This declaration is based on a detailed review of research and in-depth discussions among an interdisciplinary group of education leaders convened at Wingspread, June 13-15, 2003.

THE DECLARATION

Students are more likely to succeed when they feel connected to school. School connection is the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. Critical requirements for feeling connected include students’ experiencing:

- High academic expectations and rigor coupled with support for learning; 1,8
- Positive adult-student relationships; 2
- Safety: both physical and emotional; 3
- Increasing the number of students connected to school is likely to impact critical accountability measures, such as:
  - Academic performance; 4
  - Incidents of fighting, bullying, or vandalism; 5
  - Absenteeism; 6
  - School completion rates. 7,8,9

Strong scientific evidence demonstrates increased student connection to school promotes:

- Educational motivation; 10
- Classroom engagement; 11
- Improved school attendance. 9

These four factors in turn increase academic achievement. The findings apply across racial, ethnic, and income groups. Likewise, strong evidence exists that a student who feels connected to school is less likely to exhibit:

- Disruptive behavior; 12
- School violence; 13
- Substance and tobacco use; 14
- Emotional distress; 15
- Early age of first sex. 16

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. 1
- Applying fair and consistent disciplinary policies that are consistently applied and fairly enforced. 17
- Creating trusting relationships among students, teachers, staff, administrators, and families. 18
- Hiring and supporting capable teachers skilled in content, teaching techniques, and classroom management to meet each learner’s needs. 19
- Postulating high parent/family expectations for school performance and school completion. 20
- Ensuring that every student feels close to at least one supportive adult at school. 21

Best Bets Warranting Further Research

- Programs and approaches that create positive and purposeful peer support and peer norms.
- Strategies that work to promote connection to school among disenfranchised groups.

- Analysis of the costs and effectiveness of different programs for fostering school connectedness.
- Evaluation of new and existing curricular approaches, staff and administrator training, and various institutional structures.
- Effects of students feeling connected on teacher morale, effectiveness, and turnover.

References

2. Enos AM, Cowell RF. Relationships matter: linking teacher support in student engagement and achievement. Paper presented at: Wingspread Conference on School Connectedness; June 2003; Racine, WI.
The effects of the Feasile Social Development Project: Behavior, prog-


19. Lecouer JD, Abbott BD, Howkin J, Kastenbor R, Canaleo R.

Wingspread Conference

Participant List

Angeli Acrivis, MPH
Public Health Analyst
Office of the Directors
Division of Adolescent and School
Health
Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention
Atlanta, GA

Trina Argyll, MD, PhD
Chief, Office of Adolescent Health
National Center for Health Services
and Administration
US Public Health Service, DHHS
Rockville, MD

John Bishop, PhD
Director, Educational Excellence
Alliance
Consortium for University
Rhode Island, RI

Lynn (Michael) Blum, PhD
Licensed Psychologist
Wayzata, MN

Robert Blum, MD, MPH, PhD
Professor and Director
William H. Gates Sr. Professor in
Health Education
Department of Population and Family
Health Sciences
The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School
of Public Health
Baltimore, MD

James D. Engels, RA, MEd
Resident Practitioner, Business
Partnerships
National Association of Secondary
School Principals
Roxton, VA

James D. Ericson, JD
Chairman Emeritus
Northwestern Mutual
Milwaukee, WI

Bruce Z. Greene
Director, School Health Programs
National School Boards Association
Alexandria, VA

Nora Howrey, MA, CHES
Project Director, School Health
Project
Council of Chief State School Officers
Washington, DC

Adena Klein, PhD
Research Manager
Institute for Research and Reform in
Education
New York, NY

Theresa C. Lavelle, MA, CHES
Director, Health in Education
Initiative
Association for Supervision and
Curriculum Development
Alexandria, VA

Heather Libby, EdM
Fellow, National Time Pregnancy Prevention
Research Center
Minneapolis, MN

Lisa McKay
Senior Advisor to the Deputy Under
Secretary
Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools
for Character Education & Civic
Engagement
US Department of Education
Washington, DC

Clydene Mclntyre, DrPH
Assistant Professor
Division of General Pediatrics and
Adolescent Health
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN

Nancy Miller, MS, PhD
Project Director
American Association of School
Administrators
Arlington, VA

Karen Mossan, MEd
Staff Director
White House Task Force For
Disadvantaged Youth
Washington, DC

Jenny Overo, MPA
Associate Director for Planning,
Evaluation, & Legislation
Division of Adolescent and School
Health
Atlanta, GA

Jean Silverman, EdD
Policy Analyst, Military Child in
Transition and Deployment
Department of Defense
Educational Opportunities Directorate
Washington, DC

Constance Varagon
Senior Program Officer and Director
Urban High School Initiatives
Carnegie Corporation of New York
New York, NY

Dorian Wilson
Center for the Study and Prevention of
Violence
Institute of Behavioral Science
Boulder, CO

The Joelson Foundation Staff

Carol M. Johnson, PhD
Program Officer for Education
The Joelson Foundation
Racine, WI

Wingspread Fellows

Kristina Beck
Alverno College
Milwaukee, WI

Rhonnie Song
Northwestern University
 Evanston, IL