis, Western, and Redburn (2014); and Waldfogel (2006)



# Family Engagement

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## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

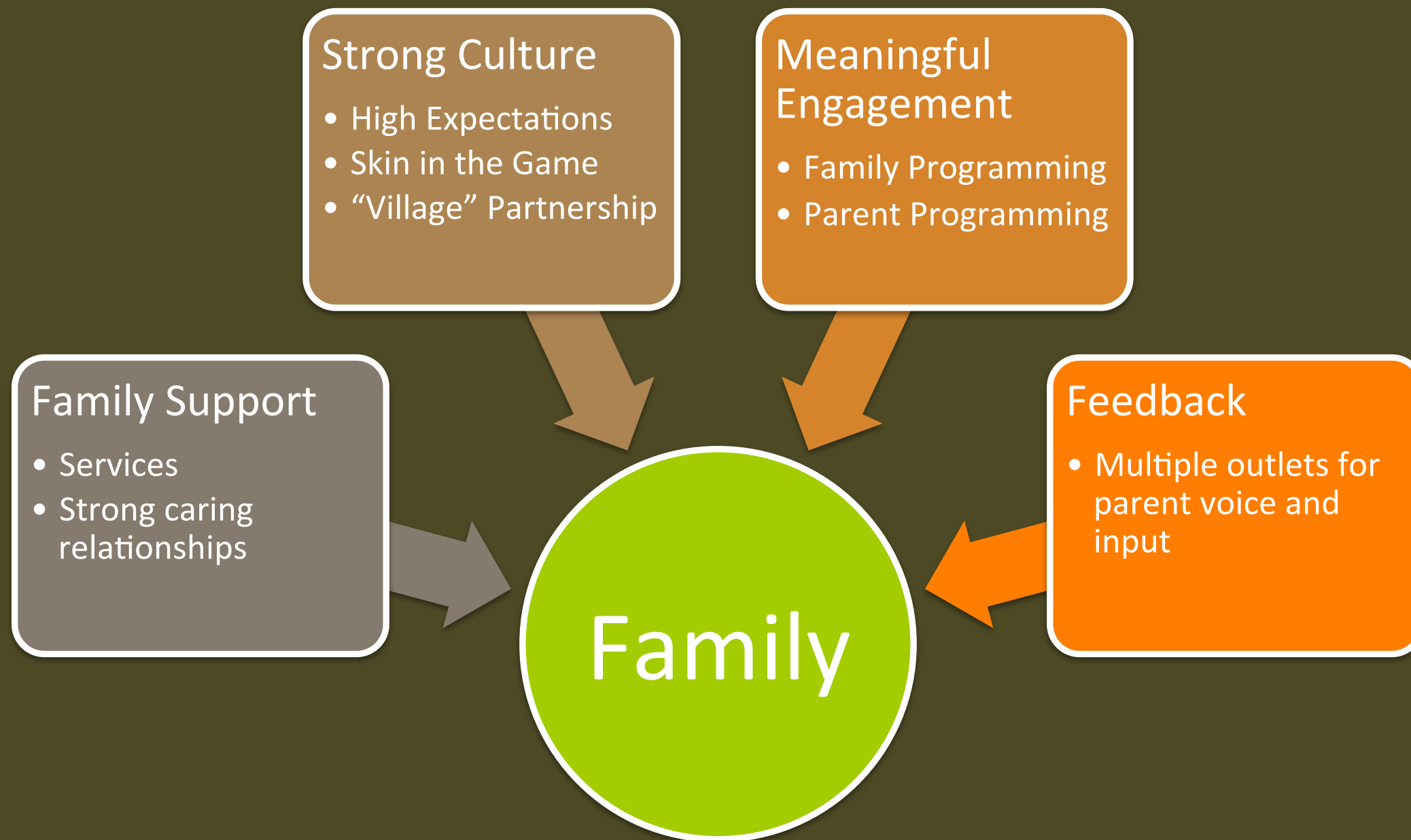
*To involve is to “enfold or envelope” - Identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute*

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

*To engage is to “come together and interlock” - Listening to what parents think, dream or worry about*

# Family Engagement

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# Continuum of Service

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# Creating a Continuum

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Middle School



High School



College/ Trade School



Career/ Adulthood



# Importance of the Continuum

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**Three young  
college  
ladies meet  
for lunch:)**

# Social Emotional Growth

## Engagement and Hopefulness (Grassi, 2012)

Do youth engaged in Open Doors Academy differ from youth not exposed to Open Doors Academy in relation to achievement related behaviors including hope, wellbeing, and engagement?

Findings - Statistically significant difference between ODA Youth and Non-ODA Youth

67% of ODA youth Hopeful  
47% of Non-ODA youth Hopeful

65% of ODA youth Engaged  
47% of Non-ODA youth Engaged

Are hope, wellbeing, and engagement predictive of academic performance, (measured by GPA) amongst youth participating in ODA?



Statistically significant with approximately 6% of the variability in grade point average predicted by hope, engagement, and wellbeing.



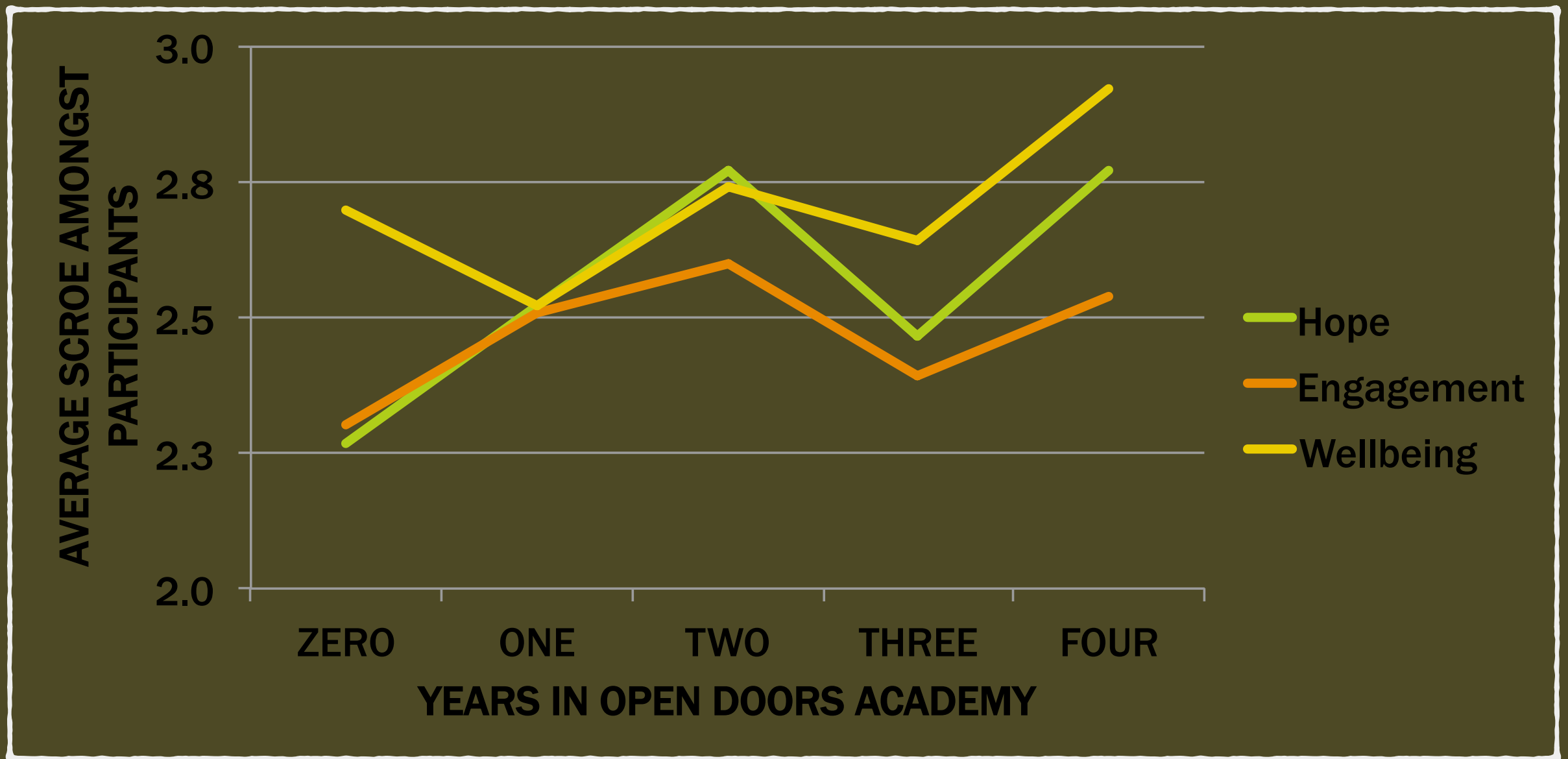


# What The Research Says...

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*Figure 1. Youth Identified as Increasingly Hopeful, Engaged, and Thriving Amongst Youth Participating in Open Doors Academy For One to Four Years*





# Social Emotional Growth

**Table 2. Chi-Square Test for Independence on Graduation, New Ideas, Goal Setting, and Job Placement Confidence (scale of 1 to 5)**

	M	Pearson Chi-Square	<i>p</i>	<i>n</i>
I know I will graduate high school				
Open Doors Academy	4.58	3.17	.075	188
Non Open Doors Academy	4.06			
I energetically pursue my goals				
Open Doors Academy	2.70	3.59 <sup>1</sup>	.058	190
Non Open Doors Academy	1.77			
I can think of many ways to get good grades				
Open Doors Academy	3.21	1.38	.249	191
Non Open Doors Academy	2.66			
I know I will find a good job after I graduate				
Open Doors Academy	3.86	6.67 <sup>2</sup>	.010	185
Non Open Doors Academy	2.74			

# Raising Fishermen

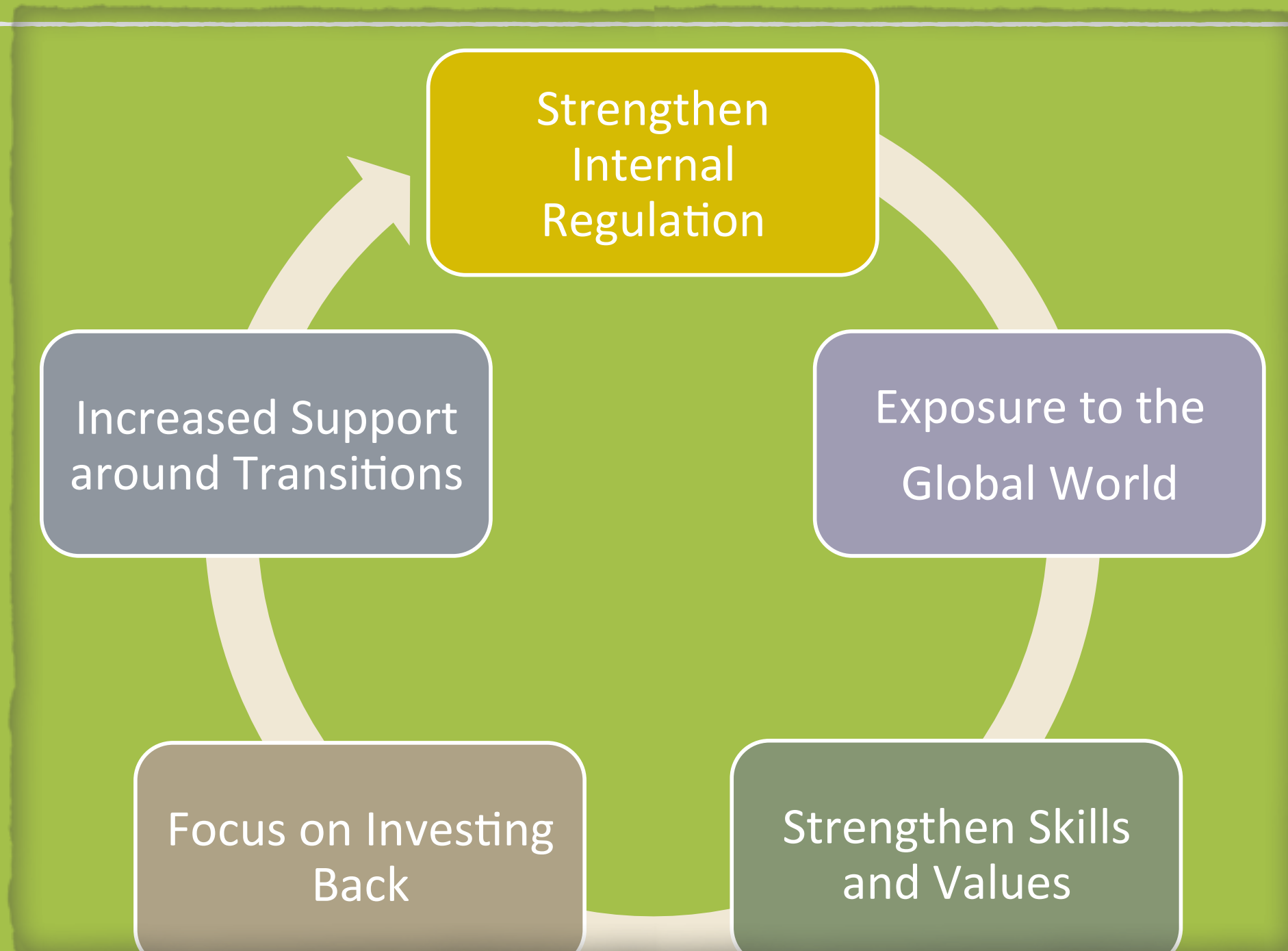
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- Garner Buy In**
- Set the Bar High**
- Minimize Gaps between systems of inequality**
- Teach Responsibility and Ownership**
- Foster Autonomy and Mutual Respect**
- Accept Failure, Promote Success**



# Breaking the Cycle of Poverty



# Tips and Tools

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- ODA Financial Literacy System**
- Creating a brain path out of poverty**
- Performance Based Systems**
- Shift from Social Welfare to Resilience and Empowerment**















# INVESTING IN SUCCESS

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Invest in programs/organizations that demonstrate:

- A continuum of services with long-term outcomes
- Bridge the gaps between systems of inequality
- Utilize an performance management system
- Focus on both short-term and long-term outcomes



# MISSION TO ACTION



**PROTECT** – Protect each individual child from becoming a statistic. See the opportunity to develop holistic systems to support the development of the adolescent.

**INSPIRE** – Inspire youth to learn, engage them in meaningful programming and opportunities that open doors to their futures.

**NURTURE** – Nurture youth overtime. Invest in deep learning and long-term impact.

**CHALLENGE** – Challenge funders and stakeholders to look more closely at after-school education and out-of-school time learning as keys to building success in our future generations

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