

TAKEAWAY POINTS: FAMILIES AS THE KEY TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Prepared by: Dr. Stephen M. Gavazzi
The Ohio State University Center for Family Research

February 24, 2010

- ❖ Educational risks are a leading indicator of youth developing behavioral problems such as involvement in delinquent behavior
- ❖ While race and gender (i.e. being an African American male) are typically associated with higher rates of crime, for instance, those static factors are virtually eliminated *when educational risks are taken into account*
- ❖ Educational risks can be examined in terms of 3 main domains:
 - **Disruptive classroom activity**
 - **Threats to academic progress**
 - **Learning difficulties**
- ❖ These three educational risk domains are significantly predicted by non-academic barriers to learning that include:
 - **Family**
 - **Peers**
 - **Mental Health Issues**
- ❖ Non-academic barriers to learning are what drives **credit accumulation and OGT performance** for youth and young adults involved in dropout recovery programs
- ❖ **OAT scores** are highly related to disruptive classroom behavior, threats to academic progress, and learning difficulties, all of which in turn are predicted by family issues, peer concerns, and mental health symptoms in middle school samples
- ❖ Certain non-academic barriers to learning such as mental health issues and gang activity fall outside the purview of schools, and thus require the assistance of partners in the community. However, school personnel have immediate access to families, and that becomes a *key method for increasing academic potential*
- ❖ **Family engagement** should be seen as a multi-layered effort that meets family members where they are, instead of expecting families to conform to a pre-determined way of having contact with schools
- ❖ Family engagement efforts should be primarily **strength-based** in orientation
- ❖ The most powerful way to change educational outcomes is by changing the way our schools approach and involve families

Bottom line: Families must be given a central role in the educational process if we are to have any hope of creating greater academic success