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Developing Transformative Schools: A Resilience-Focused Paradigm for Education

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For the better part of the past century, the field of education has witnessed repeated calls and initiatives for change, reform and improvement of our schools. Yet today, the problems of improving academic achievement and social adjustment among youth continue unabated. An explanation for this 'change without change' phenomenon is offered which differentiates innovative change from transformative change processes. A review of the research evidence regarding resilience and positive youth development, both academically and socially, is utilized to formulate a conceptual framework for guiding educators in creating resilience-focused, transformative schools. Specific attention is addressed to the application of such concepts as mindsets, resilience, social-emotional competencies, and supportive social environments (family and school) in adopting a new, transformative paradigm for developing more effective schools and more capable youth.

Keywords: transformative, resilience, social-emotional competence, family environment, school environment

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Failure of Educational Reform Efforts

Calls for new, innovative school practices and educational reforms have been relatively constant over the past century. However, as Kliebard (1990) concluded in his historical review of educational reform efforts, little has changed. Indeed, many educators have grown increasingly cynical and pessimistic about

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new ideas, instructional methods, or educational initiatives purported to offer educational practice that will improve academic outcomes in schools. As far back as 1922, leading education reformers have critiqued the history of education as a chronicle of fads (Charters, 1922). Other dismissive terms such as fads and foibles, frills, or pendulum swings have continued to be commonplace characterizations throughout the education literature regarding new ideas and practices set forth as being cutting edge reforms which will substantially improve school effectiveness and student academic outcomes. Why is it then that the more things change, the more they stay the same in our schools? Perhaps it is due to our failure to differentiate between innovation and transformation in school reform

Innovative Change

Innovation, by definition, involves the initiating of something new, a different method; to alter or change something that is already established. Systems theory refers to such innovative change with the term, First Order change. Educational innovations, in other words, are primarily new ways of doing the same old thing; i.e., change without change. As recently noted by Cuban (2013), educational innovations such as reduced class size, independent charter schools, instructional technology, online instruction, and high stakes testing so as to apply outcome-driven management strategies to education have all failed to bring about improved learning outcomes. While new, innovative instructional techniques and methods are constantly put forward, they tend to remain fundamentally consistent and stuck within the prevailing, dominant paradigm guiding educational theory and practice. Daily classroom practice and teacher instruction remains fundamentally unchanged by these 'reforms' in education (Cuban, 2013).

The prevailing, dominant paradigm guiding school practice and is represented in Figure 1. This paradigm assumes that student achievement results primarily from the interaction of two variables, the child's neurophysiological capabilities and the type and quality of classroom instruction. The student must possess certain physiological and neurological capabilities such as, intelligence, attending ability, listening ability, psycholinguistic abilities, fine motor skills, and so forth. With such purportedly innate capabilities intact, the introduction of appropriate curricular and instructional methods and programs is assumed to then lead to successful academic achievement. Conversely, if problems in achievement arise, the search for a solution is sought only within these two variables; the 'cause' of failure, and thus the search for a solution, is assumed to reside in either the neurological abilities of the child or the instructional methods of the teacher. While this model has been dominant in education for the better part of at least the past half-century, it has failed to lead to any significant improvement in our educational programs and student achievement levels as we continue to seek innovative strategies which fit within this linear and reductionist paradigm.

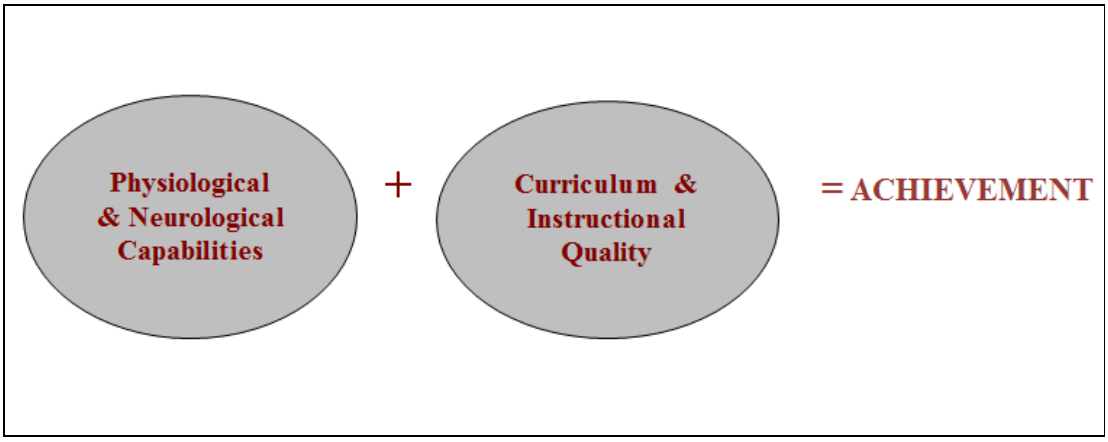

Figure 1 The dominant achievement paradigm

Transformative Change

Transformative change, on the other hand, involves the adopting of a fundamentally new perspective to a problem, a paradigm shift, leading to qualitatively different solutions that move us to ever higher levels of functioning (Clark, 1993; King, 2005; Mezirow, 2000). Transformative Change, in other words, involves a Copernican Shift in our guiding paradigm regarding the educational process and teaching practice. It requires an awareness of and fundamental alteration in the tacit assumptions guiding daily practice, decisions, and methods in the classroom. Systems theory refers to transformative change with the term 'Second Order change'; that is, a metamorphosis, or fundamental change, in form or character. As Albert Einstein is credited with noting so simply and eloquently, "we can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them" (Mielach, 2012, para. 4).

Unfortunately, educational reform efforts have embraced only innovative change allowing essential daily practice to remain essentially unchanged. Initiating transformative thinking, and thus transformative change, is never easy. People, and institutions such as education, have a natural tendency to resist real change and maintain homeostasis, the status quo, and the familiar. The larger the system, the stronger the homeostatic forces which will emerge to resist change. Accordingly, schools tend to embrace innovation but resist transformation. As noted by one of the foremost Transformative Leaders of our time, Dee W. Hock, Founder and CEO of VISA:

> The problem is never how to get new, innovative thoughts into your mind, but how to get old one's out. Every mind is a building with archaic furniture, clean out a corner of your mind and creativity will instantly fill it (Hock, n.d., n.p.).

Foundational Constructs for Transformative Change

It is only through the adoption of a fundamentally new perspective, an alternative paradigm, that educators can be empowered to implement truly transformative changes and bring about improved student outcomes, academic and psychosocial. The relatively recent research on resilience offers the possibility for developing such an alternative paradigm for guiding educational practice. Three concepts, in particular, seem

relevant to offer the primary components for a resilience-based paradigm in education: mindsets, social-emotional competencies, and positive, supportive social environments (family, school and community).

Mindset

The term, Mindset, refers to a set of cognitive assumptions held by an individual or group of people. Such assumptions are so firmly established and embedded, that they create a predisposing bias to adopt or accept only that which is consistent with prior behaviors, methods, beliefs and techniques when seeking to achieve goals or solve problems. An educator's mindset refers to the unquestioned assumptions he or she holds in regard to the teaching process, the role of a teacher, student learning, and what criteria constitute quality education and effective school practice. As noted by Benard (2004), Walsh (1998) and others, changing the life trajectories of youth to resilience and success begins with changing the beliefs and behaviors of the significant entourage of adults surrounding the lives of children and adolescents; i.e., changing the mindsets of parents and teachers. Dweck's (2006), research regarding the mindsets of teachers and students and their impact on learning outcomes lends further support to this perspective. She differentiates between two primary types of mindsets, the Fixed mindset and the Growth mindset.

Fixed Mindset

An educator with a Fixed Mindset believes that certain qualities or abilities are biologically determined. Such educators assume students possess a certain innate amount of intelligence, attending ability, motivation, academic potential and/or a given personality type or character. A fixed mindset adheres to the notion that qualities such as intelligence, talents, motivation, and so forth are determined by and contained within the individual child. Students who perform well in class, i.e., for whom learning tasks are readily met with quick success, are assumed to be 'smart' or 'gifted'.

Dweck's (2000, 2006) research however, identifies the problems inherent in this common perspective. Students of such teachers (and parents) are found to become consumed with the goal of proving themselves to be smart, a winner, as their means to be accepted and valued. However, if instant success appears doubtful, such students will tend to protect their self-concept by avoiding being exposed as 'dumb', 'a failure' or, 'a loser' and thereby devalued. Feigning a lack of interest, procrastination and giving minimal effort are common strategies employed for the purpose of avoiding such perceived failure. From the Fixed Mindset perspective, students who struggle are assumed to possess 'less intelligence', 'lesser natural ability' or to be suffering from some form of neurologically based deficiency or disability such as an attention deficit disorder, a learning disorder/disability, lower innate intelligence, a behavioral disorder or some moral/character deficit in regard to motivation or attitude.

This Fixed Mindset lies at the very foundation of our current Special Education (Exceptional Student Education) paradigm. Despite the existence of a very large body of research evidence questioning the validity and effectiveness of our diagnostic assumptions, tests, and classroom instructional methods in working with children experiencing learning and social adjustment difficulties, educators continue to hold onto the tacit assumptions and practices of the traditional special education paradigm (Waber, 2010). It is from the Fixed

Mindset perspective that past educators labeled as inept, unmotivated, or unintelligent students such as: Isaac Newton, Gilbert Chesterton, Thomas Edison, Charles Darwin, Alfred Adler, Albert Einstein, Henry Ford, and James Watt, as well as to label other students as being 'untalented' including Mario Caruso, Giaccomo Puccini and Pablo Picasso. While many of the commonly employed special education intervention strategies, teaching strategies and classroom management techniques have been demonstrated to be not only ineffective, but often counter-productive adversely impacting student achievement and motivation, schools continue to employ the same Fixed Mindset based paradigm and seek only innovative changes in classroom methods and techniques consistent with this perspective. As Waber (2010) has noted in her book, *Rethinking Learning Disabilities*, after five decades of the LD paradigm, experts have yet to reach consensus on what a learning disability is, how to determine if a child has one, and what to do about it. Moreover, the instructional methods based in this Fixed Mindset perspective have failed to demonstrate their effectiveness in improving learning and behavioral outcomes.

Growth Mindset

The Growth Mindset educator, on the other hand, starts with the assumption that basic qualities such as intelligence, talent, motivation and creativity are things that can be cultivated and developed through effort. Though we may all differ in our initial talents, aptitudes, interests or personal temperaments, we can all change, grow and develop further through effort, training and experience within supportive, optimistic environments. Our limitations are not known, thus we must constantly strive toward further growth and improvement. As one figure skating coach often told his students, o*rdinary people make the Olympics*. Such is the mindset of the transformative teacher and the transformative school leader. They refuse to accept the 'common wisdom' of educational psychologists and special education theories regarding student's limitations, abilities or disabilities and instead, seek to be encouraging and believe in the ability of all children to succeed through effort and perseverance.

Growth Mindset leaders are found to establish growth oriented goals, philosophies and strategies in their schools that gradually 'infect' the staff (Dweck, 2006). Such leaders never accept the status quo and constantly seek to move their school from good to great; criticism and feedback are accepted as challenges to improve their school or classrooms. Indeed, the one common theme among the list of 'unintelligent', 'untalented' students noted above was that each encountered a transformative teacher, family member or friend who possessed a Growth Mindset and inspired them to believe in their abilities and encouraging them to succeed.

Mindset Outcomes

Research has identified several negative consequences for both students and teachers that arise out of adopting the Fixed Mindset position. For example, students whose school performance is viewed from a 'fixed mindset' typically receive feedback such as; *you are very smart, bright, talented, the best at, or, so gifted.* The unspoken, meta-communication to the students, is that; *if you do well, perform better and more quickly than others then you are smart, if not, then you are dumb, inept or untalented.* Such Fixed Mindset

based teacher/student communication patterns subtly values a striving for status 'over others' and thus encourages student competition to be the 'best and brightest' or, if not possible to at least to avoid being 'lesser than' in relationship to one' peers. Such a school culture, research now indicates, is associated with increased incidents of bullying and social aggression (Twemlow & Sacco, 2008). Furthermore, the Fixed Mindset school culture adversely impacts student achievement and motivation. Students with a Fixed Mindset become reluctant to engage in any learning activities that truly challenge them to grow and stretch their abilities. They are only willing to try when success is guaranteed (Dweck, 2006). Such avoidance of failure strategies such as feigning a lack of interest, boredom, low motivation, or procrastination typically increase among students.

Some teachers and school leaders can also be observed to function from the Fixed Mindset position as well. Fixed mindset oriented educators are found to be primarily concerned with protecting their professional self-esteem –i.e., as an innately 'good teacher' or 'good administrator'- working in a 'good classroom' or 'good school'. Consequently, such educators will tend to neither acknowledge, nor correct, deficiencies or failures when problems arise. Rather, the fixed mindset educator will become defensive when criticism or problems in school performance or student progress are raised. They will seek to protect the status quo by utilizing one or more of the dysfunctional organization methods identified by Collins (2001). Whenever confronted with criticism or problems regarding school performance, they will circle the wagons, shoot the messenger or fudge the data. In so doing, Fixed Mindset educators strive primarily to protect their professional self-concept as a 'good school', 'good teacher', 'good headmaster' by blaming the problematic student(s).

Resilience

Over the course of the past half-century, both the education and mental health fields have moved increasingly toward a biomedical-neurological paradigm (i.e., a pathology-focused paradigm) for explaining student academic failure and behavioral adjustment difficulties. However, over the last two decades we've seen an increasing interest in, and research on, a more optimistic, developmental and wellness promoting perspective, the Resilience paradigm (Kumpfer, 1999). This paradigm embraces the Growth Mindset position and assumes a more comprehensive, developmental perspective on children's academic and social adjustment. Students' academic and behavioral difficulties are understood as being rooted in the social environmental contexts in which they live and function. Consistent with Waber's (2010) assertion, based in her review of the research, that the etiology of learning problems lies in the dynamic, developmental interaction between the child and his/her primary social environments of family, school, culture, and community.

The resilience research has focused our attention not on disorders and dysfunctions but rather upon what occurs in the lives of those students who succeed academically and socially even when faced with adverse life situations. The developmental, systemic perspective of the resilience paradigm further requires us to look more closely at what occurs in consistently high functioning schools and the classrooms of highly effective teachers that is missing in low performing classrooms and schools, so as to discover how we can

infuse such processes into all schools and classrooms? As Benard (2004) points out, the resiliency research appears to suggest two primary, inter-related factors which lead to children's positive social adjustment and highest academic success:

1) The development of essential social-emotional competencies and;
2) The presence of positive, supportive social environments in the home, school and community.

Positive, supportive social environments

The National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine (Eccles & Gootman, 2002) concluded that supportive relationships appear to serve as 'critical mediums' of development providing the opportunity for the healthy physical, intellectual, psychological and social growth of youth. Additional research on parenting and teacher 'styles' provides clear evidence that the authoritative/democratic style with its focus on warmth/connection, guidance/regulation and psychological autonomy/responsibility is highly correlated with positive outcomes including higher academic achievement, greater psychological adjustment, social competence, self-reliance, creativity and responsibility (Barber & Olsen, 1997; Cohen & Rice, 1997; Dornbusch, et. al, 1987; Herman, et.al, 1997; Lahey, et.al, 1999; Paulson, et.al, 1997). In the United States, a national longitudinal study on adolescent health found a sense of belonging or connectedness with one's family and one's school to be the two most powerful predictors of positive youth adjustment (Resnick, Bearman, Blum et. al., 1997). Several other studies have found supportive and caring relationships within schools to promote higher academic achievement, higher academic motivation and more positive social adjustment (Blum, McNeely & Rhinehart, 2000; Libbey, 2004; McNeely & Falci, 2004; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). In simple terms, healthy organisms grow best in nurturing, supportive environments!

Social-Emotional Competencies

Defining the relative quality of a school's performance also requires a broader measure than simply academic test scores. If the purpose of the school is to prepare youth for successful transition to adulthood, college and/or the workplace, a more comprehensive perspective and evaluation methods are needed. For example, social-emotional competencies have been identified in the resilience research as being at least as important as academic skills for determining future life success, and perhaps even more important (Benard, 2004; Goleman, 1995, 2006). A comprehensive Child Trends report reviewing the research on youth readiness for college and the workplace identified significant gaps in what our schools teach and those competencies needed by youth to make a health transition to adulthood and the workplace (Lippman, Atienza, Rivers & Keith, 2008). Specifically identified were the domains of psychological, social, cognitive and spiritual/ethical development. This would appear to argue strongly for the implementation of classroom programs designed to foster the development of essential social-emotional competencies as well as academic competence. Social-emotional competence and academic competence are not competing curricular issues as some have argued. Rather, it appears that both are necessary if youth are to be adequately prepared to successfully assume the full complement of adult roles as responsible, productive world citizens.

It is interesting to note that the dual focus on academic competencies and social-emotional competencies is far from a new idea in education. Rather, it is more of a forgotten or abandoned idea in education that was once the very foundation of our educational systems. For example, in founding Philips Exeter Academy in 1781, one of the first schools established in the United States (and still one of the most prestigious preparatory schools), Dr. John Phillips (1781) stated as the school's mission statement that:

> Above all… it is expected that the attention of instructors to the disposition of the minds and morals of the youth… will exceed every other care; … though goodness without knowledge is weak and feeble, yet knowledge without goodness is dangerous … both united form the noblest character and lay the sweet foundation of usefulness to mankind (Phillips, 1781, para. 1)

Developmental psychologists now recognize the social-emotional competencies associated with resilience as significant indicators of children's overall positive adaptation or wellness (Luthar & Burak, 2000). Social-emotional competencies such as responsiveness to others, empathy, caring, communication skills, humor, positive relationship skills, flexibility and adaptability in solving social problems are key attributes observed in successful youth. When these social competencies are present, youth are more likely to develop into healthy, competent young adults (Benard, 1991; Dweck, 2000). Conversely, adjustment problems manifested by children and adolescents have been directly linked to the inadequate development of these same social-emotional competencies (Achenbach & Howell, 1989; Barnes & Welte, 1986; Hanson, Myers & Ginsburg, 1987; Oetting & Beauvais, 1987; Taylor, 1993).

Perhaps most importantly, recent studies have indicated that a child's long-term social-emotional adaptation, academic and cognitive development, and citizenship skills can be enhanced through exposure to opportunities for developing and strengthening these social competencies during childhood (Diekstra, 2008; Hartup & Moore,1990; Payton, Weissberg, Durlak et. al., 2008; Zins, Weissberg, Wang &Walberg, 2004). Daniel Goleman, author of the books Emotional Intelligence (1995) and Social Intelligence (2006) has suggested that the educational system should take a more active role in developing students' social-emotional competencies and by so doing better prepare students for both academic success and the assumption of a useful, contributive place in the larger global society. In so doing, he echoes the words of the Viennese psychiatrist, Alfred Adler, who suggested some 90 years ago much the same idea by observing that, a teacher who takes time to work on students social development will find his/her job simultaneously amplified and simplified as it is easier and more efficient to teach the well-adjusted, cooperative and responsible child than it is to prod and nag along the maladjusted, uncooperative and irresponsible student (Adler, 1929). Research evidence provides clear support for the infusion of social-emotional learning in classrooms with up to an 11% increase in student academic achievement reported when such programs are introduced into our classrooms (CASEL, 2010).

Toward a Resilience-Focused Systemic Paradigm in Education

How then do we translate these concepts and the research supporting them into a practical schema for initiating truly transformative change in schools? The answer is in moving to a more systems based approach and focusing upon those factors the resilience research has found to lead to optimal academic and social

outcomes in youth. Such a resilience-focused, systemic paradigm offers a more comprehensive, developmentally based, and holistic perspective that addresses the interaction effects among all the factors involved in student academic and social-emotional outcomes. This resilience-focused, systemic paradigm requires the recognition that any one of these factors can serve to negate, enhance (in a synergic fashion both positively and negatively), or compensate for any other factor. Consistent with what Waber (2010) has termed, a 'developmental cascade', multiple factors are recognized as combining to contribute to, and maintain, a student's success, or difficulties, in learning and psychosocial-behavioral adjustment.

The resilience-focused, systemic paradigm for academic achievement and healthy psychosocial adjustment in represented in Figure 2. The research literature related to education, child development, and psychology suggests at least seven major categories of variables that have a significant impact on the academic and social competence of youth: the curriculum, bio-neurological functioning, the school environment, the family system, the classroom environment, peer and community relationships, and the child's social-emotional competence.

Curricular Variables: Clearly the instructional materials, content rigor, resources, and instructional methodologies employed by educators' impact children's academic success. There is ample research to support this beyond mere common sense. However, research also suggests curricular variables to be a necessary, by not sufficient, factor for determining student success; an indeed other variables have much more profound effects on student achievement. For example, in researching highly effective schools researchers have found the curriculum to be so similar across all schools as to have little significance in differentiating low from high quality schools (Goodlad, 1984; Rutter & Maughen, 2002; Rutter, Maughen, Mortimore & Ouston, 1979).

Bio-Neurological Variables: Without doubt, biological/neurological factors can impact learning and behavioral outcomes. Problems in visual acuity, auditory acuity, nutrition, sleep, brain damage and mental retardation have all been clearly identified as adversely impacting the child's ability to learn. However, there are also numerous pseudoscientific explanations for educational failure that lack sound, empirical research support (Waber, 2010) but which are consistent with the prevailing fixed mindset perspective of educational systems. These include such hypothesized disorders as low general intelligence (IQ), learning disabilities, dyslexia, brain hemisphere dominance, Attention Deficit Disorder, and so forth. The validity of the diagnostic criteria and the validity of the research supporting the assumptions underlying these various neurological theories for student failure are highly questionable at best given the paucity of scientific research to support them and mounting research questioning their validity.

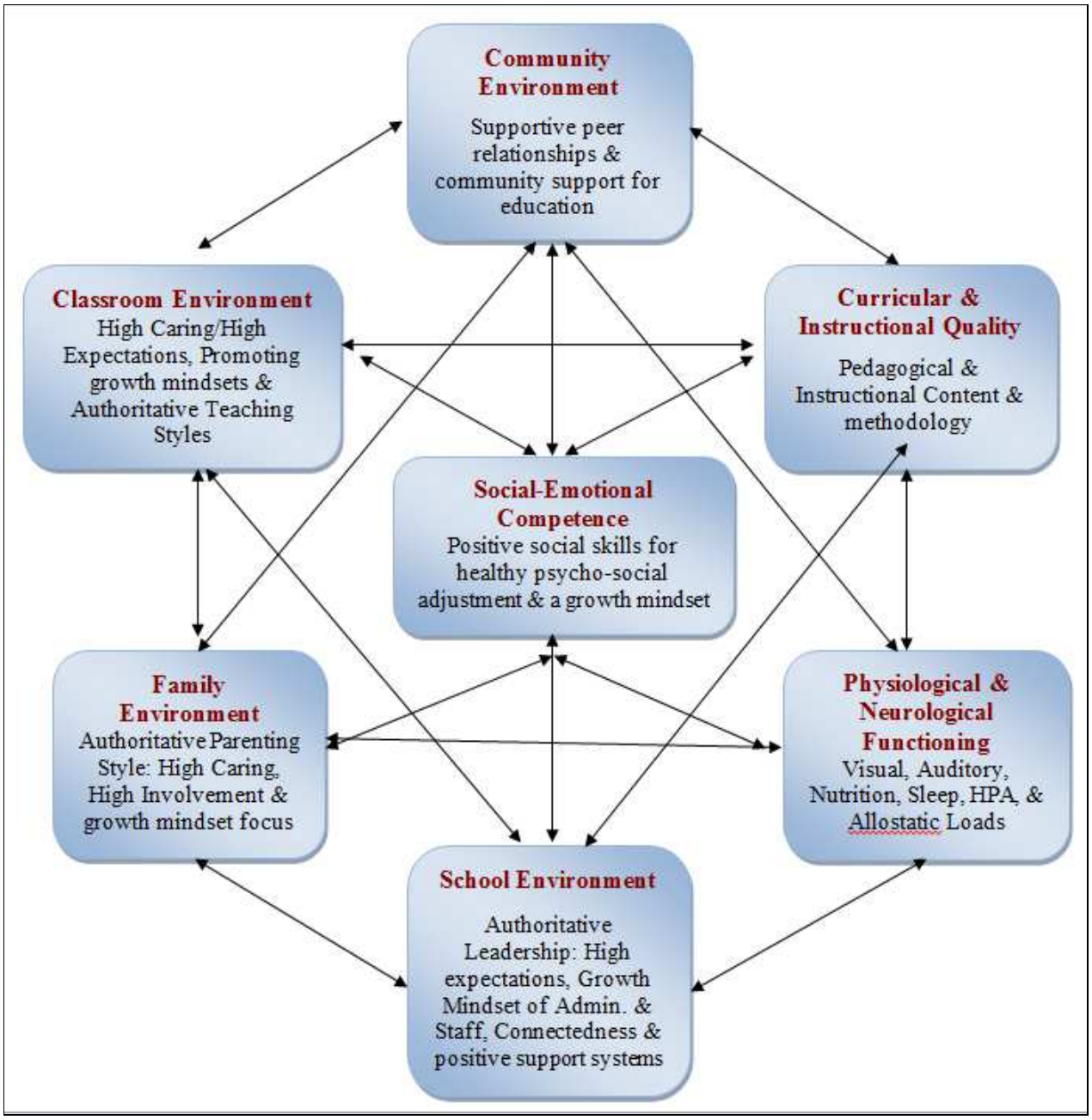

Figure 2. Resilience Focused, Systemic Paradigm to Guide Educational Practice

There is also an emerging body of research on the adverse effects of living in high stress environments (home, school and community) in regard to the development of mental and emotional disorders, learning difficulties and behavioral problems. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) have been found to be associated with significantly higher rates of learning difficulties, mental disorders, and personal/behavioral adjustment problems for both children and adults (Anda, et. al., 2006). Living in high stress family and community environments appears to result over time in the dysregulation of the HPA (hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal) system and high Allostatic Load scores (McEwen, 2000; Sapolsky, 2004). These neurological effects, in turn, negatively impact the executive functioning processes of the brain (learning, memory, problem solving, etc.), and lead to hyper-vigilance and a decreased ability to attend, focus or concentrate. Fortunately, the research also indicates that with the provision of safe, supportive environments and training in emotional self-regulation, (e.g. social-emotional competencies) this process can be effectively reversed.

School Environment: The effective schools research of the past twenty-five years has consistently identified the school environment, or school culture, as the key to differentiating highly effective schools from lower performing schools. Depending upon the quality of the school environment (i.e., caring relationships, high expectations and opportunity for participation) the outcomes for school success for minority culture and linguistic groups ranges from high engagement and college attendance to 75% drop out rates (Benard, 2004). Goodlad (1984) summarized his findings on effective and ineffective secondary schools by concluding that instructional and curricular matters play a neutral role as effective schools differ primarily in terms of their ambiance or school culture. The effective schools research of Rutter, et.al. (1979) reached similar conclusions noting that it's the creation of a school ethos, i.e., a set of values, attitudes and behaviors, which differentiates the effective school from others. The National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health (Resnick et. al., 1997) concluded that of all the protective factors which contribute to preventing problems of academic failure and social maladjustment among our youth, school connectedness was identified as one of the two most powerful factors, the other being family connectedness. These findings are consistent with the resilience research on the importance of positive, supportive social environments in schools for optimal outcomes in youth development (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

School policies and practices in regard to student discipline policies and classroom behavior management must also be addressed under the school environment category. It seems paradoxical that classroom discipline, and school conduct policies, are rarely included in educational reform and improvement discussions yet this issue is consistently cited as one of the greatest concerns of teachers and the reason for many leaving the profession (MetLife, 2006). Feeling inadequately prepared by their teacher preparation programs to deal with disruptive classroom behavior or to effectively engage with parents in resolving learning and behavior problems, teachers feel overwhelmed, discouraged and thus choose to leave the profession (MetLife, 2006). Interestingly, the same research indicates that while a large percentage of teachers see this as a major concern, only about 10% of school administrators identify this as a concern for their schools.

Behavioral Psychology based interventions are also commonly employed school strategies methods for improving student behavior and motivation despite decades of research that consistently finds the use of extrinsic rewards to have an adverse impact on student motivation and achievement (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 1999). Research further identifies counterproductive school discipline policies and procedures such as reward/punishment systems, exclusionary practices (suspension or expulsion) to have a negative overall impact on student academic and social outcomes (Pane & Rocco, 2014). Improving school and classroom effectiveness requires the development of a positive school culture with more positive, and effective discipline and conduct policies and procedures.

Family Environment: Research evidence has consistently identified the family as the single, most powerful factor impacting children's academic and social adjustment. The significance of family environment factors on children's academic achievement was documented in Good and Brophy's (1986) review of the literature on school effects. They summarized the research on factors associated with student achievement, by concluding that family factors account for more of the variance in student achievement than do curricular, instructional variables. Parenting styles in particular have been consistently identified as significantly impacting both student academic success and social adjustment (Nicoll, 2002). The authoritative parenting style appears to lead to higher achievement, better grades, higher aspirations, and better relationships with peers and authority figures along with decreased rates of substance abuse, mental health problems, and behavior difficulties (Cohen & Rice, 1997; Dornbusch, et. al, 1987; Shek, 1997). The other common parenting styles such as permissive-indulgent, permissive-disengaged, and autocratic have similarly been linked to outcomes such as lower academic achievement and behavioral problems including bullying, delinquency and truancy/drop-outs. Research evidence further indicates that when schools actively promote parent-school collaboration the results are: higher grades, higher student achievement, improved teacher morale, better student attitudes toward school, fewer special education placements, higher graduation rates and higher post-secondary enrollments (Henderson & Berla, 1995).

More recently, research on the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and subsequent learning, behavioral, and mental disorders in both children and adults has called into question many of the neurological based hypothesis for adjustment and learning problems. Anda and Felitti (2006) found that the greater the number/type of adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) in one's life the more likely the development of both learning & behavioral disorders in children/adolescents. A study by Burke et. al. (2011) indicated that of those children with no adverse childhood experiences (as measured by the ACE Questionnaire) only 3% displayed any indications of learning or behavior problems. However, 21% of those with ACE scores of 1 – 3 had been so diagnosed and of those with 4 or more adverse childhood experiences, 51% had learning or behavior problems in school. Similarly, studies have found that the greater the number/type of adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) in one's life the higher the probability of experiencing one or more mental and emotional disorders in adulthood (Danese, et. al. 2009).

Given that family dynamics have now been identified as unequivocally the single most powerful determinant of the academic success and positive social development of youth, it seems imperative that schools address programs and practices to promote positive parenting skills and improved home-school

collaboration. This includes school administrators coming to view the availability of family counseling and coaching services as well as parent education programs as critical to overall school effectiveness. Counselors in schools must available and feel confident in their training to work with parents on both a primary and tertiary prevention basis (Benard, 2004; Nicoll, 2002). Teachers also need to be better prepared for recognizing and addressing family related factors in student adjustment as we as to effectively engage parents in supportive home practices to foster the development of social-emotional competence and growth mindsets in children.

Classroom Environment: Of all the school related variables impacting student success, none appears to be more powerful than the effect of the classroom teacher his or herself (Heck, 2007; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Sanders & Horn, 1996). A large, multidisciplinary body of research has clearly established that student-teacher relationships are strongly associated with important academic and social development outcomes (Chhoun & Wallace, 2014; Bryk & Schneider, 2002). It seems ironic then that while considerable time is devoted to developing the teaching methodology and instructional technology skills of teachers, little attention is devoted to developing their interpersonal skills and social-emotional competence. This holds true in both teacher pre-service and professional development training programs. As Benard concluded from her review of the resilience research, "One of the most important and consistent findings in resilience research is the power of schools, especially of teachers, to turn a child's life from risk to resilience" (Benard, 2004, p. 65).

The teacher's interpersonal relationship style determines the classroom climate which, in turn, has a profound impact on student learning motivation, academic success, and social adjustment. Teachers viewed by students as empathic, warm, friendly and having a genuine concern for the students as individuals have been associated with such student outcomes as better academic performance, higher learning motivation, more positive attitudes toward school and decreased behavior problems (Paulson, Marchant & Rothlisberg, 1997). Benard's (2004) review of school factors involved in fostering youth resilience noted that the interpersonal qualities of teachers such as, high caring, supportiveness, high expectations (i.e. growth mindsets), concern for student emotional safety needs, enthusiasm, fairness, and mutual respect are highly correlated with student academic and developmental outcomes. Teacher's interpersonal relationship styles, supportiveness and mindsets in regard to students' abilities to succeed are found to be predictive of student engagement in school, learning motivation, and academic achievement as well as positive social development (Goodenow, 1993; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; McHugh, Horner, Colditz & Wallace, 2013; Murray-Harvey, 2010; Piant & Stuhlman, 2004). Adopting a broader, developmental and resilience promoting paradigm to education moves us toward greater awareness of, and attention to, the development of teachers' social-emotional competencies and growth mindsets so as to foster more positive classroom climates conducive to learning and optimal social-emotional development of youth.

Community/Peer Environment: Schools do not exist in a vacuum. They must be understood within, and be responsive to, the social contexts of the surrounding adult and peer communities. Community and peer environments which support school success and provide positive social supports – i.e. belonging and connectedness – dramatically impact achievement (Benard, 2004). As Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls

(1997) noted, Collective Efficacy, i.e., community residents interacting in a positive and cooperative manner with a shared concern for young people is associated with dramatically lower crime rates and more positive social adjustment of youth across all socio-economic, ethnic, and racial groups. Opportunities for participation in group or cooperative activities in the home, school and community help youth fulfill their psychological needs for belonging and can connect even 'at-risk' youth with positive supportive peers and adults that serve as a surrogate family.

Peer relationships and support also play a significant role in student motivation and achievement. (Chhoun & Wallace, 2014; Goodenow, 1993; Li, et.al., 2011). When students feel safe in schools (physical, sexual, verbal, and social/emotional) their stress levels diminish enabling optimal executive functioning including attending, learning, and problem solving. The research on school bullying has shed further light on the importance of the peer community by noting that effective bullying prevention programs focus primarily on creating supportive, protective peer networks (i.e., bystander) rather than on identifying and punishing the perpetrators (Nicoll, 2014; Twemlow & Sacco, 2008).

Social-Emotional Competencies: The development of essential social-emotional competencies (social skills and attitudes) has been demonstrated within the research literature to be correlated with psychosocial health and academic success (Zins, et. al., 2004). Factors such as a strong, positive ethnic identity, positive self-esteem, and a sense of purpose in life, confidence, cooperativeness, communication, empathy, caring, compassion and problem solving skills have all been identified as crucial skills leading to successful social adjustment. Research further indicates that the long-term social and emotional adaptation, academic success and cognitive development of youth can be enhanced by opportunities for developing and strengthening their social-emotional competence (Diekstra, 2008; Payton, et. al., 2008). These social competencies are found to lead to higher academic achievement, more positive relationships with peers and adults and be a better determinant of future life success (college, career, family and social) than IQ or academic grades (Goleman, 1995).

Nicoll (2011) identifies five broad categories of social-emotional competencies that research evidence has linked to optimal youth development: Understanding and Respecting Self & Others, Empathy, Communication, Cooperation, and Responsible Contribution. As noted by Adler years ago, a teacher's job is simultaneously amplified and simplified when time is taken to also work on the students' social adjustment (Adler, 1929). The resiliency research of the past two decades has clearly demonstrated that certain characteristics of families, schools and communities are associated with the development (or improper development) of these personal strengths, or social-emotional competencies, and, in turn, the healthy social development and successful learning and academic achievement of youth. Effective education practice must include the development of student social-emotional competence as a priority goal their education of youth and infuse the teaching of social-emotional competencies into the overall academic curriculum (California Task Force, 1990).

Conclusion

The failure of education reform efforts was suggested as stemming from the continued reliance upon an outdated and overly simplistic paradigm for understanding the educational process. Consequently, methods to improve schools and student learning, educational innovations, have been sought only from within this limited perspective. A growing body of research from across multiple disciplines now offers us an opportunity to re-think those long embraced, tacit assumptions about school effectiveness and student learning and move toward transformative change in education.

Specifically, the research on fixed versus growth mindsets along with the emerging body of research on resilience was used to broaden our perspective so as to include the effects of beliefs about student abilities and potential, the influence of social environments (home, school and community), and the importance of social-emotional competence in determining positive academic and social development outcomes in youth. An alternative resilience-focused, systemic paradigm was offered to better illustrate the interaction effects between and among these seven major categories of variables which research evidence has clearly identified as significantly impacting youth academic success and developmental outcomes.

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