

5 Essentials in Building Social Capital

Report 4 of the MyWays Student Success Series



The MyWays™ Student Success Series

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Visual Summary
Introduction and Overview


Part A: Adolescence in an Age of Accelerations

Summarizes specific real-world realities and conditions confronting today's young people.

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About this report

Report 4, 5 Essentials in Building Social Capital, summarizes the close connection between opportunities and relationships. While social capital is traditionally weak among young people in general, growing class segregation is creating a social capital crisis for less advantaged students. A key part of the wayfinding decade is securing social support, developmental relationships, and connections to resources through five types of social capital: *Caring Friends & Adults, Near-Peers & Role Models, Mentors & Coaches, Networks & Weak Ties, and Resources & Connectors*.

Report 4 is the fourth of five reports in Part A of the MyWays Student Success Series. **Part A, “Adolescence in an Age of Accelerations,”** analyzes the real-world changes and conditions that are most acutely impacting young people and outlines key developmental tasks of the adolescent years.

The *MyWays Student Success Series* examines the through-line of four essential questions for next generation learning and provides research and practice-based support to help school designers and educators to answer these questions. The series consists of 12 reports organized into three parts, plus a Visual Summary and Introduction and Overview.

The **primary researchers and authors** of the *MyWays Student Success Series* are Dave Lash, Principal at Dave Lash & Company, and Grace Belfiore, D.Phil., Principal Consultant at Belfiore Education Consulting.

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REPORT 4

5 Essentials in Building Social Capital

“Opportunities do not float like clouds. They are firmly attached to individuals. If you’re looking for an opportunity, you’re really looking for **people**. If you’re evaluating an opportunity, you’re really evaluating **people**. If you’re trying to marshal resources to go after an opportunity, you’re really trying to enlist the support and involvement of other **people**.”

— Reid Hoffman and Ben Casnocha
*The Start-Up of You*¹

This report explores the crucial role that social capital plays in the wayfinding decade, building on the previous Report 3 which introduces Cultivating Social Capital as the fifth of the 5 Decisions in navigating the work/learn landscape.

The *5 Essentials in Building Social Capital* constitute the third part of the 5-5-5 Realities construct that summarizes key challenges facing students in this age of accelerations. The *5 Roadblocks to Bootstrapping a Career* (Report 2) identify five shifts in the labor market that are making it more difficult to find and maintain gainful employment, especially for young people with less than a bachelor’s degree. The *5 Decisions in Navigating the Work/Learn Landscape* (Report 3) describe five shifts in the work/learn landscape of postsecondary education, including early work opportunities for today’s emerging young adults and the crucial decision-points they face in navigating that landscape. As these shifts accelerate, social capital becomes more and more critical to the ability to adapt, yet social capital is becoming less and less accessible to the low-income students and students of color who need it the most.

“Social capital” was introduced into modern usage by urban advocate Jane Jacobs in her 1961 book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Arguing against the sweeping demolition of hundreds of urban neighborhoods and their replacement with highways or homogeneous single-use developments, Jacobs unpacked the social and economic workings of successful cities. The very density and diversity of people and activities, she proffered, and the rate of informal contact and access between them — that is, their *social capital* — make cities great. To her lasting credit, Jacobs’ principles of urban vitality catalyzed a dramatic paradigm shift in urban planning and a renaissance in the livability of American cities.



Key reading

Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis
by Robert Putnam

“‘I Didn’t Know You Could Just Ask’: Empowering Underrepresented College-Bound Students to Recruit Academic and Career Mentors”
by Sarah E.O. Schwartz et al.

On-Ramps, Lane Changes, Detours, and Destinations, by Hive Research Lab

Defining Webs of Support
by Shannon M. Varga and Jonathan F. Zaff,
Center for Promise

Today, another paradigm shift is needed: rethinking the role that schools play in retarding or nurturing the social capital of young people. While schools today concern themselves with school climate, social-emotional learning, counseling, and other important forms of student well-being, very few schools include in their mission the deliberate development of social capital resources that students carry with them into the work/learn landscape. Service learning, place-based learning, and internships can all contribute to empowering students' social capital through the relationships they gain; typically, however, such programs are designed for the near-term quality of the learning experience and not the long-term durability of the social capital. As a result, much of the social capital potential of these experiences is lost.

Social capital, as described by Ricardo Stanton-Salazar, consists of “resources and... social support embedded in one’s networks or associations, and accessible through direct or indirect ties.”² Those resources include information, opportunities, material resources, and a wide range of social and emotional supports.³ Some researchers distinguish between *bonding* social capital (emotional support, companionship, validation) and *bridging* social capital (informational and instrumental support).⁴ As we have shown in Reports 2 and 3, social capital is a crucial part of a personal opportunity engine for advancing learning and employment. Challenging roadblocks and decisions in the work/learn landscape require harnessing as much knowledge, advice, and opportunity as possible — wherever one can find it. As in any unfamiliar territory, our first survival skill in a tumultuous work/learn landscape is the capacity to learn from others. Securing help with what we don’t know is second nature for effective adults. Unfortunately, most young people have few social assets beyond their immediate circle of family, peers, and school. And, typically, young people are neither practiced nor skilled at utilizing what social capital they do have from within this circle or beyond.

Here are what we believe to be the 5 Essential types of social capital:⁵

1. **Caring Friends & Adults:** Emotional support, companionship, and validation provided by family members, peers, and close relationships with unrelated adults.
2. **Near-Peers & Role Models:** Ideas, inspiration, and behavior patterns explained or modeled by direct contacts, or individuals “met” only through history, entertainment, or other worlds (including fiction).
3. **Mentors & Coaches:** Informational support, counseling, emotional support, and validation built on a relationship of mutual knowledge and trust.
4. **Networks & Weak Ties:** Connections to any form of social network including one’s “strong ties” (friends and close relationships) and “weak ties” (acquaintances and friends of acquaintances).
5. **Resources & Connectors:** Informational, instrumental (financial, material, services), and social support accessed through networks and individuals helping bridge or broker connections.

This formulation identifies roles, not people. Parents and teachers, for example, often play many of these roles. We will return to these 5 Essentials in the following pages, along with a developmental framework for social capital created specifically for next generation educators.

First, however, we look at how each new generation has traditionally acquired social capital and how that process has changed. One of our earliest and most respected scholars on social capital, Robert Putnam, builds a powerful case that low-income students and students of color today have far less access to the people, relationships, and social networks upon which strong social capital is built. We examine these changes and the reasons why.

Splitting America into the social capital haves and have-nots

“Over and over again members of the class of 1959 use the same words to describe the material conditions of our youth: ‘We were poor, but we didn’t know it.’ In fact, however, in the breadth and depth of community support we enjoyed, we were rich, but we didn’t know it.”

— Robert Putnam
*Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*⁶

Putnam argues in *Our Kids* that children’s success in life is deeply influenced by the social capital embodied in their families, schools, and communities, and that powerful stratifying forces are splitting Americans into social capital haves and have-nots. This polarization is the third form of societal acceleration with profound implications for student competencies and education, along with the rapid changes in the labor market and postsecondary world described in Reports 2 and 3. Accordingly, we summarize Putnam’s work here.

Paralleling the well-publicized polarization of income and wealth over the past 50 years, Putnam explains that social capital (“family, school, and community support”) has also stratified, and that it is the key to children’s well-being and growth. He uses his own high school class (“the class of 1959”) to illustrate: While most of his classmates came from families of modest means, the neighborhoods, schools, and churches in his hometown of Port Clinton, Ohio were well mixed: “socioeconomic class was not nearly so formidable a barrier for kids of any race, white or black, as it would become in the twenty-first century.”⁷

Prospects in 1959 were good but about to change:

As my classmates and I marched down the steps after graduation in 1959, none of us had any inkling that change was coming. Almost half of us headed off to college, and those who stayed in town had every reason to expect they would get a job (if they were male), get married, and lead a comfortable life, just as their parents had done. For about a decade those expectations were happily met.... But just beyond the horizon an economic, social, and cultural whirlwind was gathering force nationally that would radically transform the life chances of our children and grandchildren.⁸

Putnam pauses to frame this impending shift in the context of American values and attitudes of equality of opportunity and social mobility. The shift to unequal beginnings and unequal prospects for advancement, he argues, poses a “momentous problem in our national culture.”⁹

Putnam begins his analysis with the trends in income inequality, emphasizing that “in the 1980s the top began to pull away from everyone else, and in the first decades of the twenty-first century the very top began pulling away even from the top.” He underscores that income inequality rose even within each major racial/ethnic group “as richer whites, blacks, and Latinos pulled away from their poorer co-ethnics.”¹⁰ This growing economic gap “has been accompanied by growing de facto segregation of Americans along class lines” while “race-based segregation has been slowly declining.”¹¹

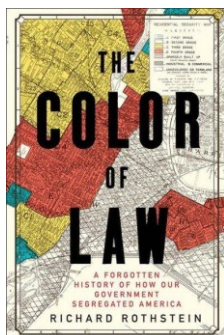
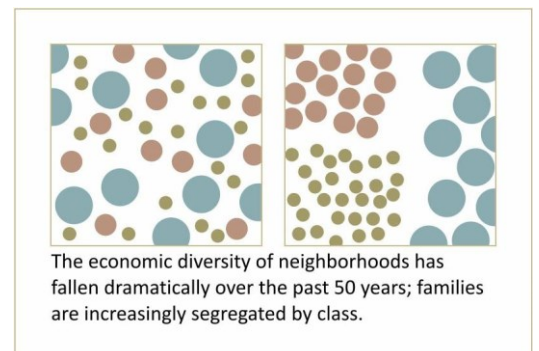
It is useful to note that Putnam’s indicator of “class” (and stratification) is *parental education*, which he indicates is typically “the more powerful predictor of child-related outcomes” compared to *family income*. He acknowledges many other aspects of class — occupation, culture, social status, and self-identity among them. However, because these indicators are often closely inter-correlated, it is appropriate to “operationalize social class by ‘education, the most important resource in today’s knowledge-based economy.’”¹²

The result are three groups of roughly equal size: “upper-class” or “college-educated” homes with at least one parent graduating from college; “middle-class” homes where parents have some postsecondary education; and “lower-class” or “high-school-educated” homes where neither parent went beyond high school. These three groups are physically and socially becoming more and more segregated.

How did this segregation happen? Putnam examines three aspects of class segregation: neighborhood separation, education segregation, and the decline in cross-class marriages. Together, they have altered the landscape for public education. We provide a brief overview here of these trends and then examine each of the 5 Essentials individually.

Neighborhood separation

Putnam summarizes: “Whether we are rich or poor, our kids are increasingly growing up with kids like them who have parents like us.”¹³ Between 1970 and 2009, the percentage of all families living in predominantly middle-income neighborhoods fell from 65% to 40%; families living in low-income or poor neighborhoods rose from 19% to 30%; and families living in high-income neighborhoods nearly doubled from 16% to 30%.¹⁴ Putnam notes that this class segregation is occurring within each major racial group: “Affluent and impoverished black (or Latino) families are less likely to be neighbors now than they were 40 years ago.”¹⁵



Neighborhood segregation is not solely the byproduct of free market consumer choice. It originated in deliberate federal, state, and local government policies that created exclusively white suburbs and segregated public housing. Richard Rothstein chronicles this shift in *The Color of Law*, which “brings together in one place all of the governmental actions that created residential segregation” and the inequality of social capital that exists today.¹⁶

When neighborhoods are diverse and vital, with a healthy rate of social contact between people of varied backgrounds, young people grow up exposed and connected to people with a wide variety of occupations, life styles, and social network involvements. The benefit of higher education is visible in neighbors and local businesses. Concentrated low-income and poor neighborhoods, on the other hand, rob young people of nearby benchmarks and role models through which to envision and pursue their own aspirations and plans. “College” becomes an alien, abstract aspiration rarely experienced by family, friends, and neighbors who can model and support the journey.

Education segregation

Class-based school segregation begins in neighborhood separation. Putnam describes this as follows:

Schoolchildren from the top half of the income distribution increasingly attend private schools or live in better school districts. Even when poor and wealthier schoolchildren live in the same school district, they are increasingly likely to attend separate and unequal schools. And often within a single school, AP and other advanced courses tend to separate privileged from less privileged kids. Later on, kids from different class backgrounds are increasingly sorted into different colleges: for example, by 2004, kids from the top quarter of families in education and income were 17 times more likely to attend a highly selective college than kids in the bottom quarter.¹⁷

In its study of poverty and high school dropouts, the American Psychological Association concluded that students living in poverty were five times more likely to drop out than high-income students, with high-poverty schools at the heart of the problem:

In 2009-2010, 9 percent of all secondary students attended high-poverty schools (where 75 percent or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch), but 21 percent of Blacks and Hispanics attended high-poverty schools, compared to 2 percent of Whites and 7 percent of Asians. More than 40 years ago, famed sociologist James Coleman demonstrated that a student’s achievement is more highly related to the characteristics of other students in the school than any other school characteristic. Subsequent research has confirmed this finding and even found that the racial/ethnic and social class composition of schools was more important than a student’s own race, ethnicity and social class in explaining educational outcomes.¹⁸

Sadly, these are familiar patterns to educators. School achievement levels are tightly correlated with school-level poverty and these economic disadvantages often manifest through differences in social capital between affluent and poor schools — differences, that is, in individual and family risk factors, community and environmental effects, and resource inequality.¹⁹ (For more details, see [*The Turnaround Challenge, Supplemental Report*](#) and [*Hidden Inequities: An Education Week Analysis*](#).) To combat these challenges, schools have instituted a wide range of interventions, as we discuss below. All too often, however, low-income students are attending school without the social capital to scaffold their preparation for college (and

help them persist and succeed there). As Putnam remarks, “They know that everybody goes to college, and they don’t know what that means... They’re going down that path without anybody holding their hands.”²⁰

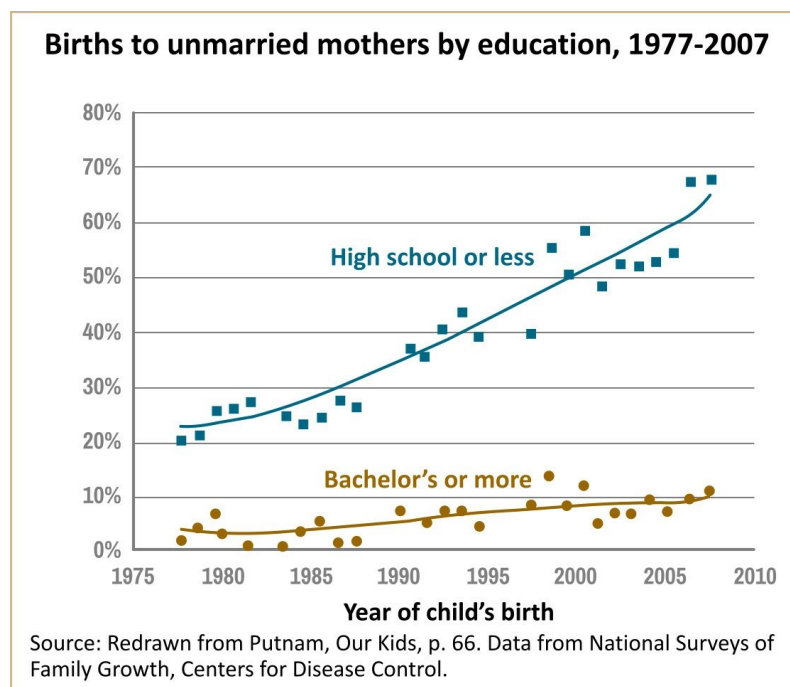
The decline in cross-class marriages

Putnam further describes how the education-based class segregation in neighborhoods and schools is also reflected in modern marriage patterns:

In the second half of the [twentieth] century Americans increasingly married people with educational backgrounds similar to their own, with the most educated especially likely to marry one another.... The decline in cross-class marriages has implications for the composition of extended families. Two generations ago, extended family gatherings might bring together small businessman and manual workers, professors and construction workers, but the ripple effects of increasing endogamy (marrying within your own social class) ensure that one’s kin networks today — and even more, tomorrow — are likely to be from the same class background as oneself, further reducing cross-class bridging.

The net effect of neighborhood, school, and marriage polarization

For children in less-educated families, the shifts that Putnam documents result in altered family structures, class-segregated neighborhoods, schools with fewer caring adults, fewer near-peers and positive role models, fewer mentors and coaches, fewer networks and acquaintances, and fewer resources and connectors to mobilize toward a better life. At the family level, high-school-educated mothers typically have their first children in their late teens or early twenties — 10 years earlier than college-educated mothers — although “older parents are generally better equipped to support their kids, both materially and emotionally.”²¹ Furthermore, less-educated parents are increasingly unmarried and having unplanned children. Non-marital births now account for two-thirds of all births to mothers with a high school diploma or less, three times the rate in 1977 (graph below). Most of these children grow up in a single-parent family.²²



Divorce rates, unstable cohabitation, and employment rates for mothers are all substantially worse for children of less-educated mothers, as Putnam summarizes:

Regardless of its causes, this two-tier family pattern has had an unmistakable effect on kids' lives. In the upper, college-educated third of American society, most kids today live with two parents, and such families nowadays typically have two incomes. In the lower, high-school-educated third, however, most kids live with at most one of their biological parents, and in fact, many live in a kaleidoscopic, multi-partner, or blended family, but rarely with more than one wage earner. Scores of studies have shown that many bad outcomes for kids are associated with the pattern now characteristic of the lower tier, whereas many good outcomes for kids are associated with the new pattern typical of the upper tier.²³

These outcomes do not imply that less-educated parents care less about their children. An insidious variety of factors relating to poverty place stresses on families, parents, and children. Yet as Brookings researcher Isabel Sawhill says, “Generalizations are dangerous; many single parents are doing a terrific job under difficult circumstances. But on average, children from single-parent families do worse in school and in life.”²⁴ Our focus in this report is on how these stresses are manifested through reduced levels of social capital that narrow opportunities and limit the likelihood of successful adulthood. This happens first by undercutting personal well-being and academic preparedness in the pre-kindergarten, primary, and secondary years. It happens second, as Putnam notes, by “removing the stepping-stones to upward mobility” in the form of resources available through social connections:

Ultimately, growing class segregation across neighborhoods, schools, marriages (and probably also civic associations, workplaces, and friendship circles) means that rich Americans and poor Americans are living, learning, and raising children in increasingly separate and unequal worlds, removing the stepping-stones to upward mobility — college-going classmates or cousins or middle-class neighbors, who might take a working-class kid from the neighborhood under their wing.²⁵

In truth, adolescents of every background require not only a caring classmate or neighbor, but a robust “network of socialization agents, natural or informal mentors, pro-academic peers, and institutional agents [high-status, non-kin individuals] distributed through the extended family, school, neighborhood, community, and society.”²⁶ Stanton-Salazar underscores that “middle-class parents do not operate alone, but are embedded in the social network of institutions, school personnel, institutional agents and youth-serving organizations in the community.”²⁷ In contrast, children in segregated, stratified communities face a “constricted social universe,”²⁸ where schools play a particularly pivotal role in the social ecosystem. Unless these schools restructure themselves profoundly, they will continue to perpetuate and deepen class segregation and the opportunity gap.

Once again, this is not to imply that working-class communities are not places of richly layered social interaction and relationships with family, peers, and other community members. These researchers are simply pointing out that, increasingly, there is little movement between and few connections across these communities and more affluent ones. Public schools are the one institution with the potential to provide or promote the restorative experiences that under-resourced students need to build social capital and “learn to negotiate and participate in [the] multiple sociocultural worlds”²⁹ required for success. Stanton-Salazar, a leading researcher in the field of social capital and empowerment of low-status youth, describes the necessary socialization and engagement with various agents and significant others:

Each world requires adoption or execution of certain social identities, and effective accommodation to a system of values and beliefs, expectations, aspirations, ways of using language, and emotional responses familiar to insiders.³⁰

Or, as noted Boston inner-city charter school head Meg Campbell (founder of Codman Academy) notes: “If students coming to Codman aren’t in our gang, they’re going to be in somebody else’s.”³¹ Each world embodies a distinct cultural discourse, or *way of being in the world*, that is “not mastered by overt instruction but by ‘apprenticeship’ into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the discourse.”³² The more students and youth are disadvantaged by class segregation, the more imperative it becomes to deliberately create this kind of apprentice learning in all the sociocultural worlds related to success in learning, work, and life.

Addressing social capital gaps: arguably the second largest movement in public education over the past 15 years

Before we proceed to describe the work needed to restore a sufficient level of social capital to every student, regardless of parents’ education and income and degree of social segregation, it is important to observe the extraordinary measures already being taken, and that are growing every day, to address gaps in social capital. Few schools or districts, if any, have an explicit “social capital” plan or agenda, yet virtually every school and district has joined the “movement” in some way through at least some of the efforts listed in the table below. The cumulative effect is a broad and growing education movement around social capital and sociocultural acclimation that is arguably larger than any other aside from standards-based reform. The next natural stage in this movement, we believe, is to properly label these disparate restoration efforts as components of a broad social capital infrastructure, and begin integrating and strengthening their combined impact.

Social Capital Breakdowns and Restoration Efforts within preK-16 Education Today			
	Pre-kindergarten	Primary & secondary	After high school
Evidence of social capital breakdowns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kindergarten readiness gap ● Executive function issues ● Reduced vocabulary and little reading in the home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not finishing high school ● Lack of college preparedness ● Toxic stress, substance abuse, teen pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not in school or working ● High youth unemployment ● College dropout rate
Social capital restoration efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Healthy start programs ● Developmental screenings ● Early Head Start ● High-quality early learning ● Caregiver training ● Two generation programs ● Parenting programs ● Home visiting programs ● Early literacy ● Immigrant integration ● Health education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wraparound supports ● Community schools ● After school programs ● Positive youth development ● Social-emotional learning ● Parent engagement ● Immigrant integration ● Early-warning dropout prevention programs ● Mentoring and near-peer initiatives ● Teacher home visits ● Career pathways programs ● Civic engagement initiatives ● Internships and youth jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● College awareness and exposure programs ● Mentoring programs ● Career pathways programs ● College financing advice ● College persistence programs ● Youth employment opportunities ● National College Access Network ● Internships and apprenticeships

If this social capital movement continues to expand and deepen, it will help close achievement gaps and improve life outcomes. Framing the matter in personal terms, Paul Reville, the former Massachusetts Secretary of Education, describes a typical night at his own house, where his daughter and her friends receive bountiful advice, recommendations, and other assets:

This is social capital at work... the benefits of this working capital are typically and regularly accruing to other advantaged youngsters who, like my daughter, profit not only from the assets of affluence (camp, lessons, summer travel, and so forth), but from the contacts and influence of their parents and their parents' friends. As is the case with financial capital, the rich get richer. If we were providing such services to disadvantaged youngsters, we would dub this activity "wraparound services." It would be thought of as "an extra," not an essential part of a child's education or development.³³

To close achievement gaps will require, Reville notes:

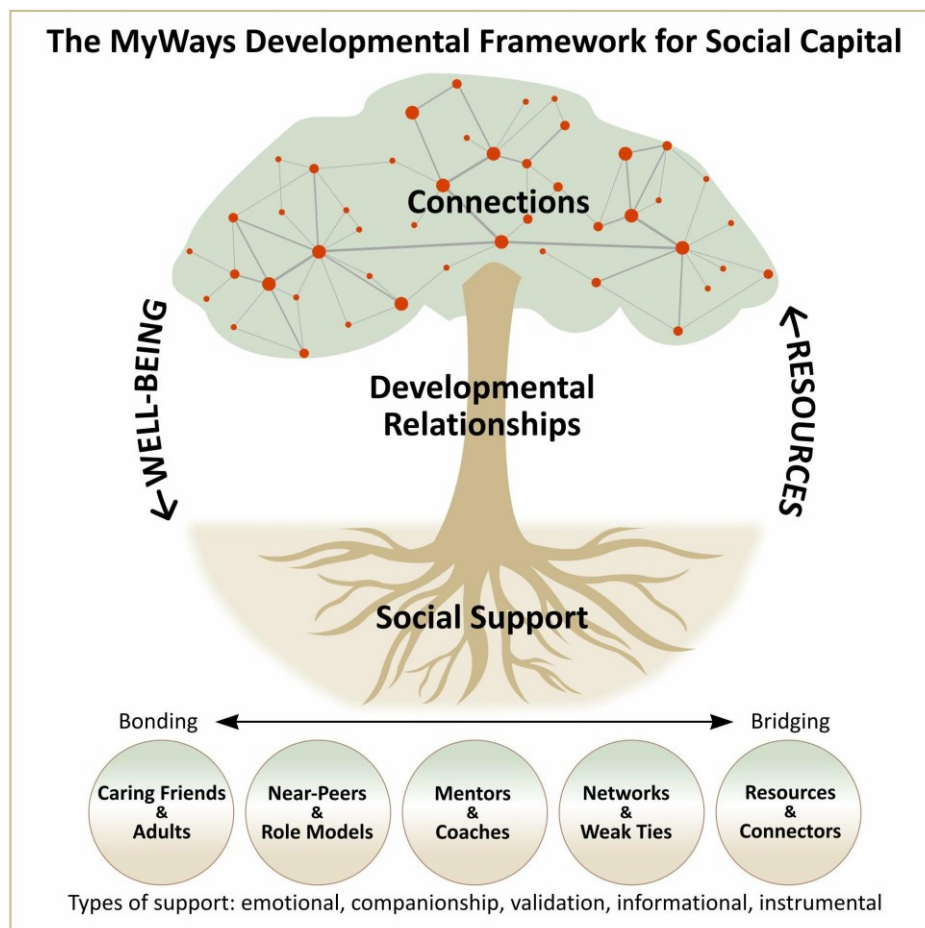
...a comprehensive system of child and youth development and education will be needed. All children will need social capital and basic health and mental-health support. All children will need early-childhood education and access to after-school and summer-enrichment activities. All children will need consistent support and guidance as they face the challenges of learning in school, succeeding in college, and finding meaningful, remunerative work. Schools, as currently constituted, are not set up to do all this work, but those of us who enjoy privilege know that this is what it takes for our children to succeed.³⁴

Understanding social capital as a developmental system

Is it possible that social capital is *the* limiting factor in today’s economic mobility system? We believe that is precisely what the research shows.

A “limiting factor” is a system variable such that “a small change in it from the present value would cause a non-negligible change in an output or other measure of the system.”³⁵ Social capital (“resources and social supports embedded in one’s networks or associations”) has been shown to differentiate successful education attainment, career advancement, and entrepreneurship as well as personal satisfaction and well-being.³⁶ Conversely, Putnam and other researchers have demonstrated that gaps in social capital among children and young people caused by neighborhood, school, and marriage polarization have a devastating impact on their ability to develop and lead healthy, successful lives. Fortunately, promising research in childhood trauma mitigation, positive youth development, mentoring, and college persistence points to the power of social capital development to change lives.³⁷ Our challenge is to translate these successes into new social structures and experiences that build social capital and empower young people, especially low-income students and students of color.

The MyWays team has created a developmental framework for social capital (graphic) that integrates some of the most relevant research. Youth systems researchers at the Center for Promise, for example,



have developed a *web of support* framework to describe the interplay of relationships, resources, and social networks needed for healthy youth development. We use the Search Institute’s well-regarded developmental relationships framework to describe the critical contribution of supportive adults. As the researchers Stanton-Salazar, Roderick J. Watts and Constance Flanagan, and Paulina Billett have independently demonstrated, youth social capital is a developmental process — far more so than adult social capital. Two research-to-action teams — the Hive Research Lab in New York City and the Boston team of Sarah E.O. Schwartz, Jean E. Rhodes, and their colleagues — are working to support young people in building more robust social capital, as described later in the report.

The resulting developmental framework is comprised of the following elements:

- **Every individual requires 5 Essential types of social capital**

From *Caring Friends & Adults* to *Resources & Connectors*, these 5 Essentials span both the *bonding* social capital (emotional support, companionship, validation) and the *bridging* social capital (informational and instrumental support) that every child, adolescent, and adult requires for healthy development and success. These roles are embedded and evolve within relationships with parents and friends, teachers and other institutional agents, and neighbors and acquaintances. When these individuals fulfill multiple roles with a particular recipient, Stanton-Salazar notes, “their potential to empower an individual increases considerably.”³⁸ In addition, educators should consider that, while adolescents are developmentally attuned to deepening relationship bonds, as Billett, an Australian specialist in youth social capital, emphasizes, they often have less appreciation for bridging relationships that might help them access informational, financial, material, or service resources³⁹ — and thus need more scaffolding in this area. Later in this report, we explore each of the 5 Essentials in more detail.

- **“Well-being” and “Resources” are two sides of the same social capital coin**

Social capital plays “two very important roles in the life of young people,” Billett says, “as a support in times of need and as social leverage to get ahead.” In short, she says, social capital helps us “get on and get ahead.”⁴⁰ Both roles — noted in the framework as the mutually reinforcing Well-being and Resources — originate in the social circumstance in which young people grow up, according the Center for Promise, which is studying the systems and ecological context of youth development:

Youth are embedded within a multi-layered ecology, from more proximal connections with peers, family, and school to more distal layers, such as major social institutions, social and cultural norms, and belief systems that shape society.⁴¹

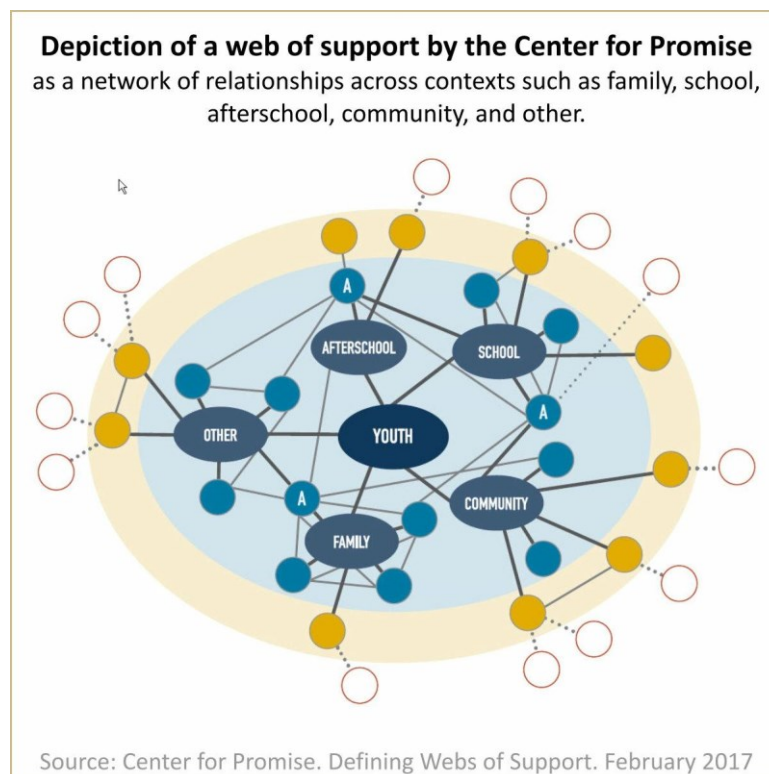
Stanton-Salazar studies how class influences these ecologies:

The higher the class position of the individual, the more likely he or she is embedded in social networks that afford high levels of accessibility to institutional agents with high degrees of human, cultural and social capital, and who are situated in high-status positions characterized by highly valued societal resources.⁴²

Conversely, the lower the class position of the individual, the more constricted the social universe is likely to be, and the less likely it is that the resulting social capital fully enables the individual to get on and get ahead — and the more likely it is that social mechanisms will result in the “social reproduction of class inequality.” To interrupt these patterns, we need to develop counter-stratification strategies and interventions that can buttress the social systems of individuals and empower the building of durable social capital.⁴³

- **Social capital is rooted in the social supports that students receive**

When a young person’s needs are met by a robust, multi-layered social ecosystem of networks and relationships, the probability is increased of a “positive developmental trajectory” (e.g., academic, social-emotional, physical, vocational, and civic trajectories). The Center for Promise calls this ecosystem a *web of support*.



Stanton-Salazar, summarizing James Coleman, emphasizes that such a web, when robust and healthy, is also the incubator of socialization and social integration, “a groundwork of trust and reciprocity, and the accumulation of experiences of mutual benefit, which together, allow the formation and enforcement of norms and sanctions that... guide social life.”⁴⁴ Without this foundation in the *quid pro quo* of working with others, the building of constructive relationships and social networks is sharply curtailed, along with the resources and opportunities that derive from such connections.⁴⁵ Weaken that foundation, and problems ensue.

First, there are the direct impacts. Researcher David Berliner points to where the social science data leads: “Outside-of-school factors are three times more powerful in affecting student achievement than are the inside-the-school factors.”⁴⁶ Consider the following indicators, which comprise a widely used index of societal health:⁴⁷

- Child well-being
- Mental health
- Illegal drug use
- Infant mortality
- Maternal mortality
- School dropouts
- Economic mobility
- School achievement
- Rates of imprisonment

Each of these indicators links back to insufficient social supports, at home and at school, or in the neighborhood or community. As noted earlier, schools and communities have mounted a growing movement to mitigate these gaps in social supports. This remains a top priority since, as we saw in Report 3, only a third of US students are academically prepared and only 1 in 10 disadvantaged students perform within the highest academic quartile.⁴⁸ Better social supports are essential to bending this curve.⁴⁹

In addition, inadequate social support has detrimental impacts — including family instability, abuse, trauma, or neglect — that harm both the individuals and their future social capital building abilities; this fact rarely receives attention. We tend not to connect the dots, but as Billett notes, “Social capital is not formed in isolation,” but is built on the groundwork of trust and reciprocity, and the accumulation of experiences of mutual benefit noted above:

The primary function of networks and their ties is the production and reproduction of trust between individuals. Without trust, it would be almost impossible to network with others. Trust is one of the most important components of social capital, being not only a precursor of a successful network, but also an important by-product of networking. There are two types of trust: “thick” and “generalised” trust. Thick trust is shared between bonding networks and is demonstrated in the sharing of our most precious resources, such as lending money or leaving one’s children in the care of friends. Generalised trust — the trust that we share with most other individuals — manifests itself as the expectation that others are honest and is often linked to community cohesion and higher population health.⁵⁰

Trust is a product of relationships and the Center for Promise focuses on how each relationship is seen in the context of other relationships:

Although considering the unique influence that a given person can have on a young person's educational outcomes is important, the effect of any relationship will inevitably be influenced by the other relationships that a youth has in her life. For instance, youth who have a warm, encouraging relationship with their parents will possibly have an easier time connecting with and deriving benefits from their teachers. On the other hand, youth who have neglectful or abusive parents can have a more difficult time bonding with their teachers. Thus, considering a young person's web of support can change the way practitioners think about positioning themselves to assist youth and inform the resources they seek out for the youth.⁵¹

- **The trunk of the social capital tree is made of adult developmental relationships**

Having discussed the general role of trusting relationships in the building of social capital, we now turn to the importance of adult, non-kin developmental relationships. The Search Institute defines a *developmental relationship* as one that involves a dynamic mix of elements such that, “when developmental relationships are prevalent, development is promoted, and when this type of relationship is not available or diluted, interventions show limited effects.”⁵² The key elements in these relationships are *expressing care, challenging growth, providing support, sharing power, and expanding possibilities*. For all students, developmental relationships help them “discover who they are; develop abilities to shape their own lives; and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them.”⁵³ For students lacking in a healthy web of support, as well as student of color isolated from the mainstream white world, these relationships can help repair the foundation of trust and reciprocity needed to invest in new relationships that, in turn, lead to the building of social capital that can be harnessed in pursuit of one's goals.⁵⁴ We discuss developmental relationships further in the Caring Friends & Adults section below.

- **The branches of the social capital tree are the social connections to resources**

In essence, the MyWays Developmental Framework for Social Capital works a bit like Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The roots at the bottom are the social supports that sustain human well-being and growth, and serve as the foundation of trust and reciprocity upon which relationships of mutual benefit can be built. One step above, comprising the trunk of the social capital tree, are adult developmental relationships that foster self-exploration, growth, and engagement in the larger world. At the top, the branches of the tree are the investments in ever-evolving connections, networks, and relationships of mutual benefit that can be harvested for the resources needed to accomplish one's goals.

Increasingly, growing, managing, and utilizing these social connections is not only how young people navigate the work/learn landscape, but how adults learn and work (see Decision 1 section of Report 3). In this age of accelerations, knowledge is constantly changing. The network intelligence to use connections to spot trends and opportunities, to gain and share knowledge, and to problem solve and collaborate becomes more crucial every day. The more worlds one

interconnects with, the more valuable and resourceful one can become. From high school on, we apply this network intelligence through the 5 Essentials:



Network intelligence is more difficult when class and racial/ethnic segregation isolates students of color from many of the multiple sociocultural worlds and discourses in which they must interact effectively to navigate successfully the work/learn landscape. In some cases, a bewildering maze of code-switching from one world to another is required, yet often there is little scaffolding or support for acquiring this skill. Informational resources for these students appear to be exceedingly limited; during our MyWays research on networking, relationship building, and career building, we found hundreds of general resources but almost none focused on the special challenges faced by students of color.

For all these reasons — lack of social supports, lack of trusting relationships, and class and racial/ethnic segregation — “a young person’s network orientation or help-seeking orientation many affect her ability to take up and navigate the opportunities brokered by high-resource individuals.”⁵⁵

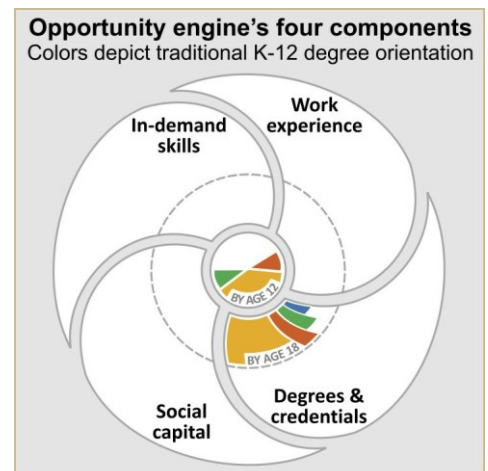
Three ways students can master social capital

To build and utilize social capital effectively, students of all socioeconomic backgrounds must connect it to their pursuit of work/learn opportunities (as discussed in Report 3), to their competencies (Reports 6–10), and to their critical consciousness about the world around them.

Using the opportunity engine to connect students to their pursuit of work/learn opportunities

The personal opportunity engine we introduced at the end of Report 2 reflects the shift toward an on-demand economy in which work experience, in-demand skills, and social capital work in combination with degrees and credentials to advance young people beyond high school. Report 3 compared the development of a “traditional student,” who gives primary attention to securing a degree or credential over other assets, with that of an “opportunity student,” who works to cultivate all four assets simultaneously.

All students should be encouraged to become opportunity students and be provided the information and experiences they need to help them begin building and taking ownership of their social capital. We share how some organizations are approaching this goal in the remainder of this report.



Connecting the MyWays competencies to building social capital

More than half of the MyWays competencies are closely related to building or utilizing social capital — a significant departure from more traditional academic competency frameworks. As students develop broader and deeper competencies, they are increasingly equipped to master social capital. The following chart shows a few ways in which the MyWays competencies relate to social capital:

14 of the 20 MyWays competencies are related to building or utilizing social capital	
Habits of Success	
Self-Direction & Perseverance	<i>Synergy between social health and self-development</i>
Learning Strategies	<i>Help-seeking orientation is a key learning strategy</i>
Social Skills & Responsibility	<i>A foundational competency for social capital</i>
Creative Know How	
Creativity & Entrepreneurship	<i>Securing resources through others is a vital element</i>
Communication & Collaboration	<i>Other foundational competencies for social capital</i>
Information, Media, & Technology Skills	<i>Social media skills are part of building social capital today</i>
Practical Life Skills	<i>Social experience and practical life skills go hand in hand</i>
Content Knowledge	
Interdisciplinary & Global Knowledge	<i>Cultural and societal awareness provide context for action</i>
Career-Related Technical Skills	<i>Industry norms and practices provide context for action</i>
Wayfinding Abilities	
Surveying Learn, Work, & Life Landscapes	<i>Interviews and chats with contacts are key to surveying</i>
Identifying Opportunities & Setting Goals	<i>Iterations with friends, mentors, and weak ties are vital</i>
Developing Personal Roadmaps	<i>Feedback and advice improves the quality of plans</i>
Finding Needed Help & Resources	<i>Network and help-seeking orientations are imperative</i>
Navigating Each Stage of the Journey	<i>Resource needs change throughout the journey</i>

Developing critical consciousness as an essential aspect of building social capital

We began this report with a summary of Putnam’s work on the extreme and still increasing class segregation in the US. For many low-income students and students of color, the ability to build social capital is blocked by their constricted social universe, the social attitudes and structures that perpetuate inequality, and their lack of experience and familiarity in navigating the multiple sociocultural worlds required for success. These students suffer from what John Gomperts of America’s Promise calls “relationship poverty.”⁵⁶

To overcome this disadvantage and begin to access what Putnam calls the *stepping-stones to upward mobility*, marginalized students need the ability to analyze the barriers in their path and develop strategies to combat them. For these students, “grit” must be complemented with “critical consciousness,” argues Scott Seider, a specialist in character development at Boston University:

Educators’ enthusiasm for grit can obscure the genuine obstacles that oppressive social forces such as racism place in the paths of youth from marginalized groups. Not acknowledging those forces increases the likelihood of youth attributing the effects of systemic obstacles to personal shortcomings and leaves them ill-equipped to navigate or challenge those obstacles when they encounter them.

For this reason, schools and educators who are enthusiastic about grit might be well-served to complement this work with programming and practices focused on critical consciousness. Critical consciousness is the ability to analyze, resist, and challenge the oppressive social forces that confront too many Americans and shape society. A growing body of research has found that high levels of critical consciousness are predictive in marginalized youth of higher academic achievement, mental health, resilience, and civic engagement. In explaining these relationships, Spelman College President Emeritus Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997), has written: “We are better able to resist the negative impact of oppressive messages when we see them coming than when they are invisible to us.” Other scholars have added that critical consciousness buffers marginalized adolescents against the negative effects of oppression by replacing feelings of isolation and self-blame for their challenges with a sense of engagement in a broader collective struggle for social justice.

...[T]he gritty and critically conscious young adult can identify the systemic obstacles in his or her path; recognize that these challenges are by no means theirs alone; and strategize individually and with others about how to overcome them. Perhaps, then, both proponents and opponents of grit can agree that complementing discussions of grit with opportunities for adolescents to deepen their critical consciousness will strengthen these young people’s capacity to thrive and contribute to the various communities of which they are a part.⁵⁷

Applied to the task of building social capital, Seider’s critically conscious young adult is better equipped to “identify the systemic obstacles in his or her path” to multiple sociocultural worlds; “recognize that these challenges are by no means theirs alone”; and “strategize individually and with others” on how to build bridges to these worlds. Of course, for this to be possible, schools and their community partners must provide the experiences, support, and systems by which marginalized youth can decode the system and build social capital.

Three ways adults can build social capital systems for young people

This section discusses the multiple roles that institutional agents (high-status, non-kin individuals) play in an effective social capital system; the importance of cross-organizational partnerships and initiatives to connect schools to the work world, postsecondary world, and adult organizations; and how a variety of successful school-based and community-based initiatives weave the five aspects of the MyWays Developmental Framework for Social Capital into their program design.

The multiple roles that institutional agents play in an effective social capital system

In a 2011 paper, Stanton-Salazar explores institutional agents and their role in the empowerment of low-status students and youth. Institutional agents, he writes, “operate the gears of social stratification and societal inequality.”⁵⁸ Stanton-Salazar nonetheless envisions how these institutional agents can become “empowerment agents.” He first identifies institutional agents: business owners and executives, university

administrators, community leaders, social workers, labor organizers, teachers, and other high-status, non-kin individuals dispersed “across key social spheres and institutional domains.” Noting that, for marginalized youth, “the development of supportive relationships with eligible institutional agents, and access to key forms of institutional support, are systematically complex and problematic,”⁵⁹ Stanton-Salazar then identifies 14 roles that various institutional agents must play in constructing and sustaining an effective social capital system for marginalized youth (see the graphic above). Notice that many of these roles can also be observed in various youth development, wraparound services, and career pathway systems — as well as in the kinds of next generation learning needed to foster broader, deeper competencies such as those in the MyWays Student Success Framework. (For a summary of how Hive NYC is organizing institutional agents to broker learning opportunities and related social capital for youth, see its 2015 [white paper](#).)

Student-facing roles for institutional agents in a social capital system



Behind the scenes roles for institutional agents in a social capital system



Reorganized and redrawn from Stanton-Salazar, *A Social Capital Framework for the Study of Institutional Agents and Their Role in the Empowerment of Low-Status Students and Youth*. 2011.

The importance of cross-organizational partnerships and initiatives

By definition, providing a robust, effective social capital system capable of providing social support, developmental relationships, and connections to resources is well beyond the capacity of any one school or organization. Many of the roles in the graphic above involve recruiting, connecting, and coordinating institutional agents and resources across a wide spectrum of community and workplace organizations. Ideally, this work involves creating a network of established networks rather than beginning from scratch. Examples of established networks include a cultivated-over-time community college network of participating employers, a youth development organization with a network of community mentors, and a school district’s network of wraparound service providers. Each of these examples have rich ties and

resources already embedded in their networks. Combining the resources of multiple players such as these is the challenge.

The same year as Stanton-Salazar’s paper (2011), John Kania and Mark Kramer reported on their analysis of cross-organizational collective impact, “We believe that there is no other way society will achieve large-scale progress against the urgent and complex problems of our time, unless a collective impact approach becomes the accepted way of doing business.”⁶⁰ Kania and Kramer identified five key elements of successful collective impact: *common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communications*, and a *backbone organization*.⁶¹ In *Smart Cities That Work for Everyone*, Tom Vander Ark and Mary Ryerse dedicate a chapter to chronicling how schools and education organizations are using collective impact to partner with other organizations to improve both academic and employment outcomes for students.⁶²


























In her foreword to their book, Cahill of the Carnegie Corporation writes that she came to see as essential an “ecosystem for learning” with “an ability to draw upon the assets of an entire city or community”:


























Where does the ecosystem come in? [We need] to redefine “school” as a *porous organization* and redefine “partnership” as a core design element, not an add-on. When partnership is a core element of school design, students have opportunities for relationships with adults and experiences that literally expand the world that is well-known to them through connections with cultural organizations, professional and business settings, science and technical organizations, or community services.⁶³ [italics added]

For these reasons, redefining “school” as a porous organization and “partnership” as a core design element is essential to building effective social capital systems.

How a variety of successful school-based and community-based initiatives weave aspects of the MyWays Developmental Framework for Social Capital into their program design

In the following two tables, we summarize 10 examples of programs that build social capital. Each example is described later in the report as well. Five of these examples are school-based and five are community-based, including higher education. We selected each program as an exemplar for one of the 5 Essentials, though all 10 programs leverage all 5 Essentials in varying degrees.

School-based Examples and How They Leverage Each of the 5 Essentials in Building Social Capital					
	Caring Friends & Adults	Near-Peers & Role Models	Mentors & Coaches	Networks & Weak Ties	Resources & Connectors
Self-Enhancement, Inc. Portland, Oregon <i>Intensive mentoring & wraparound program</i>					
Extracurricular Activities Most middle and high schools <i>Mixed age activities proximate to real world</i>					
Citizen Schools' Apprentice Projects 24 schools in 4 states <i>Afterschool projects with real-world teachers</i>					
Urban Alliance Internship Program Schools in DC, N. VA, Baltimore & Chicago <i>Scaffolded year-long internships</i>					
Da Vinci Schools' Real-World Learning Charter high schools in the Los Angeles area <i>Progression of real-world experiences</i>					

Community-based Examples and How They Leverage Each of the 5 Essentials in Building Social Capital					
	Caring Friends & Adults	Near-Peers & Role Models	Mentors & Coaches	Networks & Weak Ties	Resources & Connectors
Erie Comm. College, Pathways to Success Buffalo, New York <i>Scaffolded re-engagement, education & jobs</i>					
Harlem Children's Zone New York City <i>Web of support & pipeline of services</i>					
EMPath's Mobility Mentoring National <i>Mentoring & support for economic mobility</i>					
Earlham College Alumni Mapping 1,200 students in Richmond, IN <i>Connections to alums by major or industry</i>					
Hive NYC Learning Opportunities Network New York City (similar networks elsewhere) <i>Out-of-school learning opportunities</i>					

Each exemplar is further described below in the sections on each of the Essentials.

Looking at the importance of the 5 Essentials individually



ESSENTIAL 1. Caring Friends & Adults

“How ironic. We are the most technologically connected generation in human history — and yet more people feel more isolated than ever.”

— Thomas Friedman, *Thank You for Being Late*⁶⁴

Peers and caring friends play important roles during adolescence and into adulthood, contributing to positive psychological adjustment, better self-image, and better academic performance. Conversely: “The negative impact when young adolescents have difficulties in developing or maintaining friendships are aggressive behavior, low academic achievement, and experiencing loneliness and depression”⁶⁵ as well as an increased risk for psychosocial difficulties during adulthood.⁶⁶ Research summaries on caring friends from the National Institutes of Health and the American Psychological Association can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

In this report, we focus on the role of caring adults. The [Search Institute](#), [Center for Promise](#), and [Harvard’s Center on the Developing Child](#) are among the many research groups studying and describing how “experiences delivered through caring, supportive [adult] relationships” empower young people “to leverage the power of educational, workforce, and civic opportunities.”⁶⁷ Following are several highlights from our research scan on the role of adults:

- **Previous relationships** — positive or negative — influence how a young person perceives and responds to a new relationship. For caring support to take hold, adults must strive to understand how their interactions are being perceived, as the Center for Promise explains:⁶⁸

The level of connectedness and trust in a relationship can affect how young people perceive the support that they are being offered, called Perceived Partner Responsiveness (PPR). PPR has been found to mediate the connection between the support someone offers and the effect that the support has on the potential recipient and his or her academic achievement, social and emotional well-being and physical health. That is, perceived social support has been found to be a more powerful predictor of positive outcomes than the objective provision of support. Therefore, understanding young people’s perceptions of available support is essential to designing interventions that work.⁶⁹

- **Researchers at the Center for Promise** conclude that “young people trust and come to rely on caring relationships they perceive as honest, truthful, unselfish, faithful, and consistent”:

Young people we interviewed offered insights into damaging past relationships with important individuals in their lives and described what they think good relationships entail. They often defined caring as “trust” and “honesty,” being “truthful,” not being “fake” or “talking behind [your] back,” not being “selfish,” inflicting “drama” or being hurtful.... For the young people we spoke with caring also involved feeling “connected” to a person and feeling a “connection” from them. They associated caring with stability, which they defined as “loyalty,” having a person spend time with them and be there “forever,” offer “consistency” and “commitment,” be “faithful” and not a source of “heartbreak” or a “cheat.”⁷⁰

Tom Friedman, in *Thank You for Being Late*, quotes a Talmudic saying: “What comes from the heart enters the heart.” He continues: “What doesn’t come from your heart will never enter someone else’s heart. It takes caring to ignite caring; it takes empathy to ignite empathy.”⁷¹

- **A counselor with Café Momentum explains** that emotional support must come before appraisal support:

They [young people] need to have a safe place and they need to know they can come in here with anything, they can have a breakdown. I’ve got to allow that to happen so that I can begin to get to the roots so that they can show up and feel like they have a family. Once you’ve got that foundation you can kind of layer it with restorative discipline.⁷²

- **A 2016 Search Institute survey** of more than 25,000 middle and high school students in a large, diverse city concluded that 4 in 10 students reported infrequent and inconsistent involvement in supportive developmental relationships. In addition, only 4 in 10 reported that teachers expressed caring.⁷³ Another study of 8,000 middle school students found that “the number of supportive adults in students’ lives... had the strongest relationship to school engagement.”⁷⁴ In an extraordinary study of students who dropped out of high school and later re-engaged, The Center for Promise found: “young people mention twice as many experiences of instability vs. stability in their non-familial relationships during descriptions of leaving school; and eight times as many experiences of stability vs. instability during periods of re-engagement.”⁷⁵
- **At least one stable, non-family anchor relationship is needed** to provide unconditional support and act as a gateway to a web of support, according to the Center for Promise: “The presence of a single trusted adult appears to be a necessary component of support, alongside or in conjunction with the web of support. Neither is effective alone.... Some young people may be standing in a room that contains all the support they need, but they need someone else to turn on the lights so they can see what’s there and reach for it.”⁷⁶

- **Stanton-Salazar, on the other hand**, quotes Gary Wehlage and his colleagues on the importance of [broader] *bonding* between the student and school personnel through which the student becomes “attached, committed, involved and has belief in the norms, activities and people of an institution.”⁷⁷ Stanton-Salazar goes on to describe the “we-ness” to which most next generation schools aspire:

When such bonding between agent and student becomes a defining characteristic of the school community as whole, students experience a certain “we-ness,” a collective identity that is highly consonant with increased effort, engagement, and academic achievement. In sum: school personnel treat students in a caring manner, creating the conditions for “bonding”; in turn, students come to identify with, and conform to, the established order; now integrated, students experience a heightened degree of motivation and make the necessary efforts to meet academic demands.⁷⁸

- **At the college level**, this type of bonding with faculty represents “a particularly important form of social capital, especially for underrepresented college students.”⁷⁹ Researcher Sarah Schwartz and her colleagues summarize supporting research:

Supportive interactions with caring faculty and staff on campus have been identified as the “single most potent retention agent on campus” (Crockett, 1985, p. 245). A study of on-campus support among African American and Latino college students suggested that support from faculty was the most important type of social support in contributing to academic success (Baker, 2013). Other studies show that interactions with faculty both in and outside the classroom influence student engagement and academic achievement (Deil-Amen, 2011; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). In some cases, connections with faculty and staff may evolve into mentoring relationships, which appear to be especially beneficial. In mentoring relationships, the connection moves beyond casual interaction to intentional support and advocacy. Research has shown that college mentoring can increase students' sense of social and academic integration, their grade point average (GPA), and their persistence and retention in college (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Phinney, Torres Campos, Padilla Kallemeyn, & Kim, 2011).⁸⁰

Two programs illustrate the power of caring adults. Our school-based example is [Self Enhancement, Inc.](#), in Portland, Oregon and the community-based example is [Erie Community College](#) in Buffalo, New York.

Self-Enhancement, Inc. (SEI), Portland, Oregon**School-based example for Caring Friends & Adults**

Painted on the floor as you enter the gymnasium at SEI are the words: “Life Has Options.” Those words are central to a long, sustained conversation with participating students in SEI’s intensive mentoring and wraparound services program. The vast majority of students live “in troubled single-parent families or with a guardian.”⁸¹ For more than two decades, 97% of these predominantly low-income students of color have graduated from high school on time; 85% have gone on to college. In contrast: Oregon’s graduation rate for *white* students was 76% in 2015. The year-around, multi-year program includes in-school and out-of-school academic support and tutoring, after-school programming, community service and events, peer support, college and career counseling, and family services from elementary school until students complete college or secure a sustainable job, “basically until students become adults.”⁸² SEI was recognized as one of the 18 highest performing youth organizations in the nation by the highly selective Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and lifted up by America’s Promise Alliance as a “model youth organization for raising graduation rates.”

With respect to the MyWays Developmental Framework for Social Capital, all three parts of the social capital tree are nurtured and all 5 Essentials are provided. That said, SEI’s secret sauce is their emphasis on Caring Friends & Adults. SEI counselors refer to themselves internally as “extra parents”; they are in daily dialogue with students, parents, and caregivers; concerns and suggestions are collected through Individual Success Plan sessions with students, regular parent meetings, and data shared and discussed with students and parents. No personal problem or challenge is out of bounds. Peer support is taught and celebrated. While most school-based programs promulgate standards closely tied to high academic expectations, SEI’s standards are laser-focused on a caring culture before all else:

- We greet each other every day with a smile and a handshake to strengthen the relationship between us.
- We honor and respect each other and so we address one another with proper language and speech.
- We value the space of ourselves and others and are careful not to intrude or injure each other.
- We are mindful of what is true and strive to be honest in word and deed.
- We treasure our rich culture and hold the cultures of all people in high regard.
- We strive to reflect our beauty both inwardly, in our understanding and outwardly in our appearance.

**Erie Community College, Buffalo, NY****Community-based example for Caring Friends & Adults**

Erie Community College (ECC) has developed a remarkably effective Pathways to Success Program to reconnect disconnected youth and adults to education and employment. The Pathways program serves youth and adult learners who have left the traditional high school environment through five interconnected academic programs combined with intensive academic case management and close collaboration with community agencies, the

judicial system, and employers. The mission is to increase the successful movement of students from basic education programs to college completion and well-paying employment.

ECC actively seeks out individuals with alcoholism, substance abuse, mental health disorders, and a wide range of other at-risk factors. By breaking down silos and partnering in a deep way with the courts, community agencies, social workers, and treatment professionals, the ECC program is able to combine supports; improve participants' day-to-day functioning; and prevent their relapse back to drugs, alcohol, emotional decompensation, incarceration, hospitalization, and family neglect.

Like SEI, ECC focuses on all three parts of the social capital tree and all 5 Essentials. Its mentors, social workers, and case managers are a steady, caring presence in students' lives, working to increase retention rates through academic assistance and guidance, serving as an essential link between the student and his/her goals by fostering a supportive developmental relationship with each student and guiding them through their educational journey to success. Fellow students are clustered to provide caring friend support while former students remain actively involved in the program as mentors to current students.



E2 ESSENTIAL 2. Near-Peers & Role Models

“The fastest way to change yourself is to hang out with people who are already the way you want to be.”

— Reid Hoffman and Ben Casnocha, *The Start-Up of You*⁸³

If Caring Friends & Adults are humans' oldest form of social capital, then Near-Peers & Role Models are surely the second oldest. Furthermore, Near-Peers & Role Models have a deep, ancient connection to human learning. Evolutionary biologist David Sloan Wilson makes the dramatic point that human tribes are as old as the human species itself: we have literally co-evolved with peers and role models in multi-aged groups from whom we learn and model ourselves and craft our self-efficacy. Furthermore, he notes that “mental and physical teamwork are the hallmark of human evolution.”⁸⁴ Accordingly, denying older and younger peers to young people via age-graded education strikes many observers as a form of professional negligence — increasingly so in this age of accelerations when our ability to watch and learn from trailblazers is critically important. For all the reasons cited earlier in this report, we need to restore robust connections to Near-Peers & Roles Models. This Essential of social capital should be emphasized at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels. Following are several research highlights on Near-Peers & Roles Models:

- “The developmental theorists Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky both assigned peers a prominent role in development.”⁸⁵ Vygotsky proffered that learning takes place in a *zone of proximal development* (from which the concept of scaffolding is derived) in which one or several *more knowledgeable other(s)* can be observed, imitated, or modeled in order to acquire some new knowledge or skill. While the teaching profession typically thinks of the teacher as the more knowledgeable other, Vygotsky emphasized the social aspects of learning and believed that “slightly advanced peers [also] serve as important leaders of development.”⁸⁶
- **Young children in Montessori classrooms** (typically mixed-age groups of three age levels) quickly learn to discern which classmates, regardless of age, are the best “more knowledgeable others” on a wide variety of academic, social, and practical life skills. For example, during a visit to a public Montessori classroom in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the authors observed a substitute teacher ask a lower elementary class of 6- to 8-year-olds if they could tell her the activity schedule for the day. In unison, every head in the class turned to a shy, Korean-born 7-year-old girl who was recognized as the schedule savant of the class. Acquiring the ability to identify which peers and role models are “experts” in myriad specialty areas is a valuable social capital skill — not only for children, but for adults as well.



Elementary students at a public Montessori school explain the daily routines to substitute teachers before beginning individual work.

- **Adolescent development experts** like Robert Halpern and Reed Larson note that Near-Peers & Role Models in adolescence are incredibly important to forging one’s identity and beginning to learn about vocational possibilities. Halpern warns that when adolescents have too few older Near-Peers & Role Models in their lives, a “peer world” bubble might develop that can detour and delay adolescents from their natural exploration and entry into the adult world.⁸⁷
- **On the other hand**, internships and other forms of work-based and community-based learning can enrich and inspire a young person. The power of near-peers, in particular, is a prominent theme in the field of positive youth development. Report 5 has additional information and sources; one place to begin is Halpern’s report for the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, [*It Takes a Whole Society: Opening Up the Learning Landscape in the High School Years*](#).
- **Young people can find role models in any and every domain, including** among close acquaintances and more remote contemporaries, and in entertainment, sports, or a profession of interest. Figures from history and even fiction can be role models. Creativity consultant Michael Vance, former head of Disney University, urges young people to create their own Hall of Fame of inspiring role models. While anyone can be a role model, regardless of age, gender, or race,

students of color may be particularly aided by role models — and near-peers — who “look like me” and have traveled, successfully, the same journey. These students may also face the challenge that cultural identity and the need for code-switching often complicate the “uptake” of Near-Peers & Role Models.

- **In a complex age of accelerations**, change can happen so fast that the very best form of social capital is the trailblazers who are proceeding just ahead of you — those Near-Peers & Role Models who are just a bit further into the work/learn landscape, the career field you’re considering, the world of independent living, or the first serious relationship. Helping young people identify these trailblazers, approach those who are accessible, and learn from them is part of building social capital.

The following two programs illustrate the power of Near-Peers & Role Models. Our school-based example is the [extracurricular programs](#) present in most high schools, while the community-based example is [Harlem Children’s Zone](#).

Extracurricular Activities

School-based example for Near-Peers & Role Models

When we ask educators to recall what high school learning experience had the most impact on their own personal development, responses focus almost universally on extracurriculars: dance, theater, sports, newspapers, and so forth. Harvard’s Jal Mehta has written an insightful blog, “[Schools Already Have Good Learning, Just Not Where You Think](#),” in which he examines nine ways that extracurriculars can provide rich learning. Our interest here is in Mehta’s comments on the benefits of Near-Peers & Role Models in these activities [he uses theater as an example]:



Amas Musical Theatre, NYC

Unlike age-graded school, productions feature students at different ages and at very different levels of knowledge and skill. This gave younger learners an opportunity to learn from their peers, to apprentice with slightly older students who knew how to do what they wanted to learn. In lighting, set design, and stage managing, there was often a senior as the lead, a junior as an assistant, and a freshman or sophomore as something like an intern. Students described that they had gradually taken on more responsibility over the years as they developed increasing competence. Younger students also looked up to older ones; they provided models of who they wanted to be in the future. Adults involved in the theater program extended this notion of apprenticeship, providing greater levels of expertise, and sometimes connecting students to professional work in college, community, or regional theaters.⁸⁸

We talk more about the importance of extracurriculars and their proximity to authentic, real-world learning in Report 11.

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ)**Community-based example for Near-Peer & Role Models**

HCZ has been heralded for changing the paradigm for education in troubled low-income communities, pioneering the cradle-to-career pipeline approach of integrated academic, youth, family advocacy, and wraparound programs now emulated by the StriveTogether Network, the federal Promise Neighborhoods Program, and other local initiatives across the country. Like many of our other social capital examples, HCZ works to build all 5 Essentials. However, in our view, they are unparalleled in their approach to Near-Peers & Role Models. Serving more than 25,000 children and families, HCZ fields 1,200 trained staff — 1,200 Near-Peers & Role Models. Most are from Harlem and a great many have come up through the ranks of the HCZ organization, perhaps starting as a student-participant, then a junior counselor, senior counselor, tutor, site coordinator, program manager, and program director. Every staffer is committed to each child's success — “Whatever It Takes,” is the mantra — and every staffer is a walking, talking, inspiring example of what is possible.

E3**ESSENTIAL 3. Mentors & Coaches**

“I was angry at myself. I had underestimated the test.”

—TaTy'Terria Gary

TaTy'Terria Gary is a working-class senior at Topeka High School in Kansas. Lacking a proper mentor, this conscientious, engaged-in-many-activities, aspiring gynecologist was seeing her dreams turning to dust for the lack of someone helping ensure she was ready for her college admission test. In a gripping portrait



Christopher Smith for The New York Times

of Gary and two other working-class high schoolers, Anemona Hartocollis writes in *The New York Times* of the struggle with the college admission process that many working-class students face and the, frankly, stupid little mishaps that knock all too many off track, sometimes permanently. Gary was one of the lucky ones; a private college counselor read about her in a previous Hartocollis article and stepped forward to mentor her and help her get back on track.⁸⁹

Mentors and coaches are not all about college admissions; they come in many formal and informal forms. They are a cornerstone of youth development best practice and play a crucial role, in particular, in helping adolescents learn the Wayfinding Abilities needed to transition through secondary school challenges and navigate the work/learn landscape. Following are several highlights from our research on Mentors & Coaches:

- **Stanton-Salazar reports** that adolescents most in need of mentoring and coaching, particularly those of work-class backgrounds, are the least likely to have access to this Essential of social capital:

Most working-class youth experience difficulty in establishing *resource-ful* relationships with non-parental adult figures. In contrast, in middle-class families, both parents and adolescents themselves coordinate to incorporate non-parental adult figures into their social networks.⁹⁰

- **This mentoring/coaching gap extends into the college years**, according to Schwartz and her colleagues:

Although the value of social capital, including both mentoring relationships and lower intensity support, is well documented, data suggest that first-generation, low-income, and racial/ethnic minority college students are less likely to develop such relationships, especially with institutional agents whose support may be particularly valuable. In fact, difficulty developing meaningful on-campus connections has emerged as a key explanation for low rates of degree completion among racial and ethnic minority students.⁹¹

- **To address this deficit**, Schwartz and Rhodes trace new trends within the field of youth mentoring in [*From Treatment to Empowerment: New Approaches to Youth Mentoring*](#):

Traditional approaches to formal youth mentoring have focused primarily on improving the lives of "at-risk" youth through the assignment of individual mentors who are typically disconnected from youth's communities. Similarly, research in the field of formal mentoring has emphasized the dyadic relationship between the mentor and the mentee, with less attention paid to the broader relational contexts in which such relationships unfold. The current paper

proposes a new framework that expands the scope of mentoring interventions to include **approaches that build on and cultivate informal supports and empower youth to identify and reach out to networks of potential supportive adults**, thus increasing the reach of youth mentoring.⁹²

- **Taking this work one step further**, Schwartz, Rhodes, and other colleagues, in the wonderfully titled [*“I Didn’t Know You Could Just Ask.”*](#) describe their design for the Connected Scholars Program, an eight-session course “empowering underrepresented college-bound students to recruit academic and career mentors.”⁹³ For next generation schools that do not yet provide training on building social capital, we recommend investigating this program. The course scope and sequence are enclosed as an exhibit at the end of this report.

Our two example programs for Mentors & Coaches expand the scope of the topic. Our school-based example is the [Citizen Schools apprenticeship program](#) taught by citizen coaches. The community-based example is [Mobility Mentoring](#), a national program of Boston’s Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath).

Citizen Schools’ Apprentice Projects

School-based example for Mentors & Coaches

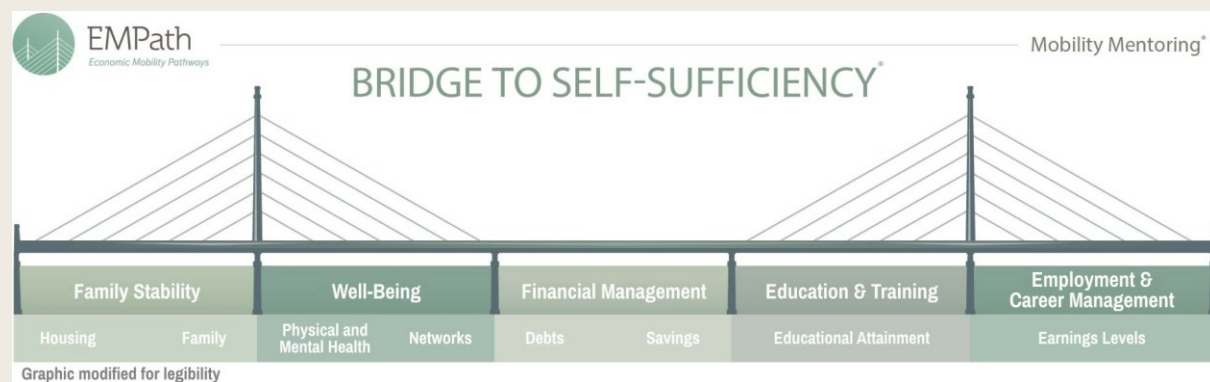
Founded in 1994, Citizens Schools’ mission is creating life-changing aspiration in low-income middle-schoolers. “I got the sense that, while they didn’t drop out until 10th or 11th grade,” says co-founder Eric Schwarz, “they tuned out in middle school. It’s a time where kids get a sense of themselves in the future.” Citizens Schools partners with schools to offer an expanded learning time afterschool program within which apprentice projects are a core component. Middle schoolers work with near-peer mentors/coordinators and community volunteers, called Citizen Teachers, from businesses and civic institutions. Students are out in the community, often in

the workplace of Citizen Teachers. “Taught in 90-minute sessions twice a week for 11-weeks, the apprentice projects emphasize skills considered necessary for success in the modern economy: leadership, teamwork, oral communication, and technology. Each semester’s apprentice projects culminate in a product, performance, or presentation produced by the students and taught back to the [school and parent] community at an event called a WOW!”⁹⁴ (See this [5m video](#) and [Forbes article](#) for more information.)



Mobility Mentoring*Community-based example for Mentors & Coaches*

Financial adviser Suze Orman says, “Today as I sit here, there is a highway into poverty; there is not even a sidewalk anymore to get out.” One program that stands out for its success in achieving economic mobility is Mobility Mentoring, refined over many years by EMPath, formerly the Crittenton Women’s Union. While program participants are low-income adults and families, EMPath’s Bridge to Self-Sufficiency framework (see graphic below) is as relevant for younger students as it is for adults. It is a competency development model that builds off participants’ real-life challenges in five domains: *family stability*, *well-being*, *financial management*, *education and training*, and *employment and career management*. A setback in any one of these elements is enough to “break the bridge” and inhibit the slow, deliberate progression toward economic mobility. This is exactly the case for most low-income students as well: the aspiration to succeed in college is easily thwarted by a host of family, personal, financial, academic, or work difficulties. (A full-page graphic of the Bridge to Self-Sufficiency Framework is provided as an exhibit at the end of the report.)



From a mentoring standpoint, the program has several characteristics noteworthy for their potential applicability to students attempting to navigate the work/learn landscape. One strength of the program (and framework) is the emphasis on building resilience by making potential breakdowns transparent and developing strategies for anticipating and adapting to crisis without being deep-sixed. In addition, mentoring needs to be available in all five domains, because specialized mentoring in narrow areas — such as college admissions — will not alone make the difference for students living challenging and complex lives.

With coaching and support, participants develop the competencies to cross the bridge to self-sufficiency: learning to make decisions, not in isolation, but in the context of their overall economic mobility plan. In addition, emphasis is given to thinking about the future — that is, to applying one’s competencies to goal setting and considering the implications of current decisions and actions on events and opportunities down the road. In educational terms, these training priorities are targeting *transfer of learning*, improving the ability of participants to apply what they are learning in the classroom, support group, or workplace to problem solving in their own lives and to their own self-sufficiency plans.

Mobility Mentoring and the five domains in the Bridge to Self-Sufficiency framework are applicable to adolescents setting out to navigate the work/learn landscape, especially low-income students and students of color. Typically, we are asking these adolescents — 16- to 18-year-olds! — to design and build their own bridge to self-sufficiency with little assistance and “in an information-poor, time-compressed, resource-constrained environment,” as Hoffman and Casnocha noted earlier. As *Pathways to Prosperity* observes, “it is a minor miracle that so many still manage to complete a degree.”⁹⁵



ESSENTIAL 4. Networks & Weak Ties

“It was like, ‘Why would they want to keep in touch with me? What would I even ask them — How is it going? Did I make enough of an impact on them for me to ask them how their life is?’ I was like ‘eh.’ I was just another kid in the program so I just didn’t think about doing it... I guess after that I was like there’s no point; I’m pretty sure they don’t care about how my life is. I guess that’s a pessimist way of thinking about it.”⁹⁶

— “Cerebral,” age 18, Hive NYC program participant

What teenager hasn’t thought like Cerebral? Network membership and adult *weak ties* (the acquaintances of friends) are frequently alien and scary concepts to young people of all backgrounds. Billett emphasizes that adolescents are developmentally more attuned to bonding relationships than the bridging relationships in networks and weak ties. Nevertheless, a network orientation and help-seeking orientation are incredibly important characteristics for any young person to cultivate.⁹⁷ Building on our brief introduction to Networks & Weak Ties in Report 3, Decision 5, including the foundational work of sociologist Mark Granovetter, we offer the following additional highlights from our research on Networks & Weak Ties:

- **The previously mentioned [white paper by the Hive Research Lab](#)** probes the challenges of social capital and young people, concluding that “if we want to help youth develop more social capital... we need to develop more sensitivity” to adolescents’ hesitation and its causes:

For example, Stanton-Salazar’s (2001) work with Latino and Latino-American youth has traced how contextual factors in their lives can lead to mistrust and wariness that over time may cause some youth to adopt a posture of “unsponsored self-reliance” that manifests in avoidance strategies among youth when it comes to interacting with certain adults (such as teachers, who could potentially provide aid). Stanton-Salazar also points out that while this trait may be celebrated as a core American value, sociologists have indicated that people who claim to have “made it on their own” generally were “deeply embedded in resource-rich networks and relationships (Fischer, 1982; Warren, 1981)” (Stanton-Salazar, 2001, p. 112).⁹⁸

- **It is useful to think of business, community, and other social networks** as additional examples of the multiple sociocultural worlds we discussed earlier in this report. Each network has its own system “of values and belief, expectations, aspirations, ways of using language, and emotional responses familiar to insiders.”⁹⁹ And, like other relationships, weak ties require trust and reciprocity, the rules for which are rarely apparent to young people short on adult network experience.

- **Hive summarizes Stanton-Salazar’s work** comparing “middle-class networks” versus “working-class networks”:

We also know that different socioeconomic groups have varied supportive capacity within their social networks. Stanton-Salazar (2001) describes middle-class individuals as having ‘*cosmopolitan networks*’ reflecting connections to individuals that make possible “smooth access to the mainstream marketplace where privileges, institutional resources, opportunities for leisure, recreation, career mobility, and political empowerment are abundant” (p. 105). So called “working-class networks,” by contrast, are likely to be more ‘*bounded, ’ i.e., smaller, more homogeneous, tightly knit, turf-bound, and therefore limited in terms of their potential to help an individual engage in mainstream institutional spheres.*¹⁰⁰ {italics added]

- **Other research reveals** that both middle-class and working-class youth utilize their peers for support and sharing information; however, middle-class youth benefit from a multiplier effect: since their networks are more robust, there are “striking differences in the kinds of support” they are able to exchange in contrast to working-class youth. “Taken to its extreme,” Stanton-Salazar (2001) warns us that social networks can function as both “support system” and “social prisons.”¹⁰¹
- **Honing in on their mission to broker learning opportunities** for New York City youth, Hive’s paper is very helpful in its discussion of the issues and principles involved in building social networks that foster youth-adult connection and provide “ladders of opportunities.”¹⁰²
- **One feel-good story of network orientation and help-seeking orientation** is that of NFL receiver Malcolm Mitchell ([5m video](#)). A football star at the University of Georgia, Mitchell entered college reading at a middle school level, an achievement gap he was determined to overcome. Visiting Barnes & Noble one day with a friend, he asked a white, middle-aged, female customer for suggestions. During the ensuing conversation, he learned that she was a member of a book club and immediately asked if he could join, despite learning that club members were all women older than his mother. The bonds that Mitchell forged in that group are a triumph of network power. Mitchell now reads everything in sight and [uses his NFL stardom to encourage kids to read](#).

Our two example programs for Networks & Weak Ties expand the topic’s scope. Our school-based example is the [Urban Alliance Internship Program](#), while the community-based example is the [Earlham College Alumni Mapping program](#).

Urban Alliance Internship Program**School-based example of Networks & Weak Ties**

Urban Alliance (UA) provides scaffolded year-long internships to low-income high school seniors in Washington, DC, Northern Virginia, Baltimore, and Chicago. (Detailed profiles of the program, along with three other youth development programs, can be found in the Center for Promise’s excellent report, [Relationships Come First](#).) Preparation and support before, during, and after an internship is essential to its success¹⁰³ and UA builds a web of support that turns a one-year internship into a life-long social capital advantage — by **showing students how to develop and utilize weak-tie relationships** at the periphery of their internships as well as getting the most from colleagues they’re working with each day. Upon acceptance, “students undergo an intensive five-week training program (their ‘professional development boot camp’) for *career management skill* building and *life skill* building.”¹⁰⁴ Students are matched with internships that closely match their interests, and the web of support is in place throughout the year:

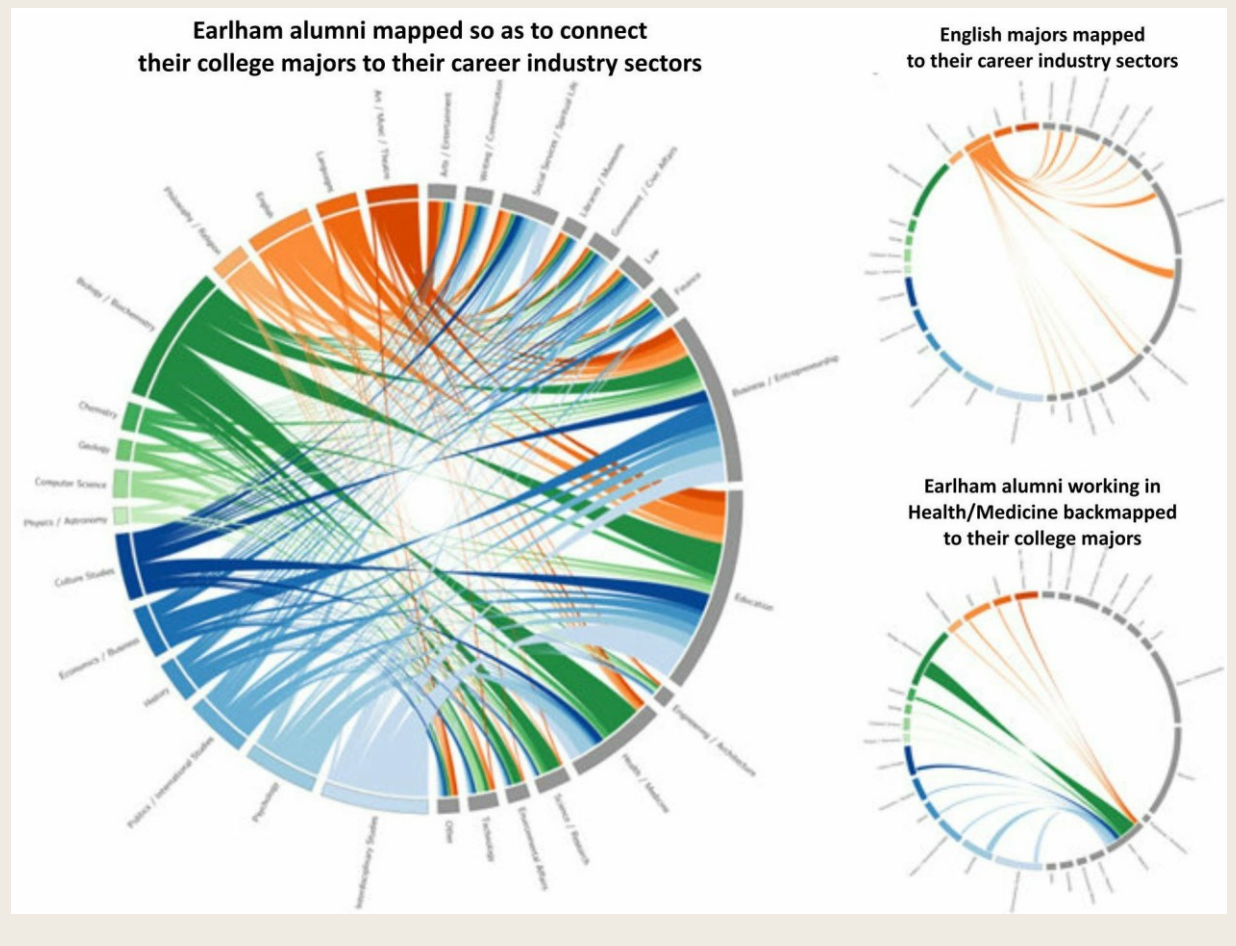
[W]e are basically trying to ensure that they are developing the whole time, and then we jump in when things do get rough. Many of our interns — they’re not just dealing with going to school and going to work where there are so many other things outside of that...maybe situations at home, or just simple things like getting back and forth to work as far as transportation. So as program coordinators, we are usually that person that jumps in and provides maybe a [transit pass] or just talking on the phone to advise them...¹⁰⁵

With an eye on the long-term, UA has an alumni outreach component that organizes professional development, mixers, community service, and networking opportunities for the current cohort of interns and UA alums — always with the goal of building the social capital web of support and connections that low-income students living in “relationship poverty” need for college and career success.

**Earlham College Alumni Mapping****Community-based example of Networks & Weak Ties**

A 1,200-student liberal arts college in Richmond, Indiana, Earlham is turning its small size into a competitive advantage by mining the social capital in its alumni community for the benefit of current undergraduates. The [interactive graphics on the Earlham website](#) illustrate the first part of the initiative: the creation of an alumni database that tracks undergraduate majors (the left hemisphere) and career paths (the right hemisphere). The width of the lines connecting the two hemispheres (first graphic) show how many alums majored in each field and their divergence into various career paths after graduation. For example, the two smaller graphics to the right of that graphic show the divergence of English majors into 15 different career sectors (top) and the number of alums working in the health field who began in various academic majors (bottom).

The second part of the Earlhamite Career Pathways program enables undergrads to engage with alums to explore their career paths and seek information or assistance in the next phase of their work/learn journey. Earlham's program could easily be emulated at the high school level.



ESSENTIAL 5. Resources & Connectors

After participating in a Hive NYC video game design program, Cerebral (introduced earlier) noted the following:

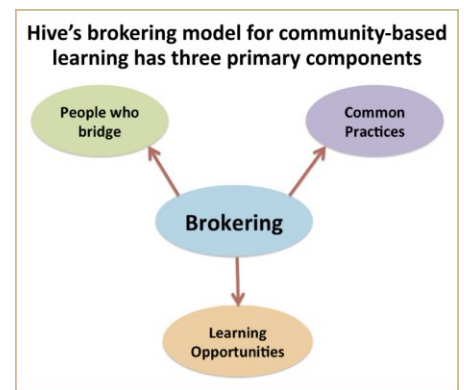
“When I first came, I was a little quiet because I didn’t know what was going on, but when Duncan started talking about games, I just wanted to talk. He looked at me and noticed that I was really interested in this and I think he just saw that I really liked it and he just talked to me about it. At first he was like, ‘I see you’re really interested in this stuff. Keep it up.’ Then towards the end of the program when he saw the game he was like, ‘If you need help and this is really what you want to do, here’s my card.’ It had his email on it and his office number and I called him at his office and he gave me a list of all the types of programs and stuff that I could go to and learn... I thought it was weird that he seemed to have some sort of faith in me. He seemed to

believe that I could do it and I didn't really believe I could do it. I never thought of game design as a career. I just thought of it as games. I like to learn about games. And then I also felt like it was kind of real that it was something I could pursue."

Hive NYC's program created the social network and support that enabled Cerebral to develop from the doubting newbie ("Why would they want to keep in touch with me?") into a young adult getting positive encouragement and potential resource assistance for a career in game design. Just as Networks & Weak Ties require systems designed to help young people develop a network orientation and help-seeking orientation, Resources & Connectors requires us to design the systems and supports so we can broker and connect young people to potential resources embedded in social networks. At the same time, we must help young people understand the dance of trust and reciprocity inherent in tapping relationships for resources while, hopefully, strengthening those relationships simultaneously — a delicate social skill that is challenging for many adults as well.

Following are several highlights from our research on Resources & Connectors:

- **We use the word “Connectors” because it is familiar** across age and educational levels. Hive uses the terms “brokers” and “bridges,” which emphasize the ability of “individual actors in one [network] to have access to resources embedded in nodes in another [network] that otherwise would not be accessible.”¹⁰⁶ Hive believes that building the capacity into social capital systems to broker and bridge on behalf of young people is a critical and unsolved design challenge. The graphic to the right shows Hive’s brokering subsystem, where “Learning Opportunities” represents any resource type.¹⁰⁷



- A **“resource-ful” network** complete with brokers and bridges (“Connectors”) is a variation of Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development. Young people are more empowered to learn and advance toward their goals when the environment is populated by “more connected others” who can help bridge to resources that would otherwise be unavailable. A traditional high school or college is less apt to perform in this way compared to a more “porous” organization that redefines “partnership” as a core design element, as Michelle Cahill urged earlier in this report. (See the discussion of the Wider Learning Ecosystem in Report 11.)
- **The world of business** is loaded with books and programs promoting social capital and how to cultivate it for resources. Few of these writings have been adapted for student use; however, Wendy Murphy at Babson College and Kathy Kram at Boston University School of Management have tried to organize the business literature and research in [Strategic Relationships at Work](#), a guide for undergraduates and college graduates. Although, in our judgment, the book is not suitable for high school students or students of color dealing with more complex connection and bridging issues, but it might be a worthwhile resource for next generation system and program developers.

- **Despite the lessons learned in the business world**, youth social capital researcher Billett warns that “until young people finished school and began looking for ‘career-based’ employment, they seemed to have little [interest] in the bridging ties that assist adults to create upward mobility.”¹⁰⁸ In other words, young people — especially those lacking the connector-relationships that can come from affluent environments — are starting their connection building essentially from scratch.
- **On the other hand**, some of this indifference is the product of fear, shyness, and a lack of scaffolding. According to Schwartz and her colleagues, upon completing the Connected Scholars Program, one student reported, “I know ways to talk to somebody and trying to get some information, help, support, asking for something, it’s easier for me now, to get the connection that I need to.” Another student noted, “I didn’t know you can just ask a person if they know someone that kind of related to something you want to do.”¹⁰⁹ One of the great student quotes on social capital!
- **Finally, we close this section** on Resources & Connectors by mentioning, all too briefly, the second enormous universe of social capital: online web- and app-based resources. From a social capital standpoint, these online and mobile assets can be divided into static and dynamic resources, differentiated by whether resources are available either without asking or after reaching out through social relationships. Potent examples of static resources are Khan Academy, YouTube, or LifeHacker, where the knowledge, skills, and advice of millions of “more knowledge others” are readily available. Need resources for learning algebra, Indian cooking, or how to drywall like a pro? Experts have shared their secrets on video. Dynamic resources — those reached through social interaction — can be pursued directly via email or by posting requests to forum communities like Quora and Reddit or to personal or professional networks through Facebook, LinkedIn, or other forms of social media. Mastering this second (digital) universe of social capital adds another crucial dimension to building social capital.

Our two example programs for Resources & Connectors are the school-based example of the Real-World Learning program at the [Da Vinci Schools](#) in California and the community-based example of [Hive NYC’s Learning Opportunities Network](#).

Real-World Learning at the Da Vinci Schools**School-based example for Resources & Connectors**

“We finally got a meeting with Mike; he is so busy, but so amazing! We are going to ask him if he is open to being a mentor to us.” So explained two student interns at one of Da Vinci’s many employer-partners, excusing themselves from a check-in with a coordinator of the Real-World Learning (RWL) Program. “I couldn’t have been happier to be ditched,” reported the coordinator, recognizing that the students had internalized RWL practices and were seeking this new connection on their own.



Starting in the ninth grade, Da Vinci students begin collaborating with industry professionals through a rich variety of learning experiences designed to help students seek and secure the social capital and resources they will need to succeed in the work/learn landscape:

Da Vinci Communications, Da Vinci Design, and Da Vinci Science are public charter high schools that pair rigorous classroom instruction with practical real-world learning experiences so students graduate college-ready, career-prepared, and community-minded. The Real-World Learning Program provides students with the skills needed in the workplace that cannot be taught within the core academic curriculum. This is done through on and off-campus learning experiences as well as career training on campus via a network of industry and community partners. The goal of the Real-World Learning Program is to bridge the gap between the classroom and the workplace.

The RWL program begins with industry-connected project-based learning, industry speakers, field trips, mentors, mock interviews, community service, and career skill development (including emailing, resume writing, LinkedIn, and other forms of personal networking). Juniors and seniors are encouraged to go deeper with optional work experience and internships. Graduates can elect a 13th “Extension” year with university transfer for students who wish to stay at Da Vinci an extra year beyond 12th grade to complete their freshman general education college coursework while gaining on-the-job work experience through paid and unpaid internships in the community — all at no cost to families.

A “porous organization” partnering with dozens of employer-partners, Da Vinci’s RWL program deliberately pulls the work/learn landscape forward into the high school years, giving students authentic opportunities to experience the workplace, build relationships and social capital, and seek the connections and resources they will need in the next stage of their work/learn journey.

Hive NYC Learning Opportunity Network**Community-based example for Resources & Connectors**

The Mozilla Hive NYC Learning Network (“Hive NYC”) is a consortium of more than 70 museums, libraries, and youth-serving organizations collaborating on a “network for learning” for city youth. The program leverages social capital as a central driver of their learning pathway:

- They create a rich, flexible social environment by connecting the personal social networks of well-placed individuals at participating organizations, and encouraging young people to use this social fabric to develop their own relationships and networks.

- They rely on the relationships among adult participants to identify or develop work/learn opportunities in the community.
- They foster strong adult-youth relationships to develop knowledge of each young person, including their interests, abilities, and aspirations, and to broker connections between these young people and matching work/learn opportunities.

The graphic below summarizes how Hive NYC envisions the “relationship building” and “brokering” system at the core of a 70-organization collaboration that first generates *durable youth-educator relationships* that lead to *youth social capital building*, *increased youth social capital*, and *valued youth outcomes*:

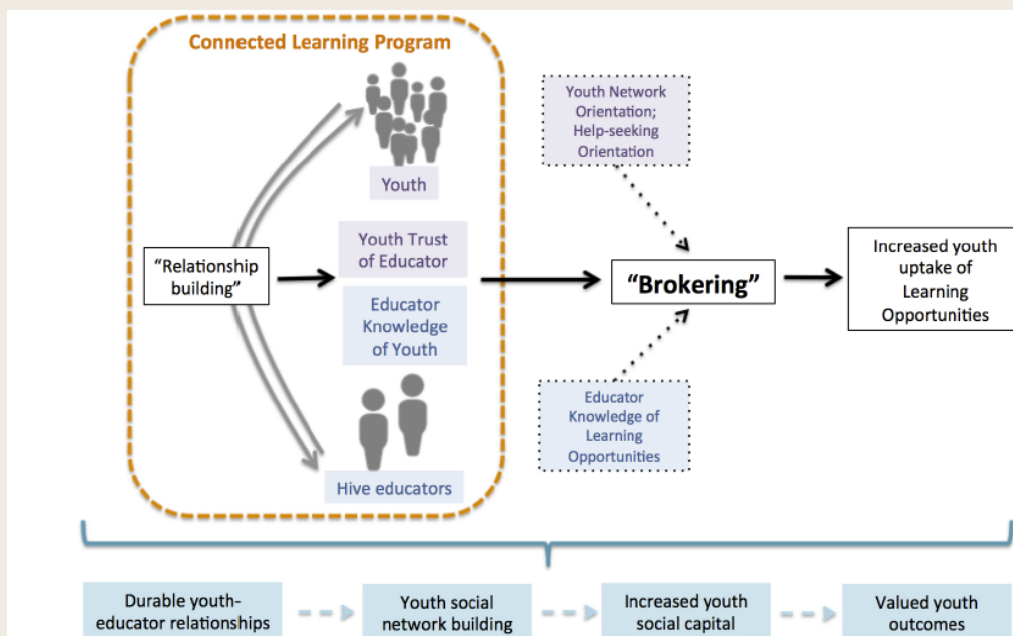


Figure 4. *Brokering as an educator practice leading to increased youth social capital and uptake of learning opportunities.*

Hive NYC’s deliberate focus on emotional and instrumental support is especially important for students in poorer communities:

Hive members’ programs are often structured in ways that allow youth and educators to get to know each other through unstructured time, hanging out, and project work. These hanging out periods are important so that educators can get to know — and develop — youth’s passions and interests. We have observed trust and norms naturally emerge in these contexts as youth develop skills, get feedback from others, and find inspiration in conversations with fellow peers and adults. Furthermore, interactions that have happened over the course of a program, with guest speakers, teaching artists and individuals encountered on field trips, have made visible to youth more opportunities and resources that may be accessed down the road.¹¹⁰

Hive NYC is an evolving initiative and, as previously mentioned, the Hive Research Lab has documented its ongoing efforts to apply social capital in smart, effective ways in a [white paper](#).

Key social capital takeaways for next generation educators

Although social capital is receiving growing attention within society as a whole, its importance to young people during childhood and their transition to adulthood is only beginning to be recognized. Furthermore, while new ways to promote social capital are needed for young people of all classes and racial/ethnic backgrounds, the research makes plain that the “relationship poverty” of many low-income students and students of color is a significant and limiting factor in the expanding opportunity gap in postsecondary degree attainment and gainful employment. To help address this, we have developed the MyWays Developmental Framework for Social Capital, which includes the 5 Essentials we described earlier in this report (and that are recapped in the sidebar on the right).

How can next generation educators take this research and integrate social capital more fully into their school design models and programs? Following are five takeaways from the research.

Takeaway 1: Social capital is an outgrowth of each person’s developmental trajectory and life circumstances, influenced by both opportunity and preparation. The social connections through which resources are attained are like the branches of a social capital tree, dependent on the quality of the roots of social support as well as the trunk of supportive developmental relationships with adults, including nonfamilial adults. Accordingly, the urgency to build social capital in young people must begin with improving the webs of support and healthy development of all young people.

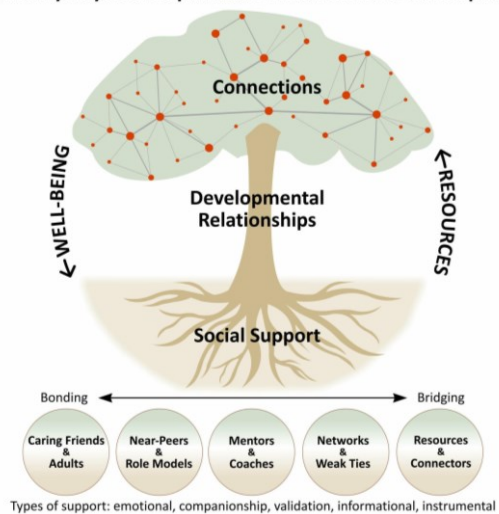
Takeaway 2: Next generation education can promote social capital development as an extension of two existing next generation focus areas: social-emotional learning and real-world learning. These initiatives provide solid platforms for developing network orientation, help-seeking orientation, and personal social

Recap of the MyWays Developmental Framework for Social Capital and 5 Essentials

As research shows, social capital is a limiting factor in today’s economic mobility system.

The MyWays team has created a framework for social capital covering the three parts of a social capital “tree”: the roots of social supports, the trunk of supportive developmental relationships, and the branches of social connections and resources.

The MyWays Developmental Framework for Social Capital



Here are what we believe to be the 5 Essential types of social capital:

- 1. Caring Friends & Adults:** Emotional support, companionship, and validation provided by family members, peers, and close relationships with unrelated adults.
- 2. Near-Peers & Role Models:** Ideas, inspiration, and behavior patterns explained or modeled by direct contacts or individuals “met” only through history, entertainment, or other worlds (including fiction).
- 3. Mentors & Coaches:** Informational support, counseling, emotional support, and validation built on a relationship of mutual knowledge and trust.
- 4. Networks & Weak Ties:** Connections to any form of social network including one’s “strong ties” (friends and close relationships) and “weak ties” (acquaintances and friends of acquaintances).
- 5. Resources & Connectors:** Informational, instrumental (financial, material, services), and social support accessed through networks and individuals helping bridge or broker connections.

connections. However, more work is needed to identify and develop curricula and learning experiences that translate materials and programs developed for the adult business world into forms appropriate for young people, especially those in marginalized groups.

Takeaway 3: There is an urgent need for schools to become *porous organizations*, as urged by Cahill, and to promote and spearhead the development of various forms of work/learn pathways that extend beyond the school walls and assist young people in building their social capital. As we described above, Citizen Schools’ Apprentice Projects Program, the Urban Alliance internship program, and Hive NYC’s learning opportunity network offer examples of collective impact that integrate the programs and resources of multiple organizations into ladders of opportunity rich in social capital.

Takeaway 4: Building social capital is doubly difficult for marginalized young people. Starting off in relationship poverty and experiencing inadequate social support and negative developmental relationships compound the growing economic, geographic, and cultural chasms documented by Putnam to block entry and participation in the multiple sociocultural worlds needed to succeed in college and career. These young people need explicit bridges and brokers if they are to overcome these barriers and achieve better social capital outcomes.

Takeaway 5: We need to develop ways to measure and assess the social capital of young people if we are to build rigorous and effective social capital systems. As a starting point, Billett has developed *Indicators of Youth Social Capital*, a set of 11 primary and secondary indicators. A desirable next step would be to build on her work to develop indicators and measures that align with the MyWays Developmental Framework for Social Capital.

What the 5-5-5 Realities mean for adolescence

Reports 2, 3, and 4 explore accelerations in the nature of the labor market, the work of postsecondary education and early employment, and societal patterns of social capital — accelerations we describe as the 5-5-5 Realities.

In Report 5, *Preparing Apprentice-Adults for Life after High School*, we examine the state of adolescence in America today and how poorly prepared many young people are to face these realities. To “prepare youth to thrive,”¹¹¹ we discuss opportunities to capitalize on the natural developmental potential of the adolescent years.

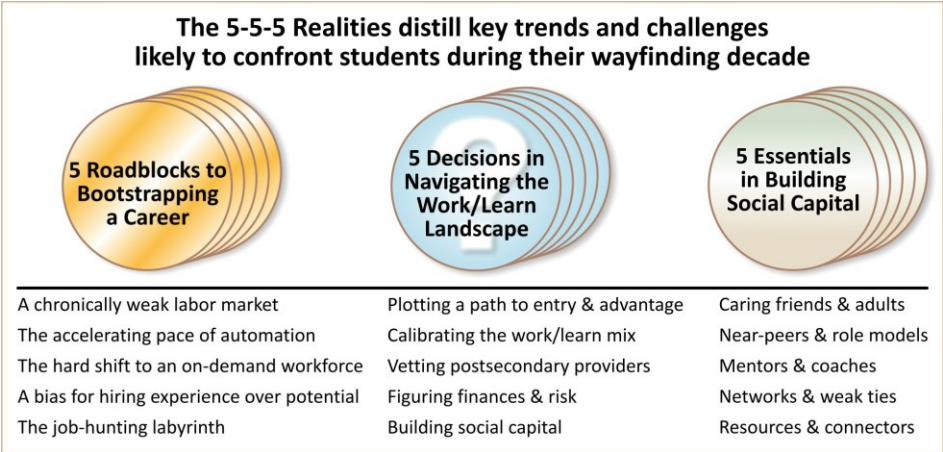
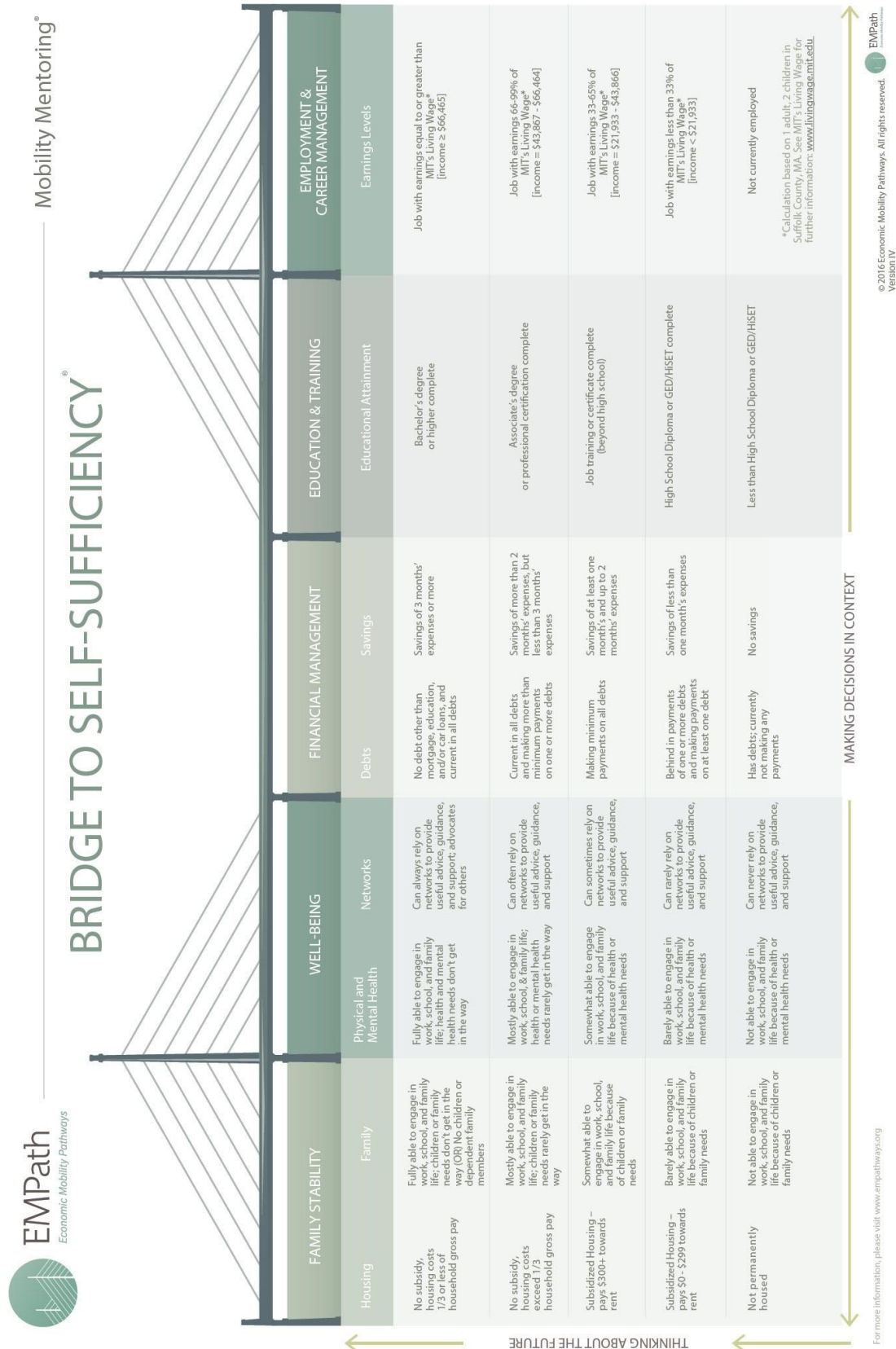


Exhibit A. Connected Scholars Program — Scope & Sequence

Session #	Essential questions	Activities	Assignment/practice
Session 1: What is a mentor and how can mentors help me?	What is social capital? What are different forms of social capital (e.g., mentors, advisors)? How can social capital help me achieve my goals?	Introduce workshop goals/review syllabus. Chalk talk: Characteristics of a mentor. Discussion: What is social capital and social support? When have you drawn on social capital in the past? How might you use it in the future?	Write a reflection on how mentors, social support, and social capital can help you achieve your academic and career goals.
Session 2: Who are the adults in my life?	Who are the adults in my life and what types of support can they provide?	Complete individual eco-map (graphical representation of relationships, including strong ties and weak ties). Discussion: How to identify someone to interview. Brainstorm: Interview questions for college interview. Role-play: How to ask whether someone would be willing to do an interview with you and set up a meeting.	Interview someone from your existing social network who went to college or is currently in college about mentors in their own lives as well as their college experience and their advice for you in your first year in college.
Session 3: How can I grow my social network?	What is networking and how do you do it? How can I identify and reach out to potential mentors?	Debrief interview assignment. Complete networking flow chart to identify potential sources of academic and career connections. Share templates for writing professional emails and writing emails to professors. Practice: Writing professional emails to set up a meeting. Discussion: What to do (and how to manage feelings of rejection) if someone refuses.	Use networking skills to identify individuals in a chosen career or academic interest area and set up an interview time.
Session 4: How can I use mentoring relationships to support me?	How do I maintain mentoring relationships? How can I make a good first impression? How can I use mentoring relationships to support me? How do I ask for support or guidance?	Debrief on networking assignment. Discussion: How to make a good first impression? What is professionalism (discuss cultural considerations)? How can I prepare for a professional meeting? Brainstorm: What are your goals for this interview? What do you hope to get out of it? Brainstorm interview questions based on goals. Discussion: What might in the way of asking for support or guidance in college when we need it? Role-play: Asking for support or guidance.	Interview an individual in your identified career or academic interest area.
Session 5: How is social capital influenced by power and privilege?	How is social capital influenced by power and privilege? What is code-switching? What do I do if I have a conflict with a mentor?	Debrief on interview assignment. Discuss thank you/following up strategies (share thank you email template). Discussion: How might social capital be influenced by power, privilege, and prejudice? Show video clips of code-switching. Share example of code-switching. Discuss: What can I do if I have a conflict with a mentor or faculty/staff in college?	Write a reflection on a time you had a conflict with an adult in an authority role (other than parents or guardians) and how you addressed it (or, if you did not, why not).
Session 6: How can I connect with mentors next year?	Why are mentors and other types of social capital important in college? Where can I find contexts to connect with mentors on campus? How can I develop relationships with faculty and staff in college?	Discussion: Why is social support and social capital, especially mentoring relationships with faculty and staff, important in college? Brainstorm: What are contexts on campus (e.g., clubs, services, office hours etc.) where I can connect with mentors? Discussion: How can I connect with professors and university staff? Role-play: Attending office hours.	Go to mock office hours and meet with the professor.
Session 7: Who can support me during the transition to college (from home and on campus)?	How can I maintain relationships with supportive adults and mentors from my home/high school network? How can I develop new supports on campus? How can I introduce myself when networking?	Debrief on office hours assignment. Activity: Create college social support map, including supports from home and potential supports on campus (include who you can go to for different types of support). Discussion: Identify (at least) one person to support you during transition to college: Consider the types of support you want from this person, the parameters you want to establish for the relationship, including frequency and type of contact (e.g., email, text, phone, in person). Role-play: Introducing oneself, including interests/goals, when networking.	Ask an adult from your existing social network to support you in the transition to college (and how you can reach out to them).
Session 8: Networking night	How do I put what I've learned into action? How can I start building my network of university and professional contacts?	Mix and mingle: Practice making small talk in professional settings. Speed networking: Structured 5 min conversations in which student practice introducing themselves and asking about academic and career paths.	

<http://www.rhodeslab.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Didntknow.pdf>

Exhibit B. Mobility Mentoring's Bridge to Self-Sufficiency Framework



Endnotes for Report 4

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- ²⁵ Ibid., p. 41.
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- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 1071.
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- ³¹ Personal interview; for more, visit <http://www.codmanacademy.org>.
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- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 1085.
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- ⁹⁹ Stanton-Salazar, “[A Social Capital Framework](#),” p. 1069.
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- ¹¹¹ “Prepare youth to thrive” refers to the report *[Preparing Youth to Thrive](#)*, Forum for Youth Investment, 2016, one of our key resources on adolescent development.