

**Michigan Department of Education**  
**Message #127 - Predicting Success – An Achievement Gap Message**

While many believe that a student's outcome can be predicted by family background, poverty or parental education, that prediction can be a dangerous and erroneous prediction, not giving ample consideration for resiliency and strength developed in individual students. Evidence suggests, with the right supports, many students can create and sustain successful lives despite the odds. The one common element for all successful students is at least one caring adult, including a parent, relative or teacher <sup>ii</sup>.

### **A Discussion of the Problem**

Research and practice have traditionally focused on investigation of risk factors and the design of interventions and services to reduce the impact of said risk factors on students. It has been made clear, however, that risk factors are not the only predictor of outcomes for students. Protective factors and resilience also have implications for outcomes for students (NCH, 2007). Resilience is the ability to 'bounce back' from adversity<sup>v,vi</sup> or "the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances". Resilient students resist adversity; cope with uncertainty and recover more easily from trauma<sup>iv</sup>.

### **The Alternative**

Rather than assuming a student is "at risk," given pre-existing conditions, educators would better serve students by labeling them all "at promise." Indeed, the most important element, common to most students overcoming adversity, is at least one important caring adult who sees beyond risk factors and recognizes the promise in all children. This adult can be a parent, relative, neighbor or teacher <sup>ii</sup>. Students need a base of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors to develop protective and resilient factors. Intrinsic factors include a secure base where they feel a sense of belonging and security, a sense of self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy, which is a sense of mastery and control. Extrinsic factors include at least one secure relationship, access to wider supports of family and friends and positive community services <sup>iii</sup>. A coordinated network of services and supports within a school or community, working to develop this base, helps to develop both protective and resilient factors leading to success.

### **Call to Action**

The most notable indicator of resiliency in all students is attachment and adult involvement. Development of positive relationships can be developed within the school community both during and after school. Home-school links promote school engagement while developing home-school relationships. Before and after school programs and partnerships develop relationships both with peers and programs that last longer than an academic year. Promotion of mentorship programs develop community-school partnerships and can enhance parent participation. School communities can enhance resiliency and involvement of all students by developing social and academic support mentorship programs which develop and foster student connection to the community. Work with your School Improvement and Coordinated School Health Team to develop a mentorship plan to develop a community for each student.

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<sup>i</sup> Kafele, B. (2009). *Motivating Black Males to Achieve in School and in Life*.

<sup>ii</sup> Levin, B. (2012). The one-legged high jumper and the perils of prediction. *Kappan*. 94(2), 74-75.

<sup>iii</sup> National Children's Home. (2007). *Literature review: Resilience in children and young people*. London: National Children's Home.

<sup>iv</sup> Newman, T. (2004). *What works in building resilience*. Ilford: Barnardo's.

<sup>v</sup> Rutter, M. (1985). Resilience in the face of adversity: Protective factors and resistance to psychiatric disorder. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 147, 598-611.

<sup>vi</sup> Stein, M. (2005). *Resilience and young people leaving care: Overcoming the odds*. York: Joseph Roundtree Foundation.