

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty: Bridging the Gap By Expanding Opportunities



Pedro A. Noguera, Ph.D.
Graduate School of Education, UCLA

The failure of school reform:

Current education policies respond to symptoms and ignore social context and deeper systemic problems

- High dropout rates, chronic failure in schools serving poor children and persistence of race/class disparities in achievement

- Education reforms not tied to economic development strategies
- Reforms not implemented with clear focus on how they will solve the problems schools face nor are they implemented *with* educators as
- **Raising standards is unlikely to lead to better outcomes unless we improve learning conditions and respond more effectively to student needs**

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER



OUR KIDS

The American Dream
in Crisis

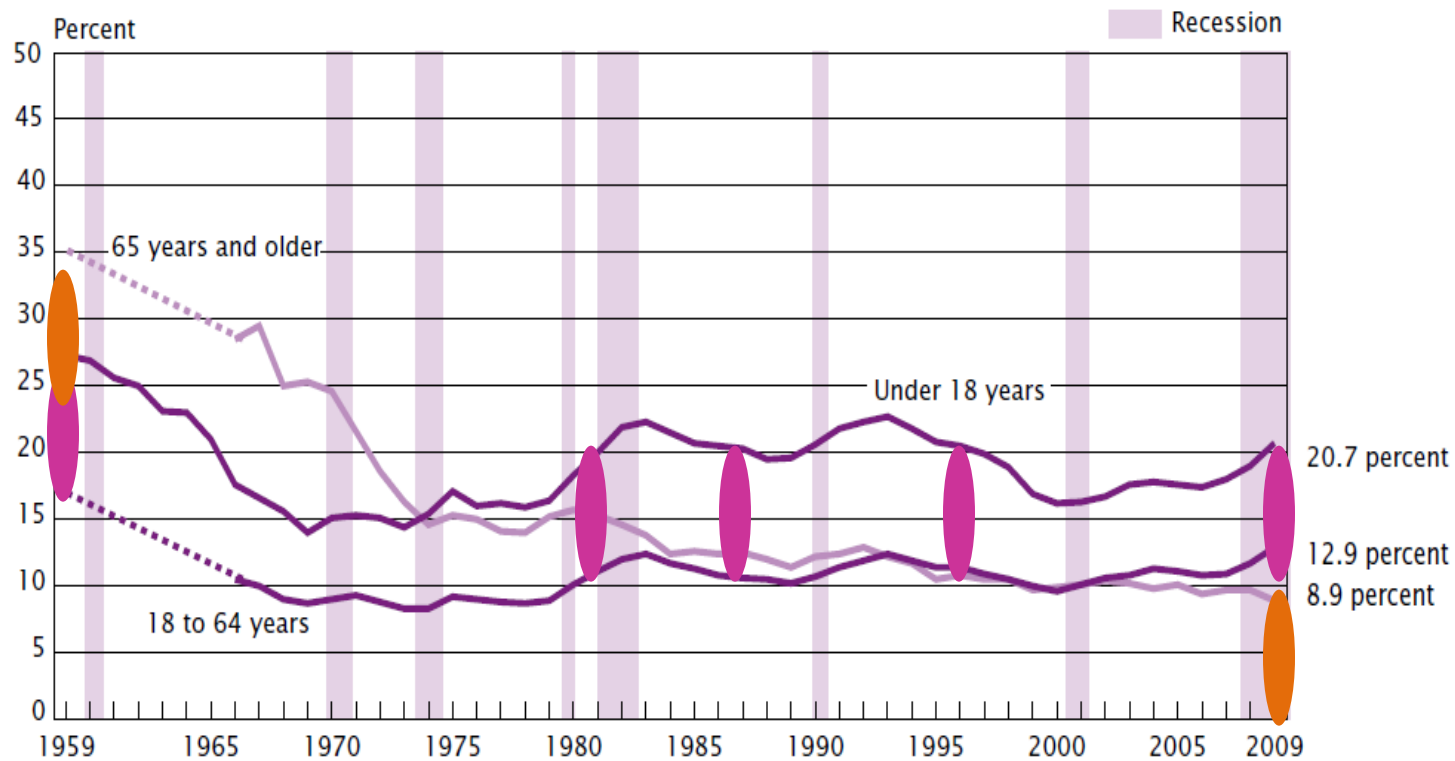
ROBERT D. PUTNAM

author of *Bowling Alone*

Copyrighted Material

Child and Family Poverty in the U.S.

Figure 5.
Poverty Rates by Age: 1959 to 2009



Notes: The data points are placed at the midpoints of the respective years. For information on recessions, see Appendix A.
Data for people aged 18 to 64 and 65 and older are not available from 1960 to 1965.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960 to 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

Child Poverty in the U.S. 2013

White	13.4%
Black	36.9%
Latino	30.4%
ALL	19.9%

Source: US Census Bureau



The Four Most Important Issues Impacting Schools Are Not Addressed



- ✓ Racial segregation
- ✓ Inequality in funding
- ✓ Poverty
- ✓ Opportunity Gaps

Narrow vs. Broad Approach

Narrow

- Use pressure/closure to foster accountability
- Focus exclusively on achievement
- Use test scores to rank
- Adopt scripted teacher-proof curriculum
- Hold principals/teachers accountable
- Treat parents as consumers
- Punitive approach to discipline
- Encourage competition among schools


Broad

- Focus on learning conditions/capacity building
- ✓ Use assessment to diagnose
- ✓ Develop teacher skills continuously
- ✓ Focus on “whole child”
- ✓ Hold all stake holders accountable
- ✓ Treat parents as partners
- ✓ Use discipline to develop character
- ✓ Expand learning opportunities
- ✓ Promote cooperation among schools

Schools can't address challenges related to poverty alone



Poverty is not the problem?

 ✓ In the debate over how to fix American public education, many believe that **schools alone** cannot overcome the impact that economic disadvantage has on a child, that life outcomes are fixed by poverty and family circumstances, and that education doesn't work until other problems are solved. This theory is, in some ways, comforting for educators...

Problem is, the theory is wrong. It's hard to know how wrong -- because we haven't yet tried to make the changes that would tell us -- but plenty of evidence demonstrates that schools can make an enormous difference despite the challenges presented by poverty and family background.

Joel Klein, Janet Murguia, Michael Lomax, Washington Post, April 9, 2010



Poverty is not a learning disability, but...

**WHEN POVERTY IS IGNORED
IT CAN BE DISABLING**

Making Progress Requires Focusing on the Right Questions:

- ✓ How can we use education to break the cycle of poverty?
 - ✓ Economic opportunity + social services + Empowerment.
- ✓ How can schools become assets to the communities they serve?
- ✓ How can we get students excited about learning?
 - ✓ Focus on motivation and engagement

Career and Technical Education to Promote Local Development



✓ East Bay Bio-Tech Academy

- ✓ Partnership between seven East Bay high schools, two community colleges, one university and five Biotech firms
- ✓ 90% of students graduate college and career ready
- ✓ Website: <http://www.biotechpartners.org>

Harlem Children's Zone



Key Concepts



- ✓ **Social Capital** – students need access to influential people and networks, schools need community support
- ✓ **Social closure** – schools need strong partnerships with parents; there must be reinforcement for learning
- ✓ **Cultural capital** – students must gain cultural literacy and learn the “codes of power”
- ✓ **Capacity Building** – schools must develop the resources and expertise to respond to student needs

Turning the curve...

**School
Demographics:**
76% low-
income
77% Latino
20% Black

**At Laurel Street Elementary School
in Compton Unified School District (Los Angeles County),**

nearly 2X as many

**Black 4th graders are meeting standards in English compared
to the state average.**

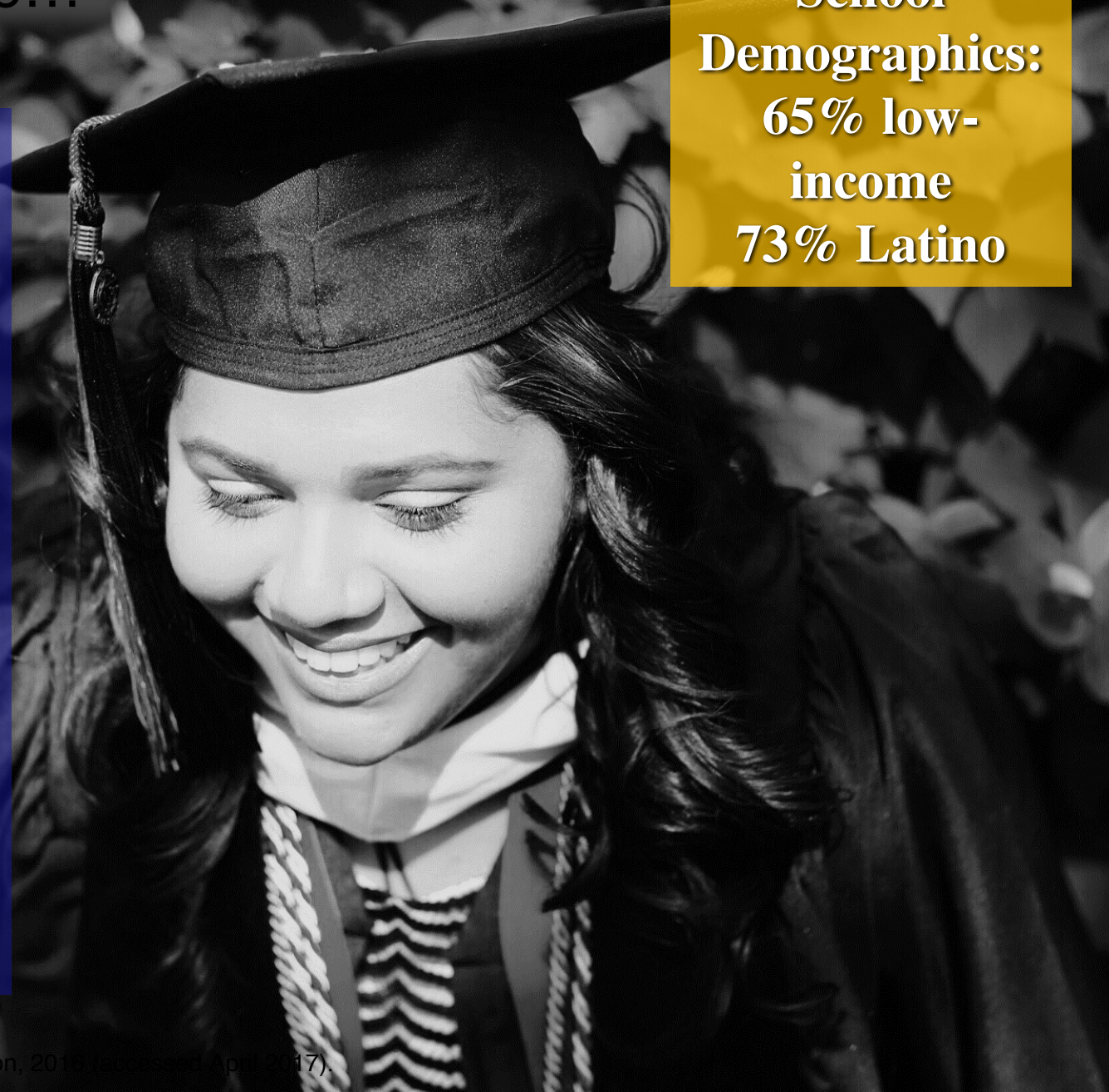
Turning the curve...

At Pescadero High School (San Mateo County),

**more than
TWICE**

as many low-income Latino 11th graders are meeting/exceeding standards in Math compared to the state average.

**School
Demographics:
65% low-
income
73% Latino**



Turning the curve...

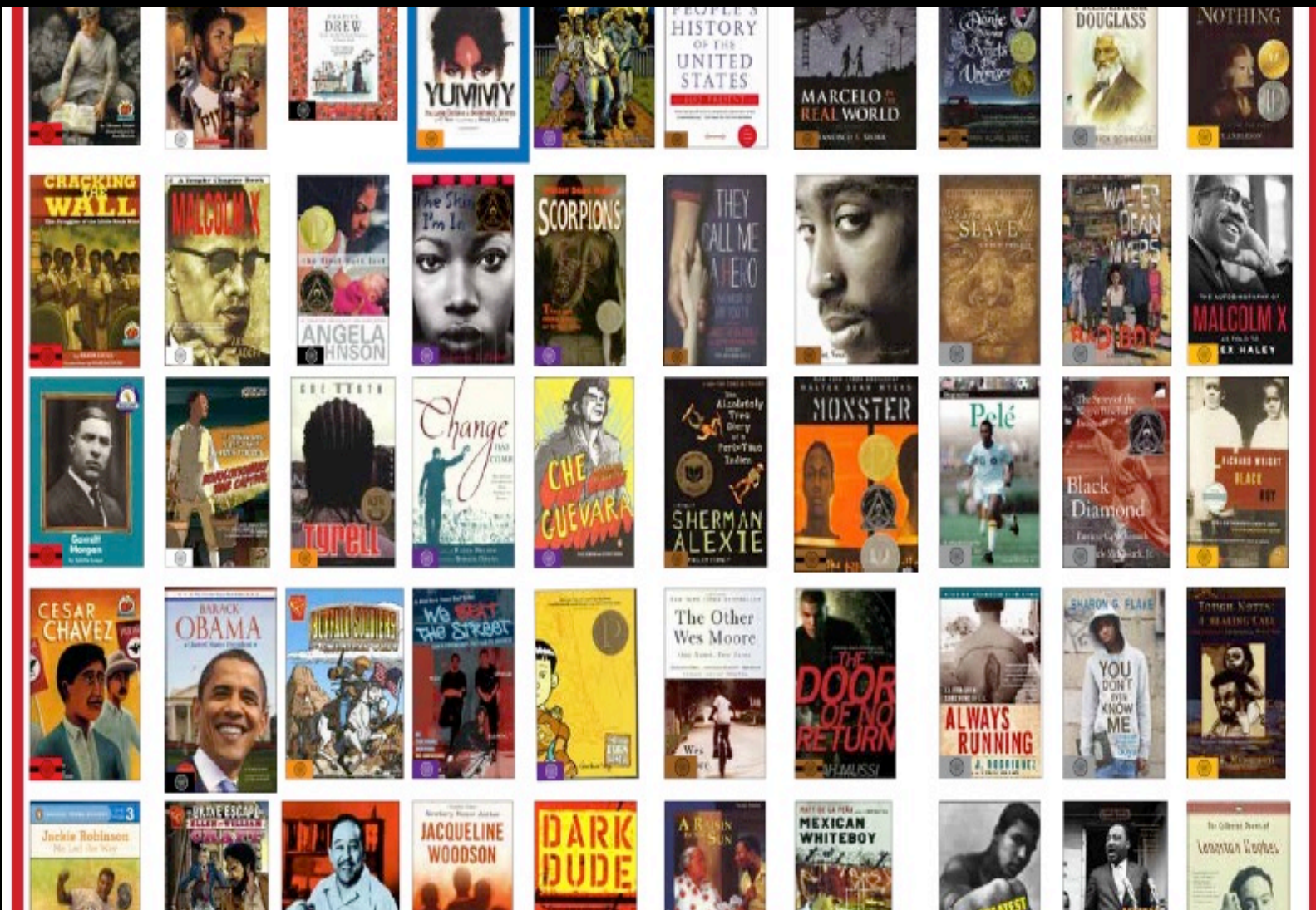
At Rosemead High in
El Monte Union High
School District (Los Angeles
County), **almost
TWICE**

as many low-income
11th graders are
meeting/exceeding
standards in math
compared to the state
average.

**School
Demographics:
86% low-
income
47% Latino**

50 Books for Boys

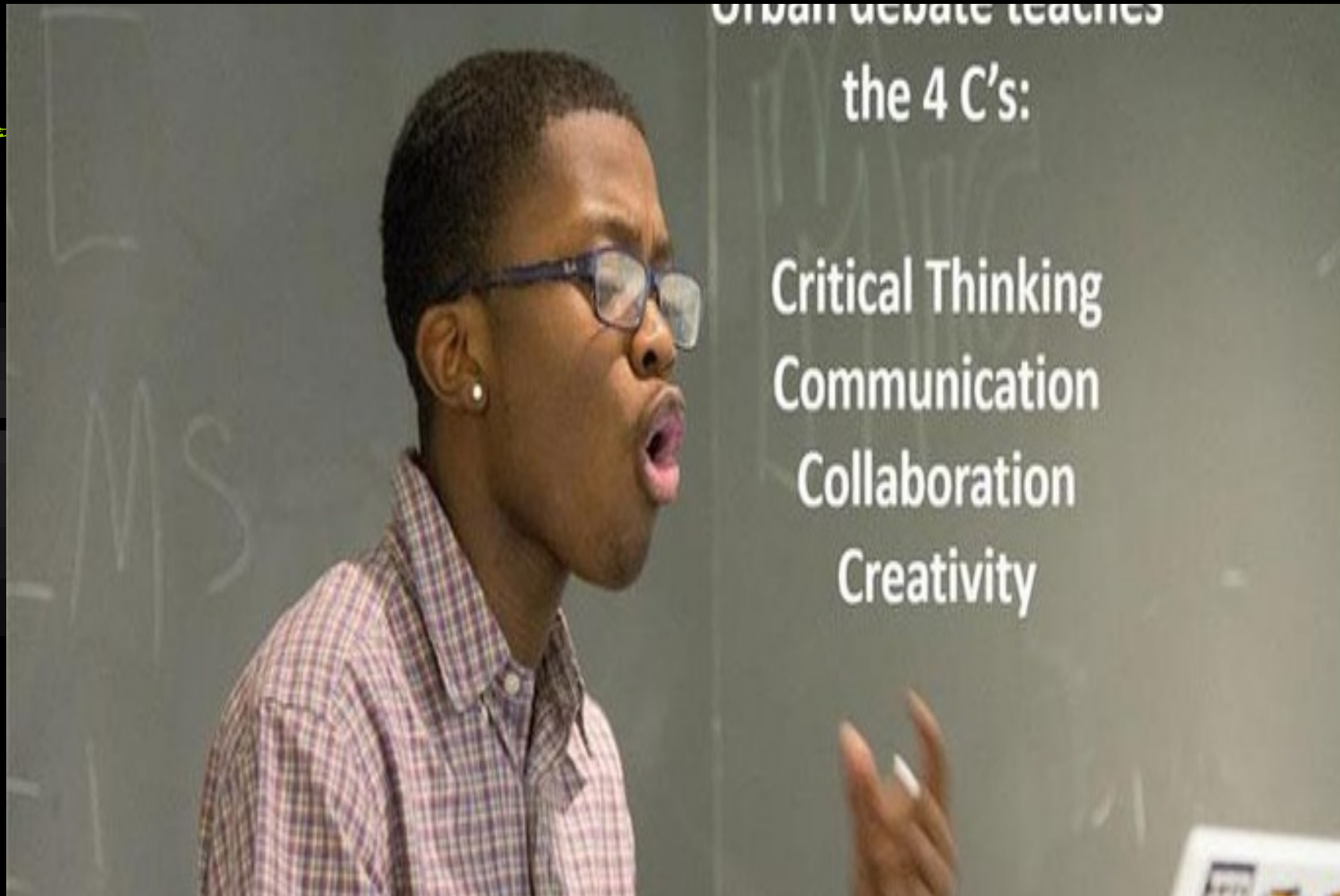
American Reading Company





“We were going to be taking the same exact AP test as the students we met from the other school. We needed to know the same exact things. But, while they were starting to read the *Odyssey*, we were reading the *Hunger Games*. There’s nothing wrong with the *Hunger Games*. I love the *Hunger Games*---I read it when I was 12. It just really struck me as unfair.”

Debate in the Bronx



PS 28 obtains highest gains in literacy and math in Brooklyn -2012



Parent Power in the Eastern Cape



Five Essential Ingredients for School Improvement



- 1) A coherent instructional guidance system,
- 2) Development of the professional capacity of its faculty
- 3) Strong parent-community-school ties
- 4) A student-centered learning climate
- 5) Shared leadership to drive change

We Need A Holistic Vision to Guide Local Policy

