CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

2016

a project of The Saguaro Seminar

HARVARD Kennedy School
THE SAGUARO SEMINAR
Civic Engagement in America

The American Dream is evaporating for over 25 million children born in the last generation. It's economically wasteful, destabilizing to our democracy, and morally unjust.

2016

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THIS WORK IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY
The Spencer Foundation
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Carnegie Corporation of New York
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
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INTRODUCTION

The Saguaro Seminar is a research initiative that brings together leading thinkers and practitioners to develop actionable ideas for civic renewal. In 2015, the Seminar launched the Closing the Opportunity Gap initiative. The initiative convened five working groups of roughly a dozen of the country's leading experts in each of five areas: family and parenting, early childhood, K-12 education, community institutions, and "on-ramps," like community college or apprenticeships. These non-partisan white papers distill the best evidence-based ideas for narrowing the opportunity gap.

I. What's the problem?

From the very first words of our founding document as a nation – "we believe … that all men are created equal"—Americans' most widely shared value has been the principle of equality of opportunity. That is, how well a child does in life should depend on his or her God-given talents and hard work, and should *not* depend on what his or her parents did or didn't do.

To be sure, American realities have often fallen short of our ideals. At the beginning, we did not mean "all" men, but all *white* men, and we did mean *men* (not women). But those deviations from the egalitarian promise of the Declaration of Independence were increasingly recognized as anachronistic, and in the ensuring years we've gradually moved toward a more inclusive interpretation of the promise. As Martin Luther King said at the 1963 March on Washington, "When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir."

However, the sad truth, chronicled in Robert D. Putnam's book *Our Kids*,[1] is that this cherished American Dream is evaporating for over 25 million children born to less educated parents in the last three decades. The economic and social transformations of the last half-century – rising economic insecurity, growing socioeconomic segregation, the collapse of the low income family, the unraveling of working class neighborhoods, and the decline of a collective sense of responsibility for "our kids" – have created a perfect storm of plummeting prospects for the next generation of Americans.

Rich kids and poor kids are now growing up in separate and unequal Americas, their fates

increasingly and unfairly tied to their "choice" of parents and the zip code in which they are born. In a gated community in sunny Southern California, for example, Jeannette, a stay-at-home mother of three, spends her summer days driving her daughters to tennis and swimming lessons, shopping for nutritious family meals, researching colleges, and planning charity events. Her youngest daughter, Alyssa, works with a college essay tutor in the morning and then trains 6 hours a day with her elite private swimming coach. Spending $20,000 a year on her coach is worth it, Jeannette and her 6-figure-earning husband believe, if swimming helps Alyssa get into a prestigious college. Meanwhile, twenty minutes down the freeway, Natalie, a single mom out of work from a back injury, peers anxiously at a fast-food menu, deciding whether to use her last few dollars on lunch or on gas. Her talented daughter, Laila, has won numerous awards at school, and Natalie always makes it to the ceremonies. But unlike Alyssa, Laila doesn't have a writing tutor, a private coach, or a college fund to help her figure out the future. She spends her afternoons working at Burger King, pinning her hopes for a better life on a for-profit college and tens of thousands of dollars in loans. And these stories crystallize the growing inequality of opportunity in America, the "opportunity gap" that is experienced across all stages of a child's life course.

Families and parenting: Growing up with two parents is now unusual for working class children (the Lailas of America), while two-parent families are nearly universal among the Alyssas and becoming both more common and stable. Whether eating dinner with their families, or participating in extracurricular activities like sports or volunteering, middle-class children come of age supported by parents, teachers, and peers who launch them into adulthood and rush to catch them and give them second chances if they fall.

Rich kids and poor kids are now growing up in separate and unequal Americas, their fates increasingly and unfairly tied to their "choice" of parents and the zip code in which they are born.

Early childhood: Even by kindergarten, meritocracy has been undermined. Rich kids enter kindergarten over a full year year ahead of bottom-third kids, having had almost 1400 more hours of developmental time with their parents (think *Good Night Moon* or paddy cake time), having experienced more personalized daycare or the presence of stay-at-home moms, having received $5,700 more of annual parental expenditures on categories like musical instruments or books or summer camp or trips to Paris, and having heard 30 million more words than their poorer counterparts.

Schools: Schools themselves did little to *cause* the opportunity gap but are *sites* of widening inequality nonetheless due to differential resources or challenges that kids bring with them to school. As a result of increased residential segregation, rich kids increasingly attend schools with other rich kids, and poor kids with other poor kids. In their backpacks, rich kids bring parental aspirations and parental resources, benefitting all their classmates, wealthy or not. In their backpacks, poor kids bring gang violence, disarray at home, and stunted aspirations, and those things hamper education for all their classmates. Poorer schools increasingly are unsafe, provide fewer extracurricular activities, lack a strong academic culture and quality counseling, and are often staffed by less able, less experienced teachers who teach students who need greater help. The test score gap between rich kids and poor kids is large and growing.

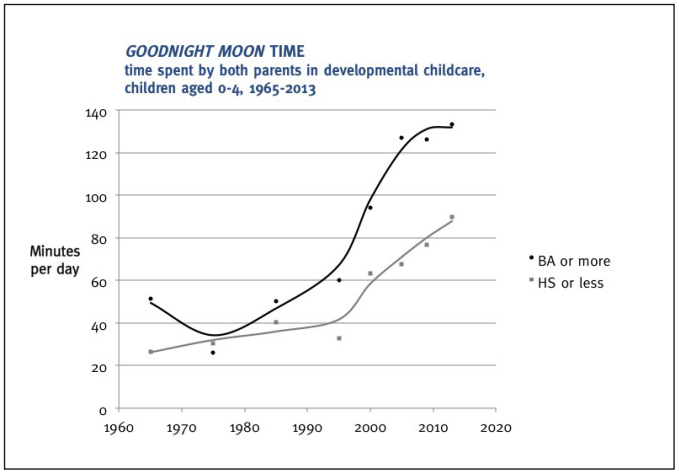
Neighborhoods: Poor and working-class kids like Laila increasingly grow up in fragile families and communities where food and housing are insecure, resources are scarce, crime is high, relationships are volatile, and stress is toxic, leaving them too isolated and distrustful to develop the skills, knowledge, and social networks crucial for success. The affluence or poverty of neighborhoods is concentrated at the differing schools that the Lailas and Alyssas attend.

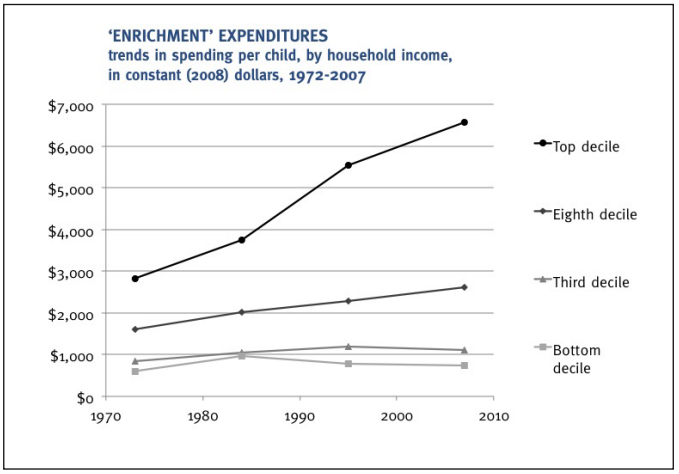
Higher education and jobs: The Lailas of the world leave high school without the connections and resources to land unpaid internships or quality jobs, without the test prep, lacking quality counseling from family or professionals to navigate college applications, financial aid, choice of colleges or majors, or to choose realistic and economically productive careers.

The following four "scissors graphs," drawn from dozens that appear in *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (Robert D. Putnam, 2015), illustrate some of the growing gaps among American youth in the resources and opportunities available to kids from affluent, educated homes and those available to kids from low-income, less educated homes.

- Although time spent by parents interacting with their children in developmental ways (e.g., reading to them) has been increasing in both college-educated homes and high-school-educated homes, the increase has been so much greater for affluent kids that the average "rich kid" now gets about 45 minutes per day more in "Goodnight Moon time" than his poor counterpart. The latest brain science shows that this difference powerfully affects children's brain development and school readiness.
- Rich parents have long been able to invest more in "enrichment" for their children—for summer camp, piano lessons, trips to the zoo, and private education—and this gap, too, has dramatically widened in the last forty years.

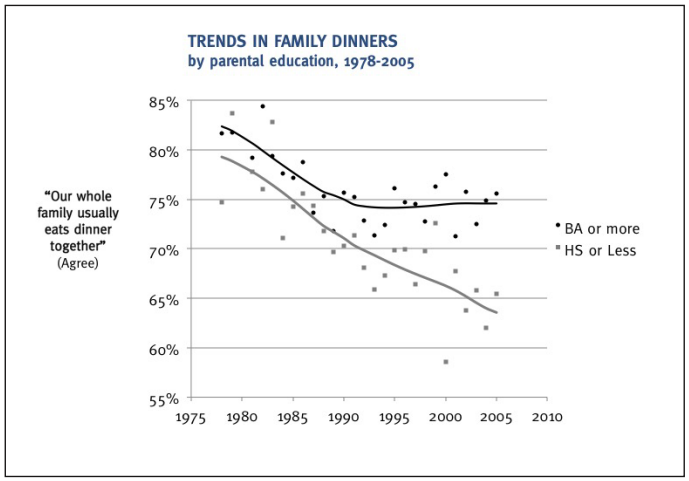
Growing Class Gaps In Parental Investments In Children

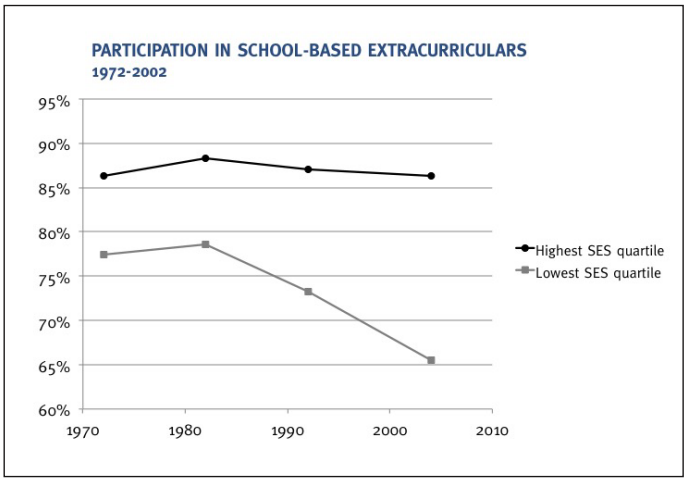




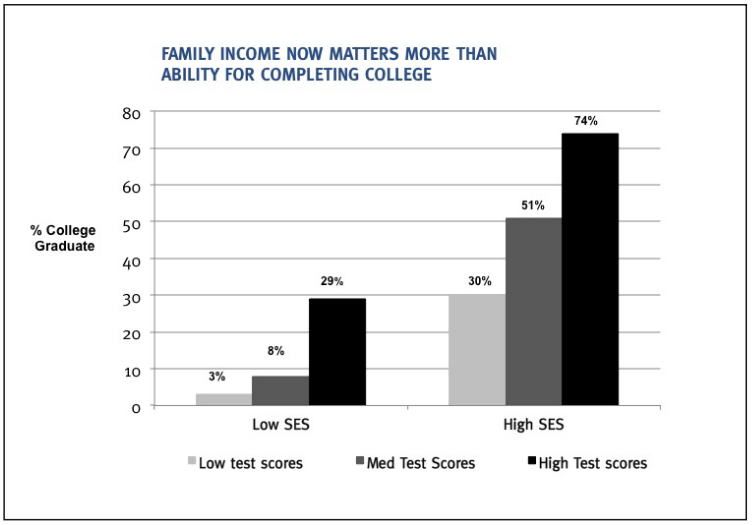
- Family dinners (and conversations about "how did your day go?") have been shown to predict children's success later in life, but the stresses of everyday life, especially for less educated single moms, have produced a growing gap in this indicator of family encouragement for children's development.
- Extracurricular activities were initiated in American schools more than a century ago, precisely as a way of inculcating what we now call "soft skills"—grit, teamwork, "stick-to-it-iveness"—and hard evidence confirms that extracurricular participation does have those effects, leading to greater success later in life. But "privatization" of extracurriculars in recent years (as exemplified by "pay to play") has increasingly deprived poor kids of these opportunities.

Growing Class Gaps In Family Dinners & Extracurriculars





These and many similar scissors graphs trace a growing *opportunity gap* between kids from affluent, educated homes and their poorer counterparts. Over time, these trends will add up to diminished rates of upward mobility. The final chart below underscores the current perversion of the American Dream. In a meritocracy, all smart kids would graduate from college at high rates and more frequently than less bright students. How rich their parents are would not in itself matter. In contrast, in America today dull rich kids graduate from college at slightly higher rates than bright poor kids.



The contrasts in these stories and charts accurately highlight the growing importance of social class differences in America, but that should not blind us to the continuing importance of racial disparities. Race and class have long overlapped in America. Most people of color have always started several rungs down on the ladder of opportunity, and they do today. But added to those longstanding consequences of the history of racism in America, in recent decades purely class disparities have grown, affecting poor kids of all races and appearing *within* each major racial category.

The shriveling of the American Dream of opportunity for all is economically unproductive, democratically ominous, and morally unjust.

- America's economic health has always been powered by a healthy middle class of productive employees and consumers and we can't afford to write off one third of our future workforce. Economists estimate that our failure to invest in today's poor kids will cost the rest of us $5 trillion over the course of their lifetime (attributable to criminal justice system costs, health care expenses, and the opportunity cost of wasting the talents of gifted poor kids).
- Over time, increasing numbers of Americans left completely outside "the system"— socially isolated, economically frustrated and politically alienated—contribute to political inequality and civic alienation, and could even pose challenges to America's democratic stability. [2]
- Most important, this opportunity gap is deeply unfair because it violates the core values of the American meritocracy and opportunity for all.

Fundamentally, this set of changes reflects a drastically diminished sense of shared destiny and mutual obligation. Two generations ago, when people used the expression "our kids," they meant our community's or our nation's children, but now the term has shriveled to refer only to our biological children. America never thrived in the past with such a narrow vision of the public weal, and we can't let it be our future.

This decreasing social mobility represents a perfect storm with multiple, interrelated causes, including: 1) the collapse of the white working-class nuclear family; 2) the unraveling of the social fabric and safety nets in working-class communities; 3) the rapidly increasing segregation of American society along class lines, and 4) increased economic insecurity among the working-class.

Growing up with two parents is now unusual in the white (as well as non white) working class, while two-parent families are normal and becoming more common among the upper middle class (both white and non white). Most Americans are unaware that the white working class family is today more fragile than the black family was at the time of the famous alarm-sounding 1965 "Report on the Negro Family" by Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

In the 1960s and 1970s, working class schools and neighborhoods had vibrant extracurricular offerings and strong social institutions, like the Catholic Church or Scouts or the Polish-American society or simply older neighbors. Those institutions, in effect, provided a "social safety net" that could help catch and sustain kids experiencing problems at home. Today, that array of institutions and the ranks of "assistant moms" have essentially collapsed in working class neighborhoods. Moreover, in that era poor kids were often living in mixed or moderate income neighborhoods and going to school with more affluent classmates.

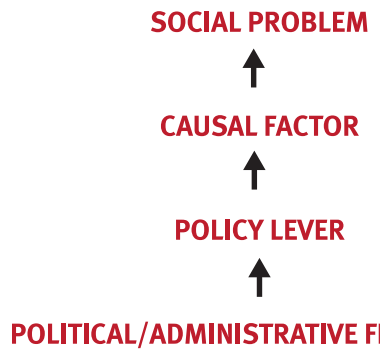
At the same time, kids from the upper third of American families are less likely to experience jarring developmental jolts (e.g., a family health problem, parental divorce, parental stress, an unwanted pregnancy, obesity), and much more likely than the bottom third to have "air bags" that cushion this jolt (e.g., their family hiring a tutor or a counselor, one of the parents taking time off from work to get the child back on track, arranging an unpaid internship, or even remodeling their house to cope with a special needs child).

The long economic stagnation for the lower half of the population (ever since the mid-1970s) has weakened the ability of working class families to invest time, energy, money, and love in their kids. As First Lady Laura Bush told Professor Putnam and her husband in a White House meeting: "George, if you don't know how long you're going to keep your house and your job, you have less energy to invest in the kids." Working class families are more tenuously attached to the job market and working class kids are ten times more likely than upper middle class kids to experience periods in which their families have no income; moreover, the working class family (prototypically a single-parent family) is far less likely to have savings or friends to buffer these economic shocks and support their kids.

In short, this problem is a "purple" problem. Parts of the problem (like the collapse of the working class family) one can see more clearly through red conservative lenses, but parts of the problem (like the long stagnation of working class wages) one can see more clearly through blue progressive lenses. Moreover, the ideal of equal opportunity has been widely shared across partisan and ideological divisions throughout our history. According to the latest polls, 95 percent of us say that "everyone in America should have equal opportunity to get ahead"—a level of consensus that is virtually never reached in contentious contemporary America. So the opportunity gap offers a chance for us to come together across our partisan polarization to restore the American Dream.

II. The policy equation

When approaching a social or policy problem, moving from cause to cure is not simple. In fact, policy-makers need to make a series of calculations as they consider alternative policies. The following chart helps us understand and frame these calculations:



Identifying an important *cause* of a problem (like the opportunity gap) is merely the first step. The next step is to identify some *efficacious policy lever* that could influence that cause. For example, family instability is generally agreed to be an important *cause* of the opportunity gap, but most experts across the ideological spectrum agree that it has proved hard to identify a "marriage promotion" policy that can reliably increase family stability. (See the families and parenting chapter for more details.) In other words, finding an important cause doesn't guarantee that we know how to fix the problem.

But even identifying a powerful policy lever that can alter an important cause of the opportunity gap does not end our search, because we also need to consider the *political and administrative feasibility* of that policy. For example, the extreme isolation of low income students in low income schools is another well-established cause of the opportunity gap. And in this case, careful evaluation of a program of cross-district busing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, showed that classroom integration can significantly raise the test scores of poor students without harming the scores of their rich classmates. Sounds like a terrific win-win: an *efficacious policy* to alter an *important cause* of the opportunity gap. However, despite these results, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg integration plan proved very controversial among suburban parents. The school board that had instituted the program was thrown out at the next election, and the successful integration policy was reversed.

This three-part policy analysis calls attention to the fact that in narrowing the opportunity gap, we should not be looking for perfection at any single stage, but rather looking for a policy initiative that might be *reasonably* feasible and *reasonably* efficacious in altering a *reasonably* important causal factor. We must weigh causality, efficacy, and feasibility all at once. The working group reports that follow are generally sensitive to all three of the steps in the policy analysis, though our expertise on *political/administrative feasibility* is less. What is politically or administratively feasible may well vary from community to community and may change over time, so policies cannot be mindlessly transferred from one to another, but lessons from one community about *causal importance* and *policy efficacy* may be highly relevant to other communities.

III. What are possible approaches for narrowing the opportunity gap?

Our Working Groups considered five important realms in which we could narrow the opportunity gap: family structure and parenting; early childhood; the K-12 years; community institutions and neighborhoods; and "on ramps" for success.

Concerted progress is possible in other domains, but these domains seemed ones where we could most advance the discussion. Two potential areas of interest are avoided here.

1. Successful economic and job development policies in communities are likely to have important positive effects on the local opportunity gap, but assessing such economic strategies was outside the scope of our expertise.

2. Though we discuss community colleges at some length, for the most part we halt our exploration at the doorstep to four-year post-secondary education, partly because we assess that by the time kids enter college, most of the gap has already grown full-size. To use a different metaphor, examining college tuition and other college policies—however important in absolute terms—is like assessing the results of a marathon by focusing on the last 200 yards of the race. In any event, college costs and college policies are outside the scope of our work.

Here is an introduction to why we examined these five areas and a tasting menu of promising approaches.

Family And Parenting:

We focused on strategies to improve family stability and effective parenting that undergirds children's success and yields lifelong advantages. The group emphasized the need for both economic changes (e.g., helping low income Americans enter the labor market and making their wages and hours more stable) and cultural changes (communicating broadly the importance of relationship stability and the sequence of events that predict children's economic success — graduate from high school, hold a full-time job or have a partner who does, and only have children if married and older than 21). The group recommended strategies to reduce unwanted and unplanned births by developing alternative appealing identities for low income girls besides being a young mom and provide better access to more effective forms of birth control. The group also recommended technological nudges to improve parenting.

Early Childhood:

Ages birth to five (especially the first two years) set the foundation for effective later learning and self-regulation and is the most promising period for investments, but America underinvests in these early years relative to most developed countries. Our working group recommended changes across four domains: parenting, early childhood education, economic security, and supports for parents such as paid leave. The working group advised high quality home visiting for first-time moms and noted strategies to ensure the provision of effective early childhood education. The group recommended changes to reduce food insecurity for low income children and provide increased economic stability to their parents.

The K-12 Years, Both In And Out Of School:

Schools and education embody the American Dream, but schools today are too often segregated by socioeconomic status and are places of unequal rather than equal opportunity. Our working group noted the importance of good teaching over physical plant or technology in equalizing opportunity and highlighted strategies to improve this teaching. The group advocated supplementing the K-12 curricula through extracurriculars, wraparound student support, tutoring, and a stronger school-to-work linkage. The group noted that accountability measures need to expand beyond mere test scores. They noted that charters writ large are not a panacea, but useful lessons from successful charter schools can be extracted for all schools. If school choice is offered, low income parents need quality schools to choose from and active supports to help them access these schools.

Neighborhoods And Communities:

Over the last several decades, we've witnessed an increase in the rich living in rich enclaves and the poor living in poor enclaves. Since adversity has

become more geographically concentrated, low income children are systematically exposed to fewer mentors, fewer economic opportunities, greater crime, and more toxic environments. This report explores how to change that broader community environment to help narrow the opportunity gap. The working group recommended strategies to reduce economic segregation through land trusts, more mixed income-housing through housing vouchers plus counseling, and economic development that promotes affordability. The group noted that the effects of segregation can be reduced through anchor institutions like hospitals, schools and police, and approaches like workforce development and workforce supports that help low-income residents obtain and keep jobs. The group also recommended strategies to reconnect disconnected low-income youth through more systematic mentoring and an increased role for religious institutions as community partners.

"On Ramps" For Success:

About 1 in 7 young adults (16-24) are both out-of-school and out-of-work. Our "on ramps" working group focused on strategies both to enable them to be more successful economically and to stem this problem for future cohorts. The group recommended a greater linking of the world of work and education (with earlier exposure to work internships for all), and revamping community colleges to make them easier institutions to navigate and from which to graduate. The group also recommended strategies to smooth transitions both between high school and community college and between community colleges and 4-year institutions. The group gave guidance on how to rethink community college "remediation" for inadequately prepared high school graduates.

These five baskets of policy suggestions are interconnected. Relevant reforms of *K-12 schools* cannot be considered in isolation from the starkly contrasting *neighborhoods* in which rich and poor kids live. *Early childhood education* appears to be most effective when combined with *parental coaching* and *home visiting*. Improved *mentoring* must be part of any strategy for lowering the dropout rate from *community colleges*. Some of these interconnections among our five baskets are discussed explicitly within the working group reports themselves, but we emphasize that the working group reports are meant to be read together. Few of our participants think there is a single magic bullet, so focusing only on any one basket (or a single working group report), while ignoring the wider web of causes and solutions, is likely to be ineffective and perhaps even counterproductive. We strongly believe that communities and groups will need an integrative approach that works across these different domains.

IV. Who's the audience we have in mind?

Reports like ours are often written by and for policy advisors to national leaders—presidential candidates, Congressional leaders, Cabinet officials, and so on. Our set of white papers, by contrast, is aimed primarily at a different audience of grassroots leaders and activists: state and local public officials, community foundations, state and local philanthropists, school and health officials, local civic, business, religious, and non-profit leaders. We target that audience for three related reasons.

First, American federalism is a great strength of our country, since states and localities—"laboratories of democracy," as Justice Brandeis famously put it—can pursue experimental policies and learn from one another. As we shall illustrate momentarily, major social reforms in this country have historically typically begun as state and local experiments. When they proved successful, such innovations have rapidly diffused horizontally to other states and localities and have risen vertically to be embodied in national policy.

Second, as we have emphasized, solutions to the opportunity gap are very likely to be holistic and interdisciplinary, involving cooperation and coordination among different agencies. That is easier to do at the state and local level than in Washington.

And finally, we live in an age of extreme, maybe

even unprecedented political polarization, stymieing efforts at addressing public problems in every sphere of life, including the opportunity gap. That polarization now extends to states and localities, but seems somewhat less intense and paralyzing locally than it is nationally. Local leaders can work in purple.

V. What do we hope will emerge from these reports?

The reason that grassroots leaders can be expected to play such a crucial role in narrowing the existing opportunity gaps is that they've surmounted such problems before. The period at the end of the 19th century – the Gilded Age – was a period very much like ours today. The Gilded Age was a time of high immigration, high political alienation, rapid technological change, and concentrated wealth.

Then, as now, new concentrations of wealth and corporate power raised questions about the real meaning of democracy. Then, as now, massive urban concentrations of impoverished ethnic minorities posed basic questions of social justice and social stability. Then, as now, the comfortable upper-middle class was torn between the seductive attractions of escape and the deeper demands of redemptive social solidarity.

Then, as now, new forms of commerce, a restructured workplace, and a new spatial organization of human settlement threatened older forms of solidarity. Then, as now, waves of immigration changed the complexion of America and seemed to imperil the *unum* in our *pluribus*. Then, as now, materialism, political cynicism, and a penchant for spectatorship rather than action seemed to thwart idealistic reformism. Then, as now, older strands of social solidarity were being abraded—even destroyed—by technological and economic and social change. Then, as now, the dominant public philosophy (then termed "social Darwinism") lauded selfishness as the prime virtue. Then as now, America had become more of an "I" society and less of a "we" society. Serious observers understood that the path from the past could not be retraced, but few saw clearly the path to a better future.

Enter some intrepid social reformers. They had national spokespeople like Teddy Roosevelt and Jane Addams, but most of the creative innovators worked at the state and local level. Instead of embracing the trend toward ideological individualism, reformers saw the problems as societal flaws, not individual failings. Growing numbers of Americans began to recognize the problem, and gradually many began to seek solutions. Among the harbingers of change was a book by a Danish-American journalist *How the Other Half Lives*. As a photojournalist, Jacob Riis set out to describe the plight of poor tenement dwellers in the slums of the Lower East Side of Manhattan, aiming his words at the affluent readers of the Silk Stocking district on the Upper East Side. Enough of his readers were moved by this desecration of the American Dream that political reformers in both parties (TR chief among them) moved to institute practical improvements, beginning with clean water and clean streets. As this movement spread, it crossed party lines and crossed the continent.

In the Progressive Era, social entrepreneurs often experimented with home-grown ideas, such as social and fraternal organizations (Rotary, the Moose, the Kiwanis) or extracurriculars like high school band and football (as alluded to earlier). They also imported innovative ideas from abroad: e.g., kindergartens from Germany; settlement houses and the Boy Scouts from England.

Progressive Era innovation was galvanized by a conscious practitioner-academic dialogue. Dialogues among business and community leaders, academics, and political officials in places like Toledo and Galveston led to some of the most successful and enduring innovations. Chicago's Hull House, founded by Jane Addams, fostered dialogue between the worlds she seamlessly spanned: the Hull House community and leading academics at University of Chicago. These conversations spread powerful, successful ideas and won national attention. For example, Addams and Florence Kelley partnered with

academics on the 1909 White House Conference on Children which led to the U.S. Children's Bureau and to urban reform policies.

The Progressive Era included many reforms (not all of them effective or even beneficent)—too many to list here. But the single important—or at least the most instructive for our times—was aimed at the opportunity gap of that era.

The High School was *invented* by American reformers around 1910, beginning in small towns in the Midwest. Until that time, nowhere in the world had any community decided that all kids in town would get—just because they were kids in town—a free, comprehensive, four-year secondary education. Prior to that, only those families who could afford it obtained secondary education. But beginning in small towns in the Midwest and spreading out from there, a grassroots "High School movement" demanded that all children, regardless of their family background, have the opportunity to earn a secondary education.

Our challenge now is to be as creative and experimental as American social reformers were at the beginning of the century.

This was a hard sell. Reformers had to convince the wealthier folks in town (whose kids likely had already received a private secondary education) that they should pay higher taxes so that all the other kids in town could get a free secondary education. Slowly but surely, citizens in these towns and then in towns and cities across American agreed to invest in other people's kids. And it turned out to be the best public policy decision America has ever made.

That decision – to make sure everyone in America had a chance to get a free secondary education – meant our workforce became the best trained in the world. That huge boost in productivity accounted for most of America's economic growth of the twentieth century. At the same time, that decision also leveled the playing field for all kids across America, raising social mobility for at least half a century. This grassroots-born innovation combined two values that economists sometimes tell us are incompatible—it increased both efficiency (improving national productivity for all) and equity (helping the less well-off even more). It renewed the American promise from the bottom up.

Our challenge now is to be as creative and experimental as the people who dreamed up the idea of free secondary education and to be as convincing to our fellow citizens of the need to make change in our society. In the Progressive Era, breakthrough ideas did not come from Washington. There was a national conversation happening about these larger issues of opportunity and education, but the role of the national conversation was to give oxygen to local reformers across the U.S. and thus to breathe life into the reforms that began to equalize opportunity in America.

The recommendations arising from our Working Groups, also based on collaboration between academics and practitioners, represent one strand of a change strategy, a menu of options for local innovators. Our Working Groups constitute one element in a broader caravan moving to address the growing opportunity gap. For example, a network of community foundations is committed to local experimentation and innovation in reducing the opportunity gap in their areas. Many large city mayors in the Cities of Opportunity Task Force and others in smaller cities are increasingly focused on this issue. A commission of Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute worked out a bipartisan consensus for federal action on increasing mobility [Opportunity, Responsibility and Security] and Convergence is also undertaking a similar agenda through the Economic Mobility and Poverty Project. The Urban Institute, supported by the Gates Foundation, has launched the U.S. Partnership on Mobility from Poverty to advance breakthrough solutions to the opportunity gap. America's Promise

and many other grassroots groups are increasingly focused on this issue. We anticipate that other supportive initiatives will spring up in the near future.

We aimed mostly to limit our recommendations to interventions for which there is good evidence of effectiveness. But we note that free high schools in America were never subjected to rigorous quantitative evaluation before they were introduced, so our list of potential approaches should not limit the imaginations and creativity of local social entrepreneurs committed to address this growing opportunity gap.

We don't know for sure what the equivalent innovation for the 21st century will be—universal early childhood education, or universal college (2-year or 4-year), or some other bold innovation as yet unimagined. But our set of working group white papers is designed to help stimulate an intense period of civic renewal and policy experimentation that will begin to narrow the opportunity gap that threatens America today. We are encouraged that our predecessors have successfully done precisely this before, when faced with a similar challenge. We recognize the value of learning lessons from abroad, but our aspiration is not be make America Sweden, but to do in today's America what Americans have done before.

This report is intended as a guide for civic and community innovators. We hope that is a useful introduction to the most strategically powerful, practically effective, and potentially feasible approaches to reducing the opportunity gap between rich kids and poor kids in communities across this land.

For more information on the working group process, visit www.theopportunitygap.com

Endnote

[1] RD Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015). The evidence and full sources for the assertions and arguments of this introduction may be found in that book.

[2] "An inert and atomized mass of alienated and estranged citizens, disconnected from social institutions, might under normal circumstances pose only a minimal threat to political stability, with any menace muted by the masses' very apathy. Government under such circumstances might not be very democratic, but at least it would be stable. But under severe economic or international pressures—such as the pressures that overwhelmed Europe and America in the 1930s—that "inert" mass might suddenly prove highly volatile and open to manipulation by anti-democratic demagogues at the ideological extremes." Robert D. Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

PROMOTING STABLE FAMILIES AND EFFECTIVE PARENTS

Isabel Sawhill and Robert D. Putnam

This chapter attempts to be faithful to a conversation involving the following experts about what has been demonstrated to work in this domain, but not every participant or author necessarily agrees with every word or sentence in the chapter.

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Family Stability and Parenting Important for Youth Opportunity

Children who grow up in stable families with effective parents reap numerous advantages throughout their lives.

Conversely, children who grow up in unstable families with ineffective parents face many disadvantages: they receive less parental time, are exposed to greater financial and emotional stress, are less confident, act out more, do less well in school, and have more premarital sex.[1]

The stability of parental relationships is more important than whether the parents are married.[2] Sometimes cohabiting unions can provide that stability to children. Still, partly because of its unique legal and cultural status, marriage is markedly more likely to provide children with the stability and emotional security they need to thrive, compared to cohabiting unions, which tend to be less stable and less committed.[3] None of this is in any way meant to be disrespectful to the many single parents who are doing the best job they can.

Two-parent families are more economically secure, because they have two potential incomes and are better able to save and accumulate assets together. Kids raised with two active parents are exposed to less stress, because such parents can share parenting tasks when they are sick, stressed out, or have work conflicts. Their children also grow up with the wisdom and example of two different adults in their

lives. For these kinds of reasons, children with absent fathers, especially boys, are less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to participate in risky behaviors, have difficulties in socio-emotional development, and more at risk of ultimately having mental-health problems as adults.[4]

Parenting[5] is also critical for nurturing youth's success. Children who have been read to at young ages and exposed to a wider vocabulary are better prepared at kindergarten.[6] All children can endure periodic stress and other adverse events, but exposure to high and persistent levels of trauma and stress can alter the brain and negatively impact later socio-emotional development.[7] As Reeves, Sawhill, and Howard explain in analyzing differences of parenting between high and low SES children, "research to date suggests that parenting accounts for around one-third of the gaps in development".[8]

A growing class gap

During the last 30-40 years, family structure and parenting have changed along class lines in ways that greatly advantage rich children and imperil low-income children. As Sara McLanahan, one of the members of this working group, has put it, these two groups of children and their families increasingly face "diverging destinies."[9]

In the upper-third of America, the traditional family of the 1950s has been transformed into a neo-traditional family in which the wife now works at a law firm rather than minding the kitchen.[10] These families are stable: the divorce rate among this group has actually dropped since the 1950s.[11] And individuals with college degrees still wait to have children until after they get married.[12]

The story differs dramatically for children in less-educated families: they grow up in complex, chaotic, and destabilizing environments.[13] More than twice as many children are raised by a single parent as were 40 years ago, although a majority of these parents are cohabiting at the time of the birth.[14] But almost half of these cohabiting relationships have ended by the child's 5th birthday.[15] And low-income mothers and fathers are far more likely than more affluent couples to have relationships and children with different partners (what experts call "multiple-partner fertility"), leading to large reductions in paternal time with the collective set of children.

Children growing up in stable families with effective parents reap advantages throughout their lives: greater parental time, less financial and emotional stress, greater confidence, better school success, and less premarital sex.

Over the last generation, richer and poorer children face 'diverging destinies' due to class-based changes in family structure and parenting caused both by economic and cultural changes.

There are also large, growing, and consequential divides based on socioeconomic status in parenting behaviors, among them teaching children to be self-reliant, and exposing them to a wider vocabulary. More-affluent families have increased the time they spend with their kids, the frequency of family dinners, and the number of investments they make in them, including camp, extracurriculars, and lessons. Low-income families can't keep up.[16]

In essence, a divide is emerging in family structure and parenting behaviors along class lines, with college graduates on one side of the line, and those with less on the other. Such divides can significantly impact a child's prospects for success. To give all kids a fair chance of success, we must consider ways to encourage healthier patterns of family formation and stability for children, and we must support and enable more effective parenting.

Why are these class gaps growing?

Scholars, pundits and politicians have debated whether these growing gaps are caused by economic changes in the prospects for less-educated, working-class Americans, or by cultural changes that both raised the bar for marriage, and have made sex and childbearing outside of marriage far more acceptable. Our group believed that this is a false choice. Both matter even though determining their relative importance is difficult.[17]

The economic causes include the loss of stable, well-paid jobs caused by technological change and global competition. In addition, skyrocketing rates of imprisonment in the 1980s and 1990s,[18] reduced the supply of marriageable men, especially for less-educated women. And young women with little education and few good economic or marriage prospects often chose to have babies as teenagers and outside of marriage. [19] Although the teen birth rate has fallen sharply since the early 1990s, women in their twenties continue to have children outside of marriage, the majority of them unplanned. Finally, economic pressures and financial instability stress relationships, especially low-income ones. Andrew Cherlin, a member of our working group, argues that the breakdown of the family is related to rising inequality, based on an historical examination of these trends. [20]

We should make the most effective forms of contraception freely available to reduce unplanned pregnancies.

The cultural causes are numerous, too. Some in our group point to the rising standards for marriage, which have affected the marital behavior of all Americans, rich and poor alike. While marriage used to be the cornerstone it has now become the capstone. Accordingly, the middle class marry at high rates but delay marriage until they are well established in their careers. Meanwhile, the poor continue to value marriage, but set a high bar both economically and in terms of relationship quality. Thus, they delay marriage and sometimes fail to marry at all.

Others in our group point to the erosion of a strong marriage culture; the much greater acceptance of premarital sex and of childbearing outside of marriage; the withering of civil society and religion in working-class and poor communities; the lack of fidelity, trust, and commitment between young men and women, especially in poor and working-class communities: these factors have all contributed powerfully to the growing family divide.

This report is designed to tell policymakers, non-profit groups, religious groups, and philanthropic groups what they need to know to influence family stability and parenting behavior, and to help them provide economic conditions that make families more stable. We ultimately hope to influence the behavior of parents or future parents, so that they can help their kids grow up and succeed.

Policy Goals

Our Working Group saw five promising avenues for increasing family stability and children's opportunities: 1) economic changes; 2) cultural changes; 3) reducing unplanned pregnancies; 4) fostering better relationships; and 5) improved parenting.

Economic changes

In the economic realm, our group focused on three broad strategies:[21]

1) Pursuing **policies that lead to more stable employment with higher wages and help disadvantaged individuals gain entry into the labor market**. Such policies could include: raising and indexing the minimum wage nationally or locally; investing significantly in restoring American infrastructure to help create more jobs; strengthening collective bargaining rights;[22] and providing wage subsidies to low-income individuals. Working-group attendees noted that the Career Academies program, by providing young men in high school with employment-related skills and connecting them to the world of work, incidentally increased their rates of marriage.[23]

2) Pursuing **policies that are family-friendly**. The group advocates policies such as paid family leave, paid sick leave, greater advance notice of work hours in a week[24], and not requiring workers to be on call for unpaid hours. These policies would have greatest impact if mandated nationwide, but could still have impact at a state or local level, or if adopted voluntarily by employers.

3) Undertaking **family-friendly tax policies**. The group mentioned three specific policies:

   a. Extending the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to single individuals, including noncustodial parents, but requiring those individuals to provide child support.

   b. Changing the tax-and-transfer system to encourage family stability by removing marriage penalties for middle or low-income Americans.[25] The group noted that these changes are very expensive and have very small effects on behavior.[26] For these reasons, they may not be cost-effective.

   c. Making it easier for low wage workers to get quality childcare.[27]

Changing norms and culture

The group recommended a large-scale social marketing campaign that uses the media, and especially social media, to change social norms. Such campaigns have been surprisingly effective in changing American social norms on such apparently intractable issues as teen pregnancy, secondhand smoke, gay rights, designated drivers, and organ donation. [28]

The group identified four messages to promote in this campaign: 1) Children require a stable, committed partnership between their parents; 2) Parents should follow the "success sequence," which involves first graduating high school, then getting a job, then getting married, and then having children (a sequence that creates a 98-percent chance of avoiding poverty);[29] 3) Partners should not have a baby until they really want one;[30] and 4) low-income single parents raising unplanned children reduce the child's later chances for success (for example, likelihood of graduating from high school or college, escaping poverty, and being married).

In addition to a media-based social marketing campaign organized around these messages, it would help to involve schools, churches, civic organizations and leaders from all sectors in promoting these or similar messages.

Reducing unplanned pregnancies

Half of all pregnancies and 73% of pregnancies among 15-29 year-old unmarried women are unplanned, according to U.S. government data on over 20,000 men and women of reproductive age in the U.S.[31] These rates of unplanned pregnancy are much higher among poor women, among racial minorities, and among the least educated. Unmarried college-educated women in their twenties, have unintended pregnancy rates less than one-third that of unmarried high school drop outs.

Unwanted or mistimed births are a source of family instability. Women who already have a child are poorer marriage prospects than those who remain childless until they find a long-term partner. And women who wait until they are older, better educated, and in a more secure economic position before having children form more stable relationships and make better parents even if they never marry.[32]

In addition to the social marketing campaign and new messages discussed above, our group proposed a number of other ways of reducing unplanned pregnancies: Providing a full array of the most effective FDA-approved contraceptive methods, all available at no cost to the woman (as called for in the Affordable Care Act).[33] Programs in Colorado (Colorado Family Planning Initiative), Iowa (Iowa Initiative to Reduce Unintended Pregnancies) and St. Louis (CHOICE)[34] have been associated with big decreases in unwanted pregnancies.[35]

Offering these services on the same day of the visit or immediately after the birth of a child to women not wanting an additional pregnancy. Educating or

retraining doctors, including paraprofessionals, on how to provide long-acting reversible contraception (IUDs and implants), along with its safety and much greater effectiveness relative to other forms of contraception.

Fostering better relationships

Encouraging Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood: The first-generation of programs to promote marriage had limited effectiveness,[36] partly because the participants attended inconsistently. Nonetheless, some members of our group believed that experimenting with the next generation of marriage-and-responsible-fatherhood programs[37] might be worthwhile. Any such effort should build on lessons learned in recent research,[38] focus on how to increase paternal involvement in the child's life, and teach participants how to avoid cycling through a series of relationships in the quest to find a partner.[39] These programs can also communicate a message that resonates deeply: by sliding into marriage or cohabitation, young adults are "losing the option to choose," which makes it ultimately harder to find the right partner, succeed economically, and parent well.

Providing Information to single parents about the impact of their love lives on their children: For those low-income families who already have out-of-wedlock children, we recommend further evaluation and use of programs like Within My Reach,[40] which trains single parents on the importance of safe relationships, wise partner choices, and the impact of romantic and sexual relationships on one's children. Even if a single parent regards the other biological parent of her/his child as unsuitable for marriage, they may often be unaware that churning through new, prospective partners can impact the safety and development of their children.

Meaningful identities: Many low-income women have limited economic prospects and few meaningful identities beyond motherhood. As a result, they are drawn to the sense of purpose that having a lovable baby provides. In addition to improving women's education and economic opportunities,[41] our group also discussed strategies for strengthening alternative identities for teen and twenty-somethings. These might include national or community-service projects[42] or internships that involve caring for another, such as a patient with AIDS, Alzheimer's, or a disability. These service or internship programs could be delivered by government, non-profit, or religious groups.

Improved parenting

Until recently, more parenting programs failed than succeeded.[43] But a new wave of promising studies is showing that light-touch, low-cost approaches can meaningfully change specific behaviors. Our group suggested four approaches: parental programs; community-based group programs; behavioral nudges; and leveraging social media.

Parental programs: Although many parental-coaching programs[44] have not proven effective, a few have shown signs of promise. In working with the most vulnerable parents, for example, the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP), has reduced harsh parenting, improved literacy practices, and boosted child vocabulary. The program exhibits high attrition rates, however, and tries to change multiple parental behaviors at once, which may undermine its effectiveness.

Some believe that nudges such as goal-setting and timely reminders could increase attendance in such programs, and that they should focus more on the growing class gaps in parental time with children, family dinners, and pro-social parenting behaviors. Whatever is done, evaluations should be conducted to measure the impact of such programs. The group also recommends that communities experiment with universal parenting classes, which parents could decline if they wished.[45]

The group also recommends that parenting programs address co-parenting and improved relationships between mothers and fathers, including greater involvement of fathers (especially non-resident fathers) in their children's lives.[46] The group considers

it necessary to convey to single mothers that they are doing damage to their children if they keep these fathers out of parenting, unless, of course, those fathers are violent or engage in substance abuse.

Programs in community group settings: Low-income and less-educated parents are generally socially isolated and thirst for greater interaction.[47] By delivering parenting programs in groups, parents are more likely to change behaviors or adhere to commitments made when reinforced by the group.[48]

Behavioral nudges: Behavioral economists argue that providing information on norms, or making small changes in how options are framed, can have big impacts on behavior at small cost.[49] Most of these "nudges" have been tried in other areas, but some of them have already shown their merit in parenting. For example, asking children to pick out books at a book fair significantly increases their test scores and the likelihood of their reading the books.[50] Similarly, if teachers text parents to let them know how students are doing,[51] individually and compared with other students, rates of homework completion and school attendance can be significantly increased at minimal cost.[52]

Given how cheap parental nudges are to implement, we recommend greater experimentation, especially with programs that ask parents to make upfront commitments and then provide participating parents with information daily or weekly about how well they have met their commitments, and how they compare to others. Such experimentation should target low-income parents who want to change a specific parenting behavior but are having difficulty in following through. These interventions should focus on getting parents to implement one positive behavior at a time for a month before moving on to another behavior. As one example, a promising Chicago-based intervention (PACT[53]) that lent families iPads with the Storytime application for six weeks doubled parental reading time to kids. Beyond the initial investment in the iPads, the program cost very little.

We should help young adults understand the importance of relationship stability for their children and encourage young women to forge identities beyond becoming a mother. And we should experiment with more light-touch, low-cost nudges to improve parenting.

Another promising nudge might be enlisting a non-profit group to develop *parent scorecards* (in conjunction with academics) where parents who wish could receive regular metrics on how they are doing compared to others of similar education or income. These scorecards could help reinforce positive behaviors.

Leverage social media: Social networks can powerfully connect isolated low-income parents, despite their different time schedules. MoMba is an interactive smartphone app being evaluated that links first-time low-income mothers, while helping them access parenting support and mental health assistance, and rewards them for participating.[54] Other promising interventions might include texting participating parents daily at 4:30 PM reminding them to text or phone their kids and discuss what they are doing and see how their day is going. Parents who wish to be involved might also get rotating reminders of specific behaviors to engage in, such as: provide unconditional love to your child; turn off the TV; read to your kids; talk to your kids; help kids get a good night's sleep; help kids eat healthily; provide consistent and effective child discipline; set high expectations; provide kids with routines in infancy and toddlerhood; and monitor kids' behavior.[55] Similar efforts should also be developed to encourage fathers, particularly nonresident fathers, to read to their children, because studies show that such

involvement increases children's cognitive development, especially language.[56]

Conclusion

Robust research supports what we have long known intuitively: for kids to have strong chances of success, they need to be born into stable, loving, and economically secure families and to parents who can help them develop socially and emotionally. In the U.S., children are more likely to enjoy this stability and support in married families. To make this a reality for as many families as possible, we advocate working to change social norms around family planning and stability, providing information and tools that parents and future parents need, and giving low-income young adults meaningful identities and economic prospects, and encouraging young adults, especially young men, to treat their partners with respect and fidelity. By focusing on these tasks, we can help reduce the growing opportunity gap that is denying the promise of the American Dream to so many of our kids.

Endnotes

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4 S McLanahan, L Tach and D Schneider, "The Causal Effects of Father Absence," *Annual Review of Sociology* 39: 399-427 (2013).

5 Parenting includes a wide-range of actions and behaviors, from *keeping a child safe*, to *doing tasks for the child* like driving them or feeding them (what Robert Putnam calls "diaper time") to *developmental activities* (e.g., reading to them, teaching them skills, providing books for them, spending on camp or lessons), to *providing a role model*, *to parenting styles* like the warmth, interactivity, sensitivity, or discipline in how a parent communicates with a child.

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14 R Reeves, "How to Save Marriage in America," (2014).

15 McLanahan, "Family Instability and Complexity," p. 117; I Sawhill, *Generation Unbound* (2014).

16 Duncan & Murnane, *Whither Opportunity?*, pp.11, 187-205; Putnam, *Our Kids* (2015), Ch. 3.

17 In addition the inter-relationship of the cultural and economic is complicated. For example, Lerman and Wilcox argue that married men do better in the labor force, suggesting how cultural changes could in turn influence economic outcomes. RJ Lerman and WB Wilcox, "For Richer, For Poorer," (2014).

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20 AJ Cherlin, *Labor's Love Lost: The Rise and Fall of the Working-Class Family in America* (NY: Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2014).

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22 In the past, there is some evidence that union density, collective bargaining rights, and the associated collective norms appear to have lifted wages for union members and non-union members alike. See for example, B Western and J Rosenfeld, "Unions, Norms, and the Rise in U.S. Wage Inequality," *American Sociological Review* 76(4):513-537 (August 2011).

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24 San Francisco, with the Retail Workers Bill of Rights, became the first in the nation in November 2014 to require retail chains to give two weeks' notice of work hours to employees or face penalties that provided "predictability" pay to employees. But this problem extends well beyond merely retail employees. Research suggests that these irregular schedules are especially damaging to children's cognitive development in the first three years. W-J Han, "Maternal Nonstandard Work Schedules and Child Cognitive Outcomes," *Child Development* 76(1):137-154 (January 2005). See also, N Scheiber, "The Perils of Ever-Changing Work Schedules Extend to Children's Well-Being," *New York Times*, August 12, 2015.

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27 This topic is discussed in the Early Childhood chapter.

28 See National Campaign to Prevent Teenage and Unplanned Pregnancy.

29 Family stability working group participant Brad Wilcox has proposed a National Campaign to promote the success sequence. See WB Wilcox and R Lerman, "For Richer, For Poorer: How Family Structures Economic Success in America," (American Enterprise Institute, 2014).

30 For example, Sawhill refers to "5 inconvenient truths that young adults need to know", including: 1) the likelihood of pregnancy using a condom alone for 5 years is 63%. Use the pill – or even better – an IUD; 2) An early unplanned birth affects a child's success later in life; 3) Cohabitation is not a substitute for marriage; 4) Later marriages are more stable than early ones, so waiting is a good idea; 5).Children are expensive – expect to spend about $500,000 to $1 million per child. This social marketing campaign could also focus on the most effective means of contraception for interested women. [I Sawhill and J Venator, "Reducing Unintended Pregnancies for Low-Income Women," in M Kearney and B Harris (eds.), *Policies to Address Poverty in America* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2014).]

31 For more detail, see Sawhill, Generation Unbound, Brookings, 2014. Some believe that the data cited above do not capture the ambiguity that many women feel in responding to a question about whether their pregnancy was planned or unplanned, wanted or unwanted. Others believe that the government data is an underestimate of lack of planning because of the inevitable bonding that occurs after a child is born and the approbation that attaches to labelling a child that is already born as unwanted. A Thomas, "Unintended Pregnancy and Public Policy," *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics, and Public Policy* 26(2):501-532 (2012); M Zolna and LD Lindberg, "Unintended Pregnancy: Incidence and Outcomes Among Young Adult Unmarried Women in the United States, 2001 and 2008," (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2012); Q Karpilow, J Manlove, I Sawhill and A Thomas, "The Role of Contraception in Preventing Abortion, Nonmarital Childbearing, and Child Poverty," Paper presented at APPAM, November 2013. *On the latter, see*: P England, K Edin et al., "Forming Fragile Families: Was the Baby Planned, Unplanned or In Between?" in England & Edin (eds.), *Unmarried Couples with Children,* 2009; Putnam, *Our Kids*, 2015.

32 Rates of pregnancy out-of-wedlock among 25-29 year old women have nearly doubled since 1980 [from 34.0 per 1000 girls to 67.2 in 2012] and most of these births are not to stable relationships. Moreover, misinformation, underusage and misusage of contraceptives abounds. Over half of the pregnancies reported by mothers as unintended were due to non-use of contraception during month of conception, and a further 43% occurred from inconsistent use of contraception. Only 5% of unintended pregnancies happened despite consistent use of contraception. *On rates of out of wedlock births*, see: US Census Bureau, Table FAM2.A Births to Unmarried Women: Birth rates for Unmarried Women by Age of Mother, 1980–2013." On *misinformation regarding pregnancies*, see: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "Prepregnancy Contraceptive Use Among Teens with Unintended Pregnancies Resulting in Live Births — Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), 2004–2008," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* 61(02);25-29 (January 20, 2012); K Kaye, K Suellentrop & C Sloup, "The Fog Zone: Misperceptions, Magical Thinking, and Ambivalence Put Young Adults at Risk for Unplanned Pregnancy," (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2009). *On rates of unintended pregnancies with consistent contraception use*, see: RB Gold et al., "Next Steps for America's Family Planning Program: Leveraging the Potential of Medicaid and Title X in an Evolving Health Care System," (New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2009).

33 We understand that this policy recommendation may be controversial. Many believe that abstinence is the best choice, especially for younger teens. But abstinence efforts have had limited success, and are both not very realistic for young adults in their late teens or twenties and unlikely to stem the rising number of out-of-wedlock births to low-income parents. Moreover, government involvement in the fertility of poor women or women of color has a shameful history around forced or coerced

permanent sterilization, conducted through prisons, among Native American women, or in the South among African-Americans. What we propose here is fundamentally different. We seek to offer poor women and women of color the best access and advice about contraception, access that more affluent women routinely use. We seek to ensure that less affluent women can choose whether to use these contraceptives to better time their childbearing. Where women elect to implant contraceptives, which permits them to return to fertility faster than with other contraception, such as the pill, these would be reversible at no cost. [*For a discussion of forced sterilization in California* see: A Stern, "Sterilized in the Name of Public Health: Race, Immigration and Reproductive Control in Modern California," *American Journal of Public Health* 95(7):1128-1138 (2005).] It is worth noting that in the St. Louis CHOICE program, where about half the participants were African-American (reflecting the population of the St. Louis region), free contraception coupled with quality health counseling brought rates of unintended pregnancies among African Americans and white women into parity.

34 In St. Louis CHOICE for example, those women opting to use a contraceptive shot or long-acting reversible contraceptives [LARCs] (like implantable IUDs) had unwanted pregnancy rates of less than 1% after 3 years and those using the pill, a contraceptive ring or patch had unwanted pregnancy rates of approximately 9% after 3 years. [See Sawhill, *Generation Unbound, 2014.*] In the Colorado experiment, expanded access to LARCs caused a 27% drop in births from 2009-2011 to unmarried disadvantaged women under age 25. [S Ricketts, G Klingler and R Schwalberg, "Game Change in Colorado: Widespread Use of Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives and Rapid Decline in Births among Young, Low-Income Women," *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 46(3):125-132 (September 2014).] We also think policy makers would benefit from a study that aimed to get low-income teens and twenty-something women to come into centers for free counselling and contraceptives to see how the success of such an effort pitched to the broader population compared with the success of St. Louis CHOICE that targeted women already entering family planning clinics.

35 These programs offered low-income teens and twenty-somethings freely available choices of contraceptives and counseling, including IUDs (freely removable), which lower the cumulative risk of pregnancy dramatically more than other kinds of contraception. For example, the risk of pregnancy during 5 years of use is estimated to be 63% for condoms vs. 37% for the pill vs. 1-4% for various forms of IUD. So if a large fraction of women decided to use IUDs, it would dramatically change the default, even if they were active sexually, from significant numbers of births out-of-wedlock *while using birth control*, to extremely few. The IUDs would change the default and women would almost always not get pregnant unless they actively decided to stop using the IUD. [See analysis in Sawhill, *Generation Unbound*, 2014.]

36 For the limited effectiveness of programs to promote marriage (funded under the George W. Bush administration), see MD Johnson, "Government-Supported Healthy Marriage Initiatives Are Not Associated with Changes in Family Demographics, 2014: A Comment on Hawkins, Amato, and Kinghorn (2013)," *Family Relations* 63(2):300-304 (2014).

37 For example, Barack Obama has proposed that unmarried fathers receive parenting-time orders while child-support orders are established, so that society acknowledges that fathers' contributions to their children extend beyond their wallets. [RB Mincy, M Jethwani & S Klempin, *Failing Our Fathers: Confronting the Crisis of Economically Vulnerable Nonresident Fathers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).] Many studies show that nonresident fathers who spend time with their children are also more likely to support their children financially, though there is mixed evidence on which comes first." [L Nepomnyaschy, "Child Support and Father-Child Contact: Testing Reciprocal Pathways," *Demography* 44(1): 93-112 (2007).] It is worth also looking at lessons learned from the ongoing MDRC Building Bridges and Bonds (B3) evaluation of responsible fatherhood programming.

38 PA Cowan & CP Cowan, "Controversies in Couple Relationship Education (CRE): Overlooked Evidence and Implications for Research and Policy," *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 20(4):362-383 (2014); E Lundquist, J Hsueh et al., "A family-strengthening program for low-income families: Final impacts from the Supporting Healthy Marriage evaluation," OPRE Report 2014-09A (Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2014). The next generation of programs will be more focused on parent and child outcomes and measuring the impact of curricular variation and innovation from site to site.

39 For example, PA Cowan, CP Cowan and V Knox, "Marriage and Fatherhood Programs", *The Future of Children* 20(2):205-230 (Fall 2010); RG Wood, Q Moore, et al., "The Long-term Effects of Building Strong Families: A Relationship Skills Education Program for Unmarried Parents," OPRE Report 2012-28A (2012); J Miller Gaubert, D Gubits et al., "The Supporting Healthy Marriage Evaluation: Final Implementation Findings," OPRE Report 2012-12 (2012). The Working Group is also hopeful that program redesign could increase program effectiveness by increasing consistent attendance using some of the tools suggested below in the "behavioral nudges" section of up-front goal setting with timely reminders on fulfillment of those commitments.

40 Within My Reach, designed for women on TANF but relevant for many single parents, provides secondary prevention and could have significant impact on women sliding into motherhood.

41 Kearney and Levine suggest that improving women's sense of economic opportunity might decrease non-martial childbearing, perhaps through greater on-ramps and publicizing this opportunity. See Kearney and Levine, "Income Inequality And Early Non-Marital Childbearing" 2011.

42 One promising example is Wyman's Teen Outreach Program that aims to instill teen leadership through transformative community service.

43 F Furstenberg, "The Challenges of Finding Causal Links between Family Educational Practices and Schooling Outcomes," in Duncan & Murnane, *Whither Opportunity?,* 2011.

44 Parenting programs attempt to impart the skills necessary to be good parents, either through one-on-one coaching or through classes that can cover topics like dealing with stress, creating positive learning environments, effective discipline, proper expectations, appropriate supervision, creating a routine, or other topics. In the case of Nurse Family Partnership, they use specially trained nurses visiting at-risk first-time mothers at home during pregnancy and their first few years post-birth. The nurses follow a highly specific curriculum that focuses on helping and supporting the mother with her pregnancy and delivery, and the growth and development of her child.

45 An example is the FAST (Families and Schools Together) initiative that has been tried broadly in the UK as well as other countries.

46 Some studies show that nonresident fathers who receive co-parenting support from the mothers are much more likely to visit their teenage and pre-school children than nonresident fathers with no such support. Higher visitation also appears to make the fathers more responsive parents. Mincy et al., *Failing Our Fathers*, (Oxford University Press, 2014).

47 One demonstration of this is the 27 hours of counseling that couples on average spent in the George W. Bush-funded "Strengthening Healthy Marriage" initiative.

48 This lies behind much of the effectiveness of Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers.

49 RH Thaler and CR Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (NY: Penguin Books, 2009).

50 See for example: RL Allington et al., "Addressing Summer Reading Setback among Economically Disadvantaged Elementary Students," *Reading Psychology* 31(5):411-427 (2010).

51 Kraft and Rogers in an experiment in a summer credit recovery program in large urban school district found that weekly teacher to parent text raised the percentage of students getting summer credit from 85% to 91%, and it appeared to work by increasing parent-to-student communication. MA Kraft and T Rogers, "The Underutilized Potential of Teacher-to-Parent Communication: Evidence from a Field Experiment," (HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series, 2014). Having parents receive text messages when children had not completed academic assignments led to improvement in student GPA and test scores. See P Bergman, "Parent-Child Information Frictions and Human Capital Investment: Evidence from a Field Experiment," (self-published, 2012)

52 Unpublished work of Raj Chande, Simon Burgess and Todd Rogers.

53 In PACT, the treatment group of low-income parents got information on the importance of educational play, made commitments to spend more educational time with their kids, and received daily texts reminding them of this goal and the time spent with their kids in prior weeks. The control group of mothers was simply lent iPads loaded with the Storytime application. S Mayer, A Kalil, S Gallegos and P Oreopoulos, "The PACT Study," (Behavioral Insights and Parenting Lab, University of Chicago, Harris School of Public Policy, n.d.), accessed August 18, 2015.

54 S Seger, "Researchers Explore Smartphone App to Combat Depression among First-Time, Low-Income Mothers" (New Haven, CT: Yale School of Public Health, June 25, 2012).

55 Ron Ferguson of Harvard's Kennedy School is pursuing something analogous through the Achievement Gap Initiative's Parent group for parents of kids ages 0-3. While Ferguson does not focus on social networking or text reminders, he calls his list the Fundamental Five behaviors. He believes parents of children 0-3 should: 1) Maximize loving responsiveness and minimize stress; 2) Talk, sing, and gesture a lot; 3) Use number games and rhythm; 4) Enable and encourage three-dimensional competencies; and 5) Cultivate a love of learning through conversations during book reading and travel.

56 JD Shannon, CS Tamis-LeMonda, K Londo & NJ Cabrera, "Beyond Rough and Tumble: Low-Income Fathers' Interactions and Children's Cognitive Development at 24 Months," *Parenting: Science and Practice* 2(2):77-104 (2002) ; NJ Cabrera, JD Shannon & CS Tamis-LeMonda, "Fathers' Influence on their Children's Cognitive and Emotional Development: From Toddlers to Pre-K," *Applied Development Science* 11(4): 208-213 (2007).

PROMOTING OPPORTUNITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Jane Walfogel and Robert D. Putnam

This chapter attempts to be faithful to a conversation involving the following experts about what has been demonstrated to work in this domain, but not every participant or author necessarily agrees with every word or sentence in the chapter.

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Why early childhood is important as we try to reverse the growing opportunity gap

America today invests less in children under five than most other developed countries.[1] Recent research shows this means we are overlooking the most promising period for investments in children.[2] [3] The opportunity gap begins in early childhood. Rich and poor parents are able to invest vastly different amounts in their children's development, a trend itself fueled by greater resources as well as a greater awareness among higher-income and better-educated parents of the parenting style that best benefits children in their later life and in the labor market. In recent decades a social class difference has emerged where more-educated and higher-income parents tend to engage in concerted behaviors to foster their children's development, while low-income and less-educated parents tend to expect children to develop more naturally with less parental intervention. These parenting behaviors act as powerful predictors of how children will fare in educational attainment and the labor market.[4]

These differences in early investments are consequential, because children's brain development, and the development of cognitive, language, social-emotional, and behavioral skills, is much more plastic in early childhood, and a dollar invested can have a much greater impact.[5] Children in low-income families are more likely to grow up without a good enough early environment—and more likely to be exposed to harmful stress and food insecurity.[6] We've long known that differences in the abilities between rich and poor adolescents can

be traced back to differences in development as early as age two (when skills such as vocabulary can first be measured), and we're now learning, through advances in neuroscience, that these differences can even have prenatal roots. The results can be lagging cognitive and language development and also deficits in other essential skills (such as attention and self-regulation) necessary to succeed in life.[7]

Although all developed countries struggle with such inequalities, our performance in this respect lags others. American children do not excel on international tests, in large part because of their greater inequalities in skills. These greater inequalities are already present at age 5: children of low-educated parents in the US have reading and math scores a full standard deviation behind those with more educated parents, and these gaps are significantly larger than they are in the UK, Canada, or Australia.[8]

Moreover, development is cumulative – so improvements in development in early childhood lay the groundwork for, and facilitate, improvements in development in later life. Conversely, limitations in development early in life make it all the harder to close gaps later in life. These are significant hurdles to overcome in our "meritocratic" society.[9]

We are beginning to understand the challenges we face in more specific terms. The brain develops as a social organ rather than as an isolated computer. In healthy situations, important foundations in brain architecture

Early childhood improvements undergird and facilitate later life development. Conversely, early limitations make it all the harder to close opportunity gaps later.

A sensitive, responsive adult caregiver can reduce the impact of significant stress on a child, but parents themselves are often undermined by the same events and stresses that affect their children.

form surprisingly early through growth-promoting relationships with nurturing, responsive adults: the so-called 'serve-and-return' (or 'contingent reciprocity') of positive adult-child interactions that literally shape the circuitry of the developing brain. Conversely, 'toxic stress' (i.e., prolonged activation of the stress response) from such threats as deep poverty, recurrent abuse, or chronic neglect can have long term consequences for learning and health through a 'fight or flight' response system driven by a hair trigger that leaves affected children more prone to be rattled by adversity and only able to settle themselves down with difficulty.[10]

We know a good deal now about the often-traumatic events that can hinder children's development. Scientists have developed an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) scale to measure the incidence of a selected list of often-traumatic events that can hinder children's development.[11] These challenges include deep poverty, food insecurity, low education, trouble with the law, homelessness or frequent moving, closely spaced children, single parenthood, partner/couple violence, severe mental illness in a parent, or a parent her/himself having experienced abuse/neglect. Exposure to one or two such events in childhood is not typically associated with bad adult outcomes; however, as the number of negative experiences increases, the rates of lifelong adverse consequences escalate. A sensitive, responsive adult caregiver can reduce the effects of even significant stress on a child, but what's often overlooked is that parents themselves are often undermined by the same events and stresses that affect their children. To properly address the problems of early childhood, therefore, we have to attend to not just children but their parents.

So we should not be surprised that healthy development in

American children is closely correlated with parental education and income.[12] For this reason, improving parents' cognitive and behavioral skills may be triply beneficial. First, better parental skills will improve children's cognitive and behavioral development (and hence the children's long-term success). But, these same interventions also often work to improve parents' ability to cope, their planning skills, and their "executive function" (a set of skills such as attention that are related to both cognition and behavior). These improved parental skills may be precursors to parents' improved participation and earnings in the labor market, which would also benefit children and parents alike, and improve US global competitiveness.[13]

Early childhood is clearly a key period for the development of inequalities – and for interventions to prevent or reduce them. Gaps in adult outcomes such as educational attainment and labor market success are presaged by already sizable gaps in young children's cognitive development, social and emotional well-being, and health. We also know that interventions to prevent or reduce gaps can be particularly effective in early childhood.[14] For many important domains of development, early childhood is a "sensitive" period when children are particularly responsive to experience.

Well-conceived and well-implemented home visiting programs have staff with strong professional training and relevant skills, fidelity to a structured curriculum, good professional supervision, and providers whom parents trust.

Fortunately, we now know more than we ever have about what we can do in early childhood—for children and their parents. We have decades of research on early childhood interventions, including many studies using randomized controlled trials or other rigorous methods (such as "natural experiments", which take advantage of naturally occurring variation such as that occasioned by public policies). We are also learning more about interventions to improve parents' education level and skills.[15] This is good news in that we now know a good deal about what we can do in early childhood to help prevent or reduce the kinds of gaps that *Our Kids* and other recent studies document.[16]

What we should do

Our group considered policies across four inter-related domains: **parenting**, **early childhood education**, **economic security**, and **time for parenting**. We will discuss each in turn below, but we want to stress that these are inter-related, in two important respects. First, high-quality programs will often deliver services that cut across domains, for instance combining support for parents and early childhood education (ECE) for the child. Second, there are synergies across these domains; parenting programs will be most effective if parents are not facing financial strain and have time to parent, and early childhood education programs will be most effective if parents are engaged and supported.

The recommendations we offer below draw from the discussions with our expert group, as well as our own reading of the evidence. We are immensely grateful to the group, and have tried to capture key points from their discussion in what follows. However, we must stress that this report – and its detailed recommendations – have not been endorsed by the group, and not all group members will necessarily agree with everything we say here.

Parenting programs

Our discussion of parenting programs begins with the premise that *all* parents need support, most of which can be provided by their communities. We recognize, however, that some parents, such as poor and socially isolated first-time mothers, require more assistance, with a focus on building their skills as parents. And we know that many parents need and would welcome more information about child development in the all-

important early years.

Although not all parenting programs are effective, rigorous evaluation studies have identified some programs that have been successful at improving parenting and, in some cases, have also improved child outcomes, although often effects are not large.[17] The strongest evidence on the role that parenting programs can play comes from the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) Program, developed by David Olds.[18] First tested with a random assignment experiment in Elmira, NY, with subsequent trials in Memphis, TN, and Denver, CO, the program sends specially trained nurses to visit at-risk first-time mothers at home during pregnancy and their first few years post-birth. The nurses follow a highly specific curriculum that focuses on helping and supporting the mother with issues related to her pregnancy and delivery as well as the growth and development of her child. [19] Although relatively few parenting programs have been successful in altering parenting, and even fewer have been able to improve children's development, NFP has been found to not only reduce harsh parenting but also to modestly improve the quality of the home environment, parents' literacy activities, and children's early vocabulary.[20]

The specific curriculum and the use of nurses seems to be key (in one variation, Olds did try using paraprofessionals instead, and found that they were less effective). NFP and a select number of other home visiting programs have been identified by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as evidence-based and are approved for funding through the federal government's new evidence-based home visiting initiative.[21]

The studies of NFP and other evidence-based programs suggest that this kind of help can be provided through well-conceived and well-implemented home visiting programs with the following key elements: staff with strong professional training and relevant skills; fidelity in practice and implementation to a structured curriculum; good professional supervision; and service providers who have the trust of parents. In rarer instances, some families are in real trouble due to a combination of high-risk factors such as depression, substance abuse, or domestic violence. Such families need more intensive services – greater or more intensive support for parenting plus other types of services. In extreme cases where parents put children at risk, the intervention of child protective services is warranted. Often it is helpful to have a screening function in a program or community to assess where parents are on such a continuum before deciding what, if any, additional resources and support they need.

Successful parenting programs can be delivered through different venues (non-profits, schools, health organizations) and our expert group was agnostic as to recommending a specific approach. Instead, they advised us to endorse a more general principle, noting that there are lots of poor-quality parenting programs out there, and just sending untrained people into families' homes is unlikely to have a positive impact. We therefore make two recommendations:

- We encourage policymakers to implement rigorously-evaluated parenting programs (see, for instance, HHS's list of evidence-based home visiting programs).[22]
- And, if policymakers decide to try to innovate in this area, we recommend that they follow the above guidelines regarding the key elements of effective programs and attempt to rigorously evaluate the impact (as HHS is doing in its initiative) so that dollars spent are not wasted.

We do note considerable knowledge gaps in this area. Before recommending wide-scale adoption of parenting programs, more research is needed to identify a core set of parenting knowledge, attitudes, and practices tied to positive parent-child interactions and child outcomes, as well as evidence-based strategies that support these universally and across a variety of specific populations with an intentional

emphasis on reaching parents whose children do not access preschool We also need to learn more about what specific components of intervention are critical and about how to train home visitors for this work. Researchers are also actively studying how to improve parent engagement.[23]

Early childhood education (ECE)

High quality early childhood education (ECE) has been clearly demonstrated to benefit young children, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Children who have had the opportunity to attend high quality ECE enter school more ready to learn.[24] And even when gains in test scores fade over time, there is evidence of long-term gains in other consequential outcomes for low-income children in adolescence and young adulthood – in the area of increased rates of high school graduation, better labor market outcomes, fewer incarcerations, and better health and mental health outcomes.[25]

The classic studies in this area include random assignment evaluations of model programs, such as Perry Preschool, the Infant Health and Development Program, and Abecedarian. Each of these provided high-quality center-based early childhood education to disadvantaged young children and produced large impacts on child development.[26] Cost-benefit studies of model programs like these have found that not only were the impacts substantial, the programs also paid for themselves several times over.[27]

These studies inspired larger scale efforts, such as the federal Head Start program for low-income children and, more recently, state investments in universal prekindergarten. Head Start's record of success has been difficult to gauge. Only recently has there been a randomized study of Head Start (the Head Start Impact Study).[28] The study found that Head Start led to gains in some aspects of development at program completion, but that for the most part, these were no longer evident when the children were assessed again in first grade. However, earlier rigorous studies of Head Start have shown that when children are followed longer-term, Head Start does have positive effects on important adolescent and adult outcomes.[29] More recently, states have expanded their investments in universal prekindergarten programs. These programs, which provide a part- or full-day of free early education, now serve nearly 30 percent of the nation's 4 year olds.[30] Rigorous evaluations of these programs provide evidence that they produce substantial gains in children's development.[31]

Our expert group stressed that high quality is critical. High quality ECE includes both instructional and emotional support, as well as classroom management. Previous research shows that both *structural* (group size, adult-child ratio) and *process* (adult-child interactions) quality matter in creating the early care environments that produce positive outcomes for children. These features are evident in the Tulsa Public Schools pre-K program, which has been shown to produce big improvements in school readiness, including a 9-month gain in pre-reading skills, a 7-month gain in pre-writing skills, and a 5-month gain in pre-math skills.[32] That program combines highly-educated teachers and favorable child/staff ratios (structural quality) with high levels of instructional support in comparison to pre-K programs in other states (process quality).[33] Tulsa's teachers also devote more time to academic subjects than their counterparts elsewhere. Experts agree that this is a winning combination. It is also important to promote the engagement of families, since parent involvement can augment the effects of ECE.

With regard to preschool programs, the group endorsed the 8 points made by the recent Investing in Our Future[34] group in their Executive Summary (with amendments as noted in italics below):

1) Large-scale public preschool programs can have substantial impacts on children's early learning; 2) Quality preschool education is a profitable investment; 3) The most important aspects of quality in preschool education are stimulating and supportive interactions between teachers and children and effective use of curricula (although how to measure and assess quality continues to be debated); 4) Supporting teachers in their implementation of instructional approaches through coaching or

mentoring can yield important benefits for children; 5) Quality preschool education can benefit middle-class children as well as disadvantaged children; typically developing children as well as children with special needs; and dual language learners as well as native speakers; 6) A second year of preschool shows additional benefits; 7) Long-term benefits occur despite convergence of test scores; and 8) There are important benefits of comprehensive services when these added services are carefully chosen and targeted (*depending on the needs of the children and also what other services are available to these children in the community*).

In addition, we would add that high quality programs are *typically* provided by well-salaried, well-trained, credentialed professionals. Although there is not agreement in the field about whether having a BA-trained teacher is critical, there is general agreement that a BA-trained teacher in ECE is a clear plus. We note that a recent Institute of Medicine and National Research Council report clearly supports a BA degree for lead teachers who work with children from birth through age 8.[35] We also note that high quality programs *typically* have teachers working in a supportive environment and being effectively supervised by personnel with early childhood education expertise.

More closely aligning ECE and the curriculum in kindergarten and the early elementary grades could help boost the effectiveness of ECE and primary school programs. There is evidence that preschool gains are particularly likely to be maintained when children attend the same school for prekindergarten and kindergarten.[36] However, the benefits of alignment must be balanced against the risk of pushing down curriculum and practices appropriate for older children onto younger children who do not yet have the experiential backgrounds to profit from more formal instructional techniques. It is likely that many ECE programs could profit from an enhanced focus on rich and age-appropriate curriculum in the academic content areas (i.e., math, science, literacy), while primary school programs could profit from reminders about the value of play-based approaches to supporting children's development and learning, including social and emotional development.

Policymakers face tough choices in early childhood education. Unless there is money to do both, enhancing quality limits access to such programs or inclusion. Expanding access to disadvantaged children is important in closing the opportunity gap but high quality should not be sacrificed.

A friendly and successful transition to kindergarten is key to child well-being and to continued family engagement. Family engagement can wane if transition to kindergarten is not done well. Improving the transition to school is also important for equity.[37] Research has shown that children from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds are better prepared for achievement when they enter school than children from disadvantaged backgrounds. As we have discussed, this disparity has a lot to do with access to quality preschool, family stress, and social support, among other factors. The good news is that school readiness and transition activities can shield children from the effects of these risk factors — although these children are the least likely to have access to such support. Transition to kindergarten practices throughout the US are uneven. Too often policies that support a smooth transition and inform parents of their rights and responsibilities in the K-12 system are not carried out. Nebraska is the only state that employs transition to kindergarten managers. In addition, only 14 states require children to attend kindergarten.

ECE is an area where policymakers face tough choices. Enhancing quality comes at the expense of expanding access or inclusion

(unless there is enough money to do both). Expanding access to disadvantaged children who would not otherwise attend early education is important in closing gaps. But high quality should not be sacrificed, because doing so could result in not making the most of dollars spent. As between what ages should be covered and how universal provision should be, we think for children age 3 and 4 pre-school should ideally be offered universally, but if this is not affordable, we would recommend either targeting the services to low-income school *districts* or making preschool universal but having a sliding scale of fees depending on the income of the families. Other promising approaches would be providing universal part-time pre-kindergarten for 3- and 4-year olds, but offering full-time pre-kindergarten based on a sliding scale, or serving all 4-year olds in universal provision, with preschool for 3-year olds targeted to children in low-income districts and with the largest number of risk factors. For the 0-3 age group, an emerging body of research documents the value of high-quality ECE for infants and toddlers from low-income families as a way to prevent the achievement gap from forming.[38] Where resources for children age 0-3 are limited, policy makers should target programs and interventions on children and parents facing the largest number of risk factors (as discussed earlier).

Economic security

A long literature in psychology, sociology, public health, and economics documents that children are adversely affected by economic insecurity, particularly in early childhood.[39] And, addressing economic insecurity will also help boost the effectiveness of parenting and early childhood education programs. Accordingly we would recommend consideration of several specific policies to improve the economic security of families with young children.

Children are adversely affected by economic insecurity, particularly in early childhood. And, addressing economic insecurity will also help boost the effectiveness of parenting and early childhood education programs.

The federal government should extend the Child Tax Credit. The Child Tax Credit used to require a $15,000 income threshold to qualify, but this was changed in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to $3,000 so that more low-income families were eligible. This provision is due to expire in 2017 and should be extended.

The federal and/or state governments might offer some kind of new cash benefit for very low-income parents of young children who are not eligible for work-linked benefits such as the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (because they are not able to find work or have a health or other condition that prevents work). One potential idea is that states could experiment with demonstration programs that fund parents unable to secure regular employment for a year while they enroll in programs to develop stronger parenting or executive function skills, to see if such programs enable them to both become better parents and subsequently acquire job skills.

Another way to reduce economic insecurity among low-income families with young children would be for the federal government to provide a higher Child Tax Credit (or EITC) for families with children under age 5.

The group also stressed the importance of addressing food insecurity, which has strong ties to brain development. Policy suggestions here include:

- The federal government should increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits during the summer months (for families with school-age children) and for families with preschool-age children since such children do not receive free or reduced priced breakfasts or lunches during these periods and are thus more likely to go hungry.

- The federal government should provide a smoother transition from the high Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits in pregnancy and infancy to the lower benefits for toddlers and preschoolers (because currently participation for those children falls sharply as benefit levels drop abruptly after infancy).

Another important source of economic security is help with childcare costs for working mothers. The federal government (via the states) should increase the subsidies for childcare for low- and middle-income working mothers. Due to limited funding, such subsidies currently cover only 17% of low-income children (although eligibility is broader). Consideration should also be given to raising the standards for childcare quality so the money is not spread too thin and wasted with low-income children relegated to poor-quality childcare. Policymakers should also consider targeting more of the subsidy support to families with children ages 0-3, for whom the cost of care is much higher and a greater impediment to accessing quality care.

Finally, improving parents' education and skills, so that they can work more consistently and at a higher rate of pay, would also help improve families' economic security. Two-generation programs—such as the Career Advance program in Tulsa, which pairs education and training for parents with quality early childhood education for children—are a particularly promising model.[40]

Time for parenting

The science of early childhood development tells us how important consistent, sensitive, and responsive caregiving is for young children. As a practical matter, mothers need time to recover from childbirth and both parents need time to get to bond with their child. Yet, the United States, alone among the advanced industrialized nations, does not have a national law providing paid parental leave for new parents. Our peer nations offer a year of job-protected leave to new mothers, with a substantial portion paid (12 months in Canada, nine months in the UK, four months in Australia), and with a period of paid leave available to fathers as well. For families with newborns and young children, paid parental leave is also an important source of economic security, as otherwise families have to forego a paycheck while a parent is out on leave.

In this domain, we recommend:

- Encouraging more states and localities to follow the examples of California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island, which provide paid parental leave for new parents or parents with care-giving responsibilities.[41] The programs are funded by employee contributions (pennies per week) paid into a central fund that parents can apply for, to get up to six weeks of paid leave. There is no additional tax on employers.

- Nationally we should explore the option, developed by Heather Boushey at Center for American Progress, of covering up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave by allowing parents to draw on their future social security benefits.[42] The proposal includes provisions to leave the Trust Fund whole, either by having the drawdown of benefits reduce the old-age benefit that the mother would get or by increasing the universal age of retirement by several months for all Americans.

Another time when parents need time off for parenting is when children (or other family members) are ill. Yet not all Americans have paid sick leave, and under existing employer policies, low-income parents are disproportionately not covered. We encourage states and localities to look to the examples of the 25 state or local jurisdictions that now have statutes requiring firms to offer paid sick leave (generally 5 days a year), but with exemptions for small businesses.

A related area affecting time for parenting is workplace flexibility. One aspect of flexibility has to do

with work hours. Many countries have laws requiring or encouraging employers to allow employees with children to request part-time or flexible working hours. We are supportive of such flexibility, which allows parents to keep their jobs while also fulfilling their responsibilities as parents. Another crucial issue is work scheduling. Uncertain and fluctuating work schedules can wreak havoc on families' lives and can also increase their economic insecurity. We are supportive of proposals to require companies to advise workers of their schedules at least one week in advance so they can plan accordingly. Such changes could increase employee loyalty and avoid firms needing to hire new workers and train them.[43]

The role of non-governmental actors

We have stressed above key policy changes that federal, state, and local governments and employers could make to help reduce inequalities and promote opportunity in early childhood. But clearly non-governmental actors can make a difference too.

Businesses, charitable organizations, religious institutions, and individuals all can play important roles, by 1) funding proven ECE programs; 2) providing add-on volunteers to existing programs; and 3) creating greater demand for public and private investment in early childhood.

1) *Funding*. Charitable and philanthropic organizations can partner with public funders or non-profit programs to help fund their interventions with the goal of ensuring quality and rigorous research/evaluation in existing programs. States with early examples of success in such efforts include Georgia, Minnesota, Nebraska and Oklahoma. The Educare program is an example of a public-private partnership model that appears to be delivering impressive results through a quality focus. The Career Advance program provides another example.

Philanthropies and businesses might also consider social impact bonds as a way of providing up-front financing for early childhood programs to prove their worth.[44] Often such programs spread after they prove their effectiveness through evaluations

2) *Volunteering*: The group applauded the desire of individuals to make a difference but also cautioned that untrained and unprofessional volunteers can hinder more than they help, especially in the highest-risk families, where many forms of disadvantage converge and where professional skills are required. Volunteering is likely to be most effective when provided by trained volunteers to families with relatively simple needs (e.g., more reading time for kids, respite for a single parent) and few overlapping forms of deprivation. Another promising approach would be to add volunteers to existing quality programs and take the lead from program staff about what they work on. Stability in volunteering is often highly important, because less-educated youth already face significant instability in their lives, both socially and economically.

3) *Creating demand for investment*. Businesses, philanthropies, individuals, and religious organizations can all play a strong role in being a voice for local change, encouraging local institutions, businesses, and leaders to prioritize addressing the opportunity gap in early childhood and beyond. Houses of worship can be especially effective at making the case for their congregants that we have a moral obligation to invest in all our children and that we are judged by how we treat those among our children who have the greatest needs.

Conclusion

There are clearly urgent implications here for those seeking to reverse the growing opportunity gap. Disadvantage in early childhood, we now know, contributes greatly to the opportunity gap in this country. It involves not just material but social and economic deprivation, and as it passes from generation to generation, it locks children in a vicious cycle of similar or worsening outcomes, making a mockery of the American Dream. If we are to achieve true equality of opportunity, each and every child deserves to have a decent early childhood so they can acquire the skills and competencies to compete and contribute effectively. To reverse the growing

opportunity gap, policymakers will need to focus with great care and attention on early childhood programs that address the entire environment in which children grow up—which is precisely what the recommendations we've made in this report are designed to help them do.

Endnotes

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44 The way social impact bonds are designed, the more significant payment would be made by government, but only if the program proves that the intervention made a difference on the outcome variable(s) of interest.

INCREASING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL, GRADES K-12

Meredith Phillips and Robert D. Putnam

This chapter attempts to be faithful to a conversation involving the following experts about what has been demonstrated to work in this domain, but not every participant or author necessarily agrees with every word or sentence in the chapter.

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"What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy."
— John Dewey[1]

Why the K-12 years are important to reverse the growing opportunity gap

Public schools embody the promise of the American Dream. They hold such promise because at their best they can be places of opportunity where low-income students learn the skills needed to thrive in today's economy and advance beyond their parents' income and education. But low-income children enter kindergarten at a large academic disadvantage relative to their affluent peers,[2] and when they encounter inequality in the public schools, it often serves to reinforce large gaps in school readiness among children from different income brackets.[3] As a whole, these gaps grow slightly during the next 8 years of public schooling, rather than narrowing.[4]

The children of more advantaged parents bring added resources with them to school (e.g., their parents' larger vocabulary, greater social connections, educational expertise, and financial investments in their educational supports and out-of-school opportunities).[5] Conversely, children from less-

advantaged families frequently face added challenges (e.g., financial pressures, stress, food insecurity, gangs or safety in some neighborhoods). And these outside differences can easily spill into the classroom.[6]

Moreover, even seemingly small advantages or disadvantages in children's school experiences, repeated year after year, can compound into significant gaps by the end of schooling.

But even if schools aren't the root or only cause of the growing opportunity gap,[7] schools have the potential to be strong levers for further increasing equality of opportunity.

With that in mind, we convened a group of practitioner and scholarly experts for an extended conversation on what works to narrow the opportunity gap in the K-12 years, both in- and out-of-school. Studies have disproportionately focused on how to close gaps in test scores, but we adopted a multi-dimensional approach, certainly involving cognitive skills (like math and reading skills, typically measured by test scores), but also non-cognitive skills (such as teamwork, persistence, determination, inter-personal skills), and differential access to savvy,[8] social networks, and second chances. We wanted to determine how best to close gaps in opportunity, support, and resources, so that all students by grade 12, regardless of their parents' education or income, can be prepared to succeed in college and in their chosen careers.

Our conversations followed four main currents of thoughts, which we describe as guiding principles for thinking about K-12 education in the twenty-first century. These principles acknowledge that schools are about human development *and* human relationships, and that although schools cannot equalize opportunity on their own, there is much they can do.

American educational segregation reinforces inequalities in school quality and resources, making equal opportunity all the harder to achieve. But within our schools, low-income students need the best teachers, and quality teaching is much more important than heavy investments in technology or physical plant.

General principles

Importance of schools as community institutions: Schools are the first encounter children have with general society and the institutions where they learn how to be citizens and members of society. With this in mind, we considered what schools might do to provide a full range of possibilities to low-income students, many of whom grow up with less-educated parents facing increased financial stress and sometimes increased social and emotional stresses. Certainly, schools must be welcoming places that do not stigmatize initial disadvantage or make it permanent and instead effectively scaffold the long-term learning potential of students from all backgrounds.[9]

Education policy should reflect the changing demographics of American youth: Children of color make up an increasing percentage of our K-12 school population: 37 percent in 1997, 50 percent in 2014, and, according to projections, 55 percent in 2024.[10] The percentage of English Language Learner students (i.e., from non-English speaking households) in public schools grew rapidly between 1998 and 2008, rising from 7.6 percent to 10.6 percent, and is projected to rise dramatically in the years ahead.[11] In addition, more children are growing up in poverty: in 1969, roughly 1 in 7 grew up in poverty, but in by 2010 the ratio had increased to 1 in 5.[12] These demographic changes make it now more important than ever that schools meet the needs of children of color, low-income children, and children whose first language is not English.

Schools cannot equalize opportunity on their own, because students enter schools with such big differences in vocabulary, skills, and preparation and they live in dramatically different families and neighborhoods that have lasting impact on their educational trajectories. Moreover, students' well-being in non-educational domains, such as health, is related to students' educational success, and non-school institutions play an important role in supporting students' development in these other areas.[13] Therefore, we need to take family and neighborhood inequalities very seriously, along the lines laid out in other report chapters.

Early youth experiences accumulate: The K-12 grades span a wide age range, and some interventions, among them ones that we suggest below, make more sense for one age than another. Also, early intervention is often desirable, (as discussed in the early childhood chapter) since youth skills, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors at earlier ages often in turn influence later outcomes.[14]

Many strategies we discuss below would be easier to achieve if schools were more deeply integrated economically.[15] American segregation is a problem – because it leads to and reinforces inequalities in school quality and resources. Our goal should be more than just getting students of different backgrounds into the same schools; we need to ensure they are equally welcomed and valued by teachers and have equal opportunities within school, including opportunities to prepare for advanced courses and encouragement to pursue higher education. School districts and charter schools have some levers available to make marginal improvements in desegregation—student-assignment policy, transportation policies, siting decisions for new schools or new desirable programs, teacher assignment—and they have levers to work to integrate schools internally as well.

With those general principles in mind, we advocate strategies for equalizing opportunity during the K-12 years in three domains: *what happens within schools and classrooms; better supporting low-income students in- and out-of-school;* and *school governance and accountability*.

Within schools and classrooms

Within schools and classrooms, we focused on: teaching, curriculum, and use of technology.

Above all, if local leaders seek to overcome the opportunity gap that lower-income students face, they should focus on high-quality teaching.[16] Lower-income students need the best teachers, because their parents tend to have less time, education, and resources to help; however, no matter what the measure, they disproportionately get *less*-effective teachers compared to higher-income students.[17] Research also suggests that high-quality teaching is much more important than either investing in the physical plant (above reasonable health and safety standards) or investing heavily in technology.

We recommend three strategies for improving the ***quality of teaching*** for low-income students. The most promising is to recruit and retain top-quality teachers.[18] This can be hard, because teachers teaching in low-income districts generally have fewer resources, are often not well supported, and are dealing with the greater stresses faced by low-income students and their families. When high-quality teachers in such districts move schools, they tend to move to schools with fewer disadvantaged students.[19] Recruiting and retaining the best teachers typically requires making schools serving low-income students very attractive places to work—and this, in turn, is influenced by the school's culture, the principal's leadership,[20] relationships among teachers, and teachers' sense of efficacy and empowerment.[21] Salary bonuses may also help. For example, the U.S. government successfully used a $20,000 bonus to convince more than a fifth of top teachers in ten large, diverse school districts to apply to teach for two years in high-poverty, low-performing schools. Sixty percent of the teachers hired remained at the schools after the mandatory two-year period—a rate of retention as high as the rate among non-transferring teachers—and the transferred teachers significantly raised local reading and math test scores during their first two years.[22]

A second strategy for improving the quality of teaching is to provide professional development or evaluative feedback. Too little high-quality research has evaluated the effectiveness of these strategies. What evidence exists suggests that if professional development is to be effective it needs to be intensive.[23] Likewise, classroom observations and feedback may also improve teaching quality, at least in some subjects and types of schools.[24] There is also some evidence that teachers improve more when they are at schools that support teacher collaboration and improvement.[25]

A third strategy to improve teaching is to make teacher-tenure decisions more selective,[26] or to base them on more years of teaching, to improve the reliability of teacher assessments.[27] Most school districts grant pro forma tenure after an initial probationary period of several years,[28] and thereafter the firing of underperforming tenured teachers requires a multi-year documentation of teacher underperformance and steps undertaken to try to remediate that underperformance. Some school districts have thus started to grant tenure only for teachers whom they are confident they want to keep in their districts for their remaining careers, and let other teachers stay on without tenure.[29]

In addition to high-quality teaching, low-income students need a ***rigorous and engaging curriculum,***[30] which should:

- Focus on early math[31] and literacy in the first years, with a knowledge- and vocabulary-rich curriculum;[32]
- Require higher-level thinking of students and have relevance and meaning to their lives;[33] and
- Be content-rich, extending beyond math and reading to science, art, music and social studies.[34]

Making the ***teaching student-centered*** is also important. In the last several decades, a score of interventions have successfully removed psychological barriers that prevent students from learning, especially low-income or students of color.[35] As one example, providing low-income black and Hispanic 7th graders with eight weekly sessions—covering study skills and how the brain, like muscles, strengthens with practice (a "growth mindset"[36])—increased math grades significantly even though grades typically declined for this population.[37] Many other low-cost limited-duration psychological interventions have also significantly improved test scores or academic behaviors. These interventions are no magic wand, but their impact demonstrates just how little psychological support low-income students typically get in school. Although no one has tested the impact of making a supportive culture widespread in schools, we think it is promising to give low-income students greater understanding of the growth mindset, and a greater sense of agency. In the meantime, it is important to overlay these psychological interventions atop other interventions discussed, so that psychological barriers won't undermine the impact of such interventions. Other important psychological interventions that might show promise more generally for low-income students are:

1) helping them to see that early years of school are hard for everyone[38]; 2) giving them a greater sense of belonging[39]; 3) affirming their underlying competencies[40]; 4) helping them to see the relevance of classes to their lives,[41] sometimes by imagining their future selves[42]; and 5) overcoming "stereotype threat"[43]—negative stereotypes about race and gender that suppress test score performance.

We are skeptical that the current ***technological*** applications[44] can substitute for good teaching and for the increased social isolation of low-income children. Although less important than good teaching, technology may have promising applications in *curriculum-based* interventions. Although some evidence indicates that less-educated adults rarely succeed in *purely* online courses,[45] emerging research suggests that some types of *blended* instruction (mixing technological and face-to-face instruction) may be

more effective than purely face-to-face instruction for disadvantaged K-12 students.[46] Students' direct involvement in producing technological applications, by learning computer programming, may also be beneficial.[47] Technology has also been used successfully for text-based nudges to encourage behavior. For example, text-based nudges[48] have increased parental engagement in literacy activities with their preschoolers,[49] encouraged parents to be more involved with their kids' schoolwork and progress,[50] increased college matriculation among low-income high-school graduates admitted to college,[51] and increased community-college persistence.[52]

We are more aware of the *challenges* of using technology to help with the social isolation of low-income youth, increasingly disconnected from friends, community, church, family, and social institutions, and increasingly distrusting.[53] We have yet to see any technological application that demonstrates its effectiveness in substituting for caring and supportive adults in these young people's lives. Technologists will need to experiment and evaluate to see if technology can lead youth to feel listened to and heard and can effectively reconnect them to caring real adults or to the broader society. Blended approaches are most promising.

Because many low-income students start school far behind, they require greater support through tutoring, wraparound supports, enrichment and extra-curriculars, and by reinforcing the school-to-work linkage. Some schools find it easier to achieve this through an extended day.

Supports for low-income students

Low-income students require greater support to close the opportunity gap, because many of them start school far behind. We recommend 4 broad strategies: 1) tutoring; 2) wraparound supports for youth; 3) enrichment and extra-curriculars; and 4) reinforcing the school-to-work linkage (discussed in the "On Ramps for Success" chapter). A promising way to provide these additional supports would be within the context of an extended school day and year.

Tutoring is a proven strategy for improving low-income students' test scores.[54] Properly trained tutors, who are competent in the subject matter, can effectively improve students' academic skills in all grades,[55] but simply providing vouchers for private after-school tutoring has proven ineffective for low-income students.[56] Two examples of the types of tutoring likely to be effective are Match Corps[57] tutoring and Reading Partners.[58] An idea worth considering is to use these tutors also as: 1) early warning monitors for difficulties in students' lives, such as signs of depression or home environments that are not conducive to studying; and 2) academic guides during high school to help students prepare for and navigate going to college.[59] Designed well, a tutoring program could provide students with a caring and consistent presence in their lives and enable tutors to share their social, intellectual, and cultural capital with their students.[60]

Relatedly, we believe that ***wraparound community school support,*** which helps link students to needed social services, is promising, even though there are not yet enough rigorous studies of the effectiveness of such programs.[61] Communities undertaking such efforts should ensure that such programs provide a caring and competent adult for each student, assess students' needs and strengths, and efficiently refer students to a coordinator of services or a direct service provider for needed supports.[62] Research suggests that sustained participation in extracurricular activities predicts success in school and beyond.[63] Extracurricular involvement may also increase the chances of high school graduation and lifetime earnings by cultivating soft skills like teamwork, grit, and interpersonal communication.[64]

Enrichment and extracurriculars: Activities such as band and high school sports were added to the school curriculum by social reformers roughly a century ago, as part of the education reforms that led to high schools, because the reformers feared that academic courses alone wouldn't give disadvantaged youths the skills they needed to succeed.[65] So it is lamentable that during the last several decades, schools have cut their extra-curricular offerings and some have instituted "pay-to-play" regimes that charge parents for their children's participation. Wealthy parents can afford these fees and private extra-curriculars, but low-income parents often cannot. Consequently, a large gap has emerged in extra-curricular participation between rich and poor children.[66] School-year inequities in extracurricular access also threaten to compound social-class gaps in students' access to enrichment activities over the summer. School districts should end pay-to-play regimes, and states should work to both equalize extracurricular offerings between richer and poorer schools and districts, and offer more free after-school and summer extra-curriculars in poorer communities.

Adding tutoring, extra-curriculars, and other enrichment opportunities, meeting students' varied needs, building school-to-work ties, and developing stronger student-teacher relationships all take precious school ***time.*** It can be hard to fit this in without cutting current curricula or without a longer school day and/or school year. In addition, longer days can ensure that students are in safe and supervised spaces in afternoon hours and the summer, when students are at greatest risk of being either a crime victim or perpetrator, and when students are most sexually active.[67] Expanding the school year to some of the summer months also reduces the weeks of summer in which low-income children may fall behind academically. Of course, added time must be well spent, ideally in high-quality instructional and enrichment activities.[68] Adding time to public schools also requires teacher buy-in, but some public schools have lengthened the day or year without hugely increasing costs by staggering teacher schedules and partnering with community groups.[69]

Four changes in K-12 governance and accountability could narrow the opportunity gap: broadening school accountability beyond test scores; increasing resources for low-income students; learning from successful schools; and making school choice effective.

Governance

We have four recommendations on governance and accountability to narrow the opportunity gap: 1) accountability should be broadened beyond test scores; 2) additional resources for low-income students are required; 3) charter schools are not a panacea, but some have shown promising results and offer potentially useful lessons for educational improvement; and 4) choice among public schools must be accompanied by additional active supports for low-income parents and the provision of enough high-quality options so that every child has a good school within reasonable distance of his or her home.

Broadened accountability beyond test scores

Accountability measures should measure growth or gains over the school year rather than focusing on static test scores. Accountability measures should also incorporate non-test-score measures to encourage schools to focus on broader outcomes and recognize inputs that may not directly affect test scores but are important for narrowing the opportunity gap. States could have done this previously in their state accountability systems and some did. Federal policy is encouraging more now to move in that direction.

We also encourage mayors or governors, in consultation with

experts, to develop new "opportunity dashboards" for school districts emphasizing meaningful inputs and outputs for students' educational success. For example, the dashboard *input* measures could cover: the quality of teaching,[70] the presence of a diverse and rich curriculum,[71] and measures of students' perceptions of agency or school climate. Dashboard *output* measures, beyond test scores, could include the percent of students engaged in extracurricular activities (for 2+ years) and conditional measures (based on where students started) such as the percentage of students enrolled in APs and the percentage of AP test takers who pass; high-school graduation rates; and college-completion rates of successive high-school graduating classes.[72]

Our group discussed the potential of using competency-based bite-size certificates valuable to students and employers to better motivate students from lower-income backgrounds to learn and excel.[73] For example, math might be chunked into certificates covering addition/subtraction, multiplication, fractions, percentages, decimals, etc. A tutor, parent, and student might be motivated to focus a student on getting a "decimals" certificate (or "badge"), and such certificates could have greater meaning to employers. We agreed that it might be worth some schools or districts trying out such an approach and evaluating its effectiveness.

Additional resources

Low-income youth need and deserve great schools, which are expensive. Some observers rightly claim that some current educational spending is wasteful. We call for greater transparency of resources to ensure that the dollars that *are* spent reach low-income students effectively.[74] Although spending more is not sufficient on its own,[75] it is necessary, especially if we want to (a) overcome the gaps that already exist between students from wealthy and poor homes, (b) make up for the differential opportunities after school and during the summer, and (c) provide needed additional social supports at school. This increased spending on schools serving large numbers of low-income students can be accomplished by either increasing spending on those schools or reallocating state spending so that a higher amount per pupil goes to them.[76]

Some charter schools show promise, but charter schools writ large are not a panacea

Some reformers cite charter schools as the answer to various educational challenges facing America, including the opportunity gap. However, both charter and public schools vary greatly in their performance. In some places (Massachusetts, New York, Washington, D.C.) charter schools are more effective on average than public schools, but in others (Nevada, Pennsylvania, Texas) they are less effective.[77] Some charter schools, particularly desirable (or popular) oversubscribed ones in urban areas, have had impressive effects on students' test scores.[78] Charter schools have also generated controversy for a number of reasons, including concerns that they may deplete resources from neighboring traditional public schools while leaving those schools to serve the neediest students.[79] Effective charter schools seem to undertake practices that may be particularly good at helping less-advantaged students who are behind catch up to their more-advantaged peers (for example, by spending more time on learning through an extended school day or year, putting a strong focus on mentoring and coaching teachers, providing a highly-focused curriculum, inculcating a growth mindset among students, and holding students to "no excuses" high standards, including resisting social promotion).[80]

Because there are examples of excellent schools of all types, including traditional public schools, charters, pilot, and innovation schools, students' experiences at school undoubtedly matter more than the governance structure of schools. Nonetheless, to the extent that effective practices flourish in schools with innovative governance structures, such as in charters or pilots, it will be useful to learn more about those practices and the extent to which they can be transplanted to all schools.[81]

Choice among public schools must be accompanied by active supports for low-income parents and enough good choices for everyone

Some reformers advocate public school choice to address the opportunity gap for low-income students. School choice may help low-income parents enroll their children in schools they prefer,[82] but the greater time, savvy, and transportation capability of higher-income parents can enable them to use school choice more effectively than low-income parents.[83] For school choice to be meaningful, low-income parents need assistance with transportation and information, and school-choice lotteries should be tiered by income at high-quality charter schools to ensure they at least draw a representative share of surrounding low-income students.[84] In any event, there need to be enough good options in or near the neighborhoods where low-income families live so that all children can attend a good school.

No agreement on use of public vouchers for private schools

Our group did not agree on whether low-income students should receive vouchers to enable them to attend private schools. The evidence on the effectiveness of vouchers and of private schools is mixed and may depend on what other schools are available to students in the community and the grade level of the schools.[85] Catholic high schools may have modest positive effect on low-income students' high school graduation rates.[86] But Catholic schools have the advantage of choosing students and expelling those who misbehave—an advantage that public schools lack. Although we did not agree on the use of public funding for religious schools (vouchers), we encourage local leaders to fold religious schools into any collective impact strategy[87] being undertaken (if funded privately) or to learn from the lessons of successful religious schools to improve secular public schools.

Conclusion

With these K-12 interventions and others mentioned in the "On Ramps for Success" chapter, we hope to restore public schools as places that represent the American Dream for all. Schools cannot close the opportunity gap on their own. Coupled with interventions in communities and in early childhood and families, schools should be able to help narrow the opportunity gap and skills gap that exist between low- and higher-income students even before they first attend school. High-income families will always invest more in their kids than low-income families can, but we should do everything we can to make all students both college and career-ready, and to give low-income students greater opportunities to thrive in school.

Endnotes

1 J Dewey, "The School and Social Progress" in *The School and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1907). We include this quote not to imply that all wise parents share Dewey's progressive educational philosophy but rather to illustrate our shared vision that all children have access to good schools.

2 See, for example: GM Mulligan, S Hastedt & JC McCarroll, "First-Time Kindergartners in 2010-11: First Findings From the Kindergarten Rounds of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010-11 (ECLS-K:2011)," NCES report 2012-049 (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Education, National Center for Educ. Statistics, 2012); J West, K Denton and E Germino-Hausken, "America's Kindergarteners," NCES report 2000-70 (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Education, National Center for Educ. Statistics, 2000); M Phillips, "Parenting, Time Use, and Disparities in Academic Outcomes," in GJ Duncan and RJ Murnane (eds.), *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children's Life Chances* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2011); M Phillips, "Ethnic and Social Class Disparities in Academic Skills: Their Origins and Consequences" in LM Stulberg and SL Weinberg (eds.), *Diversity in American Higher Education* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

3 BD Baker, DG Sciarra, D Farrie, "Is School Funding Fair? A National Report Card" (The Education Law Center and Rutgers Graduate School of Education, 2012); US Department of Education, "For Each and Every Child—A Strategy for Education Equity and Excellence, a report to the Secretary" (Washington, DC: The Equity and Excellence Commission, 2013).

4 SF Reardon, "The Widening Income Achievement Gap," *Educational Leadership* 70(8):10-16(May 2013). There is

some evidence in the early years that the gap grows especially in the summer, because low-income students are neither getting school nor the stimulation that wealthier students get in summer enrichment activities. DT Burkam, DD Ready, VE Lee and LF LoGerfo, "Social-Class Differences in Summer Learning between Kindergarten and First Grade: Model Specification and Estimation," *Sociology of Education* 77:1–31 (January 2004); DB Downey, PT von Hippel and BA Broh, "Are Schools the Great Equalizer? Cognitive Inequality during the Summer Months and the School Year," *American Sociological Review* 69: 613–635 (October 2004); DJ Condron, "Social Class, School and Non-School Environments, and Black/White Inequalities in Children's Learning," *American Sociological Review* 74:683-708 (2009); DT Burkam, "Educational Inequality and Children: The Preschool and Early School Years," in *The Economics of Inequality, Poverty, and Discrimination in the 21st Century*, RS Rycroft (ed.)(Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2013), 381-397; S Gershenson, "Do Summer Time-Use Gaps Very by Socioeconomic Status?" *American Educational Research Journal* 50:1219-1248 (2013); K Alexander, D Entwisle & LS Olson, "Schools, Achievement, and Inequality: A Seasonal Perspective," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 23: 171-191 (2001); KL Alexander, DR Entwistle & LS Olson, "Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap," *American Sociological Review* 72:167–180 (April 2007).

5 N Kaushal, K Magnuson & J Waldfogel, "How is family income related to investments in children's learning?" in Duncan & Murnane (eds.), *Whither opportunity?*, 2011.

6 RD Putnam, *Our Kids* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

7 We use "opportunity gap" as Robert Putnam does in *Our Kids* to refer to the growing gap in opportunity for life success (e.g., earnings, education) between kids born to parents where at least one of them has a 4-year college degree vs. kids born to parents with at most a high school degree. For a discussion of how differences in opportunity intersect with academic achievement gaps, see PL Carter and KG Welner, "Achievement Gaps Arise from Opportunity Gaps," in PL Carter and KG Welner (eds.), *Closing the Opportunity Gap* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

8 By savvy, we mean skills and knowledge to help one's child advance: for example, knowing how to intervene to get one's child reassigned to a different teacher or a more advanced class, knowing what types of extra-curriculars will be most highly valued in college applications, or knowing how to choose what type of college to attend.

9 Among the things that schools should emphasize are a growth mindset for students from less-educated backgrounds and replicating the stimulating early childhood experience that more affluent students typically get. CS Dweck, *Mindset: The new psychology of success* (New York: Random House, 2006); CS Dweck, *Mindset: How You Can Fulfill Your Potential* (Constable & Robinson Limited, 2012). Growth mindset is discussed later in the chapter.

10 J Batalova and M McHugh, "Number and Growth of Students in US Schools in Need of English Instruction," (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2010); National Center for Educational Statistics, Table 203.50: Enrollment and percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and region: Selected years, fall 1995 through fall 2024.

11 The number of ELL students in US public schools pre-K to grade 12 increased 8.5 percent, from 46.0 million in 1997-98 to 49.9 million in 2007-2008, while the number of ELL students increased 53.2 percent from 3.5 million to 5.3 million. J Batalova and M McHugh, "Number and Growth of Students in US Schools in Need of English Instruction," (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2010).

12 1969 figure of 15.1% comes from Census Historical Poverty Table CPH-L-169 ("Related Children under 18 Years, by Poverty Status in 1969, 1979, 1989, and 1999, by State"), U.S. Department of the Census. 2010 figure of 21.6% poverty rate for children under age 18 comes from "Child Poverty in the United States 2009 and 2010: Selected Race Groups and Hispanic Origin" American Community Survey Research Brief (Washington, DC: US Department of the Census, November 2011). See, however, C Jencks, "The War on Poverty: Was it Lost?" *New York Review of Books*, April 2, 2015 for a discussion of how poverty trends vary depending on the measured used.

13 For a review of the association between health and academic achievement, see B Bradley and A Greene, "Do Health and Education Agencies in the United States Share Responsibility for Academic Achievement and Health? A review of 25 Years of Evidence about the Relationship of Adolescents' Academic Achievement and Health Behaviors," *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 52(5): 523-532 (2013).

14 See, for example, GJ Duncan and K Magnuson, "The Nature and Impact of Early Achievement Skills, Attention Skills, and Behavior Problems," in Duncan & Murnane (eds.), *Whither Opportunity?* (2011); G Farkas, "Middle and High School Skills, Behaviors, Attitudes and Curriculum Enrollment, and Their Consequences" in *Whither Opportunity?* (2011); GH Elder, Jr., "The Life Course as Developmental Theory," *Child Development* 69(1):1-12 (February 1998).

15 We also discuss some strategies to achieve school integration in the community chapter.

16 Scholars are actively debating how best to measure high quality teaching. One well-publicized method, "teacher value added," like most methodologies, has its strengths and limitations. For perspectives on both sides of the debate, see R Chetty, JN Friedman and JE Rockoff, "Measuring the Impacts of Teachers II: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood," *American Economic Review* 104(9): 2633-79 (2014); PZ Schochet and HS Chiang, "Error Rates in Measuring Teacher and School Performance Based on Student Test Score Gains (NCEE 2010-4004)," (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2010); H Braun, N Chudowsky and J Koenig (eds.), *Getting Value Out of Value-Added: Report of a Workshop* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2010); D McCaffrey and JR Lockwood, "Value-added models: Analytic issues" (Washington, DC: National Research Council, Paper prepared for the workshop of the Committee on Value-Added Methodology for Instructional Improvement, Program Evaluation, and Educational Accountability, 2008); H Braun, "Using student progress to evaluate teachers: A primer on value-added models," (Princeton, NJ:

Educational Testing Service, 2005). Other prominent measures of teacher quality include teacher observation and student surveys. See Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project, "Ensuring Fair and Reliable Measures of Effective Teaching: Culminating Findings from the MET Project's Three-Year Study," (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013) for a discussion of the need for multiple, valid and reliable, measures of teacher quality. For additional evidence on the importance of teacher quality, see also: JE Rockoff, "The Impact of Individual Teachers on Student Achievement: Evidence from Panel Data," *The American Economic Review* 94(2):247-252 (May 2004); EA Hanushek, JF Kain, DM O'Brien and S Rivkin, "The Market for Teacher Quality," NBER Working Paper 11154 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, February 2005); S Rivkin, EA Hanushek and JF Kain, "Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement," *Econometrica* 73(2):417-458 (March 2005); D Aaronson, L Barrow and W Sander, "Teachers and Student Achievement in the Chicago Public High Schools," *Journal of Labor Economics* 25(1):95-135 (2007). For a discussion on how high quality teaching relates to student learning, see JD Bransford, AL Brown and RR Cocking (eds.), *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2000). While reducing class size can be a strategy to improve teaching, research suggests that recruiting, training or retaining great teachers improves teaching more than lowering class size. See, for example, JE Rockoff, "The Impact of Individual Teachers on Student Achievement," *The American Economic Review* 94(2): 247-252 (May 2004). Smaller class sizes may reduce somewhat the impact of below-average teachers but their performance would still lag an above-average teacher in a larger classroom. EA Hanushek and S Rivkin, "The Distribution of Teacher Quality and Implications for Policy," *Annual Review of Economics* 4:131-157 (September 2012).

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18 Recruiting away good teachers for certain low-income school districts will not address underlying concerns of an undersupply of great teachers. In many other countries teachers earn higher salaries and K-12 teaching is more prestigious, enabling schools to recruit teachers from the top 10 percent of college graduates. A Ripley, *The Smartest Kids in the World: And How they Got That Way*, (Simon & Schuster, 2013). Certain educational programs, like UCLA, have focused on training high-quality teachers and principals for high poverty areas, although the size of such teaching programs does not meet the demand for more high-quality teachers in these areas. For more on the challenges of hiring quality teachers in disadvantaged districts, see: BA Jacob, "The Challenges of Staffing Urban Schools with Effective Teachers," *The Future of Children* 17(1):129-153 (2007).

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25 MA Kraft & JP Papay, "Can professional environments in schools promote teacher development? Explaining heterogeneity in returns to teaching experience," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 31(4):476-500 (December 2014).

26 See, e.g., R Gordon, TJ Kane and DO Staiger, "Identifying Effective Teachers Using Performance on the Job," Discussion Paper 2006-01 (Washington, DC: Hamilton Project, 2006). Since changes in tenure policy have not been carefully evaluated, it is hard to ascertain, however, the extent to which such changes might adversely impact future recruitment of high-quality teachers into the profession.

27 See: Measures of Effective Teaching, "Ensuring Fair and Reliable Measures…", 2013), Figure 5.

28 For a description of the tenure process that exists in every state other than Wisconsin and how few teachers are denied tenure, see P McGuinn ,"Ringing the Bell for K-12 Teacher Tenure Reform," (Center for American Progress, February 2010), pp. 4-6 and Appendix.

29 S Loeb, LC Miller & J Wyckoff, "Performance Screens for School Improvement: The Case of Teacher Tenure Reform in New York City," CALDER Working Paper No. 115 (June 2014).

30 As an example of a rigorous curriculum, competency-based differences in curriculum (like advanced placement or international baccalaureate classes in high school or advanced math or reading) should be offered in a way that does not violate equal opportunity for students, by providing multiple points of access so students are not permanently tracked. Similarly, Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses should be accessible to all who want to do the work. For example, a mother who wanted her child in advanced math could engage in school-provided after-school or summer programs to prepare her son or daughter to take such a class. It is worth noting that a strong curriculum, while important in its own right, also helps to in turn improve the quality of teaching.

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43 GL Cohen et al., "Reducing the racial achievement gap," *(2006)*; GL Cohen et al., "Recursive processes" (2009).

44 In a rapidly evolving technological landscape, evaluations of technology are always several software or hardware versions behind the latest iterations.

45 See for example, NPR, "The Online Education Revolution Drifts off Course", (NPR, December 31, 2013); M Chafkin, "Udacity's Sebastian Thrun, Godfather of Free Online Education, Changes Course" (*Fast Company,* December 2013 / January 2014).

46 See Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, "Early Progress: Interim Report on Personalized Learning" (Gates Foundation,

Nov. 2014); D Ready, "Student Mathematics Performance In The First Two Years Of Teach To One: Math" (Evaluation Report, December 14, 2014); R Murphy, E Snow, et al., "Blended Learning Report," (Menlo Park, CA: SRI Education, 2014); B Means et al, "Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies," (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Education, 2010).

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52 BL Castleman and LC Page, "Working Paper: Freshman Year Financial Aid Nudges: An Experiment to Increase FAFSA Renewal and College Persistence," (EdPolicyWorks, Updated December 2014).

53 Putnam, *Our Kids*, 2015.

54 Among high-school students, there is less evidence of effectiveness of tutoring in reading than in math. While research is continually underway, at this point researchers don't know how frequently tutoring should be offered, for how many semesters or years it should be offered, the ideal group size, whether to tutor in-class or pull students out of class, and whether near-peers or older adults are more effective. See BS Bloom, "The 2 Sigma Problem: The Search for Methods of Group Instruction as Effective as One-to-One Tutoring," *Educational Researcher* 13(6):4-16 (June-July 1984) for an early discussion of the benefits of one-on-one tutoring and attempts to replicate its effects in a larger group setting. See G Farkas, "Reading One-to-One: An intensive program serving a great many students while still achieving large effects," in J Crane (Ed.) *Social programs that work* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998), pp. 75-109 for a discussion of the implementation of reading tutoring program for elementary students.

55 If it couldn't be provided in all grades, several participants advocated focusing tutoring on the transition grades to new schools, like kindergarten, sixth and ninth grades, because students with fewer supports tend to be most vulnerable during these transitions. See, for example: J Eccles, "Can Middle School Reform Increase High School Graduation Rates?" (California Dropout Research Project, June 2008).

56 CJ Heinrich, P Burch et al., "Improving the Implementation and Effectiveness of Out-Of-School-Time Tutoring," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 33(2):471–494 (Spring 2014); CJ Heinrich, RH Meyer, and G Whitten, "Supplemental Education Services Under No Child Left Behind: Who Signs Up, and What Do They Gain?" *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 32(2):273-298 (June 2010); J Deke, L Dragoset et al., "Impacts of Title I Supplemental Educational Services on Student Achievement, (NCEE 2012-4053)," (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, US Dept. of Educ., 2012).

57 Match, a nation-wide program that recruits college graduates to tutor younger students, was evaluated in 12 Chicago high schools (roughly 2700 boys in 9th or 10th grade, 95 percent African American or Latino, 90 percent on Free or Reduced Price Lunch, 2.1 average GPA) using a RCT. PJ Cook, K Dodge, et al., "Not Too Late: Improving Academic Outcomes for Disadvantaged Youth," Working Paper WP-15-01(Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Institute for Policy Research, 2015). See also MA Kraft, "How to Make Additional Time Matter: Integrating Individualized Tutorials into an Extended Day," (April 2013, self-published).

58 Reading Partners was evaluated by MDRC using a RCT involving 19 schools, 3 states, and 1,265 students.

59 These tutors could also help ensure students enroll in the high school courses they need to prepare for college, understand what extra-curriculars are valued by colleges and encourage students to participate in those activities, and help students sign up for standardized tests or fill out financial aid forms (FAFSA).

60 Many of the supplemental services and supports recommended can be offered by high-quality community and faith-based paraschool youth-serving organizations with a track record of success (such as Match, Playworks, or others), working in partnership with school districts. For other examples of paraschool organizations (or other organizations) that have a track record of success, see the What Works Clearinghouse. Evidence of the success of Playworks can be found at: Mathematica, "Impact and Implementation Findings from an Experimental Evaluation of Playworks: Effects on School Climate, Academic Learning, Student Social Skills and

Behavior" (Mathematica evaluation, 2013).

61 KA Moore & C Emig, "Integrated Student Supports: A Summary of the Evidence Base for Policymakers," (Child Trends, February 2014). The community schools model builds on a history of approaches like *Check and Connect*, or *Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success* (ALAS). An association of many of these community schools can be found through the Coalition of Community Schools.

62 Simply increasing staffing in the school is unlikely to be effective. See J Simpkins & M Roza, "The Real Deal on K-12 Staffing," (Edunomics Lab, Georgetown University, Dec. 2014) for trends in staff-to-student ratios over the past two decades and how these trends have varied across states.

63 The College Board, "Personal Qualities and Academic Experiences: Predictors of Academic Success," Research Summary RS-02, October 1997 (Washington, DC: College Board, 1997).

64 Putnam, *Our Kids*, 2015, pp. 174-176. For plausibly causal evidence of the link between extracurriculars and positive outcomes see B Stevenson, "Beyond the Classroom: Using Title IX to Measure the Return to High School Sports", *Review of Economics and Statistics* 92 (May 2010).

65 Putnam, *Our Kids*, 2015, pp. 174-176.

66 Putnam, *Our Kids*, 2015.

67 See for example, DA Cohen, TA Farley, SN Taylor, DH Martin & MA Schuster, "When and where do youths have sex? The potential role of adult supervision," *Pediatrics* 110(6) (2002). See also M Dynarski et al., "When Schools Stay Open Late: The National Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program," (Mathematica Research, 2004).

68 Expanded time, depending on how it is configured, can also give teachers more time to work and plan together to meet the specific needs of students. For examples of innovative ways of using expanded days or years see volume 40 of *Voices in Urban Education*, titled "Time for Equity: Expanding Access to Learning" (2015).

69 See, for example, the use of teacher staggered schedules and community partners in Denver and New York City through Generation Schools.

70 As noted earlier, strategies for describing teaching quality should include multiple measures.

71 This could include parent or student measures of students' engagement in courses, satisfaction with courses offered, and assessments of classroom climate. We encourage the development and refinement of valid and reliable measures.

72 This requires high schools linking to other databases such as the National Student Clearinghouse.

73 The working group adapted this idea from work on proximal goals. See, e.g., A Bandura & DH Schunk, "Cultivating Competence, Self-efficacy, and Intrinsic Interest through Promixal Self-Motivation," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 41(3):586-59 (1981). The use of competency certificates and competency-based education could also enable schools to personalize and self-pace students' educational experience. The Los Angeles Unified School District has experimented with using digital badges to motivate students during its "Summer of Learning," but the effects of this program have not yet been rigorously evaluated.

74 We think it is important that programs and policies be rigorously evaluated for their effectiveness in improving a holistic set of outcomes. When programs are ineffective, we recommend modifying those programs to improve their effectiveness or redirecting funds into programs that work better.

75 Researchers continue to debate the importance of school resources. For an introduction to the varied perspectives on this debate, see the chapters in G Burtless (ed.), *Does Money Matter? The Effect of School Resources on Student Achievement and Adult Success* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1996).

76 Baker, Sciarra, Farrie, "Is School Funding Fair?" 2012; US Dept. of Educ., "For Each and Every Child," 2013. The United States (along with Israel, Slovenia, and Turkey) are the only OECD countries out of 34 advanced nations with higher teacher/student ratios in disadvantaged schools than advantaged schools. OECD, "Viewing Education in the United States Through the Prism of PISA", Fig. 2.3, in *Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education: Lessons from PISA for the United States* (OECD, 2010).

77 See CREDO, "National Charter School Study," 2013, Center for Research on Education Outcomes, Stanford University.

78 A Abdulkadiroğlu, JD Angrist, SM Dynarski, T Kane, & PA Pathak, "Accountability and flexibility in public schools: Evidence from Boston's charters and pilots," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 126(2):699-748 (2011); JD Angrist, SM Dynarski, T Kane, & PA Pathak, "Inputs and impacts in charter schools: KIPP Lynn," *American Economic Review* 10(2):239-243 (2010).

79 For a balanced and accessible review of research on charter schools, see this joint effort of the Spencer Foundation and the Public Agenda.

80 Angrist, Pathak & Walters, "Explaining charter school effectiveness," 2013; A Cheng, C Hitt, B Kisida & JN Mills, "'No Excuses' Charter Schools: A Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence on Student Achievement," EDRE Working Paper No. 2014-11 (self-published, July 2015 updated version).

81 For a comparison of the impact of charter, pilot, and public schools in Boston, see: A Abdulkadiroğlu, JD Angrist, S Cohodes, SM Dynarski, J Fullerton, T Kane & PA Pathak, " Informing the Debate: Comparing Boston's Charter, Pilot and Traditional Schools" (Boston Foundation, January 2009). For examples of innovative attempts to reconfigure public schools, see the National Center for Time and Learning example schools; Generation Schools in New York and Denver; expanded learning time middle schools in New York City. See also Roland Fryer's experiments to inject best charter school practice in public schools in Houston and Denver with buy-in from the city's educational leaders. R Fryer, "Injecting Charter School Best Practices into Traditional Public Schools: Evidence from Field Experiments," (self-published, 2014).

82 The evidence on the effects of school choice is mixed. For evidence that school choice did not increase academic outcomes in Chicago, see: JB Cullen, B Jacob & S Levitt, "The Effect of School Choice on Participants: Evidence from Randomized Lotteries," *Econometrica* 74(5):1191–1230 (September 2006). Conversely, David Deming et al. found evidence that winning a school choice lottery in Charlotte-Mecklenberg increased college enrollment and graduation, especially among girls. [DJ Deming, JS Hastings, TJ Kane, & DO Staiger, "School Choice, School Quality and Postsecondary Attainment," *American Economic Review* 104(3):991-1013 (2014).] For evidence that school choice may decrease future criminal activity among school choice graduates, see the Cullen et al. paper and D Deming, "Does School Choice Reduce Crime?" *Education Next* 12(2) (Spring 2012).

83 A Lareau and K Goyette, *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools (2014),* especially chapters 4 and 9.

84 For more description see the "community" chapter. See also JS Hastings & JM Weinstein, "Information, School Choice, and Academic Achievement: Evidence from Two Experiments," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123(4):1373-1414 (2008); PM Rich & JL Jennings, "Choice, Information, and Constrained Options: School Transfers in a Stratified Educational System," *American Sociological Review* 80(5):1069-1098 (2015).

85 For rigorous research showing the positive impact of voucher programs in Washington, DC on high school graduation but not on test scores see PJ Wolf et al., "Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Final Report (NCEE 2010-4018)," (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Chingos and Peterson find positive effects of New York City voucher lottery on college enrollment for African American students [MM Chingos and PE Peterson, "The Effects of School Vouchers on College Enrollment: Experimental Evidence from New York City," (The Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings and Harvard's Program on Education Policy and Governance, 2012).] PJ Wolf, "The Comprehensive Longitudinal Evaluation of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program: Summary of Final Reports" finds positive effects of vouchers on high school graduation and college enrollment using a non-experimental design. For a general review of vouchers' effects on test scores up through 2009, see CE Rouse and L Barrow, "School Vouchers and Student Achievement: Recent Evidence and Remaining Questions," *Annual Review of Economics* 1:27-42(2009).

86 See, e.g., Wolf et al., "Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program," 2010; Wolf, "The Comprehensive Longitudinal Evaluation of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program,"2012; JG Altonji, TE Elder & CR Taber, "Selection on observed and unobserved variables: assessing the effectiveness of Catholic schools," *J. Polit. Econ.* 113(1):151–84 (2005). However, these studies find few to no test score benefits of Catholic high schools. And a non-experimental literature on the effects of Catholic elementary schools finds that such schools are no more effective than public elementary schools in improving students' math and reading test scores. [See T Elder & C Jepsen, "Are Catholic primary schools more effective than public primary schools?" *Journal of Urban Economics* 80:28-38 (March 2014); SF Reardon, JF Cheadle & JP Robinson, "The effects of catholic schooling on math and reading development in kindergarten through fifth grade," *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 2(1):45-87 (2009).]

87 For an example of a collective impact strategy where a cross-section of local leadership agrees on shared metrics and outcomes and moves collectively to impact those, see Cincinnati's Strive Together.

REBUILDING COMMUNITIES TO HELP CLOSE THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

Patrick Sharkey, Robert D. Putnam and Margery Turner

This chapter attempts to be faithful to a conversation involving the following experts about what has been demonstrated to work in this domain, but not every participant or author necessarily agrees with every word or sentence in the chapter.

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Why are communities important to closing the opportunity gap?

Decades ago, affluent families often lived down the street from lower-income neighbors, and sent their children to the same schools.[1] Over the past forty years, this has become less and less common. Only about 15 percent of American families lived in either very poor or very affluent neighborhoods in 1970, but this figure had more than doubled by the end of the 2000s.[2]

The rise of economic segregation, defined as the degree to which high- and low-income families live in separate communities, has enormous implications for the opportunity gap. As the level of economic segregation has risen over time, children from high-income families increasingly live in exclusive, affluent communities, while children from low-income families increasingly live in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty. Since 2000, the number of Americans living in neighborhoods with extreme poverty has risen by more than 90 percent, from 7.2 million to 13.8 million.[3]

When low-income children are raised in areas where poverty is concentrated, they are less likely to attend high-quality schools, to breathe clean air, to

develop a diverse network of resourceful peers and mentors, and to find employment opportunities as they approach early adulthood .[4] A growing evidence base suggests that the impact of concentrated poverty is long-lasting, with consequences that alter the life chances of children and extend across generations.[5]

With this evidence in mind, a politically diverse group of experts in poverty and communities met for three days to identify policies and approaches to reduce segregation and to strengthen communities in order to reduce the opportunity gap.

We agreed that any policy agenda designed to reduce segregation and its consequences should begin with several principles. First, it must be place-conscious. Community experts have long debated whether to invest in places or the people within them. We argue for a place-conscious approach that recognizes how inequality is organized along spatial lines, and includes investments both in places and the people within them.[6] Second, the policy agenda must consider both structure and choice.[7] To close the opportunity gap for children, we must reduce structural barriers that shape neighborhood inequality and block their success while encouraging individuals to make choices that will facilitate their own mobility. Third, a community agenda must include multi-level and cross-sectoral interventions. Confronting the decline of communities requires policy from multiple sectors operating at multiple levels, from the nonprofit and private sectors to local, state, and national government.[8] Fourth, dosage matters. Over the past several decades many exciting community-rebuilding policies have been diluted in the political process or abandoned before they could realistically transform communities.[9] Any place-conscious policy should be assessed for its long-term sustainability so it can forge durable change in families' lives and their communities.

Building on these principles, we settled on a set of five recommendations to reduce the effects of economic segregation and improve low-income children's life chances:

1. Preserve and develop affordable housing in high-demand real estate markets.
2. Provide opportunities for long-term, supported mobility out of highly disadvantaged communities.
3. Weaken the consequences of neighborhood poverty with evidence-based investments.
4. Invest in strong institutions with a community focus.
5. Link disconnected young people to supportive groups and mentors.

Preserve and develop affordable housing in high-demand real estate markets

Many cities around the country have experienced a rebirth over the past several decades, becoming increasingly attractive places to live with growing job opportunities, safe environments, and vibrant culture.[10] The growing population in some central cities, combined with rigid zoning restrictions, has jolted housing prices and jeopardized housing affordability for middle- and low-income families.[11] A key challenge is to preserve and expand opportunities for middle- and low-income families in areas with rising housing values and rents.

SIDEBAR: The Dudley Neighbors, Incorporated, in Boston, was granted land-use control in the 1980s. The group converted blighted parcels in the distressed sections of Boston known as the Dudley Triangle into stable, affordable homes for residents and rebuilt parks, gardens, and community institutions.[i] Similarly, the Burlington Community Land Trust, in Vermont, established with a city seed grant in the early 1980s, has developed about 650 housing units, maintaining affordable housing in Burlington.[ii]

Two promising strategies are community land trusts and inclusionary zoning. In high-demand real estate markets, these strategies maintain mixed-income neighborhoods by developing and preserving a stock of stable affordable housing outside the market, thereby reducing the involuntary mobility of low-income families that undermines positive youth development.

Community land trusts are parcels or sections of land owned by local nonprofit organizations committed to preserving affordable housing. Land trusts, operating in hundreds of U.S. communities since the early 1970s, own the land and sell or rent homes to individuals or cooperatives with restrictions on appreciation if houses are resold. Land trusts maintain a permanently affordable stock of housing outside the private market.

Mandatory inclusionary zoning regulations require that any new real estate development include a specified percentage of units affordable to local residents with below-median income.[14] The original and most extensive inclusionary zoning program is the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit program, implemented in Montgomery County, MD, in 1974.[15] This program requires developers to include affordable housing in new developments and allows the public housing agency and local nonprofits to purchase some of this new housing. Montgomery County's inclusionary zoning policy has generated over 12,000 units of affordable housing.[16]

Over the past 40 years, the rich increasingly live among the rich and the poor among the poor, lowering the chances of life success among low-income youth. In high-demand housing markets, community land trusts and inclusionary zoning help maintain more stable mixed-income neighborhoods, promoting youth development.

Case studies of mandatory inclusionary zoning policies, which have expanded to hundreds of jurisdictions, provide three lessons for policy makers.

- New units developed through inclusionary zoning policies should be made affordable for at least 30 years to achieve stable mixed-income neighborhoods.
- To reach very low-income populations, inclusionary zoning policies must be combined with other low-income housing assistance.[17]
- Localities should enable community organizations or public agencies to acquire affordable housing units to provide additional subsidies that make units affordable to very low-income families.

Inclusionary zoning and community land trusts represent two promising approaches to preserving and creating affordable housing in markets with rising rents and property values. In communities where housing costs are not projected to rise, such mandatory inclusionary zoning may actually discourage new development, limiting the overall supply of housing and possibly exacerbating problems of affordability. In these areas, policies should instead allow some residents to move to more prosperous neighborhoods and simultaneously reduce the harmful consequences of growing up in these poor and segregated communities for those who do not move.

Provide opportunities for long-term, supported mobility out of highly disadvantaged communities

In places around the country where economic opportunities have declined or disappeared, increasing voluntary residential mobility is one important strategy in confronting racial and economic segregation is to increase voluntary residential mobility. Several approaches are possible, including: constructing affordable housing developments in high-opportunity communities;[18] developing scattered-site subsidized housing across cities and metropolitan areas;[19] and making it illegal for landlords to discriminate against housing voucher recipients.[20] All of these policies can open up communities of opportunity to lower-income families, expanding opportunities for their children.

In addition to these large-scale changes in housing policy, housing voucher programs should be administered differently to make them more effective in reducing residential segregation. Housing vouchers

are portable credits that pay the difference between what families can afford (typically 30 percent of income) and their actual rent.[21] Families receiving housing vouchers tend to live in communities with lower crime and less concentrated poverty than families in traditional public housing.[22] However, many housing voucher programs offer minimal assistance to families to navigate the private rental market or move to a new community. As a result, families with housing vouchers frequently shuffle between a limited set of relatively poor neighborhoods, often reproducing city-wide racial and economic segregation.[23]

Policymakers at all levels of government should devise strategies to supplement voucher programs with enhanced services, as the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program has done, to lead families into integrated neighborhoods and then offer greater opportunities and support their transition to new communities.[24]

SIDEBAR: the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program (BHMP) is a court-ordered program to reduce segregation among public housing recipients. The BHMP assists and supports families in moving to low-poverty and racially integrated neighborhoods across the Baltimore metropolitan area.[iii] The program provides extensive assistance to help families find units in high-opportunity neighborhoods, and continues to support them for two years after their transition. The vast majority of BHMP families feel that their children are learning better in their new schools, and feel "safer, more peaceful, and less stressed" in their new neighborhoods.[iv]

Weaken the consequences of neighborhood poverty with evidence-based investments

Providing vouchers that allow families to leave high-poverty neighborhoods can be effective, but we also need to invest in the individuals and families that remain in the nation's most economically disadvantaged communities. We recommend a set of targeted investments designed to increase children's access to good schools, to expand the economic opportunities available to children as they reach early adulthood, and to support parents in finding and keeping stable employment. In each case, the programs we recommend are based on rigorous evidence demonstrating effectiveness, and represent strong candidates to be scaled up.

Help youth in poor neighborhoods access high-quality schools. High-quality anchor schools are central to children's academic trajectories and their long-term prospects in the labor force. High-quality schools also can act as a magnet that attracts middle-class families whose presence can stabilize and bring economic resources into depressed communities.[27]

But there are other effective ways to broaden children's access to effective schools. Bringing in high-quality charter schools can increase local educational opportunity for low-income students.[28] Unfortunately, low-income youth (with less-educated and more stressed parents) may be less able to take advantage of high-performing schools by choice.[29] To compensate, schools can increase the chance that low-income students get admitted to these schools by holding separate lotteries for admission based on race, class, and ethnicity[30] as New York City's Success Academy Network and Community Roots have done.[31]

A second approach is to take steps to soften school enrollment boundaries. In cities with economically diverse populations, school enrollment boundaries can be redrawn to create more diverse schools and give parents and children in poorer neighborhoods access to better schools.

Depending on the economic segregation of the city or metropolitan area, this might be simple or might entail busing or metropolitan-wide agreements.[32] Other promising strategies are magnet schools in low-income areas, or choice systems that enable low-income students to apply to out-of-boundary high-performing schools and get additional weighting in admission decisions. Quality education in all school districts is critical for such initiatives to succeed, whether city-wide or regional.

Connect youth to high-growth industries. We can also improve economic opportunities for young adults and engage them more effectively in school through apprenticeships,[33] non-profit collaborations like YearUp, and career and technical education (discussed in the "on ramps for success" chapter). Special attention may need to be paid to whether to locate these new opportunities in more distressed neighborhoods, the availability of transportation for those who need it, and doing effective outreach about these opportunities in poorer neighborhoods.

Provide place-conscious supports for work. A strategy successfully undertaken in the strong labor market of the 1990s is work supports, such as the federal Jobs-Plus program and the New Hope program implemented in Milwaukee. Such work supports can include training or skill building (in hard or soft skills), financial incentives to work, assistance in job searching, mentoring, and job-retention counseling. Jobs-Plus (a federal HUD demonstration program) provided residents in a small number of public housing developments with services to help them get and keep jobs as well as rent discounts if they found employment. The program was found to generate substantial, long-term impacts' on participants' earnings and smaller impacts on employment.[34] The New Hope program targeted assistance to low-income parents in poor sections of Milwaukee; parents willing to work 30+ hours a week received temporary guaranteed community service jobs, wage supplements to make private jobs pay and wraparound support services like subsidized childcare or health insurance. The intervention raised rates of employment and family income, and the benefits of the program extended to the next generation—children of families that were enrolled in New Hope were more likely to be in structured day-care, and showed improved performance in school relative to the control group.[35]

Employ schools, the police, and hospitals to help support young people in communities.

Invest in strong institutions with a community focus

Decades ago, middle-class families began leaving central-city neighborhoods and heading to the suburbs. Many urban neighborhoods experienced a new form of concentrated poverty alongside disinvestment from the federal government. In the process, core institutions like the church and schools were starved of resources and began to deteriorate.[36]

To rebuild the institutional infrastructure of distressed communities requires a process of collective, sustained planning for community change. The most ambitious approach is to rebuild communities around new institutions devoted specifically to holistic change. Purpose Built Communities is a model for neighborhood transformation that begins with the establishment of a nonprofit designed to provide a strong institutional base to lead the change process. The model of change includes the development of mixed-income housing, community-oriented schools, and comprehensive services for community wellness, all of which are based on a commitment from the institution designated as the "Community Quarterback."[37]

A more common approach is to build around existing anchor institutions that are crucial for supporting young people in a community . We focus our discussion on three institutions: schools, the police, and hospitals.

Schools.[38] K-12 schools are the most important institution in most young persons' lives, but they often do not serve the entire community. Community schools – public schools identified by cities as hubs for other social services – and some charter schools have been developing teams and partnerships, and launching initiatives, to improve community prosperity. Baltimore Public Schools, together with Family League of Baltimore City, has converted 43 of their schools into community schools, using partnerships that focus not only on academics but also on after-school enrichment, health and social

services, family engagement, and youth and community development. Cincinnati's Community Learning Centers do something similar, and also offer arts and civic engagement opportunities. And the American Federation of Teachers is building a school-led organizational coalition of government, business and non-profit organizations to rebuild the faltering Appalachian economy of McDowell County, West Virginia. Reconnecting McDowell includes a commitment to community schools, but partners have also covenanted to work together for at least 5 years on shared goals in the following six areas: K-12 instruction; college and career pathways; early childhood; health & wraparound services; housing & transportation; jobs & economy; and technology.

Transforming the school building into a center of community life is aided by broadened accountability and changed metrics that reward school principals and superintendents for community outcomes, such as the number of community adults and children (non-students) who enter the school weekly. These metrics, which could be implemented by city mayors or state legislatures, would help overcome dense bureaucracies in which actors have few incentives to serve anyone but enrolled students.

Police. Over the past two decades, rates of homicide and violent crime in the United States have been cut roughly in half. Although improvements in policing have likely contributed to the drop in violent crime, intensive policing and mass imprisonment have also destabilized families and communities, and created widespread anger and resentment that is concentrated in low-income communities of color.[39] To transform the role of police in disadvantaged communities requires re-orienting the police toward community life.

The primary goal of police departments nationwide is always to prevent crime. Police departments collect extensive data on criminal complaints and arrests, but they should also collect broader metrics on neighbors' attitude toward police, community cohesion and trust, fear of crime, and victimization. These broader metrics would inform local policing strategies and enable police chiefs and mayors to assess collective and individual policing performance.

Expanding the focus of the police beyond arrests aligns with new models of policing that attempt to foster trust and legitimacy while preventing violence.[40] First, positive interactions between the police and the large majority of law-abiding community residents can rebuild trust and community life.[41] Simultaneously, "focused deterrence" strategies engage the small group of residents responsible for a disproportionate share of violence. The focused deterrence approach, which has been successful in many cities across the country, is designed to clearly communicate that these chronic offenders will be prosecuted aggressively if they engage in violence, but supported through social services or job opportunities if they desist.[42]

Hospitals. Some hospital systems, such as Montefiore in Bronx, NY, have a long history of working with schools, housing associations, and community groups to improve general community health by working "upstream" to address poor nutrition, mold and other dangerous housing conditions. Others engage in community-building as part of their corporate or even religious mission (for example the Catholic and Adventist hospitals).

For hospitals without this type of charitable mission, incentives for a more explicit focus on the community can be effective. Medicare, for instance, now reduces reimbursements if patients are readmitted to hospitals for the same problem within 30 days. Maryland goes further by penalizing hospitals for any readmission, stimulating local hospitals like Washington Adventist to work with housing organizations and food associations to reduce risk factors that foster both hospital readmissions and adults' work absenteeism.[43] Adventist has also developed partnerships with local churches to teach better health and

support community groups and parish nurses. Many hospitals also use volunteers from these networks and trained staff to help families enroll for social services. And as a result of the Affordable Care Act, nonprofit hospitals must now develop a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to indicate how they are providing benefits to the wider community.[44]

We shouldn't kid ourselves about quick neighborhood turnarounds. It takes time to create stable communities, establish partnerships, and change accountability. Organizations often resist the call to broaden their efforts to reach the community as a whole, claiming that a broader agenda will dilute their focus or make their task too hard. The truth is that the stakes are too high for business as usual. We must begin by identifying actors within and outside of a community, core anchor institutions, and funders and policymakers willing to plan for long-term change, agree on these broader metrics and the importance of working together to achieve them, and have the public or private sector support this collaboration and the data systems that enable communities to track their progress.

Link disconnected young people to supportive institutions and mentors

Removing barriers to opportunity and improving neighborhood conditions are important, but young people also need to be supported and guided as they go through risky stages of the life course. Youths from more- advantaged families and communities are typically surrounded by mentors and role models, and when they mess up (as most do) they have access to a range of "airbags" in their families and community to cushion any blow to their success.[45] When young people from areas of concentrated disadvantage make bad decisions, they are far less likely to have access to the same airbags in their families or communities and are far more likely to experience harsh punishment in the schools or on the streets.

Every young person in every community should have access to supportive community institutions and committed mentors in order to provide guidance, advocacy, and support through the period of young adulthood. One core institution providing such support in every community is religious congregations.

During the last twenty years church attendance has fallen much more rapidly among children from working class families than among children from affluent families.[46] This divergence may contribute to the growing opportunity gap. For youth (and for adults), involvement in religious groups is robustly associated with better physical health, better mental health and happiness, higher educational attainment, lower substance abuse, and increased volunteering.[47] The evidence available suggests that the importance of religious institutions does not arise through theology, but through the connections and sense of identity that may emerge via friends and mentors from one's house of worship.[48]

We recommend that mayors, local foundations, and other community leaders take active steps to engage local congregations as leaders in the effort to confront the opportunity gap.[49] As part of this effort, local religious leaders should step forward to explore what their congregations are doing both to provide needed social services and positive role models to less-educated children. For example, in 2009 Amachi, which provides mentors to children with incarcerated parents and other at-risk youth, enlisted congregations in the Amachi Mentoring Coalition Project. They received $18 million of federal funding (from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention) to train and assist mentoring organizations in 38 states and unlocked significant supply of mentors from religious organizations.[50]

Beyond the role of religious congregations, we argue for a broader focus on mentoring. Strong evidence links mentoring to a range of positive outcomes, such as educational attainment, mental and emotional health, and avoiding risky behavior like gangs or drugs.[51] But the least privileged children and teens – the ones most in need of formal or

informal mentoring – have the fewest mentors, with devastating long-term implications.[52]

High-quality mentoring is neither free nor cheap.[53] To be effective, mentoring needs to be consistent and offered by trustworthy adults with positive behaviors and character.[54] If we want *all* low-income youth to find *high-quality, trained* mentors (caring non-parental adults), we will probably need to supplement volunteer mentors with paid mentors.[55] Linking young people with mentors is the primary goal of any mentoring program, but such programs can also be tailored to meet other goals such as improving academic engagement through tutoring or improving health among the children of a community.

SIDEBAR: Harlem Children's Zone's found that more traditional approaches to mentoring – for example, more short-term mentoring by strangers -- were ineffective and sometimes counter-productive. Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) now uses AmeriCorps positions, paid a yearly $15,000 stipend, and filled by youth from the HCZ community generally who have earned 2-year degrees or are attending community college. The mentors are trained in conflict resolution and other key skills, and provide academic support, community role modeling, and consistent longer-duration life coaching skills to mentees. HCZ experience is that these kinds of relationships tend to endure. The 13-14 year old mentees tend to especially look up to and seek to emulate older youth from the community, so this ensures they see positive role models. The mentors provide support one-on-one and in small groups in public schools, in and out of classes. HCZ has shown how mentors themselves start to "walk the walk" and live up to their high expectations.[v]

Conclusions

As rich and poor families have increasingly moved into separate communities, the character of neighborhood life in the United States has changed. Towns and cities used to look out for the wellbeing of every child, all of whom were considered "our kids."[57] After several decades of rising economic segregation, and erratic investment from the federal government, poverty is concentrated in certain neighborhoods, and the sense of collective responsibility for every child has eroded.

We have outlined several concrete steps to reduce economic segregation, rebuild communities, and narrow the opportunity gap. We advocate housing policies that would create more diverse communities and expand the residential options of low-income families. Investing in the recommended programs would weaken the relationship between neighborhood poverty and the life chances of children, and more effectively link children to existing resources and institutions in their communities. Reducing neighborhood inequality through these mechanisms will not, by itself, allow all children from low-income families to experience upward mobility. But sustained investments in American neighborhoods can transform the role of communities in the United States—instead of neighborhoods and communities exacerbating the impact of family poverty, communities can mitigate the impact of family poverty, providing a cushion for every low-income child.

Endnotes

1 Robert Putnam uses the example of his hometown of Port Clinton, Ohio in his book *Our Kids*. In Port Clinton, the children of well-off families and working-class families lived their lives in the same neighborhoods and took part in collective life together, creating the conditions for a strong community. RD Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2015). For a review of evidence on school segregation see: SF Reardon and A Owens, "60 Years after *Brown*:

Trends and Consequences of School Segregation," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 40:199-218 (July 2014).

2 According to a recent report, the proportion of families living in either very poor or very affluent neighborhoods rose from 15 percent to 33 percent from 1970 to 2009. K Bischoff and SF Reardon, "Residential Segregation by Income, 1970-2009", (US 2010: Discover America in a New Century, 2013); See also: Pew Economic Mobility Project, "Mobility and the Metropolis" (Washington DC: Pew Economic Mobility Project, 2013); R Pendall with C Hedman, "Worlds Apart: Inequality between America's Most and Least Affluent Neighborhoods" (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2015).

3 P Jargowsky, "The Architecture of Segregation" (Washington, DC: The Century Foundation, 2015).

4 Pew Economic Mobility Project, "Mobility and the Metropolis,"2013; E Kneebone, "The Growth and Spread of Concentrated Poverty, 2000 to 2008-2012" (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, July 31, 2014).

5 R Chetty, N Hendren and L Katz, "The Effects of Exposure to Better Neighborhoods on Children: New Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 21156 (2015); R Chetty and N Hendren, "Causal Effects of the 100 Largest Commuting Zones on Household Income in Adulthood," Equality of Opportunity Project (2015); R J Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); P Sharkey, *Stuck In Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Racial Equality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

6 MA Turner, "Tackling Poverty in Place: Principles for a Next Generation of Place-Conscious Interventions," Urban Institute (February 10, 2014 draft); M Pastor & MA Turner, "Reducing Poverty and Economic Distress after ARRA: Potential Roles for Place-Conscious Strategies," Urban Institute (2010).

7 WJ Wilson, *More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City* (WW Norton & Company, 2009).

8 As an example, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development is planning to implement a new rule that will tie federal aid to the development of comprehensive plans for affirmatively furthering the goals of fair housing (AFFH). This rule has the potential to alter the landscape of housing policy in a way that could reduce neighborhood inequality as much or even more than any single policy suggested in this document. [For more on this, see MA Turner, "How HUD's latest fair housing rule could expand access to opportunity," Living Cities Blog (2014).

9 P Sharkey, 2013.

10 B Katz and J Bradley, *The Metropolitan Revolution: How Cities and Metros Are Fixing Our Broken Politics and Fragile Economy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013).

11 EL Glaeser and J Gyourko, "The Impact of Building Restrictions on Housing Affordability," *FRBNY Economic Policy Review,* June 2003: 21-39 (2003).

12 P Medoff and H Sklar, *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood,* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994).

13 D Fireside, "Burlington Busts the Affordable Housing Debate," *Dollars & Sense: Real World Economics* (2015).

14 J Madar, "Inclusionary Housing Policy in New York City: Assessing New Opportunities, Constraints, and Trade-offs," (New York, NYU Furman Center paper, March 26, 2015). Note: while voluntary inclusionary zoning policies exist, they have had limited impact and many communities (e.g., Boulder, CO or Cambridge, MA and others in California) that began with voluntary programs and later switched from voluntary to mandatory programs to increase their effectiveness.

15 National Low Income Housing Coalition, "40 Years Ago: Montgomery County, Maryland Pioneers Inclusionary Zoning," (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2014).

16 More specifically, this program originally required that new housing developments with at least 50 units had to include at least 15 percent affordable units. MPDU has been modified over time, but several features stand out. When first implemented, the program required that new units remain affordable for five years. Now, new homeowner units are required to remain affordable for 30 years and rental units are required to remain below market price for 99 years. Secondly, at least 40 percent of newly developed units have to be offered for purchase to the county's public housing agency or to local housing nonprofits. This policy has allowed the public housing agency and local nonprofits to purchase neighborhood housing, amassing a substantial share of affordable housing in the most desirable neighborhoods across Montgomery County.

17 For example, Cambridge, MA requires half of rental units generated through local inclusionary zoning regulations to be reserved for low-income housing vouchers, opening up these neighborhoods to voucher holders.

18 DS Massey, et al., *Climbing Mount Laurel: The Struggle for Affordable Housing and Social Mobility in an American Suburb*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

19 G Galster, K Pettit, et al., "The Impacts of Supportive Housing on Neighborhoods and Neighbors," Urban Institute (October 1999).

20 L Freeman, "The Impact of Source of Income Laws on Voucher Utilization," *Housing Policy Debate* 22(2):297-318 (2012).

21 For more detail on how vouchers work, see Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "Policy Basics: The Housing Choice Voucher Program," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (Updated July 7, 2015).

22 MC Lens, IG Ellen and K O'Regan, "Do Vouchers Help Low-Income Households Live in Safer Neighborhoods? Evidence on the Housing Choice Voucher Program," *Cityscape* 13(3):127-151 (2011); K McClure, "Deconcentrating Poverty with Housing Programs," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 74(1):90-99 (2008).

23 A Owens, SF Reardon and C Jencks, "Trends in School Economic Segregation, 1970 to 2010," Working Paper (December 2014); P Sharkey, "Residential Mobility and the Reproduction of Unequal Neighborhoods," *Cityscape* 14(3):9-31 (2012).

24 Barbara Sard and Douglas Rice have a paper providing an excellent diagram of policymakers at various levels could better use the voucher program to enable children to access better neighborhoods. See B Sard and D Rice, "Creating Opportunity for Children How Housing Location Can Make a Difference," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (October 15, 2014), Figure 1.

25 More specifically, the BHMP program was the result of a court-ordered desegregation plan. Participants are tutored in budgeting and finance and supported until ready to move. They are then offered assistance in navigating potential destination communities with lower levels of poverty, lower concentrations of racial/ethnic minority populations, or less public housing. Participants are introduced to local institutions likely to be important in their transition period, and are supported for at least two years after moving. During this period they receive supports that allow them to take advantage of new employment opportunities

even in areas without extensive public transit service. L Engdahl, "New Homes, New Neighborhoods, New Schools: A progress Report on the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program," Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign (October 2009).

26 The experiences of families in the BHMP program have been documented through rich ethnography and extensive follow-up survey data. Although BHMP was not designed in a way that allows for precise estimates of the program's impact, the evidence clearly shows that program participants have moved to entirely different residential environments where they have remained stably housed, and that these movers are overwhelmingly positive about how this new environment has affected them and their children. Based on a survey of roughly 1,500 families that moved in the program, Engdahl (2009) reports that families in the program moved from neighborhoods that were, on average, 80 percent Black and 33 percent poor to neighborhoods that were 21 percent Black and 8 percent poor. Their children moved from schools where 83 percent of students were eligible for free/reduced lunch to schools where 33 percent of students were eligible. Almost 90 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their children's new schools and thought that their children were performing well there. Perhaps most importantly, about 80 percent of adult movers felt "safer, more peaceful, and less stressed" in their new neighborhoods (Engdahl 2009, p.3). These findings accord with the broader literature that finds that one of the most important benefits from moving out of high-poverty communities is a less stressful life for caregivers (Kling et al. 2004). Combined with quasi-experimental evidence from other programs showing how children benefit when they move into safer neighborhoods and integrated schools (Massey et al. 2013; Schwartz 2010), there is now a sufficient research base to conclude that when families are able to make residential moves that lead them into low-poverty, integrated environments, and that when they are provided extensive supports during their transitions, the life chances of children improve substantially. Expanding the number of housing vouchers available to low-income families throughout the country is a crucial step in addressing the shortage of affordable housing. [JR Kling and JB Liebman "Experimental Analysis of Neighborhood Effects on Youth," *Econometrica* 75(1):83–119 (January 2007); H Schwartz, "Housing Policy Is School Policy: Economically Integrative Housing Promotes Academic Success in Montgomery County, Maryland," (New York, Century Foundation Report, 2010). For a more detailed discussion of policy options for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, see: S DeLuca, PME Garboden & P Rosenblatt, "Segregating Shelter: How Housing Policies Shape the Residential Locations of Low-Income Minority Families," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 647(1):268-299 (2015).

27 We discuss in the K-12 chapter strategies to improve teaching and leadership in schools, bring in high quality charters and other education-improving strategies.

28 We note in the K-12 chapter that charter schools in general are no more effective than average public schools, but certain charter schools or charter school networks are especially effective at educating low-income students. High quality after-school environments and opportunities for youth are also important. The After School Corporation has quantified a learning gap of up to 6,000 hours in high quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities between poor and middle class children by grade 6. Strategies for after-school and summer are discussed in the K-12 chapter.

29 See A Lareau and K Goyette, *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2014), especially chapters 4 and 9.

30 It is best if state-level policy incentivizes or mandates racial and socioeconomic diversity in admissions to avoid favoritism or accusations of it at the school level. See also RD Kahlenberg, *All Together Now: Creating Middle-class Schools through Public School Choice,* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001).

31 Alternately, charter schools can implement a variable weighting scheme, where being poor or living in a poor neighborhood increases one's chances in the school lottery.

32 If the new school boundaries are less compact and entail busing, state or federal funds may be needed to subsidize this additional cost. In areas where the affluent live in suburbs, regional policymakers need to acknowledge that suburban and urban success are interconnected and develop regional policies to increase school integration. [See J Rappaport, "The Shared Fortunes of Cities and Suburbs," Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City (2005).] Boundaries may also need be drawn that cross urban and suburban lines or permitting and facilitating inner city residents to attend suburban schools. [See description of Louisville and Minneapolis' description of such efforts in R Jordan, "A Closer Look at Income and Race Concentration in Public Schools," Urban Institute (2005).]

33 See R Lerman, "Expanding Apprenticeship Opportunities in the United States," The Brookings Institution (2014).

34 HS Bloom, JA Riccio, N Verma and J Walter, "Promoting Work in Public Housing: The Effectiveness of Jobs-Plus Final Report," MDRC (March 2005). For a discussion of the role of "place-based" policies in Jobs-Plus and lessons learned, see MA Turner and LA Rawlings, "Overcoming Concentrated Poverty and Isolation: Ten Lessons for Policy and Practice," Urban Institute (July 2005).

35 The New Hope program randomized who received or didn't receive these supports and benefits and compared the performance of program participants to those who got no additional services. New Hope also reduced family poverty, and raised the children's academic performance and behavior, especially for boys. For analysis of New Hope see: GJ Duncan, AC Huston and TS Weisner, *Higher Ground: New Hope for the Working Poor and Their Children*, (New York: Russell Sage, 2009); AC Huston, GJ Duncan, et al., "Work-based Antipoverty Programs for Parents Can Enhance the School Performance and Social Behavior of Children," *Child Development* 72(1):318-336 (2001); AC Huston, C Miller, et al., "New Hope for Families and Children: Five-Year Results of a Program to Reduce Poverty and Reform Welfare," MDRC (2003).

36 WJ Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987). See also G Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

37 See Purpose-Built Communities' "Our Approach" (accessed October 5, 2015).

38 Policies to reform academic opportunities are discussed in a separate chapter of this project. It is also important to support young people in the summer months. City summer employment and mentoring can also help change the culture in high-risk schools. For example, participating students from 13 high-violence Chicago schools had 43 percent fewer violent crime arrests over the following 16 months than non-participants. Interestingly, the program's impact appeared when these youth were back together with non-participating youth during the school year. A randomized controlled trial evaluated the effect of the

Chicago summer jobs program that offered summer employment and mentoring to 1,600 at-risk youth in community service jobs along with training in social and emotional learning. SB Heller, "Summer Jobs Reduce Violence among Disadvantaged Youth," *Science* 346(6214):1219-1223 (December 2014). See also an evaluation showing that first-time summer employment to poorer NYC residents increased shorter-term income and employment but didn't improve their three-year longer-term earnings or education. They did find, however, that it decreased the chance of incarceration and of young adult mortality. A study of this program is also underway by MDRC. A Gelber, A Isen and JB Kessler, "The Effects of Youth Employment: Evidence from New York City Summer Youth Employment Program Lotteries," NBER Working Paper No. 20810 (2014).

39 See the discussion of "decarceration" in the chapter on "On Ramps for Success."

40 D Nagin, "Written Testimony Before the President's Taskforce on 21st Century Policing," Written Testimony Before the President's Taskforce on 21st Century Policing (February 25, 2015). For more information on "true community policing" see C Stone and J Travis, "Toward a New Professionalism in Policing," 13 *JIJIS* 11 (2013). For more information on community policing generally see: R Trojanowicz & B Bucqueroux, *Community Policing: A Contemporary Perspective* (Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing, 1990).

41 For example, the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing described a set of programs undertaken in different places across the country designed to build trust between the police and the community: such as, "Coffee with a Cop (and Sweet Tea with the Chief), Cops and Clergy, Citizens on Patrol Mobile, Students Talking It Over with Police, and The West Side Story Project." [President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, "Interim Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing," (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2015).] Programs like The Becoming a Man program (BAM) in Chicago can also be effective. BAM, implemented in 18 public schools, offered students a combination of cognitive behavioral support groups and after-school sports programs. A randomized controlled trial found that the program reduced violent crime arrests for the 7th-12th grade African-American boys in the program by 44%. [University of Chicago Crime Lab, "BAM—Sports Edition: Research and Policy Brief," University of Chicago Crime Lab (July 2012).]

42 AA Braga and DA Weisburd, "The Effects of Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Empirical Evidence," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 49(3):323-358 (August 2012).

43 They are also working with the county to provide housing and medical services after discharge to homeless people who often do not follow healthcare directions like changing dressings or other requests and thus wind up back in the emergency room.

44 To achieve this, Adventist has also developed partnerships with local churches to teach better health and support community groups and parish nurses. Many hospitals also use volunteers from these networks and trained staff to help families enroll for social services. And thanks to the Affordable Care Act, nonprofit hospitals must now develop a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to indicate how they are providing benefits to the wider community. While the Medicare program penalizes hospitals by reducing reimbursements if patients are readmitted for the same problem within 30 days (creating some incentive), Maryland creates a larger incentive by penalizing hospitals for *any* readmission. Of course some hospital systems, as part of their corporate or even religious mission (e.g., Catholic hospitals), undertake community work. For example Montefiore Hospital in Bronx, New York, has a long history of working with schools, housing associations and community groups to improve the general health of the community by working "upstream" to address factors like poor nutrition, or mold and other dangerous housing conditions. Nonetheless, expanded incentives like Medicare reimbursement policies undoubtedly expand the number and efforts of such hospitals. [For more information, see: S Butler, J Grabinsky and D Masi, "Hospitals as Hubs to Create Healthy Communities: Lessons from Washington Adventist Hospital," Brookings Institution (September 2015).]

45 For example, the parents of high-income teens prevent these mistakes from derailing their kids' success, for example by connecting them with counseling, obtaining a good lawyer, buying them a second chance, or negotiating a change of school.

46 Putnam, *Our Kids*, 2015. See also: RA Cnaan, RJ Gelles & JW Sinha, "Youth and religion: The Gameboy Generation Goes to 'Church'," *Social Indicators Research* 68(2):175-200 (2004).

47 For this evidence as of 2012, see RD Putnam and DE Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012). For evidence on the association between youth religious involvement and at-risk behaviors, see: JW Sinha, RA Cnaan & RJ Gelles, "Adolescent Risk Behaviors and Religion: Findings from a National Study," *Journal of Adolescence* 30(2):231-249 (2007).

48 C Lim and RD Putnam, "Religion, Social Networks, and Life Satisfaction," *American Sociological Review* 75(6):914-933(2010). Putnam and Lim show that any friends (secular or religious) need to greater life satisfaction but religious friends show especially strong effects.

49 There is some needless self-censorship here. Philanthropies can fund any religious charitable group under their tax-exempt status that doesn't engage in lobbying. Government groups can fund faith-based institutions to provide needed services in poorer communities, understanding that social service provision cannot be conditioned on young people participating in religious services.

50 WW Goode & TJ Smith, "Building from the Ground Up: Creating Effective Programs to Mentor Children of Prisoners – The Amachi Model," Public/Private Ventures (2005); ICF International, "Mentoring Children Affected by Incarceration: An Evaluation of the Amachi Texas Program," ICF International (2011).

51 DL DuBois et al., "How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 12(2) 57–91 (2011); DL DuBois et al., "Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs for Youth: A Meta-Analytic Review", *American Journal of Community Psychology* 30:157-197 (2002).

52 Putnam, *Our Kids*, 2015; The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring (2014). Ideally, youth are mentored by multiple and varied adults throughout their development, as is common for upper-income youth. Many of these important ties are time-limited by design or limited to a particular sphere of a young person's life (e.g., school), many of them are informal, and some evolve into deeper, even kin-like bonds that approximate the support that parents provide children. However, too many low-income youth lack any mentor, to say nothing of multiple and varied mentors.

53 Hallmarks of high-quality programs include careful screening and background checks, appropriate training in best practices for all mentors in working with youth for all mentors (whether volunteers or paid staff), careful pairing of mentors and youth for optimum compatibility, and ongoing support from professional staff of once mentoring relationships are once

established. [MENTOR, Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, 3rd edition (MENTOR, 2009).]Low-quality mentoring programs, which can be cheap, typically have little impact or potentially do harm. C Herrera, JB Grossman, et al., "Making a Difference in Schools: The Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring Impact Study," Public/Private Ventures (2007).

54 Unpredictable adults who abandon mentoring commitments mid-program undermine trust and can actually do harm. JB Grossman & JE Rhodes, "The Test of Time: Predictors and Effects of Duration in Youth Mentoring Programs," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 30(2):199–219 (2002). Alternatively, entrepreneurial and resourceful mentors who are invested in their mentees are not only more effective, but can advocate for mentees in times when they have made bad decisions and are in need of second chances. See DuBois et al., "How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth?" 2011.

55 National service can also effectively draw together youth from varied socio-economic backgrounds to work together towards common community goals. It can also serve as a skill development experience that prepares working-class youths for the professional world. For example, see the successful Minnesota Reading Corps and Reading Partners. The long waiting lists for mentors (especially for boys) in the largest-scale programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters make it clear that insufficient numbers of volunteers exist. At the same time, we shouldn't give up on more informal mentors for low-income youth. High-income youth typically find their mentors from: teachers; family friends; religious or youth group connections; or coaches (in decreasing order). Given low-income youth's decreased religiosity and the fact that their family friends typically lack savvy, we think that teachers or coaches may be a good source of informal mentors. For more on strategies to increase mentors for low-income youth, see The Mentoring Effect, 2014.56 This sidebar is illustrative of mentoring's impact, based on oral testimony of Geoff Canada at our Community Working Group meeting. It is not necessarily based on independent academic research of this mentoring program.

56 Putnam, *Our Kids*, 2015.

SIDEBARS

[i] P Medoff and H Sklar, *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood*, (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994).

[ii] D Fireside, "Burlington Busts the Affordable Housing Debate," Dollars & Sense: Real World Economics (2015).

[iii] More specifically, the BHMP program was the result of a court-ordered desegregation plan. Participants are tutored in budgeting and finance and supported until ready to move. They are then offered assistance in navigating potential destination communities with lower levels of poverty, lower concentrations of racial/ethnic minority populations, or less public housing. Participants are introduced to local institutions likely to be important in their transition period, and are supported for at least two years after moving. During this period they receive supports that allow them to take advantage of new employment opportunities even in areas without extensive public transit service. L Engdahl, "New Homes, New Neighborhoods, New Schools: A progress Report on the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program," Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign (October 2009).

[iv] The experiences of families in the BHMP program have been documented through rich ethnography and extensive follow-up survey data. Although BHMP was not designed in a way that allows for precise estimates of the program's impact, the evidence clearly shows that program participants have moved to entirely different residential environments where they have remained stably housed, and that these movers are overwhelmingly positive about how this new environment has affected them and their children. Based on a survey of roughly 1,500 families that moved in the program, Engdahl (2009) reports that families in the program moved from neighborhoods that were, on average, 80 percent Black and 33 percent poor to neighborhoods that were 21 percent Black and 8 percent poor. Their children moved from schools where 83 percent of students were eligible for free/reduced lunch to schools where 33 percent of students were eligible. Almost 90 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their children's new schools and thought that their children were performing well there. Perhaps most importantly, about 80 percent of adult movers felt "safer, more peaceful, and less stressed" in their new neighborhoods (Engdahl 2009, p.3). These findings accord with the broader literature that finds that one of the most important benefits from moving out of high-poverty communities is a less stressful life for caregivers (Kling et al. 2004). Combined with quasi-experimental evidence from other programs showing how children benefit when they move into safer neighborhoods and integrated schools (Massey et al. 2013; Schwartz 2010), there is now a sufficient research base to conclude that when families are able to make residential moves that lead them into low-poverty, integrated environments, and that when they are provided extensive supports during their transitions, the life chances of children improve substantially. Expanding the number of housing vouchers available to low-income families throughout the country is a crucial step in addressing the shortage of affordable housing. [JR Kling and JB Liebman "Experimental Analysis of Neighborhood Effects on Youth," *Econometrica* 75(1):83–119 (January 2007); H Schwartz, "Housing Policy Is School Policy: Economically Integrative Housing Promotes Academic Success in Montgomery County, Maryland," (New York, Century Foundation Report, 2010). For a more detailed discussion of policy options for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, see: S DeLuca, PME Garboden & P Rosenblatt, "Segregating Shelter: How Housing Policies Shape the Residential Locations of Low-Income Minority Families," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 647(1):268-299 (2015).]

[v] This sidebar is illustrative of mentoring's impact, based on oral testimony of Geoff Canada at our Community Working Group meeting. It is not necessarily based on independent academic research of this mentoring program.

ON-RAMPS FOR SUCCESS

Katherine S. Newman and Robert D. Putnam

This chapter attempts to be faithful to a conversation involving the following experts about what has been demonstrated to work in this domain, but not every participant or author necessarily agrees with every word or sentence in the chapter.

Participants:
Thomas Bailey, Columbia Teachers College
Ronnie Booth, Tri-County Technical College
Michael Crow, Arizona State University
Ross Gittell, Community College System of New Hampshire
Sara Goldrick-Rab, University of Wisconsin
Antonia Hernández, California Community Foundation
Harry Holzer, Georgetown University
Andrew Kelly, American Enterprise Institute
John Ladd, U.S. Department of Labor
Katherine Newman, University of Massachusetts
Hermann Nehls, German Embassy to the United States
Robert D. Putnam, Harvard University
Dorothy Stoneman, founder, YouthBuild
with Thomas Sander

Consider the following alarming statistics about our young adults. Among those aged 16 to 24, 6.7 million, or about one in seven, were both out-of-school and out-of-work in 2012, a condition that put them at great risk for a life of unemployment and poverty.[1] That same year, only 45 percent of students from the lowest economic quartile had enrolled in a two-year or four-year college[2]—a sizeable proportion of whom, recent statistics suggest, will never graduate.[3] These trends hurt us enormously. Providing inadequate training and education for our current 16-24 year olds, according to one estimate, will cost taxpayers an estimated $1.6 trillion—and society an estimated $4.7 trillion—over the next 30 years.[4]

Ignoring these problems is not only costly but also fundamentally unfair. America's social compact is that hard work and talent, not parental wealth, should shape one's life chances—but today poor youth with the highest test scores graduate college only as frequently as wealthy students with below-average test scores.[5] What we need are "on-ramps" – new policies and institutions – that help at-risk youth get on the road toward a life of meaningful employment and social engagement and then stay the course. Recommendations from our other working groups (Early Childhood and K-12 years) would help reduce the need for these on-ramps in the future, but we need to act with urgency now to help the current generation and their children.

Fortunately, we know how to make a difference. Effective interventions in the United States and other countries have taught us in recent years what works

best in helping young adults to be more successful in education and the workplace, and in forestalling further growth in the opportunity gap.[6] This means we can now design new interventions, carefully evaluate them, and hold the institutions they support accountable for spending public money responsibly, all of which will allow policymakers to invest with confidence. We'll discuss intervention ideas below, but first we'll lay out the principles that have guided our thinking.

Guiding Principles

Reducing importance of family backgrounds. Many decisions that shape career training and education are affected by unequal family income or education. These include: search patterns for high schools and colleges; knowledge about how one trains for careers, and what they pay; having contacts in a profession to arrange internships or get advice; determining majors or the right sequence of courses; learning how to interact with faculty and seek help; patterns of participation in academic and social extracurricular activities; having adequate study time while working in school and coping with unpredictable family demands or crises. The cultural capital that enables some families to guide their young creates vastly uneven playing fields, so we need institutions that can provide equality-promoting on-ramps such as counseling, alumni networks, and financial aid to help equalize completion rates, student-debt levels, and the payoffs from degrees. We also need second-chance "on-ramp" programs to surround skill-building and education with family-like cultures of peer and adult support that provide students with safety, respect, and guidance.

With almost 1 in 7 16-24 year-olds out-of-school or out-of work, we need on ramps to help them re-engage and find work.

Educational institutions need to lower the effective cost per degree obtained even if this requires new investments to boost graduation rates.

Making education more student-centric, especially for low-income students. Educational institutions need to be more cost-effective, and hence lower the cost to society per degree, even if this requires additional investments to increase the graduation rate. But we must also focus on quality and avoid eroding it in favor of solutions that lower cost but diminish the real value of the degree. Technology has an important role to play, and we need rigorous R&D to determine how best to leverage it. Nonetheless, personal relationships with teachers and administrators are particularly important for students from less-educated households.

Making education more responsive to the labor market. Nearly all successful American youth eventually end up working. For this reason, helping all children – especially the disadvantaged -- develop a sense of their talents and interests early on, dwelling on the relationship between education and their imagined careers, would enable better long-range planning and matching of personal interests and aptitudes with future occupations. Exposure to the adult world of work helps to reinforce the importance of present choices for securing desirable futures and provides important motivation. Whether students are in liberal arts, vocational, or comprehensive second-chance training programs, all of them need to emerge capable of creative problem-solving, offering quality improvement suggestions, and working in teams. Both liberal-arts courses and demanding vocational education can develop such competencies and prepare graduates for the knowledge economy in our globalized world.

Prevention. Remediation is necessary, but it is costly. We need to continue to reduce school dropouts and ensure that youth and young adults make effective life transitions so that it isn't

needed. However, we also need to be ready with on-ramps that can offer a second chance to disconnected youth, and can re-integrate and train ex-prisoners.

Evaluation is critical. We don't dwell on evaluation in this report but we believe it to be critical. Investing in programmatic interventions and holding institutions accountable only makes sense if those interventions can be shown to affect outcomes in a positive and cost-effective way.

Interventions

This working group focused on four main topics.

1) Reforming educational institutions and incarceration to reduce "off-ramps" for young adults

Dropping out of school and floundering in the labor market are symptoms of inequality and cumulative disadvantage, not, as some people seem to believe, deficient moral character, inadequate teachers, or the excessive financial costs of schooling. To address these problems, we need to reform the educational institutions serving young people (high schools, and two- and four-year colleges), so that fewer students drop out.[7] We can do this by creating smaller schools to reduce impersonal and anomic experiences,[8] investing in more intensive advising, and reforming curriculum to scaffold success more effectively. Such strategies can limit the need for remediation courses, which are often a dead-end for students, and ensure that more students graduate from high school and community colleges. We also favor reducing reliance on incarceration in America and investing in education and training to ensure that ex-convicts will develop productive life trajectories.

Community colleges are critical pathways in this country to upward mobility and opportunity—a linchpin for many Americans struggling to further their skills and employability. But they are too complex for the most disadvantaged students to navigate.

Perhaps the most dispiriting outcome of America's community college system is that nearly two thirds of their students drop out before receiving any degree or transferring to a four-year institution.[9] To increase their navigability, community colleges should implement what Thomas Bailey, a member of our working group, calls "guided pathways,"[10] which give greater program coherence and scaffolding. Specifically, two-year colleges should provide first-year experiences that enable goal setting,[11] simpler and more coherent choices, and default educational pathways.

Community colleges are critically important for social mobility but too complex for low-income students to navigate. Students need guided pathways.

Mass imprisonment is one of the most harmful US off ramps. It takes millions – especially young men from minority communities – away from their family responsibilities and returns them damaged and unable to effectively find stable employment.

Students in community colleges also need more intensive advising and tracking, because many come from families and neighborhoods lacking the knowledge to advise them about courses and careers, or about bureaucratic hurdles such as complicated financial aid forms and course schedules. Adding advisors may raise the yearly costs for community colleges but would lower the cost per student degree, by ensuring that more community college students graduate.[12] Technology may also help students track their progress, and school counselors target the issues on which students most need help.[13] Our group does not advocate replacing personal support with technological support, though technology may help advisers be more effective.

Rethinking developmental education (also known as "remediation"): Developmental education is often too little too late for many students: they never successfully make the transition to for-credit classes at community college.[14] Students don't realize that in taking developmental classes they are not earning college credit, while they draw down available Pell Grant funding and then amass debt. We believe that as far as possible, academic deficiencies need to be the focus of remedial attention in middle school and high school;[15] We should also reconsider whether the courses that cause the highest demand for remediation, especially algebra, are really needed for the occupations students are trying to access.[16] Where possible, community colleges should integrate remediation into for-credit courses, rather than provide it as a stand-alone offering;[17] and should reconsider whether these courses are needed at all.[18]

Decarceration: One of the most harmful "off ramps" in the US today is that of mass incarceration. It is responsible for taking millions of people, especially young men from minority communities, off the road to jobs and appropriate family responsibilities and returning them to society so damaged that they are unable to reconnect with any meaningful pathway to adult responsibility. Experts and bipartisan groups of reformers agree that U.S. incarceration policies and practices today are harmful to inmates, their families, and society at large[19]—and are unnecessary to keep Americans safe.[20] We recommend five approaches to decarceration.

First, we should reform sentencing guidelines to reduce mandatory-minimum and "war on drugs" sentences, which are unnecessarily long and punitive.

Second, we should help prisoners develop career skills, literacy, non-cognitive work skills, and prosocial behaviors, so that they are better prepared to find legal employment upon release.[21]

Third, we should eliminate post-release barriers to employment,[22] public housing, public services, and voting rights, which make re-entering society difficult.

Fourth, upon their release, we should offer ex-prisoners access to social services and transitional one-year community-service positions, so that they can gain the skills necessary to re-enter the workforce.[23]

Fifth, we should introduce parole and re-entry reforms such as developing a post-release life plan with inmates, providing cognitive-behavioral interventions,[24] providing them with transitional housing or substance-abuse treatment, and reducing reimprisonment of ex-inmates for technical violations of parole terms if they are on the path to community reintegration.[25] These approaches are increasingly gaining bipartisan support and could lower both incarceration and prison-building costs. The associated savings could be put toward enhancing opportunity for low-income youth.

2) Developing and strengthening linkages between career and education

We need a more effective workforce-training system to equip today's youth with the skills needed to compete—one that starts early—by giving our youth more intentional and exciting exposure to the world of work.[26] This motivates them for the long educational road ahead and helps them choose courses or programs that would prepare them.[27] Other countries – especially Germany and Austria – do a better job of this, by (a) exposing all students to demanding career and technical education; (b) engaging employers, unions, and educational institutions in building training that produces young people with certified, advanced skills; and (c) enabling serious and sustained exposure to work through apprenticeships, co-ops, internships, and planned experiences.[28]

Many of us today think of vocational education as what it used to be, involving dull, undemanding classes in "shop" and "home economics" that are not strongly connected to future careers. But many high schools are

now pioneering or furthering high-quality career and technical education (called CTE or CATE).[29] These programs can also engage students who learn better by doing, through applied and inductive learning. This CTE training prepares students for both college and careers, and should be made available to all (although more should be required for students immediately going into careers). Successful examples include Career Academies.[30] High Schools that Work/ Linked Learning, and Small Schools of Choice:[31]

Work-based learning: Apprenticeships that coordinate classroom and on-the-job learning can often create very helpful on-ramps. The practice is growing in the United States[32] but is still used far less than in some other counties (e.g., Germany and the UK). In Germany, and in most union-based U.S. models, an industry-educational group must agree on the competencies that a given apprenticeship must develop, and these competencies must have broader relevance beyond the specific employer. Non-union U.S. apprenticeships are typically more employer-specific. In either case, apprentices benefit because their on-the-job supervisor often unofficially serves as a career mentor or coach. Apprenticeships have worked in a wide range of settings in the U.S., including high-unionization settings (e.g., Wisonsin) and low-unionization settings (e.g., South Carolina).[33] To be successful, states or localities need to establish an intermediary to recruit schools and businesses to collaboratively train the talent needed for existing and new businesses. In some cases, as in South Carolina or Georgia, business are offered small tax credits to participate as sites for apprentices—credits more than offset by tax revenues from graduates' downstream employment. Many apprenticeships enable students to earn college degrees while working, so that they can develop transferable skills if they decide to change jobs or fields.[34]

3) Smoothing the transitions between educational institutions to further educational attainment

Wherever possible, we should reduce the number of students lost in the transitions between high school and college, between high school and community college, and between community college and four-year institutions. The youth who fail to make these transitions are disproportionately from lower-income households and can least afford the losses. Our group also recommends making career paths more flexible, so that an on-ramp for apprenticeships, for example, can enable those who are interested to pursue college degrees thereafter.[35]

Our group recommends two strategies to smooth the transition from high school to college or career: dual enrollment and early college.

In dual-enrollment programs, students take credited college classes in high school, either at the high school itself or at a nearby college.[36] Such dual-enrollment programs are growing rapidly: in 2012, 71 percent of high schools offered them and had a total enrollment of 800,000 students.[37] Students in dual-enrollment programs attend college more often, have higher college grades, and persist more at college.[38] Having students take college classes not at their high school but at a college appears especially effective at encouraging college-going. The challenge is that dual-enrollment seats increasingly go to middle-class students, not lower-income students. If local leaders are starting or expanding such programs, a sizeable share of seats should be allotted to low-income students.[39]

Early college (or grades 9-14), the other strategy we recommend, offers students the opportunity to enroll in an associate-degree college program while still in high school. Since 2002, students at some 240 high schools nationwide (among them PTECH) have offered an early-college option. Students in these programs can obtain an associate degree (AA) by the summer after their normal high school graduation. Enrollment in such programs has been shown to increase AA degree-completion rates, especially for disadvantaged populations.[40]

Although 81 percent of students who enter community college seek a BA, only 25 percent actually obtain one.[41] This highlights the need to smooth the transition from community college to baccalaureate

college. Our group recommends two strategies: clearer course-credit transfers and clearer career pathways between these institutions.

Many baccalaureate institutions don't know the quality of the courses taught at community colleges in their state, or they resist credit transfers from community college students, because these would undercut demand for introductory baccalaureate courses and the faculty who teach them. In either case, the need for a smoother transfer here is clear: when students take duplicative courses, it wastes government funds and students' time, increases students' debt load, and discourages many from graduating. Ideally, faculty at community and baccalaureate institutions should meet to agree on what is required for credit to transfer, but in the absence of agreement, requirements can be imposed legislatively.[42] Once this is worked out, common course numbering (as Florida has done and Arizona did through its AZTransfer system) should be used, so that the course number itself indicates whether community college students will get credit for their classes at four-year institutions.[43]

States should also smooth this transfer through novel programs that span two-year and four-year colleges. For example, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has established an Honors-to-Honors program, which provides scholarships to honors graduates of Massachusetts' community colleges who are accepted into the university's Commonwealth Honors College. The University of New Hampshire and other colleges in New Hampshire's university system have started new dual-admission programs enabling the state's community college students to seamlessly transfer into UNH's College of Liberal Arts for a bachelor's degree upon completing their associate degree and maintaining a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or higher. Such programs, instituted much more broadly, will give students clearer pathways. Community colleges and baccalaureate institutions should work together to organize programs that unfold partly on one campus and partly on another, lowering the cost of education for the student.

We need serious and sustained exposure of students to work through apprenticeships, co-ops, internships, and strengthened career and technical educational options For young adults not in the military, school, workforce or prisons, we need structured comprehensive second-chance programs, and workforce training.

4) Supporting on-ramps to enable disconnected youth[44] to lead meaningful, productive lives[45]

For those young people not in the military, not in school, not employed, and not incarcerated, we need structured comprehensive second-chance programs[46] and well-supported federal, state, and local programs that are partially social work, partially educational, and largely embedded in workforce training.

The most impactful youth-development programs focus on one or more of the following pathways: 1) secondary-degree completion coupled with college prep, to avoid expensive uncredited remedial classes; 2) job training through industry-recognized certifications and hands-on training; and 3) national service programs designed to engage disadvantaged populations in service. These pathways are most effective when one feeds into another: e.g., a short-term training program leads to a longer-term apprenticeship, or youth completing a GED are counseled about postsecondary possibilities.

Given the need for brevity, we do not focus on the U.S. public workforce system, which provides over $10 billion in resources to programs such as JobCorps[47] and Trade Adjustment Assistance, though we believe these are worthy

and important programs. Instead, we dwell on some promising other steps in reconnecting disconnected youth.

Secondary-Degree Completion Programs: Today's labor market values a GED far less than a traditional high school degree, and even the latter rarely enables graduates to secure a living wage. Nevertheless, a GED often unlocks postsecondary education for disconnected youth. Moreover, since 2014, the GED test has become more rigorous, which may increase the value of the degree. We should therefore prioritize GED completion. Three programs do this particularly successfully: Gateway to College is a Gates Foundation–funded effort in which high school dropouts between the ages of 15 and 21 work simultaneously on graduating from high school (or getting a GED) and attending college.[48] The Program pairs school districts and community colleges and can entice other family members to get involved. National Guard Challenge Program is a 17-month Job Corps–type residential program, run by the U.S. military, for students between the ages of 15 and 18 who have left high school without a diploma. A randomized trial showed that 76 percent of participants obtained GEDs compared to 56 percent in the control group, and earned 20 percent more in the labor market. Finally, the LaGuardia Bridge program, run by LaGuardia Community College to provide an on-ramp to health and business careers, focuses on teaching students to pass the GED by packaging a curriculum around their career interests. The program has been found to more than double GED pass rates and more than triple community college enrollment.[49]

Job training: Two approaches that have been evaluated through randomized experiments are worth mentioning here. Year Up[50] provides intense technical instruction in the IT or financial sector to students with a HS degree or GED. The program develops communication/non-cognitive/professional skills, and then provides a stipend and a six-month internship at a leading company in their target profession. A randomized study by Economic Mobility Corp Study found YearUp graduates earned $13,000 more annually than the control group three years after graduating. Another promising approach is Sector Strategies, in which local employers develop industry-specific training programs to prepare unemployed and underskilled workers for unfilled skilled positions in this industry. A Public/Private Ventures evaluation of Milwaukee, Boston, and NYC programs found graduates earned almost 20 percent more, had more stable employment, and were more likely to have benefits than those in a control group.[51]

Community and national service: Some national service programs deliberately engage disconnected youth and aim to holistically provide them with GED skills, leadership and team building, job skills, and citizenship engagement. One program that has delivered highly promising results for 20 years is YouthBuild,[52] currently undergoing a 75-site MDRC randomized trial.

Resources

Funding: Investments in education and career-training pathways are necessary for a prosperous economy and a workforce that can compete globally in the long term. We recognize the political challenges involved in making such investments but feel strongly that they lead to savings for communities and the country as a whole. For example, as noted earlier, spending more on counseling, to discourage students from taking wasted courses or reducing dropout rates, can reduce the cost per degree obtained.[53] Educational institutions and second-chance programs need to focus on access, retention, and graduation. But we need to develop a "realistic accountability" that factors in the significant complexity and difficulty that institutions face when they work with disadvantaged students.

Adjusted for inflation, states spent more on higher education in 2014 than a quarter century earlier,[54] but after the Great Recession, states sharply cut their spending on higher education. Moreover, since enrollments have outpaced these investments over this entire period, state funding *per studen*t at public colleges has dropped substantially. We

encourage states to follow the model of California and Washington State,[55] which have recently supported increased targeted investments in higher education, coupled with agreements that tuitions would remain frozen for some period of time. We also encourage efforts to make community college tuition-free—although making community college truly free would require covering non-tuition costs as well (transportation, child care, etc.). [56]

Reforms and accountability: We need to provide community colleges with more resources[57] but also must hold them accountable for meaningful outcomes within their control (for example, the percentage of students that successfully transfer to a four-year college or the proportion who earn technical certificates and enter the workforce). Given that many students in community colleges have troubled educational backgrounds, some scholars argue that we should develop metrics that measure the "distance traveled" by students in community colleges (e.g., their educational improvement from matriculation).[58] Moreover, it makes no sense that community colleges are rewarded only by how many student seats are filled and not by whether they provide high labor returns or meet the greatest student needs. With current incentives, community colleges will offer more courses in the liberal arts than in equipment-intensive technical courses such as nursing or welding or IT, even though these courses are in high demand. The reason for this is simple: technical courses cost more. So our group recommends offering additional funding to community colleges with two possible stipulations: (1) that it be used for guidance and for technical courses, and (2) that it be tied to results.

Licensure: Youth from less-educated backgrounds have fallen prey to aggressive and deceptive advertising by various for-profit colleges. State regulators must take their licensure responsibilities seriously and close down or decertify schools that are not effectively graduating students or providing degrees and certificates valued by the labor market.

Debt: In a rational and predictable world, given the significant returns of obtaining higher education, more low-income youth would take out debt to attend. But given the lack of financial sophistication of low-income students, the chaos and unpredictability of their lives, many low-income students resist increasing debt. Our group did not come to a shared answer on debt other than advocating that income-based repayment schemes might be more widely employed for low-income students who have two years of college and are more confident of their ability to graduate.

Business: Our group did not come to agreement on how best to engage businesses as funding partners, as they are in some other countries. The need for such partnerships is obvious, because businesses thrive when they have access to an educated workforce, and possibilities abound for creative voluntary arrangements—in vocational education and apprenticeships, in community college collaborations, in non-profit job-training programs, and more. The challenge our group identified is that uneven state taxation levels might drive companies to lower-tax states that are not making these sorts of investments.

Conclusion

America's "BA for all" mantra has deprived disadvantaged Americans of vital on-ramps to jobs. To bring about meaningful change, we recommend increasing early exposure to potential careers, to make all young Americans more thoughtful about where they want to head and how to get there. We also recommend developing pathways of the sort discussed in this report to help Americans realize the many respectable ways they can achieve a stable and comfortable living without the need for a four-year degree. Finally we need to focus on reconnecting disconnected youth to give them a second chance at leading meaningful and productive lives.

Endnotes

1 J Bridgeland & T Mason-Elder, "National Roadmap for Opportunity Youth," Civic Enterprises (2012); note: The Measure of America study estimated the disconnected youth population as 5,800,000 and concluded that 2,800,000 of these (or 54 percent) are poor.

2 And in 2012 only 9 percent of students from the lowest economic quartile obtained a four-year BA degree versus 77 percent of students from the highest economic quartile, and in 2012 only 13 percent of students in the lowest income quartile starting at a two-year college completed an associate degree 6 years later. See: "Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States: 45 Year Trend Report," Pell Institute (2015); National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 2013.

3 The share of young people attending college has increased 50 percent since 1973, but only slightly over half (59 percent) of students beginning at a four-year institution receive a BA degree within six years and only 39 percent of first-time community college goers obtain a degree or certificate from a two- or four-year college within six years. See: D Shapiro, A Dundar, et al., "Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates—Fall 2008 Cohort (Signature Report No. 8)," National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (Nov. 2014).

4 The taxpayer costs cover items such as lower tax revenue, and to a lesser extent increased incarceration and welfare costs. The societal costs are larger than taxpayer costs since they includes private societal losses uncompensated by greater governmental expenditure, such as private costs of crime or slower aggregate economic growth. CR Belfield, and HM Levin, "The Economics of Investing in Opportunity Youth," Opportunity Nation Summit (Sept. 2012).

5 S Dynarski, "For the Poor, the Graduation Gap Is Even Wider Than the Enrollment Gap," *New York Times* (June 2, 2015).

6 Note: while our discussion was broad-based, some important topics were not discussed and are not in this discussion: financial aid, the military, or for apprenticeships, and the broader public workforce systems, which includes $10 billion of federal resources in programs like WIOA, JobCorps, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA).

7 Our group did not directly discuss reducing the high school dropout rate, but the K-12 chapter does. In addition, groups such as America's Promise, in partnership with others, have developed strategies for decreasing high school dropout rates; see the *Building a Grad Nation* report.

8 See discussion in K-12 chapter.

9 Community college completion rates are also low because they are open access institutions where many students require pre-college development courses (e.g., remediation), the students and their families have lots of outside problems and instability, and many of the hidden costs of community college are not funded (e.g., living costs, childcare costs or transportation). For answers to basic questions relating to community colleges and completion rates, see: http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Community-College-FAQs.html. It is worth noting that many community college students need to take part-time jobs unrelated to their field of study (e.g., working in food service while pursuing a nursing degree) and this unrelated work impedes the ability to graduate from community college. See *cf.* JS Clayton and V Minaya, "Should Student Employment Be Subsidized? Conditional Counterfactuals and the Outcomes of Work-Study Participation," NBER Working Paper 20329 (July 2014). Some community colleges have interesting co-op programs to enable students to pursue related paid work while in community colleges, for example, auto tech training programs where students can earn while they learn. See for example, https://www.gmasep.org/.

10 Community colleges today resemble a cafeteria that maximizes student choice. But, unlike a cafeteria, where the worst outcome is a non-tasty or unhealthy entree, the cost of not choosing courses wisely in community college can be profound: students can spend thousands of dollars but fail to obtain certificates or degrees, or can accumulate courses that don't generate credits if they transfer to a four-year university. Students who drop out are perhaps the most disadvantaged, with heavy debt burdens and no higher salaries. Community-college students, especially given the complexity of their lives, do better when presented with a set of coherent, more limited choices. Students should be assigned a default program/pathway unless the student opts out after talking to his/her advisor. For much more detail on this "guided pathway" approach, see TR Bailey, SS Jaggars and D Jenkins, *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

11 Specifically, first-year seminars, projects, experiences, and counselling can enable students to set longer-term goals and understand how their shorter-term actions feed into those long-term goals. Individualized-learning plans, discussed later in this chapter, are also an effective tool for community-college students.

12 See S Scrivener et al., "Doubling Graduation Rates: Three-Year Effects of CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) for Developmental Education Students," MDRC (Feb. 2015).

13 Students and advisors can use technology to track their progress and identify if they are off-track, but the purpose is to tailor one-on-one advising time more effectively. Simplified course pathways make advising easier, but for community colleges with complex choices of educational pathways, technology can help notify students about the next courses in their sequence and when they are offered. Technology can enable students to set weekly goals that they and their advisors can track. An example of a successful technological advising system is "InsideTrack" advising (subjected to a rigorous randomized test). See: E Bettinger and R Baker, "The Effects of Student Coaching: An Evaluation of a Randomized Experiment in Student Mentoring," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 36(1):3-19 (2014). Arizona State University believes that its Starfish e-advising system has been used successfully to track their dramatically increasing number of students, but formal published evaluations of this have not been released.

14 "The CCRC study of 57 community colleges participating in the Achieving the Dream initiative found that only 33 percent of students in developmental math and 46 percent in developmental reading were able to complete the entire developmental sequence." (T Bailey, DW Jeong & S-W Cho, "Referral Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges," *Economics of Education* Review 29 (2010) from http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Community-College-FAQs.html). For a review of the development education literature, see here.

15 Students can be tested early in middle school or high school so they understand where their shortfalls lie, and states can offer school-year or summer early remediation programs to enable these students to catch up.

16 States should revisit the prerequisites involved in licensure for professions that are standing in the way and ask whether they are truly fundamental to the effective practice of a profession. (For example, how important is algebra for high-quality hairdressers?)

Our country could develop different pathways for different professions, being mindful that we do not want to consign any students to a second-tier education.

17 Many interesting experiments accelerate this remediation and weave it into college-credit classes. This has successfully been tried with the Statway/Quantway program sequences. Texas also has promising experiments with the New Mathways Project, even though this has not been evaluated via rigorous experiments. I-BEST eliminates stand-alone remediation and puts the remedial instructor in the real classroom; the program has been found to be effective but not through experimental studies.Tennessee colleges of applied technology also integrate remediation into for-credit courses. For a more general discussion of acceleration and compressions of developmental education see: http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/accelerated-developmental-education.pdf. See also: EP Bettinger, A Boatman & BP Long, "Student Supports: Developmental Education and Other Academic Programs," *The Future of Children* 23(1):93-115 (Spring 2013); BP Long, "Proposal 6: Addressing the Barriers to Higher Education," in *Policies to Address Poverty in America* (Hamilton Project, 2014).

18 Many students tested and deemed to "need" developmental education actually coped reasonably well without it. For example, as many as 30 percent of students assigned to remediation could get a B in the relevant first college-level course. http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/high-stakes-placement-exams-predict.html

19 The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Collateral Costs: Incarceration's Effect on Economic Mobility* (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010).

20 J Travis, B Western, and S Redburn, eds., *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences* (National Academies Press, 2014).

21 It is worth noting that federal prisons have certain literacy standards for prisoners and these standards could be expanded to 12th grade for state and local prisons. N Robinson, "Higher Education in U.S. Prisons: A Cost-Effective Antipoverty Opportunity," Spotlight on Poverty Commentary (2015).

22 One reform effort, "Ban the Box," aims to make it illegal for employers to have a check-box asking applicants about prior convictions that employers could use up front to screen out convicts. States could also revisit the many barriers that make it illegal for an employer to hire an offender in a range of sectors, which often do not make sense for non-violent or non-theft felony convictions. Enforcement of Equal Employment Opportunity laws on this is also important; it is simply illegal for employers to refuse to hire any felon without considering the needs of the job and actual history of the worker, but intent can be hard to show.

23 Note: large-scale funding of such transitional programs might be expensive, but Social Impact Bonds might be a way to fund some of these programs where the state would pay only based on the success of these interventions in avoiding recividism among these programs. For greater depth see B Western, "From Prison to Work: A Proposal for a National Prisoner Reentry Program," Hamilton Project Discussion Paper 2008-16 (2008). Note one successful work program at reintegrating prisoners is the Center for Employment Opportunities (operating in 4 states and successfully evaluated in New York City as lowering recidivism), where ex-inmates work in a transitional work, learn general job skills, and engage in life planning.

24 Cognitive behavioral therapy trains ex-convicts or gang members to have a different mindset. Rather than seeing themselves as victims of society that need to take revenge or be violent to get respect, it teaches skills like anger management, interpersonal problem-solving, and dispute resolution. MW Lipsey, NA Landenberger & SJ Wilson,"Effects of Cognitive Behavioral Programs for Criminal Offenders, Campbell Systematic Reviews 2007:6 (2007).

25 Western, "From Prison to Work," 2008; J Travis et al., *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States,* 2014.

26 American middle and high schools sometimes have a "bring your daughter (or son) to work" day, but these are haphazard and limit students' exposure at best to their parents' occupations. Our group recommends exposing middle and high school students systematically to the world of work through short-term visits to help shape future choices and help students understand how academic coursework prepares them for later careers. This is the norm in Germany, where students from the eighth grade typically spend two weeks shadowing adults in factories and offices. Students should get information about career opportunities and the educational pathways these careers require. Beyond exposing young people to the work world, institutions need to develop more robust social networks that will assist kids born to less-educated families, who are less likely to have personal contacts in professional careers. Intermediary institutions (either volunteer or school-run) can help pair kids from less-educated families with a mentor-shadow in their desired careers. This exposure at a younger age will help illuminate career pathways and help students in high school decide if they want to go to college or start career preparation in high school.

27 One instantiation of this, not yet well-tested, and variable in terms of implementation from state-to-state, are individualized learning plans (ILPs) in middle school and high school. [This is different than the Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) that students in special education utilize.] Thirty-eight states have begun using ILPs with 21 states mandating them for all. An ILP is a step towards ensuring that all students leave high school both career- and college-ready. The ILP should involve discussions and/or diagnostic tests to evaluate student strengths and career interests. Once student career interests are established, the ILP links courses and post-secondary plans to a student's career goals and tracks the skills that a student has already developed towards being college- and career-ready. This ILP should also involve discussions of how extracurricular and out-of-school learning could further this skill development.

28 For much more depth on what high-quality vocational education and CTE look like, see K Newman and H Winston, *Upskilling America: Learning to Labor in the 21st Century* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2016).

29 See Newman and Winston, *Upskilling America,* 2016.

30 JJ Kemple, "Career Academies: Long-Term Impacts on Work, Education, and Transitions to Adulthood," MDRC (2008).

31 These 400 schools have considerable variation but all arose out of an innovation process, and all the schools provide closer student-faculty ties, stronger community partnerships, and rigorous academics.

32 Note: there is a U.S. national office of registered apprenticeships that sets standards, provides grants, and encourages employer/education collaboration.

33 South Carolina has attracted significant investment in new factories of German firms hungering for more skilled workers; some attribute this success to the value of apprenticeships, while others think it is the prevailing low-cost wage structure and right-to-work laws.

34 For an example, see the Newport News (VA) Apprentice College described in ND Schwartz, "A New Look at Apprenticeships as a Path to the Middle Class," *New York Times* (July 13, 2015).

35 Our group recommends that any state's economic-development strategy should consider how to enable multiple career pathways that develop students over the longer-term and lead to strong employment opportunities. This entails deep understanding of the current and future local labor market, and employer-needed skills. Youth from less-educated and less-affluent backgrounds often cannot afford to take several years off from employment to gain a degree. Their financial responsibilities, which unfold earlier in life than middle-class students, pit education against the need to earn a living, even when they powerfully desire higher education. As a result, low-income students' education often unfolds piecemeal over the long-term. Since this is not likely to change, we must adapt so that multiple on- and off-ramps facilitate the ability of adults to accumulate educational credentials, and later on, retrain and retool when needed. Structured combinations of classroom and work-based learning, in coordination with employers, often are instrumental in achieving this goal. The pathway from Certified Nursing Assistant to Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) to Registered Nurse (RN) exemplifies this approach. At each stage, participants have marketable skills, and can decide later to train further. Germany, perhaps because of its much closer collaboration between labor and management, has developed a more robust system of credentialing across various industries. There are approximately 350 exam-based certificates in Germany that employers, trade unions, and educators agree qualify people to practice these trades. These certificates are acquired through a combination of vocational education and apprenticeship and clearly enumerate what skills job applicants possess. Students completing this apprentice training can later re-enter the German system of higher education if they desire a more advanced degree.

36 Dual-enrollment programs should be distinguished from Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) "college level" classes, for which students may not get credit and which are not on a college campus.

37 Community College Research Center (CCRC), "What We Know About Dual Enrollment," Teachers College, Columbia University (June 2012).

38 CCRC, "What We Know About Dual Enrollment," 2012.

39 Project Running Start, in New Hampshire, operates in almost every high school. While the student population varies significantly by community, many schools include students of low-income parents or parents that have not attended college. Dual-enrollment classes could also be used for second-chance programs discussed later (such as YouthBuild, Youth ChalleNGe program, etc.); the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded a demonstration trial, but more investment would be needed to spread it.

40 During the 2005-2006 study period in a sample based on 10 early college high schools lotteries, the percentage of students who got an associate degree was 11 times as large (22 percent vs. 2 percent in the control group who did not win the admission lotteries). The impact on high school graduation and college enrollment was just as strong if not stronger for those participants who were non-white, had lower family incomes, were from first- generation college-going families or who had worse pre-high school achievement. For college degree attainment, the results were stronger for non-white students and low-income students, but they were also stronger for students with better middle school achievement levels. A Berger, L Turk-Bicakci et al., "Early College, Early Success: Early College High School Initiative Impact Study," American Institute for Research (2013).

41 L Horn & P Skomsvold, "Community College Student Outcomes: 1994–2009," National Center for Education Statistics (2011); D Shapiro, A Dundar, et. al., "Baccalaureate Attainment: A National View of the Postsecondary Outcomes of Students Who Transfer from Two-Year to Four-Year Institutions (Signature Report No. 5)," National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2013).

42 Such articulation agreements that spell out clearly how credit transfers will work and between which institutions should be widely shared with students.

43 Note: Massachusetts has also an innovative and easily accessed description of what community courses transfer to what institutions for what particular degrees.

44 We recognize that disconnected youth (basically 16-30 year olds out-of-work, and not in the military or school) are a heterogeneous population that includes not only middle-income young people who temporarily leave college but also the deeply disconnected who began life in highly disadvantaged families. About 2.3 million fit this category. Although there are federal programs and non-profit programs that provide on-ramps for this latter group and have existed for decades, there has not been the public will to expand these options to meet the need and there have been fewer well-tested programs that meet cost-benefit thresholds. With limited economic options and widespread youth poverty, a disproportionate number end up in the nation's prison and jail system, an outcome hugely expensive and permanently damaging to their employment prospects. There has been similar lack of political will to create and expand re-entry programs for those ex-convicts.

45 Of course, the most powerful tonic would be a strong economy and a low true unemployment rate to incent employers to hire less-educated young people and pay them more. While the reported unemployment rate was recently 5.5 percent, the true unemployment rate is close to 11 percent, and 29 percent among high-school graduates not currently in school. *On the relationship between a low unemployment rate and disconnected youth's economic prospects*, see for example, Richard Freeman's 1982 article concluding that inadequate labor demand for young Americans was a prime factor in variation in youth unemployment across regions of the US. RB Freeman, "Economic Determinants of Geographic and Individual Variation in the Labor Market Position of Young Persons" in RB Freeman and DA Wise (eds.), *The Youth Labor Market Problem: Its Nature, Causes, and Consequences*, p. 115-154 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). *On truer measures of unemployment*, the officially reported Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) unemployment rate is "U-3", but a truer measure of unemployment "U-6" includes discouraged workers, those marginally attached to the labor force (i.e., neither working nor looking for work but available for work and having worked in last 12 months) and involuntary part-timers (who ideally would like full-time work but had to settle for part-time employment). *On measures of unemployment for high school graduates not in school*, see Bureau of Labor Statistics, "College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2014 High School Graduates," Bureau of Labor Statistics (April 16, 2015).

46 Note: for all such programs, mentoring can be a key part of their magic. Principles of mentoring are discussed in the "community" chapter. Childcare should be provided to attract young adults with children back into education or the work force. Childcare provision strategies are discussed in the family and parenting chapter.

47 Job Corps offers comprehensive job training for up to 2-years in residential centers (usually away from the participants' homes) that combines education, training, counseling, health care, work experience, and job placement. Randomized results that have shown some positive results, but given the high cost of the program cost-benefit may depend on how long-lasting these effects

have shown some positive results, but given the high cost of the program cost-benefit may depend on how long-lasting these effects are. See for example, RJ LaLonde, "Employment and Training Programs" in *Means-Tested Transfer Programs in the United States* (NBER Conference Volume, 2003).

48 Gates funded effort that aims to get participants to graduate from high school (or get a GED) plus attend college. The program partners school districts and community colleges and can become a hook for getting other family involved. The early data is promising, and an RCT is planned.

49 MDRC, "LaGuardia's GED Bridge to Health and Business Program: Project Overview," MDRC (n.d.). Another program that anecdotally sounds promising and takes a somewhat similar approach is Washington State's I-BEST program. In a matched comparison sample, I-BEST graduates had "higher persistence rates, earned more credits toward a college credential, earned more occupational certificates, and showed greater improvements on tests." The program is currently being reviewed in a more systematic basis by Abt Associates. See: T Brock, ""Evaluating Programs for Community College Students: How Do We Know What Works?" MDRC (Oct. 2010).

50 As one example of an interesting linkage, the U.S. Department of Labor is currently working with Year Up to continue graduates' training in an apprenticeship once they are employed.

51 See C Clymer, M Conway et al., "Tuning in to Local Labor Markets," Public/Private Ventures (2010).

52 YouthBuild operates in over 250 low-income urban and rural communities, recruits highly disadvantaged low-income participants, 93 percent of whom left high school without a diploma, 30 percent of whom have been court involved, but all of whom are actively seeking a second chance.

53 S Scrivener et al., "Doubling Graduation Rates," MDRC (2015).

54 For example, see State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, "State Higher Educational Finance" SHEO Association (2014), Table 3 which shows that state and local funding for higher education appropriation dollars (in constant dollars) has increased from $64.4 billion in 1989 to $73.0 billion in 2014, but this has neither kept up with increases in educational costs or in higher educational enrollment as can be seen in Figure 2.

55 ST Khadaroo, "Dramatic Cuts To College Tuition in Washington State: Will others follow?" *CS Monitor* (July 2, 2015).

56 Tennessee (through TnAchieves) and Oregon have instituted free community colleges. Senators Tammy Baldwin and Corey Booker and Congressman Bobby Scott have introduced America's College Promise to do this nationally. As one small example of covering non-tuition costs, ASAP gave free bus passes to high school students so that transportation costs don't impede attendance. We should similarly provide bus and subway passes on a means-tested basis for community-college students for whom this is an obstacle. In addition, community colleges should supply students with more information on future educational costs so they are not blindsided by tuition-cost increases. See, for instance S Goldrick-Rab, *Paying the Price* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

57 See RD Kahlenberg, "How Higher Education Funding Shortchanges Community Colleges," The Century Foundation Blog (May 28, 2015).

58 See for example, "Bridging the Higher Education Divide: Strengthening Community Colleges and Restoring the American Dream," (Washington, DC: The Report of the Century Foundation Task Force on Preventing Community Colleges from Becoming Separate and Unequal, 2013), p.7.

APPENDIX AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Appendix: The working group process

In 2015, Robert Putnam's Our Kids documented the growing opportunity gap in America facing young adults through in-depth life stories and nationwide data. This growing opportunity gap has attracted widespread attention and interest among political leaders from both parties, at all levels of government, religious leaders, foundations, civic leaders, the educational community and business. The work has garnered over 288 million media impressions and has been featured in two State of the Union addresses by President Obama. Leading community foundations are launching longterm efforts in their communities to tackle this growing gap.

Leaders at various levels have consistently asked us to distill what would work to close this youth opportunity gap. Under the leadership of Tom Sander and with the generous support of the Spencer Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, William T. Grant Foundation, and Markle Foundation, we managed a three-phase process through our "closing the opportunity gap working groups."

1) Preparation and Participants: We gathered and synthesized much expert research to identify five promising areas to address: family and parenting; early childhood; the K-12 years; on-ramps and preparation for work; and neighborhoods and communities. From discussions with experts nationwide, we developed a long and diverse list of outstanding practitioners and scholars. For each of the five working groups we then recruited chairs and a heterogeneous set of participants (diverse by region of the country, academic specialty, political outlook, personal experience, and demographics).

2) Meetings: For each of the meetings, with the help of the participants, we developed a background reading list of key papers to bring all participants up to a common starting point. Together with the working group chair we settled on a meeting agenda and managed the logistics of the meeting. Chairs fostered a culture that welcomed disagreement rather than encouraging deference or logrolling among pet projects. Using detailed summaries and transcripts of the two-day meetings, the chairs worked with Tom Sander and the rapporteurs to draft a 10-15 page summary of the group's conclusions. Drawing on the range of expertise and expressed views in the group, we aimed to answer this question: Suppose a community foundation president or a mayor or a governor or an archbishop or the CEO of a local business or non-profit said "I'm convinced we need to narrow the opportunity gap here in Dayton (or Albuquerque or Atlanta or Seattle). What are the first things I need to know about possible solutions or avenues of approach?"

3) Report: Each initial draft report (with leadership from Tom Sander) was then put through repeated cycles of comments and proposed amendments from all of the group's participants. Because we had built a diversity of views into the working groups themselves, the process of revising and re-revising the reports surfaced many subtle differences of view and nuance, and this redrafting process took longer than we had initially anticipated. Of course, not every participant endorsed every word of the reports, but all were sufficiently satisfied to allow us to name them as participants in the process. In the end, all of the reports were substantially approved if not by unanimity, then by the vast majority of the participants.

Acknowledgments

The production of this report was made possible by the hard work of many committed individuals. Thomas Sander planned and organized the working groups and drafted the chapters in this report. Toby Lester served as editor for the chapters. Louise Kennedy Converse designed the report and website. Kyle Gibson provided logistical support for the report and, with Tara Tyrrell, for the working group meetings. Cyrus Motanya provided website and administrative support. Archie Drake, Auden Laurence, and Sam Albertson served as meeting rapporteurs.

We extend our deep thanks to the faculty chairs of each working group meeting and to the participants for their time, enthusiasm, and expertise.

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