



Learning Dreams : Creating a Culture of Learning

Dr. Jerry Stein
University of Minnesota

National Community Education
Association Meeting
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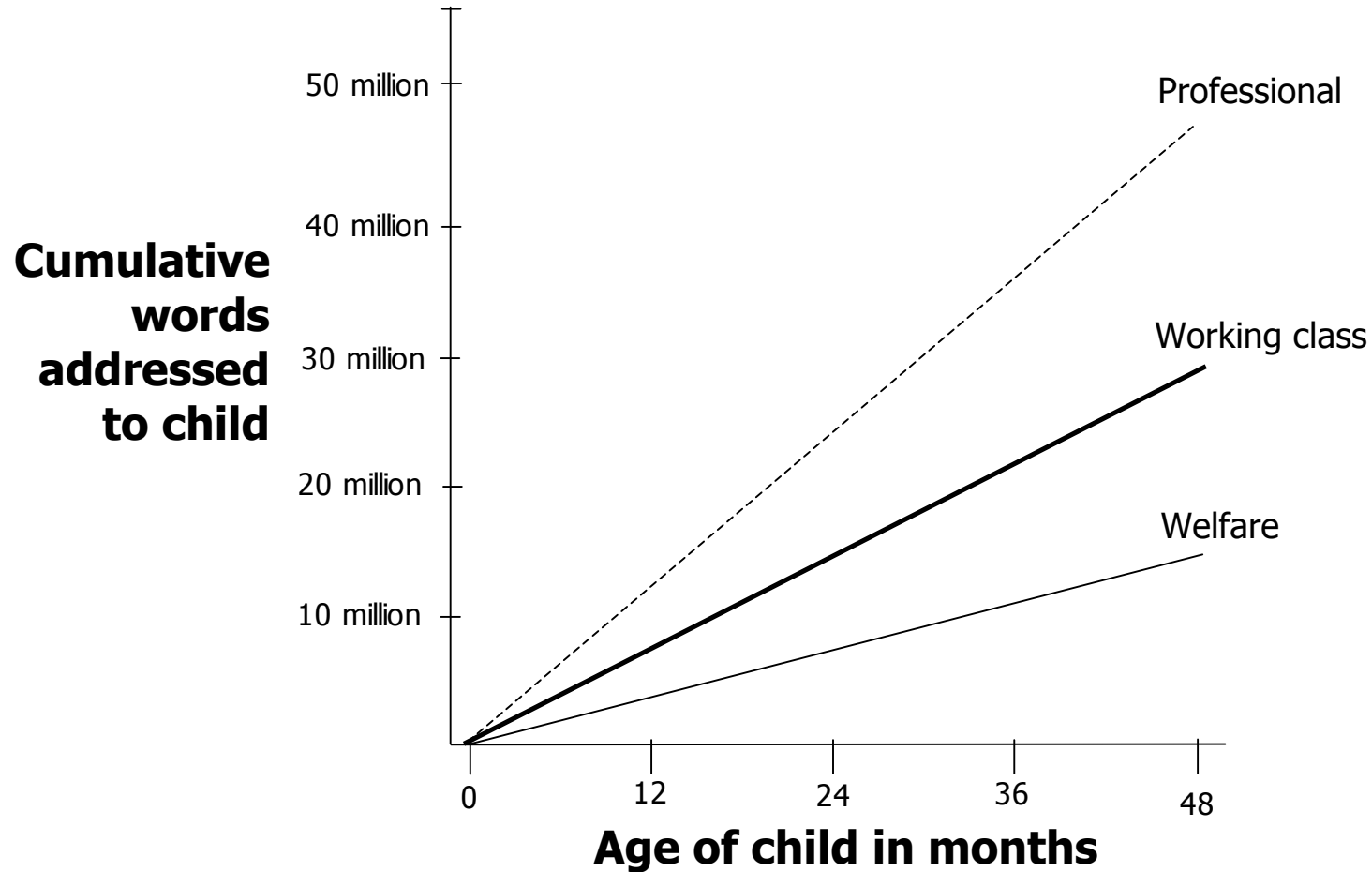
Premise #1

- A culture of learning is the foundation for educational success
- Not school centered but community & family centered learning



The Early Catastrophe

Number Words Addressed to Children



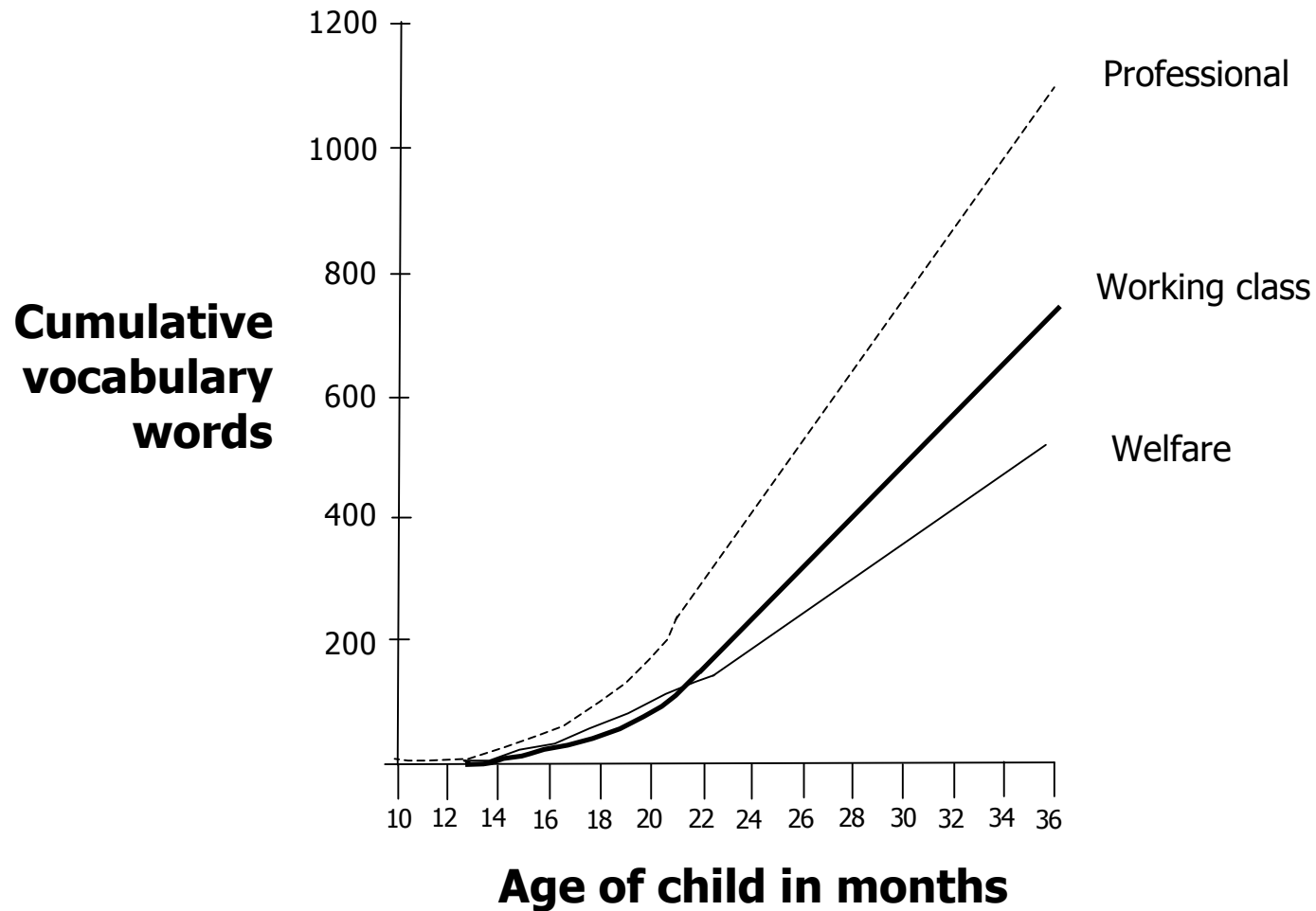
From Hart, Betty & Risley, Todd *The Early Catastrophe*,
American Educator, Spring 2003.

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The Early Catastrophe

Children's Vocabulary Across Income Groups

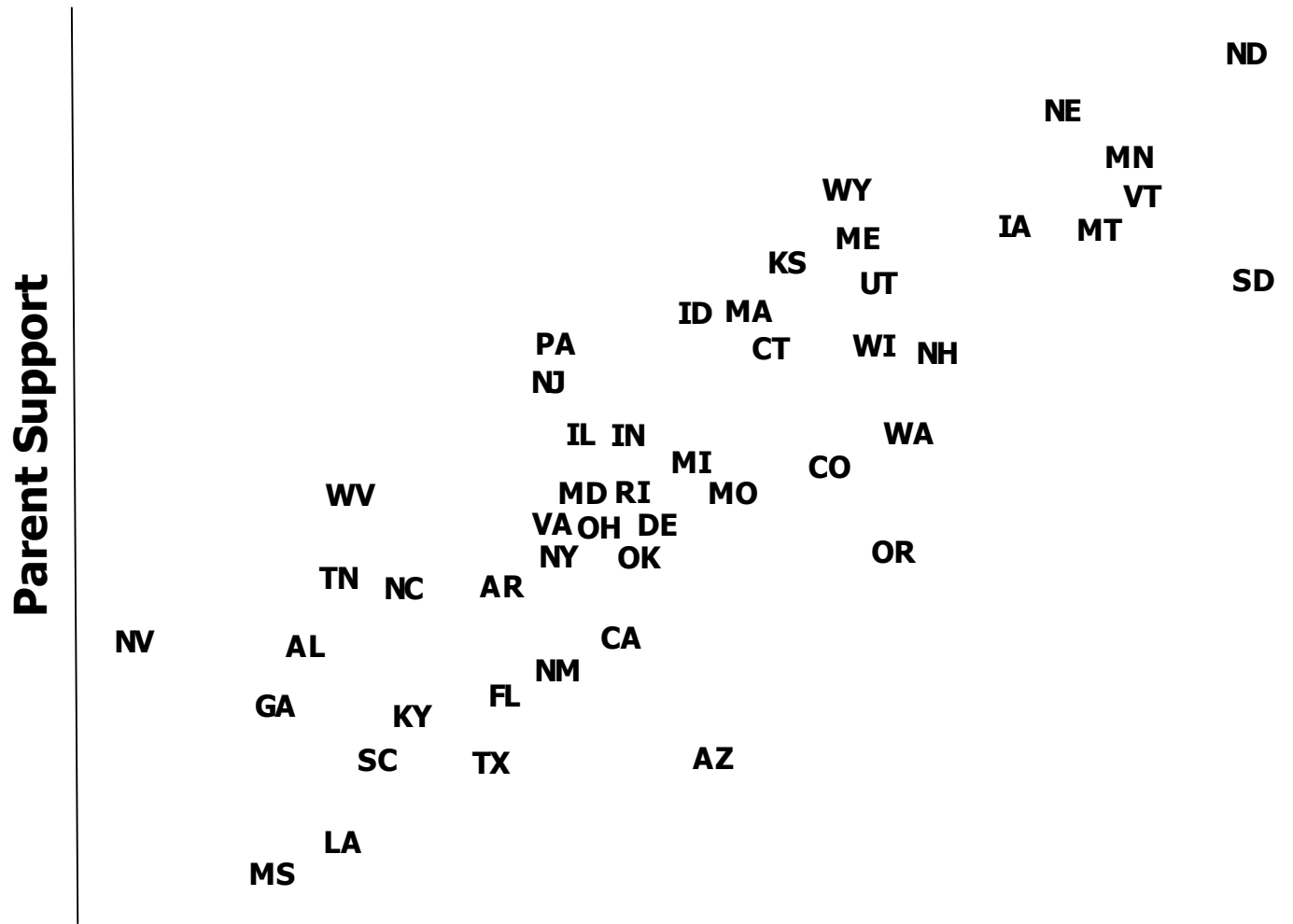


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Parental Support and Social Capital



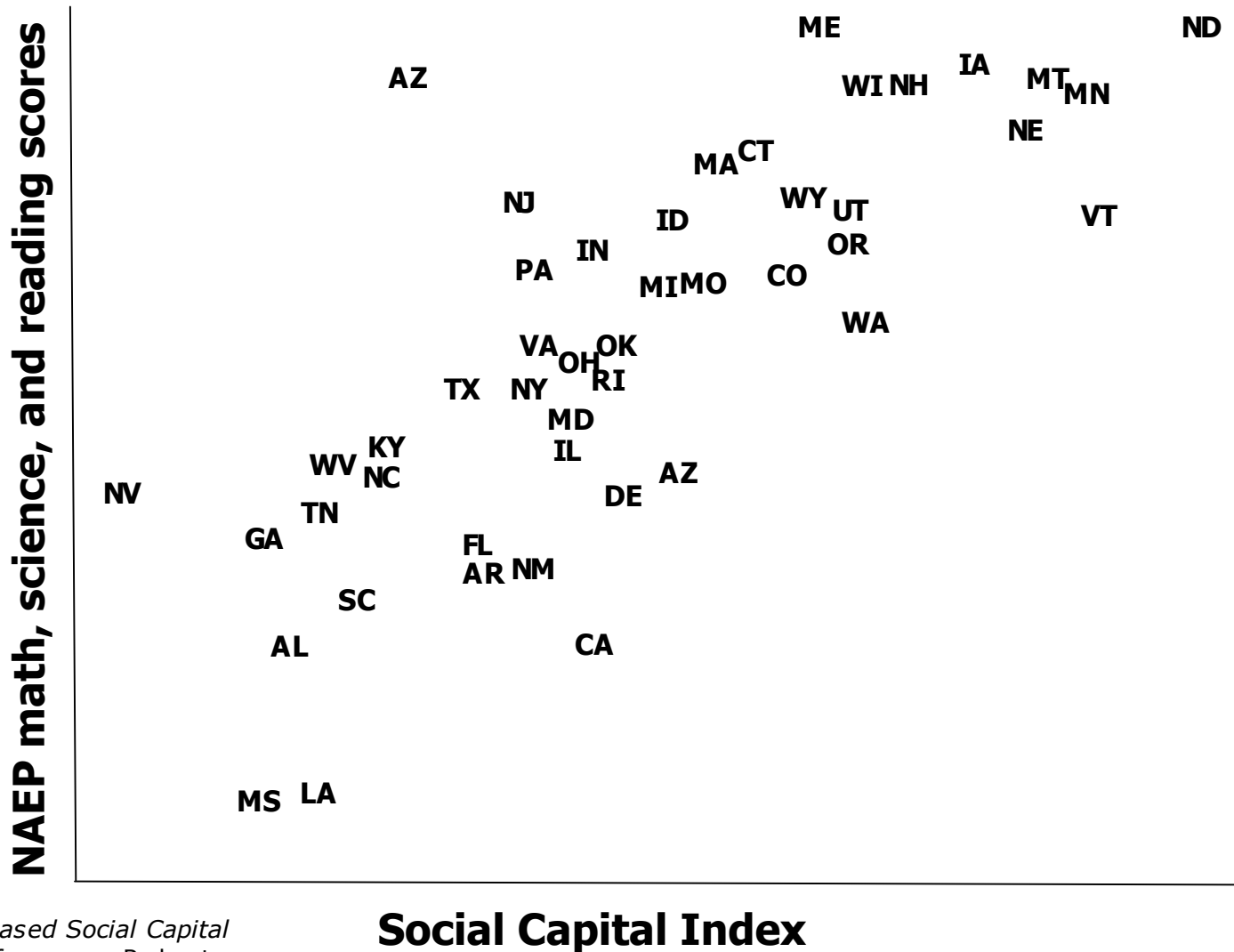
From *Community-Based Social Capital and Educational Performance*, Robert Putnam in *Making Good Citizens: Education and Civil Society*, ed. by

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School Achievement and Social Capital

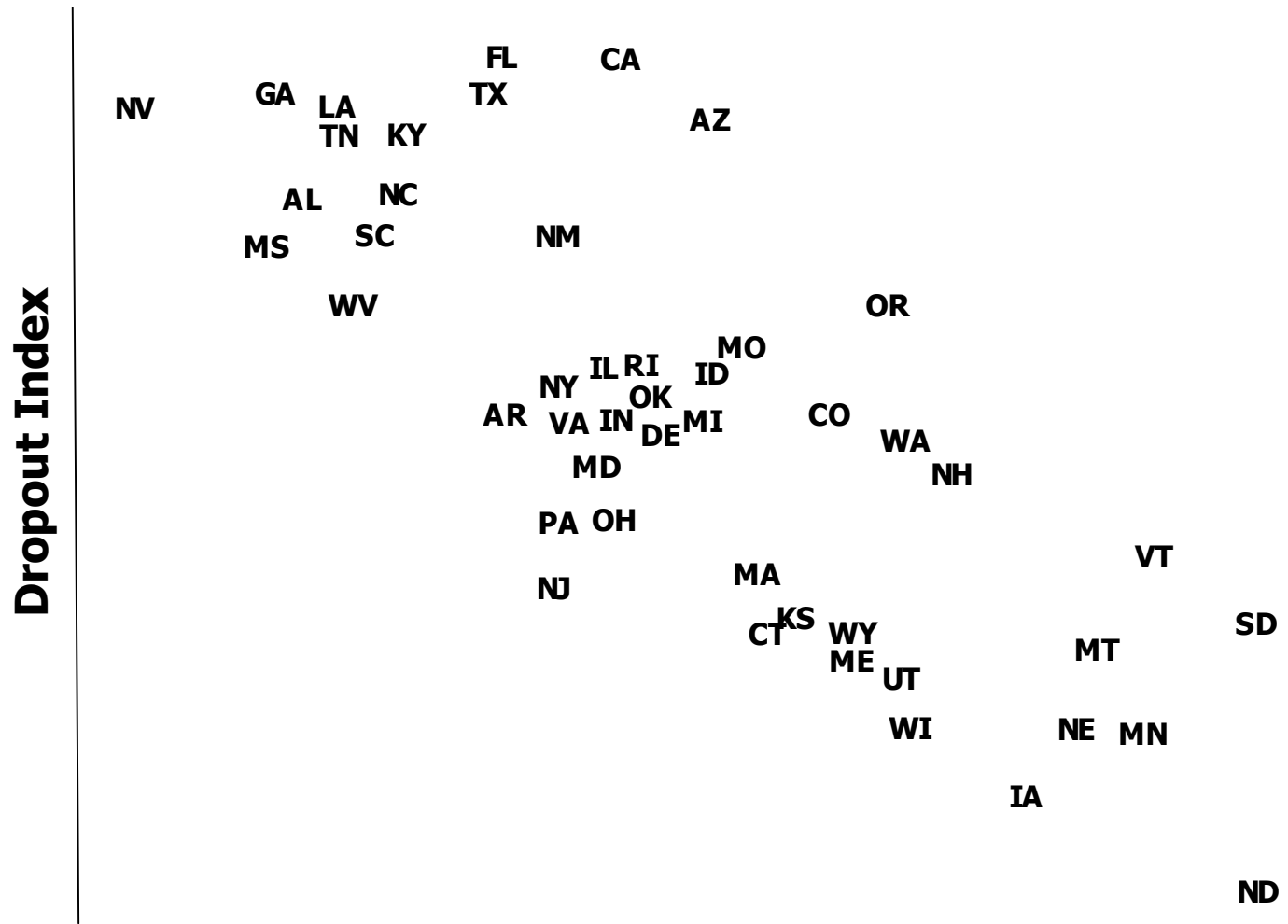


From *Community-Based Social Capital and Educational Performance*, Robert Putnam in *Making Good Citizens: Education and Civil Society*, ed. by

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Dropout Rates and Social Capital



From *Community-Based Social Capital and Educational Performance*, Robert Putnam in *Making Good Citizens: Education and Civil Society*, ed. by

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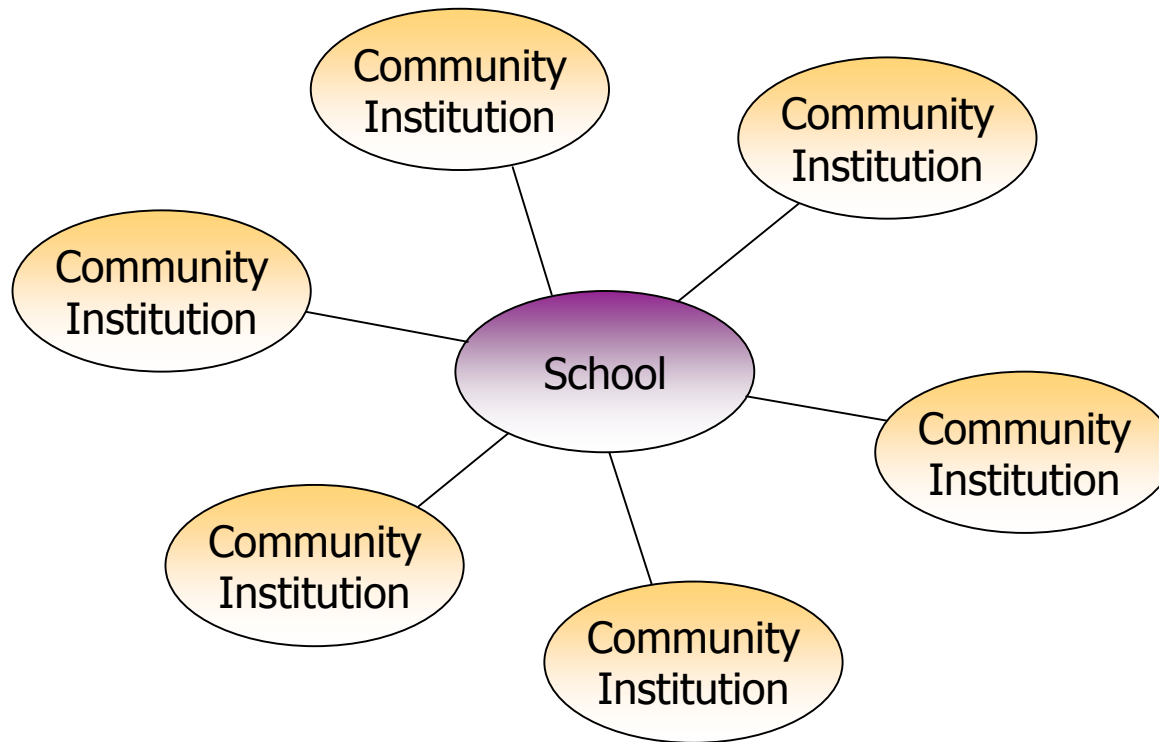


Premise #2

- A culture of learning is the foundation for educational success
- Not school centered learning, but community and family centered

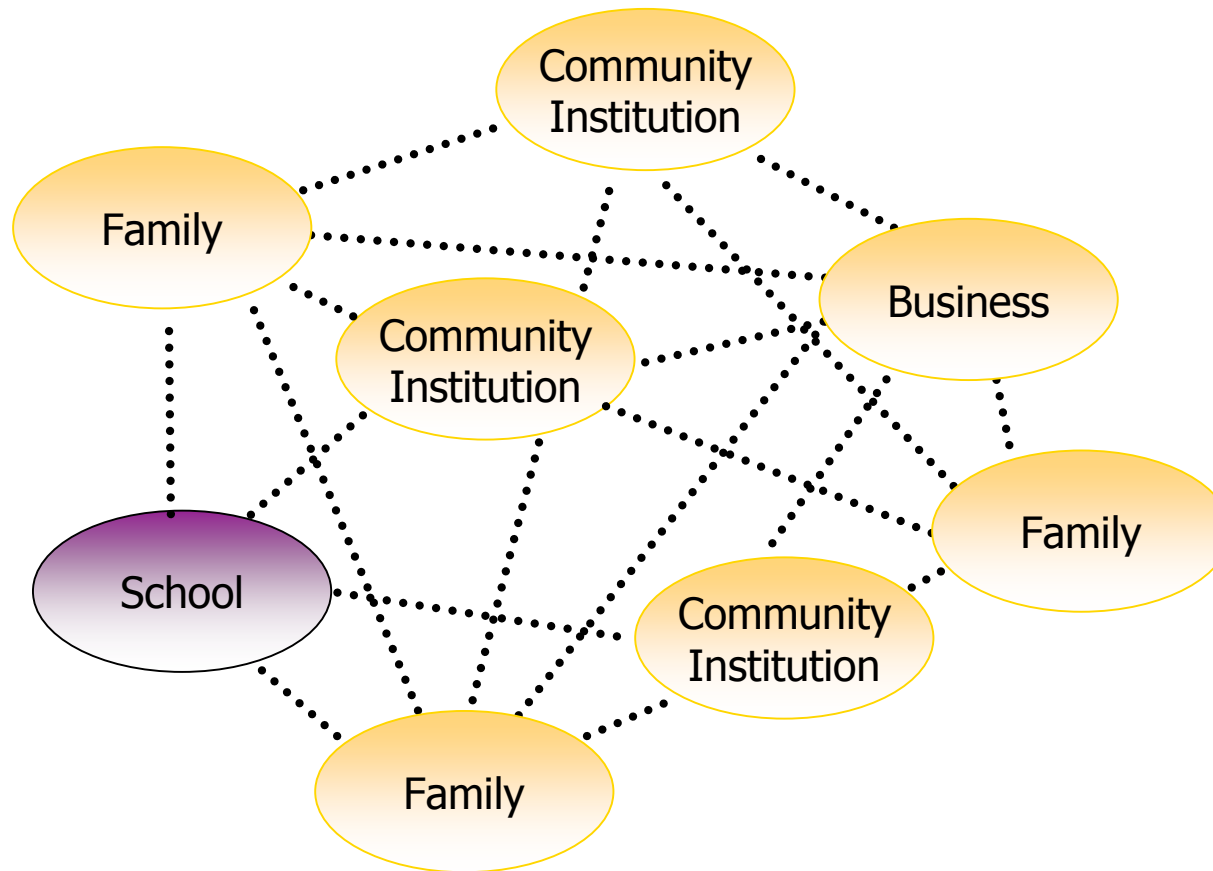


School Centered Approach to Education





Community Approach to Education





Education and Social Capital

- “Attitudes and behavior that parents and students bring to the educational process are more deeply affected by strength of community and family bonds than by the ...socioeconomic or racial character of their communities”

Robert Putnam quoted in “Nothing New Under the Sun: A Century of Thought About Out of School Time and Social Capital”, by Jerome Stein, *The Center*, Summer 2002



Learning Dreams: Project Description

- Philosophy of practice
- Program activities
- Research design
- Outcomes
- Lessons learned
- Neighborhood Educator



Philosophy of Practice

- Families can learn even in troubled homes
- Support for learning leads to increased family and community capacity
- Building capacity leads to improved learning and school outcomes



Program Activities

- Support parents' learning dreams
- Follow-up with support for children
- Build community capacity and partnerships for learning
- Create stronger bonds with schools



Research Design

- Track changes in the parents' learning networks over time
- Does increased parent learning improve family social capital?
- Does increased parent learning lead to improved school outcomes for children?



Learning Dreams: Outcomes

- Pilot project
- Replications: anticipated outcomes



Pilot Project Outcomes

- Parents did participate in learning
- Local institutional responsiveness
- Zero truancy in local school
- 100% parent involvement in school
- Rise in test scores
- Not a formal research/evaluation design



Anticipated Outcomes

- Increased parent & child participation in learning
- Better school outcomes
- Increased social capital
- Increased community capacity to support learning
- Increased participation by other members of the community in learning



Lessons Learned: Families & Communities

- All families are able to learn
- Dreams motivate people
- Parent must be involved as learners
- Work with individuals and families leads to community level changes
- Spin-off effects are very large
- Learning Dreams has proven adaptable to diverse cultures



Lessons Learned: Organizational

- Two-way partnership between families and schools replaces old model
- New de-centralized neighborhood educator model is crucial
- Educational organizing is more effective than community organizing
- Place + time = significant outcomes



Neighborhood Educator

- Collaborative stance
- Accept uncertainty
- Commitment to involvement
- Establish trust
- Very pragmatic
- Push boundaries of job descriptions

From Schorr, L. *Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America*, 1997.



Neighborhood Educators: Being Local

- Being local takes time
- Communicate face-to-face
- Respond effectively to problems
- Be specific and situational