

Improving the Odds

Social-Emotional Learning

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Meeting of the UEN – Middle School Administrators

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Results for Iowa Youth

All youth are:

- **successful in school;**
- **healthy and socially competent;**
- **prepared for productive adulthood;**
- **in safe and supportive, families, schools, and communities.**

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Indicators of School Success

- **Academic proficiency**
- **High level of attendance**
- **Staying in school (doesn't drop out)**
- **Graduating from high school**
- **Commitment to school and learning**

What is social-emotional learning?

In school, SEL is the process for integrating thinking, feeling and behavior to achieve important social tasks; meet personal and social needs; and develop the skills necessary to become a productive, contributing member of society.

More specifically, social-emotional learning is learning the skills involved in being self-confident and motivated, knowing what behaviors are expected, curbing impulses to misbehave, being able to wait, following directions, knowing how to ask for help, expressing needs, and getting along with others.

- Zins, Weissberg, Wang, and Walberg

Why social-emotional learning?

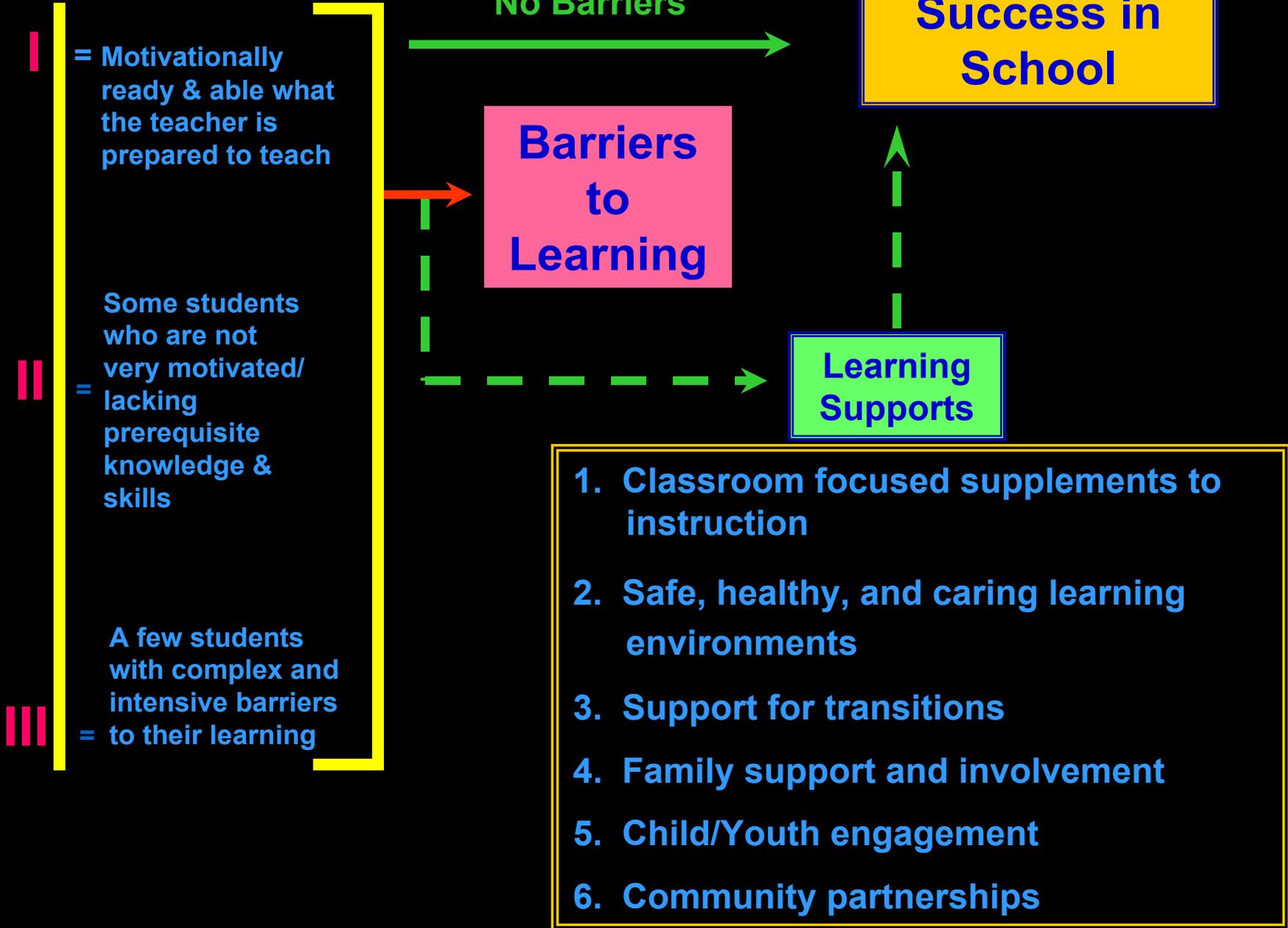
“...while intellectual development is and must continue to be the basic responsibility of the middle school, the education and nurture of young adolescents has to be an integrated venture that provides a balance between academic rigor and humanness. The physical, social, emotional, and intellectual aspects of young adolescents are inexorably woven together in the fabric of their lives. One’s readiness to achieve academically is heavily influenced by one’s personal security and self-esteem.

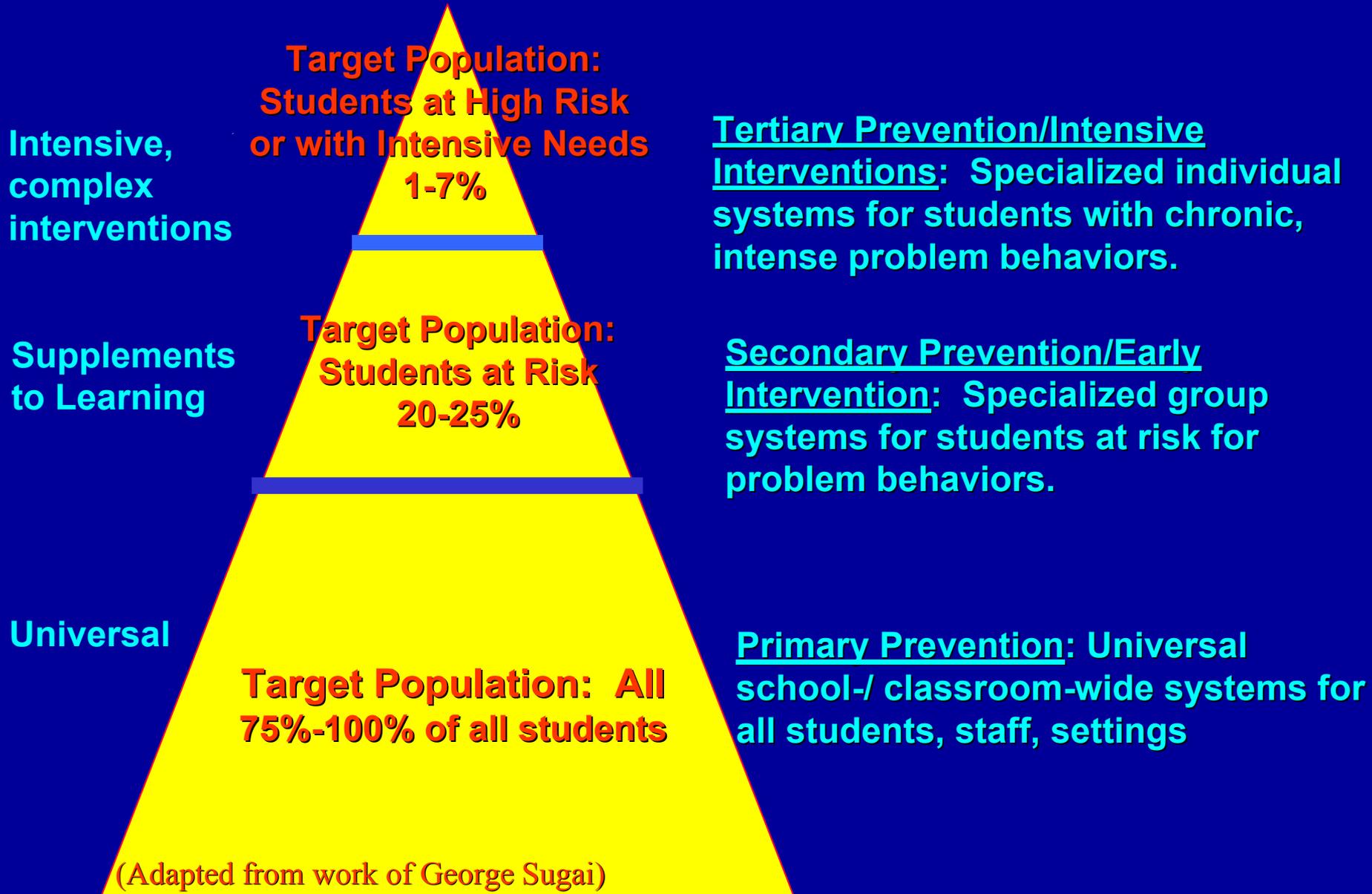
Why social-emotional learning?

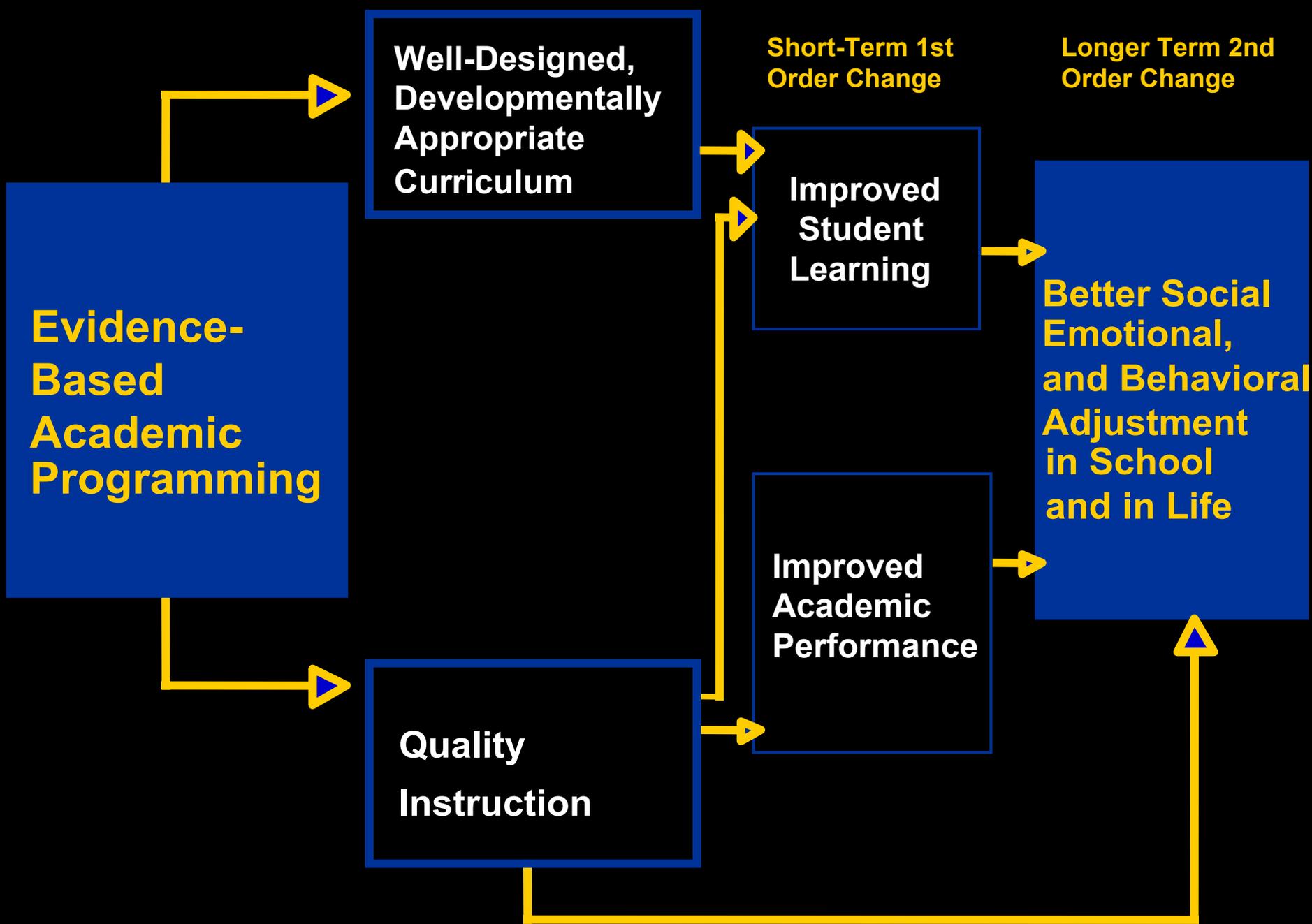
...the reality is the whole child does come to school. It is the individual that learns, and the individual is a total organism. If an individual faces difficulties in his or her personal and out-of-school life, that individual is seriously handicapped in mastering the school's lessons. Middle schools cannot just be schooling places; they are also growing places where much of the learning that occurs deals with the social and personal aspects of life that are not part of the content of the formal curriculum.”

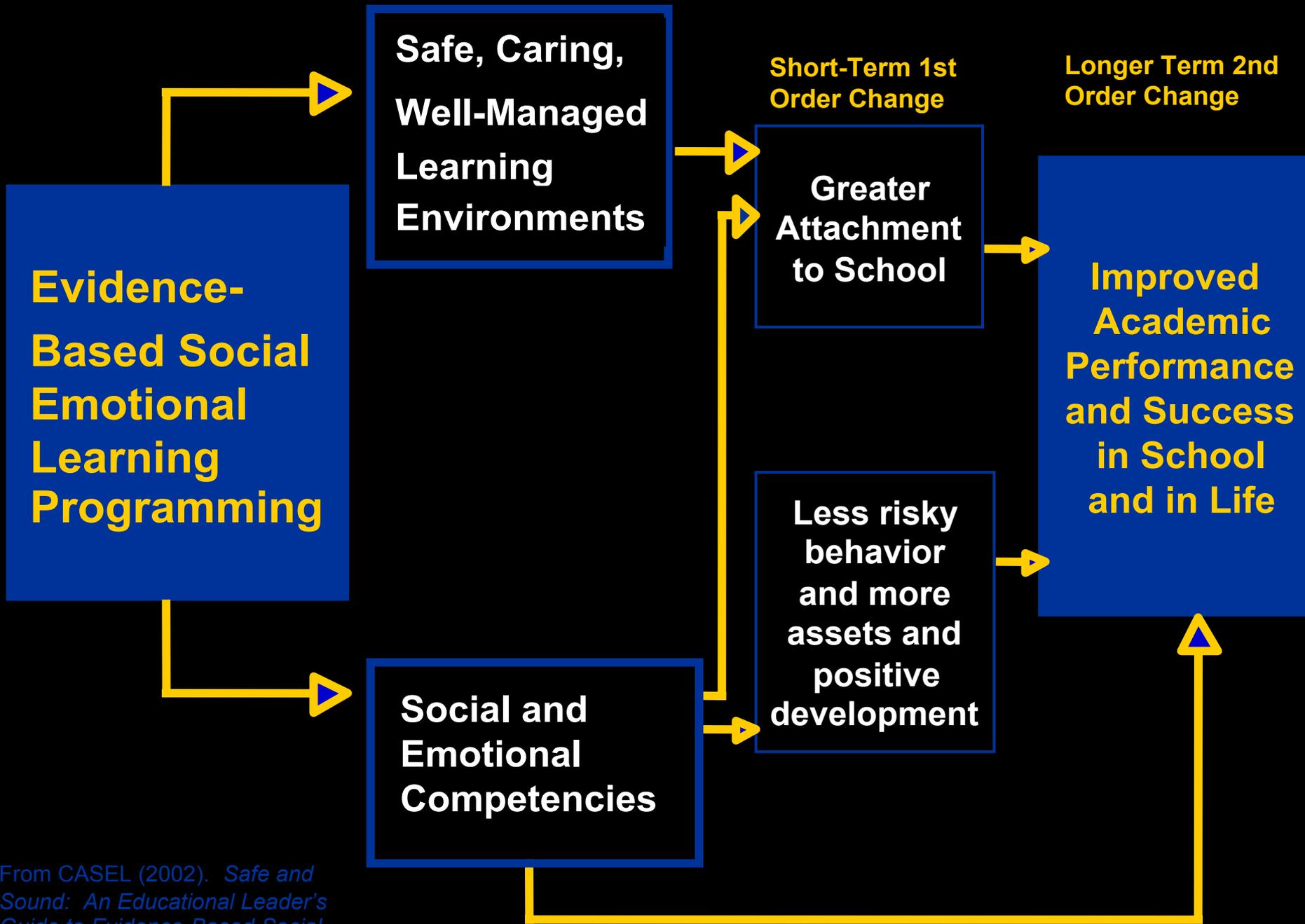
- National Middle School Association's Position Statement on Academic Achievement

Range of Learners









From CASEL (2002). *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social-Emotional Learning Programs*

“Improving the social and emotional climate of schools and the social and emotional competence of students advances the academic mission of schools in important ways. A study estimating the relative influence of 30 different categories of educational, psychological, and social variables on learning revealed that social and emotional variables exerted the most powerful influence on academic performance.”

Wang, et al, 1997

“Motivational problems in early adolescence may be a consequence of the type of school environment changes students are forced to adapt to rather than the characteristics of the developmental period per se. The fit between the individual’s psychological needs and the opportunities provided by the school contributes significantly to an individual student’s response to the pressures of this period.”

- National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002)

What Researchers Found:

- **The mental and behavioral health of children in the U.S. is deteriorating.**
- **The cause is largely attributed to a lack of connectedness experienced by our young people.**
- **Connectedness comes from groups of people organized into social institutions.**
- **In recent decades social institutions that foster connectedness have gotten significantly weaker.**
- **The nature of brain development during adolescence creates a continuing need for a nurturing environment.**

- Commission Children at Risk

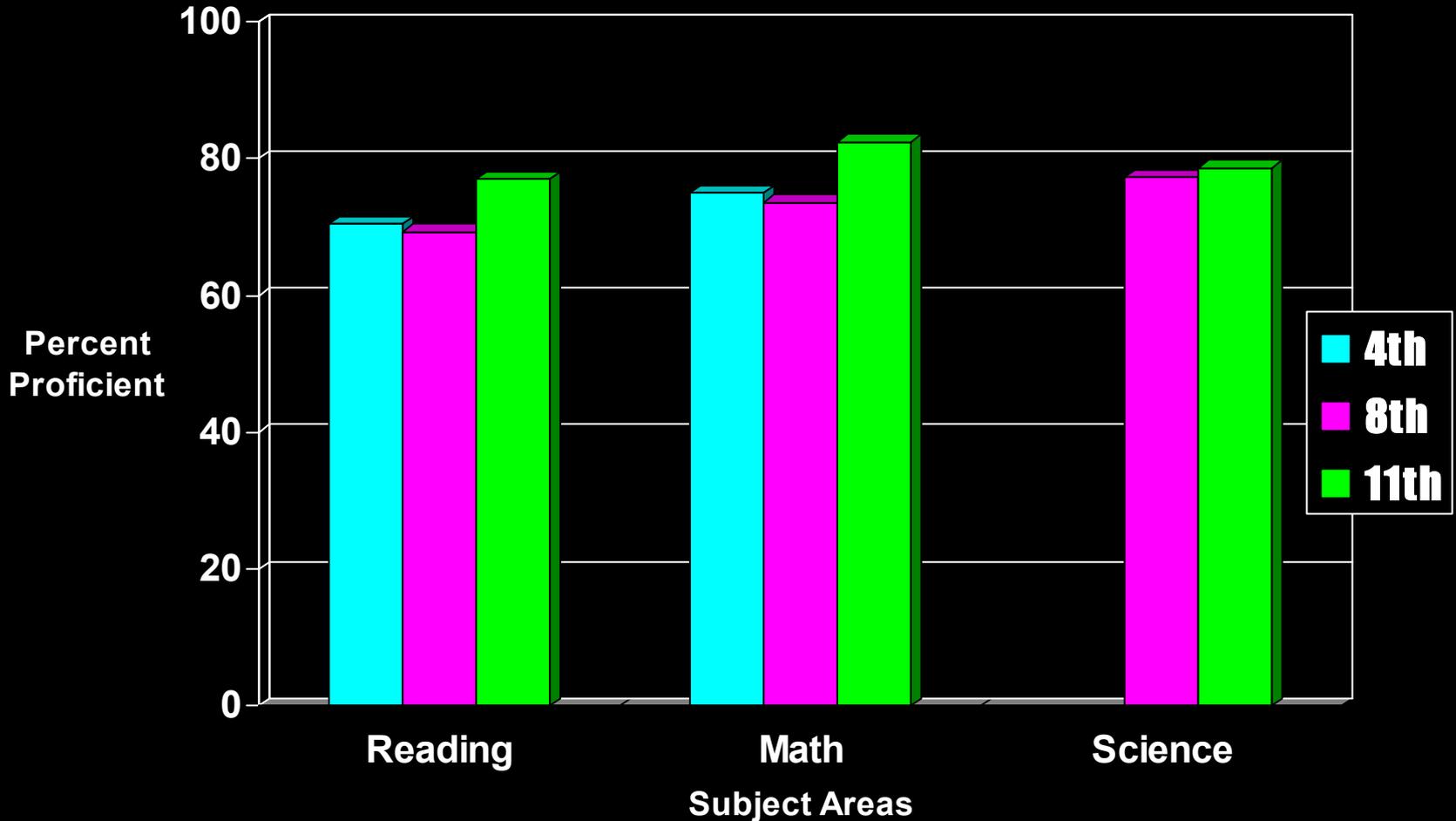
What Researchers Found:

- 1. Surrounding kids with a richly nurturing environment from birth through adolescence is critical to promoting their healthy physical, emotional, moral, and spiritual development.**
- 2. Positive social, moral, and spiritual development is integral to the healthy overall development of children and youth, and, in turn, fundamentally depends on kids receiving consistent and effective nurture from committed and caring adults.**

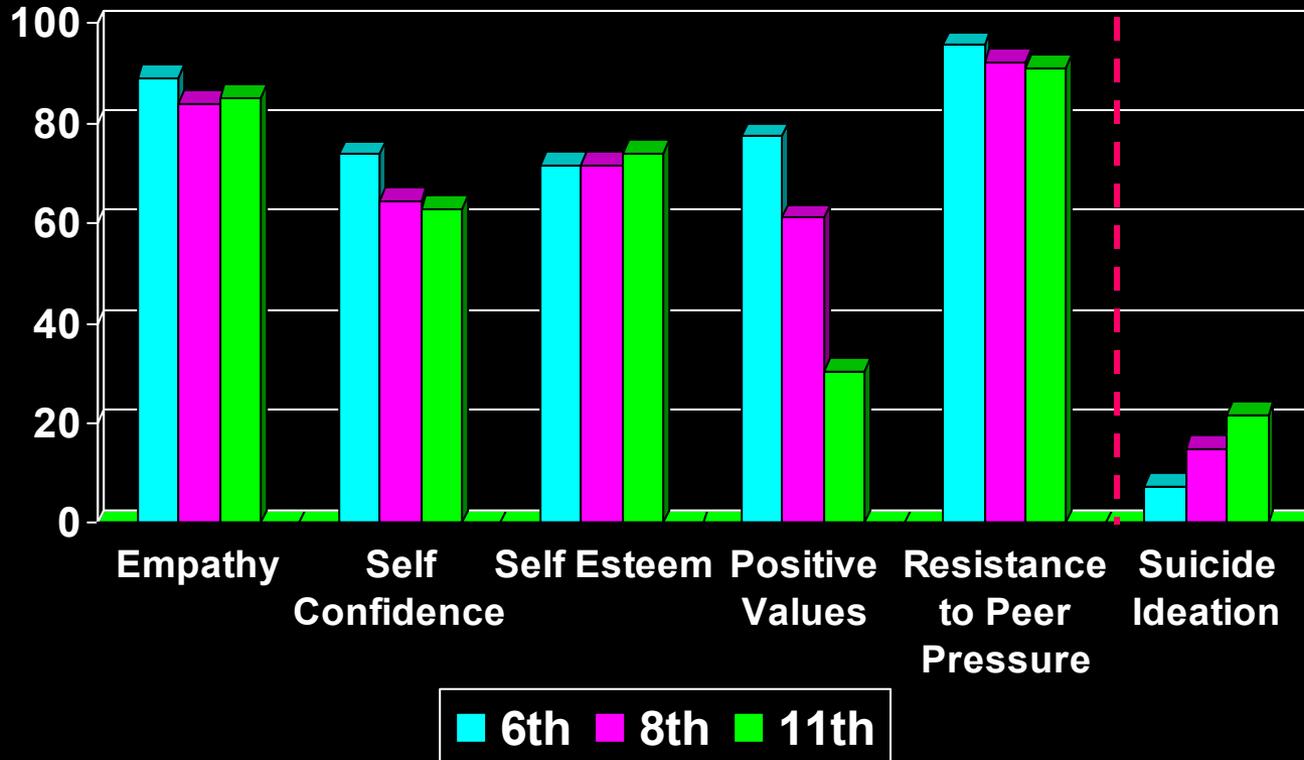
Core Social and Emotional Competencies

- **Self Awareness**
- **Social Awareness**
- **Responsible Decision-Making**
- **Self Management**
- **Relationship Management**

Academic Competence: Iowa



Social-Emotional Competence: Iowa



“Satisfying the social and emotional needs of students...actually increases their capacity for learning. **Social and emotional competence has been shown to increase mastery of subject material, motivation to learn, commitment to school, and time devoted to schoolwork. It also improves attendance, graduation rates, and prospects for constructive employment while at the same time reducing suspensions, expulsions, and grade retention.”**

- Hawkins, et al, 1999; Malecki and Elliott (2002)

Connectedness to School

“A key to the success of students’ experiences in school is their sense of connection to their school. School connection is the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. Research shows us that the critical requirements for feeling connected include students experiencing: high academic expectations and rigor coupled with support for learning; positive adult-student relationships; and safety, both physical and social.”

- The White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth

**Research from the Center for
Adolescent Health and Development,
University of Minnesota,
has shown a **strong** association
between **school connectedness**
and every **risk** behavior
they studied, including **school failure.****

Scales

School Connectedness

- I feel close to people at this school*
- I am happy to be at this school*
- I feel like I am part of this school*
- The teachers at this school treat students fairly
- I feel safe in this school

** also used by Moody and Bearman*

Results

Factors Associated with School Connectedness

THE SCHOOL

- School size mattered
 - ...classroom size did not
- School type is **not** associated with connectedness
 - ...public, private, parochial
- Location of school is **not** associated with connectedness
 - ...urban, suburban, rural

Results – What the Research Said

Factors Associated with School Connectedness

SCHOOL POLICIES

- No single school policy was associated with connectedness ...
- A climate of harsh discipline **is** associated with lower school connectedness

Results – What the Research Said

Factors Associated with School Connectedness

FRIENDSHIPS

- Integrated social groups are associated with greater connection
 - Gender integration
 - Racial integration
- Numeric integration does not necessarily lead to social integration
 - Often the more racially integrated the school was numerically the lower the mean level of connectedness.

Results – What the Research Said

Factors Associated with School Connectedness

FRIENDSHIPS

- The greater the number of friends from within the school a student has, the more connected he/she is.
- The more socially isolated, the less connected.
- Where the “popular” kids are academically motivated connectedness increases.

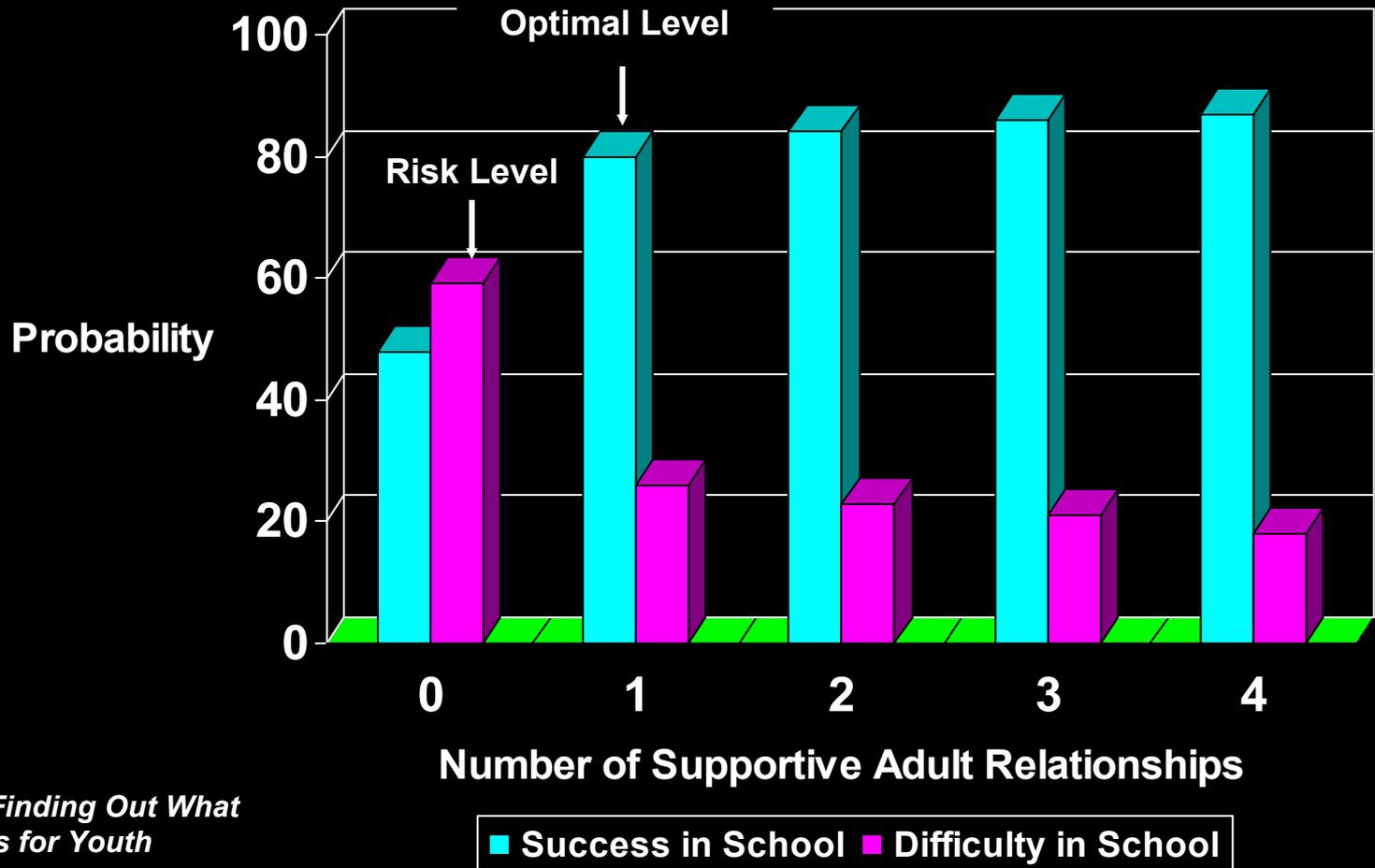
Results – What the Research Said

Factors Associated with School Connectedness

SCHOOL CLIMATE & CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

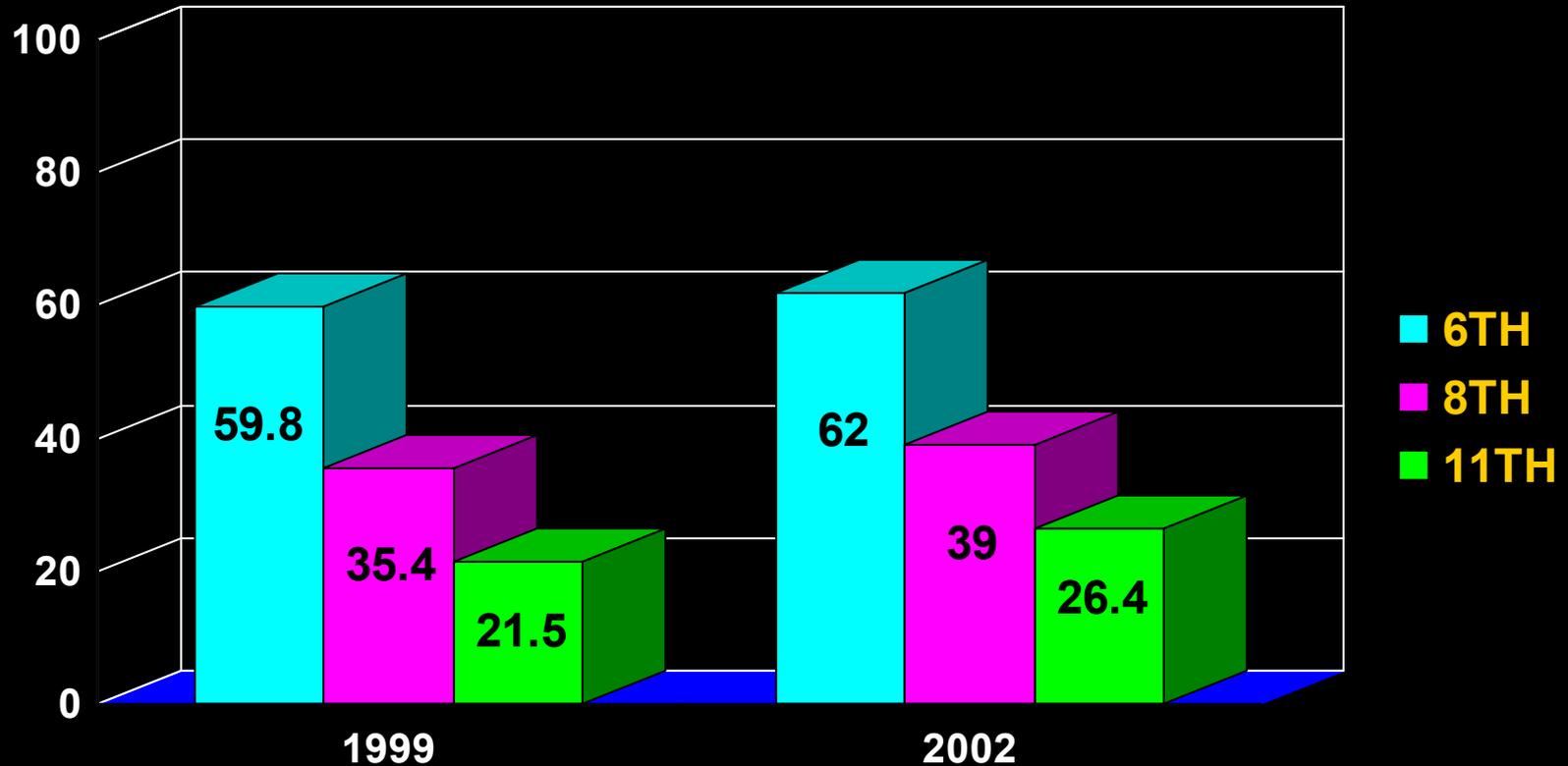
The single strongest
association with
connectedness was **school
climate**

Supportive Relationships and Probability for School Success



From *Finding Out What Matters for Youth*

School Staff/Student Support: Iowa



My teachers care about me.

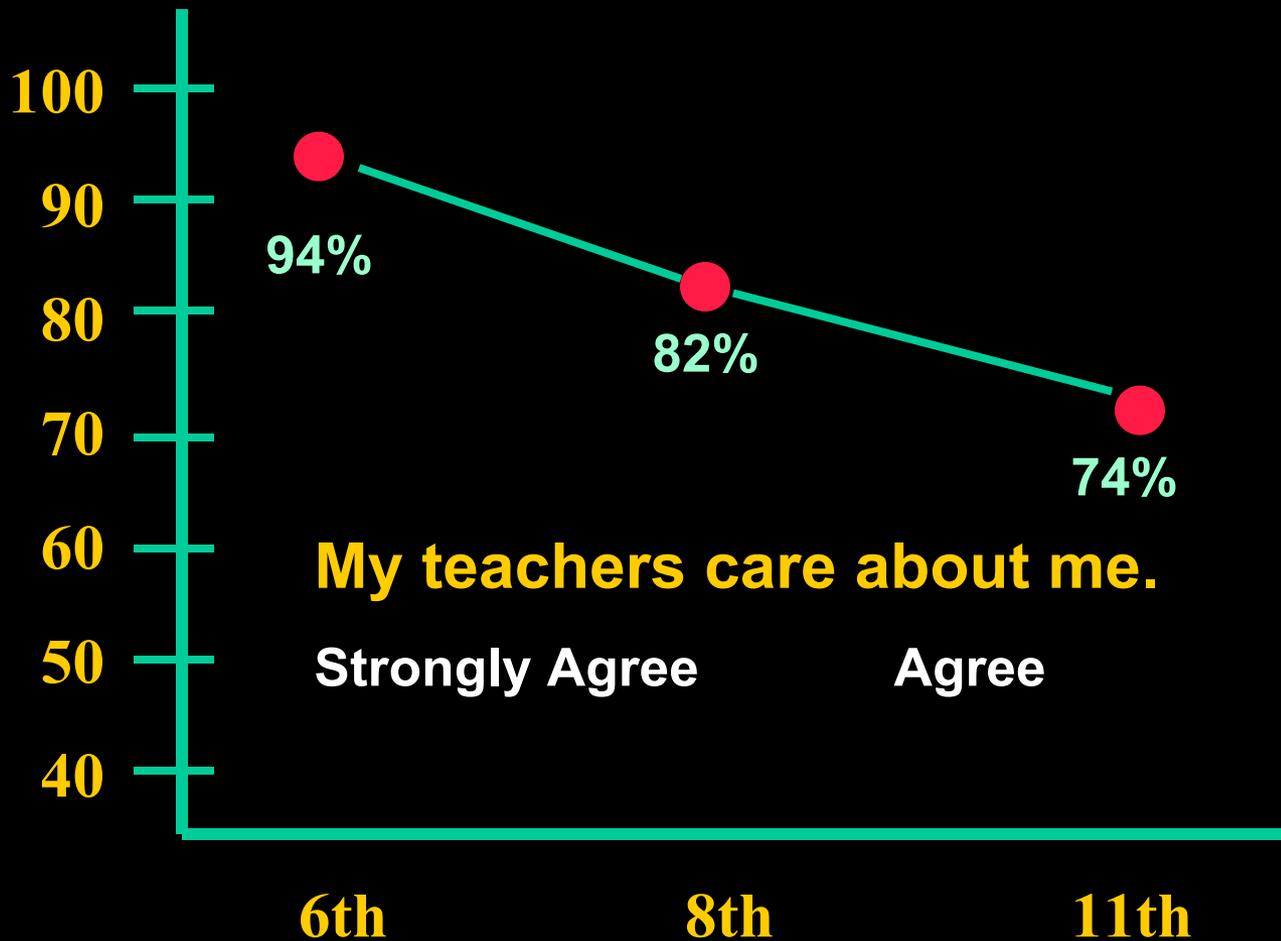
Teachers available to talk one on one.

Teachers notice I'm doing good job.

Students treat each other with respect.

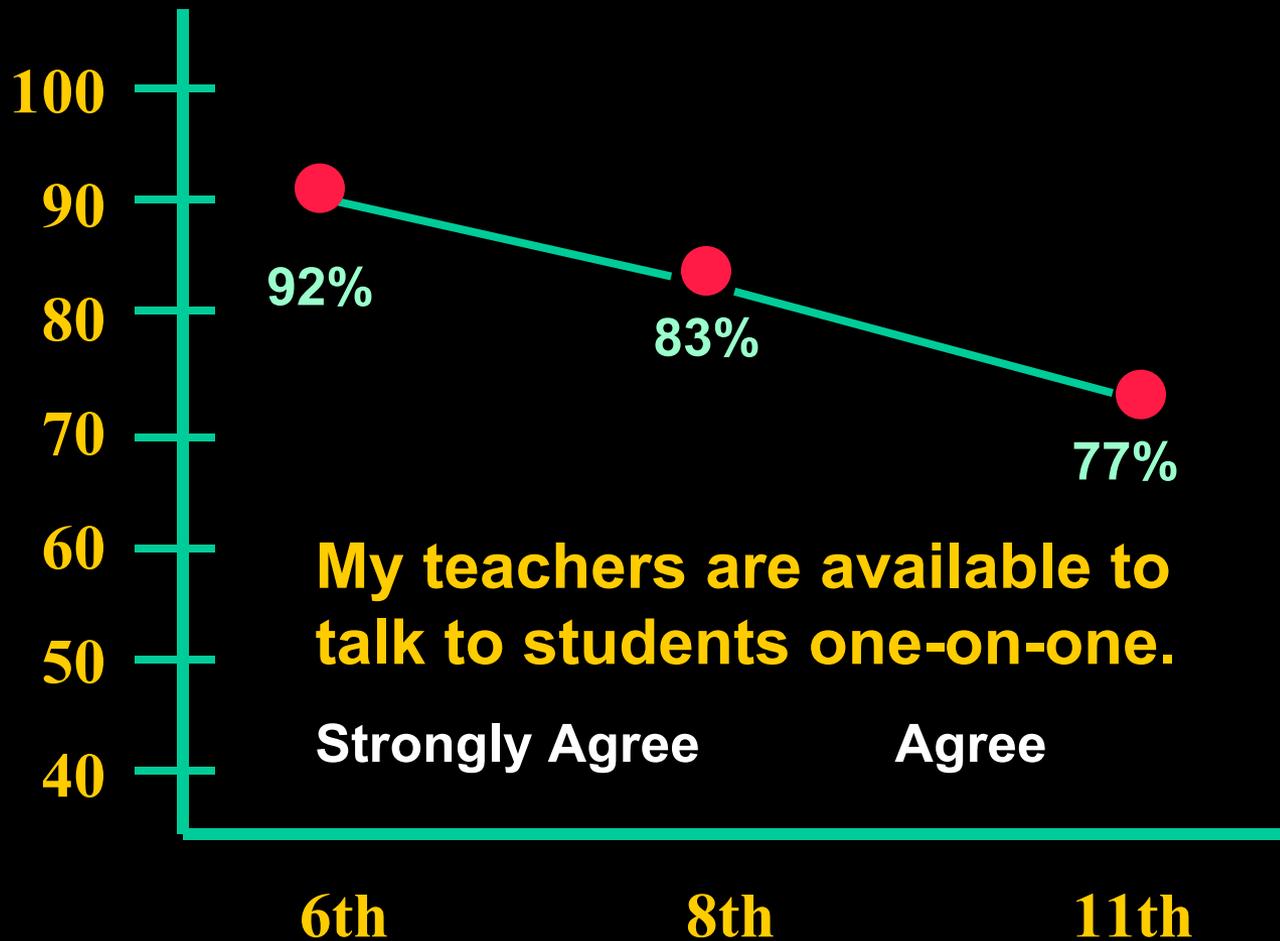
School lets parents know if I'm doing a good job.

At least one adult at school I could go to with a problem.



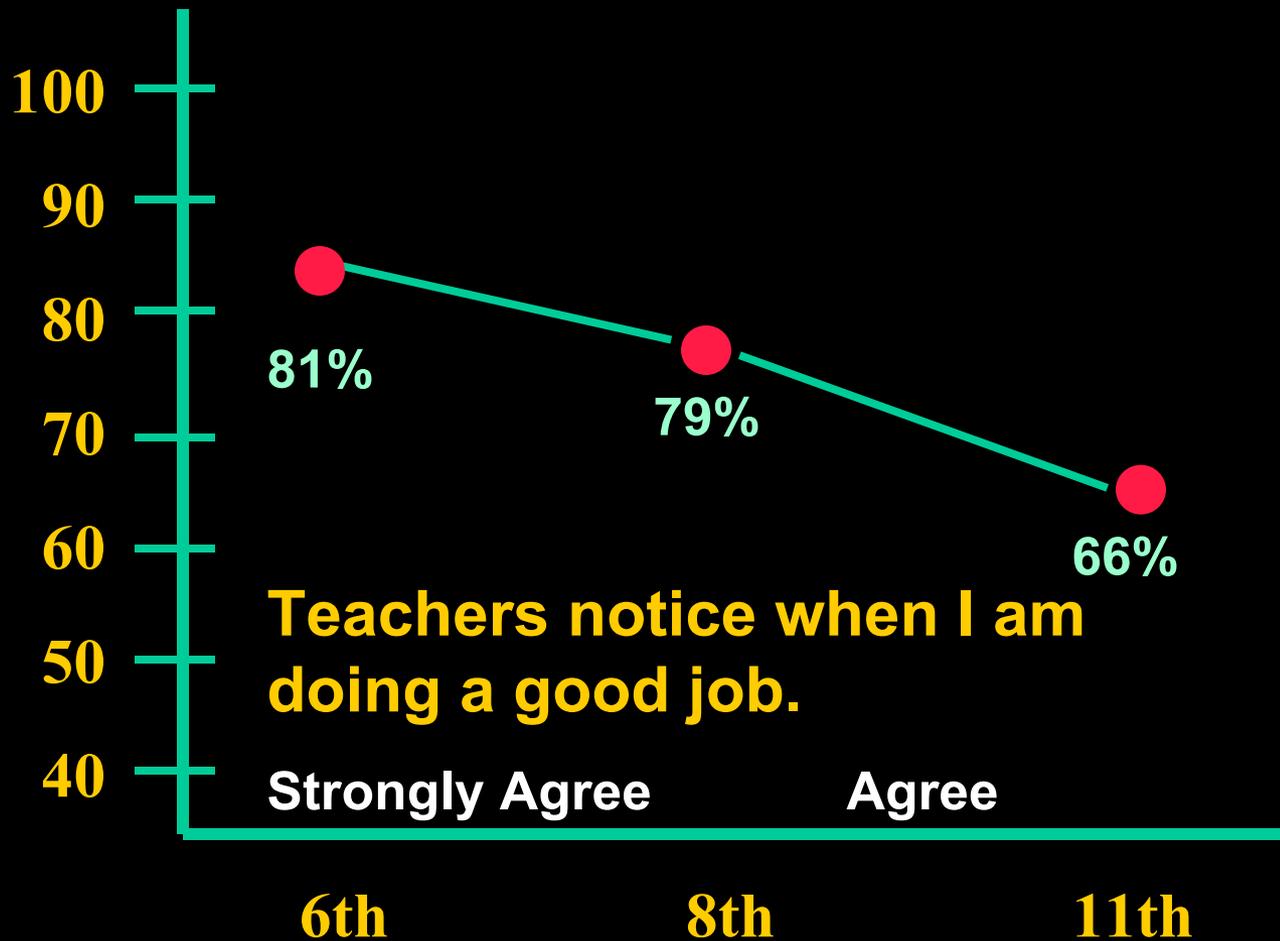
Girls = 86%

Boys = 81%



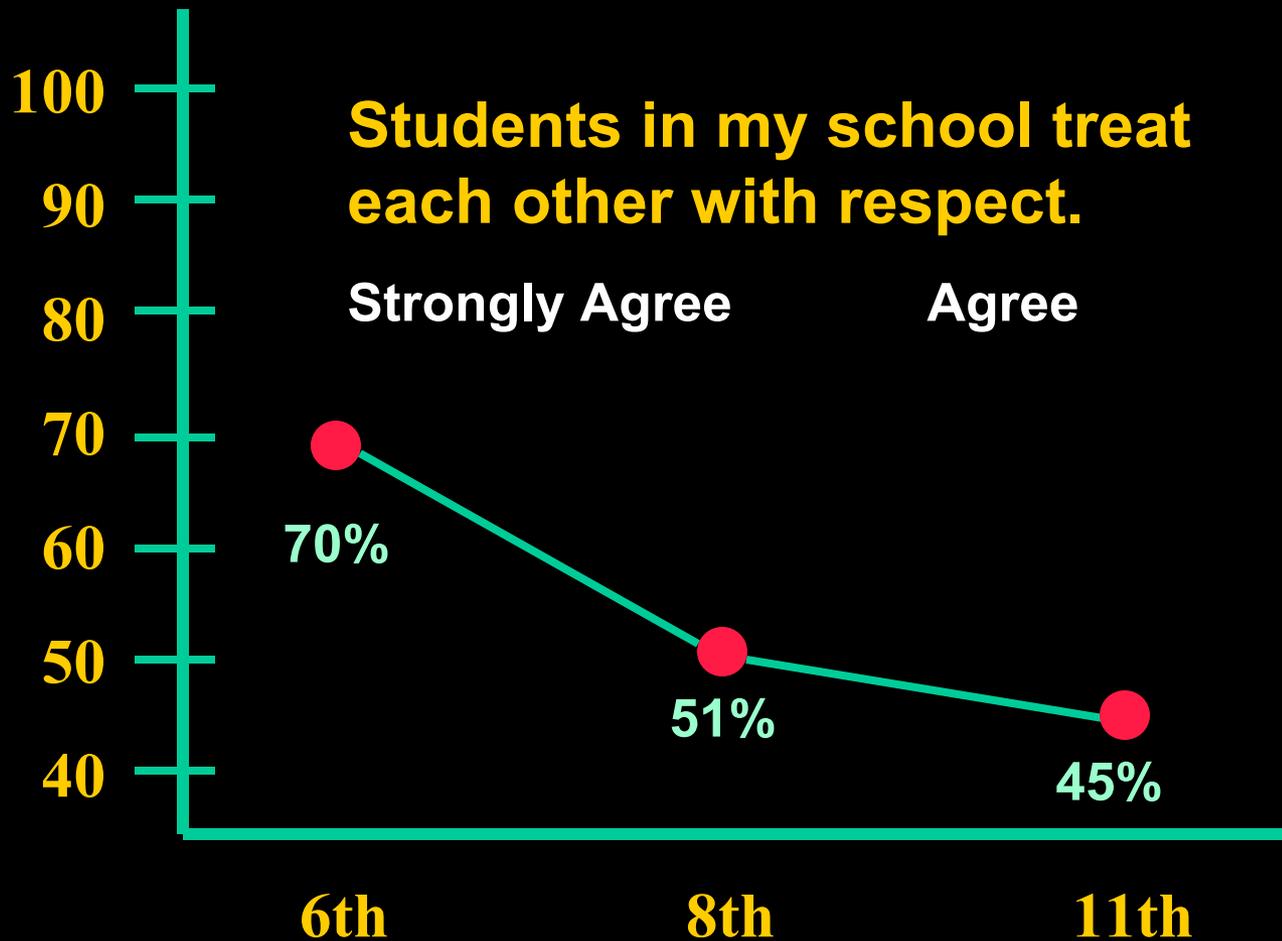
Girls = 85%

Boys = 84%



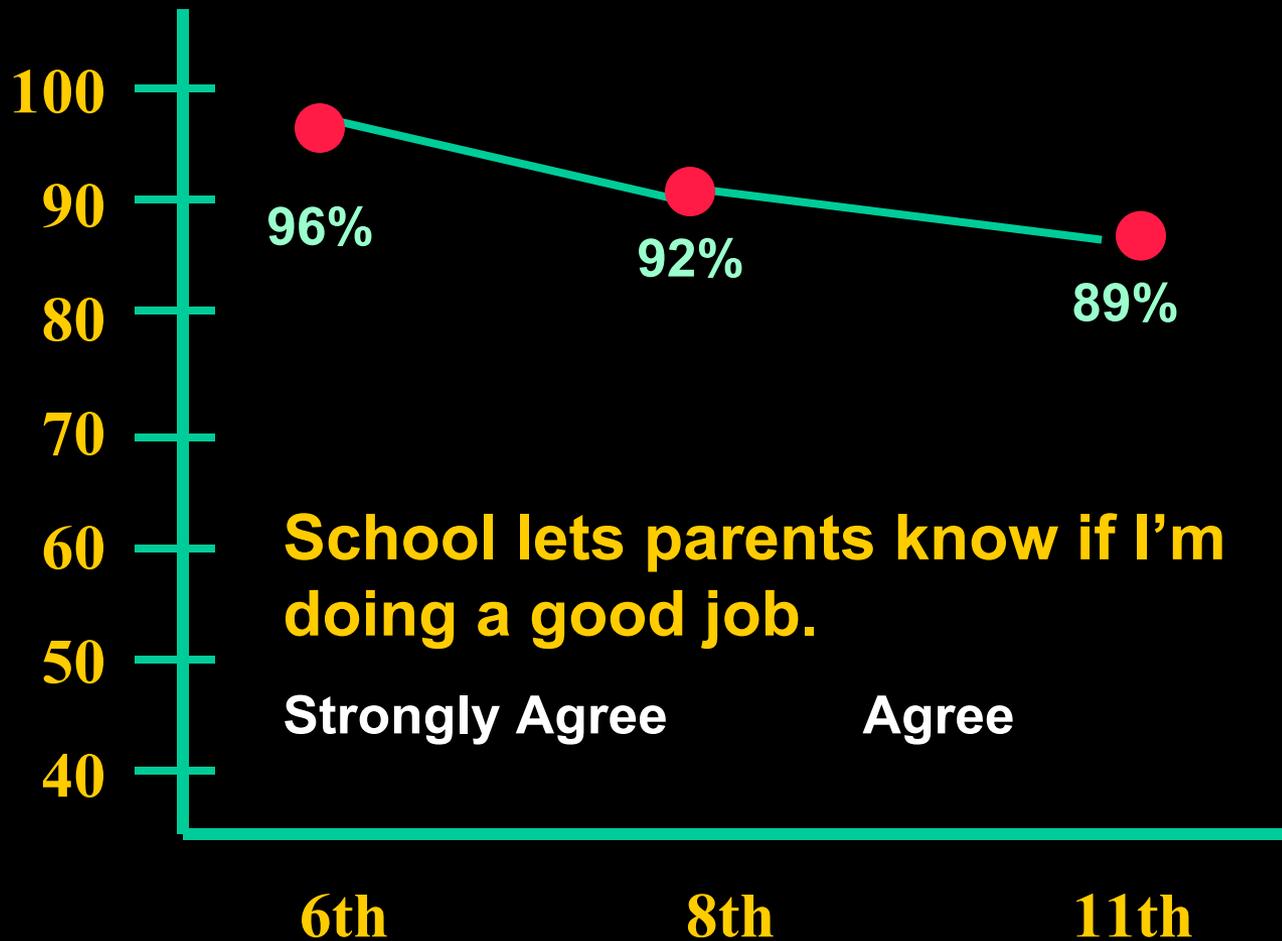
Girls = 79%

Boys = 78%



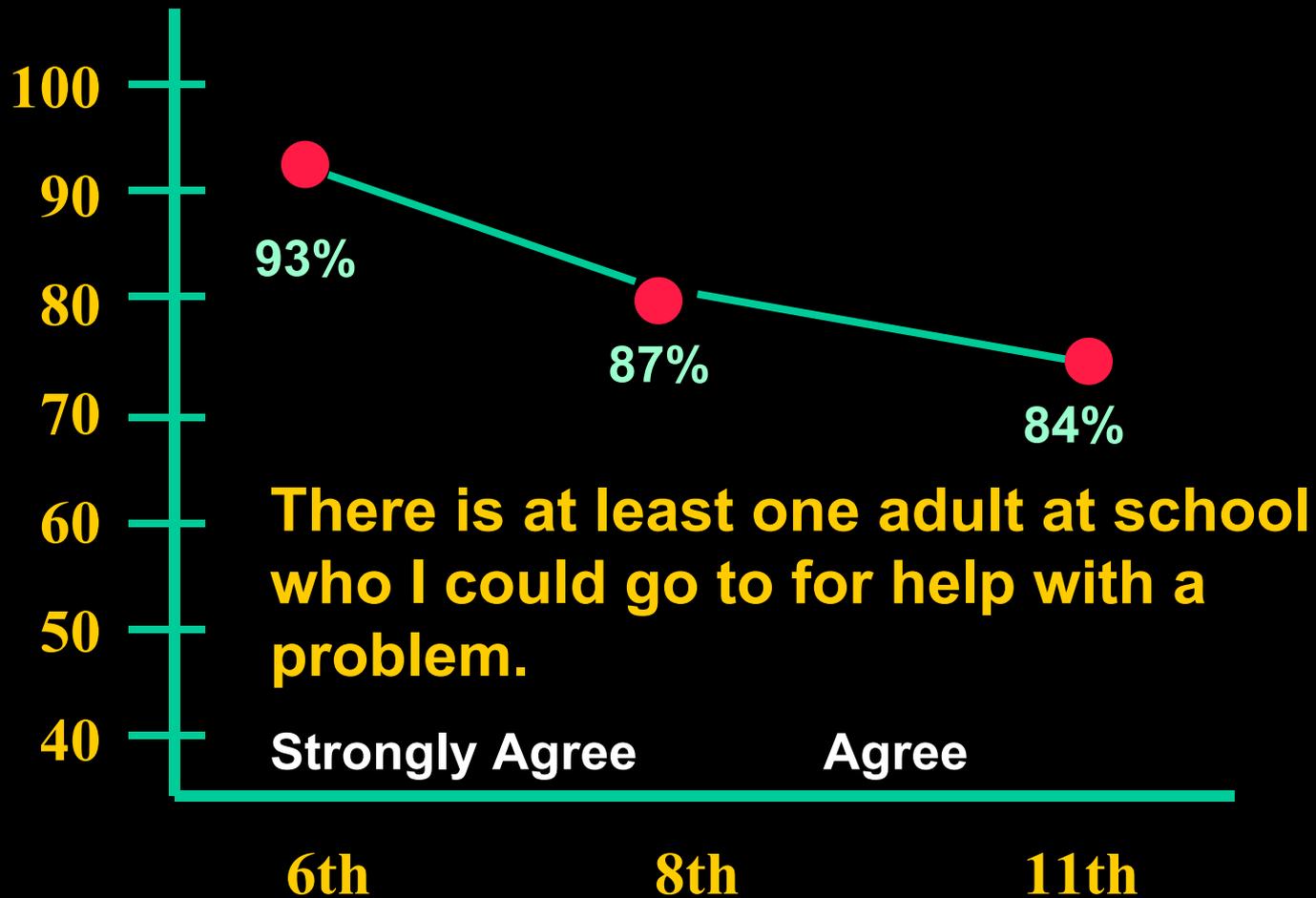
Girls = 54%

Boys = 51%



Girls = 72%

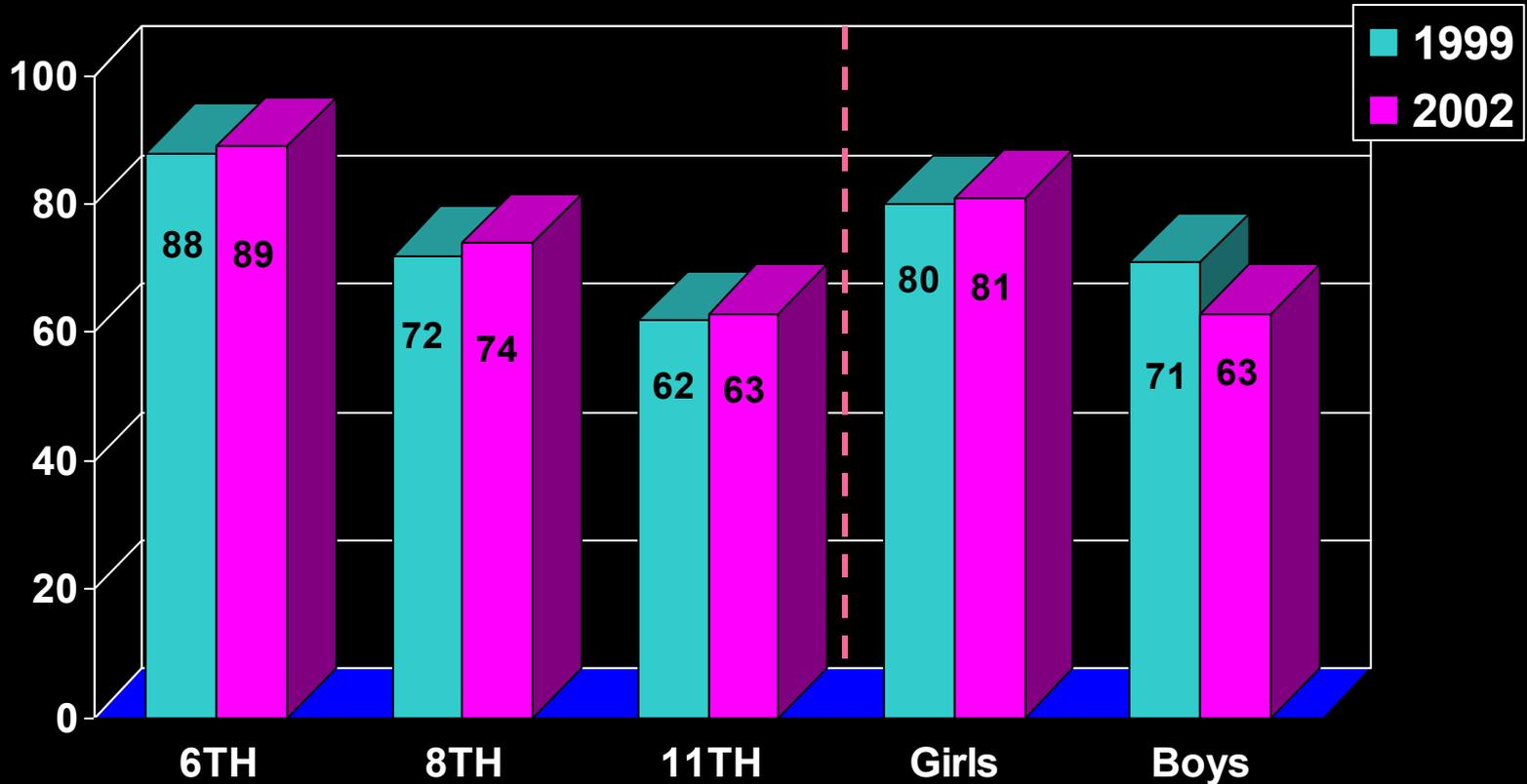
Boys = 71%



Girls = 89%

Boys = 87%

Commitment to School: Iowa

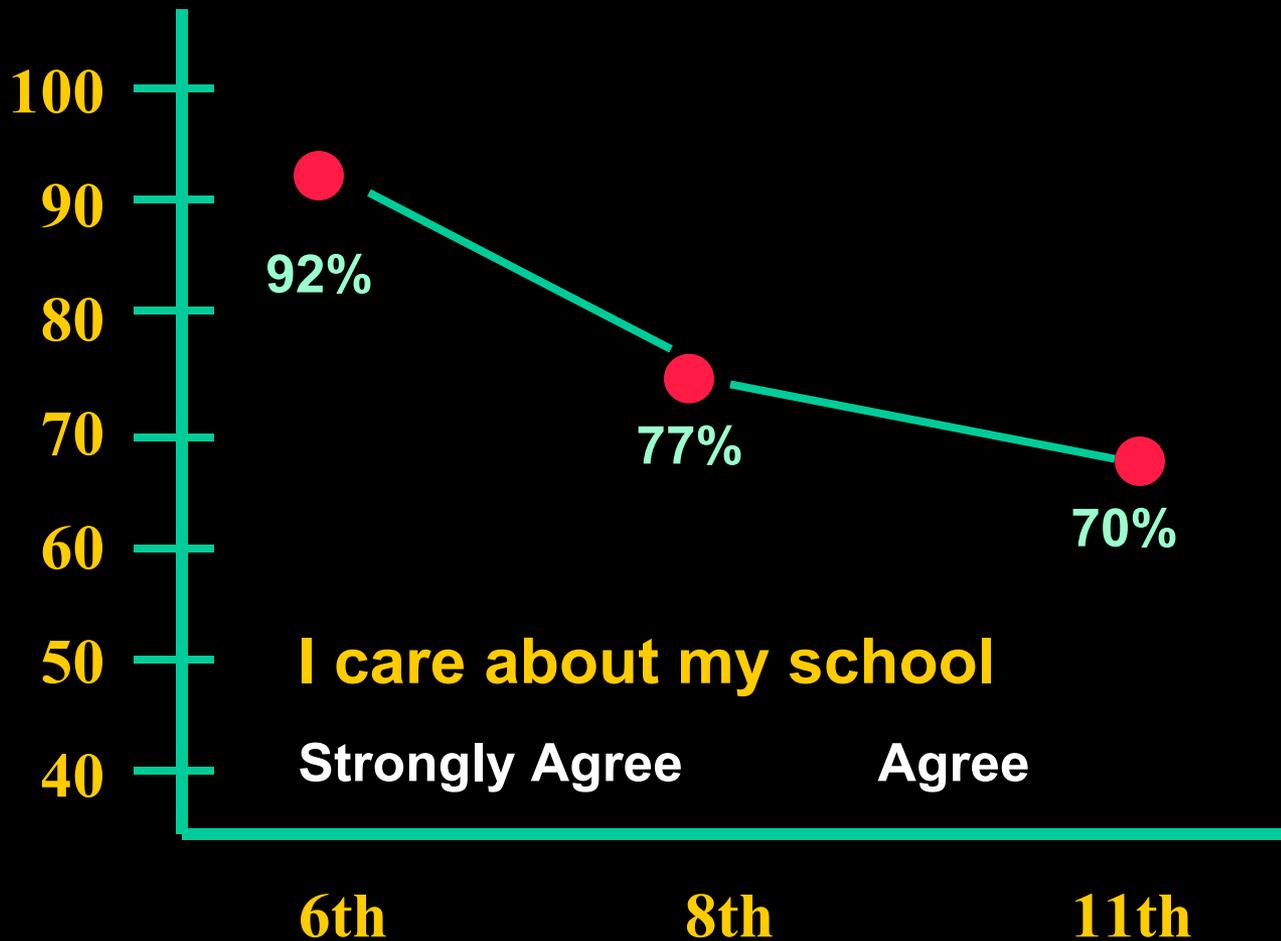


I care about my school.

I try to do my best in school.

I plan to finish high school.

I do the homework that is assigned.

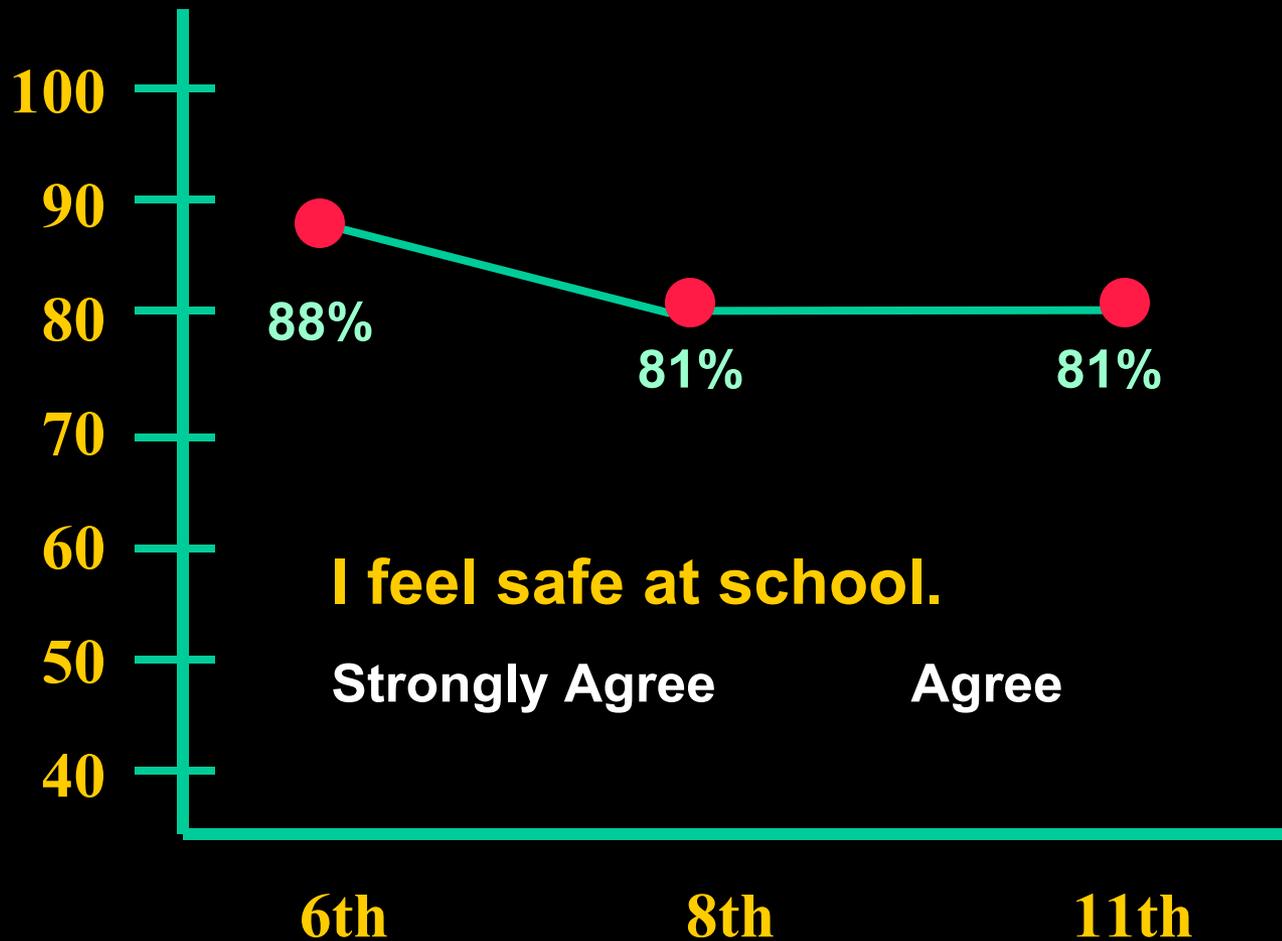


Strongly Agree

Agree

Girls = 83%

Boys = 75%



Girls = 85%

Boys = 82%

“The early adolescent needs “an environment that is both reasonably safe and intellectually challenging – one that provides a ‘zone of comfort’ as well as challenging new opportunities for growth...Research studies suggest that school environments that are responsive and developmentally sensitive to the changes in young adolescents’ needs and desires can facilitate positive development during the turbulent adolescent years.”

- Eccles (1999)

“The underlying theory, based on years of research, is that in order to experience healthy development youth need to be provided fundamental supports and opportunities in every setting...where they spend their time. These supports and opportunities are:

- 1. Supportive relationships;**
- 2. Physical and psychological safety;**
- 3. Youth involvement;**
- 4. Skill building - academic and social-emotional competence;**
- 5. Community involvement.”**

- Finding Out What Matters for Youth – Institute for Research and Reform in Education

The White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth states, “based on current research evidence, the most effective strategies for increasing the likelihood that students will be connected to school include:

- **Implementing high standards and expectations, and providing academic support to all students;**
- **Applying fair and consistent disciplinary policies that are collectively agreed upon and fairly enforced;**
- **Creating trusting relationships among students, teachers, staff, administrators, and families;**
- **Hiring and supporting capable teachers skilled in content, teaching techniques, and classroom management to meet each learner’s needs;**
- **Fostering high parent/family expectations for school performance and school completion; and**
- **Ensuring that every student feels close to at least one supportive adult at school.**

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Person-Environment Fit: Early Adolescence and the Middle School Environment

Person

- Focus on self
- Desire for control
- Increased ability to use higher level cognitive strategies
- Peer relationships important
- Need for close adult relationships outside home

Environmental Mismatch

- Emphasis on competition, social comparison, and ability self assessment
- Decreased decision-making/ choice
- Emphasis on lower level cognitive strategies
- Disruptive to social networks
- School size, scheduling & other structural factors interfere with development of relationships with adults at school

- **Contexts that promote social-emotional learning**
 - **Safe**
 - **Supportive**
 - **Caring**
 - **Developmentally appropriate**
- **Strategies that develop social-emotional competence**
 - **Direct instruction**
 - **Modeling**
 - **Practice**
 - **Feedback**

What Works

- Schoolwide discipline programs that teach prosocial behavior
- Social skills instruction
- Instruction in decision-making and problem solving
- Mentoring
- Student involvement

Worth Reviewing

- **Hardwired to Connect – Commission on Children at Risk (2003)**
- **Final Report of the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth (October, 2003)**
- **Community Programs to Promote Youth Development, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002)**
- **Improving the Odds: The Untapped Power of Schools to Improve the Health of Teens, Robert Wm. Blum, MD, Ph.D., Director, Center for Adolescent Health and Development, University of Minnesota**
- **Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say? Zins, Weissberg, Wang, and Walberg**