

**26<sup>th</sup> Konopka Lectureship**  
Konopka Institute for Best Practices in Adolescent Health,  
Department of Pediatrics, University of Minnesota

The 2007 Konopka Lecture was held Tuesday, February 13 in the 3M Auditorium at the Minnesota  
History Center, St. Paul, MN

**Dr. Pedro Noguera**  
**“What Does it Take to Leave No Child Behind?”**

**Introduction by Michael Resnick, Ph.D.**

You have been looking at pictures of Gisela Konopka; I think of a lot of words to describe her. Were she alive, she would have been 97 years old this weekend. A scholar, a mentor, a prodder. Oh, did she prod people and she was impatient. She was impatient with callous institutions; she was impatient with callous people. I think most importantly, and all of you who have known her, and have been touched by her work, who have been inspired by her, know that she was a fearless champion for youth. And I love having the opportunity to say that to you. I am Michael Resnick, I am a Professor of Pediatrics and Public Health at the University of Minnesota; and I have the privilege of holding the Konopka Chair in Adolescent Health and Development. Which means that I not only have the opportunity to honor Gisa's work and life with you; but the opportunity to work with a marvelous group of colleagues who comprise the Konopka Institute for Best Practices in Adolescent Health. And could I ask those who are members of the Konopka Institute as well as Advisors to the Konopka Institute to please stand so you can be acknowledged.

One of the things that Gisa always sought to keep us connected with, was the poetry of young people. And I am reminded of the poem by a 16-year-old girl. Gisa loved this one. The poem said:

One day a man in his flaming hands, took up a little grass. With a wisp of hair from his daughter fair, yet a slumbersome and innocent lass. And his fingers rose and whirled and skipped and swirled the threads around to a basket he formed of the fibers warmed and nursed by the loving ground. It was plump and all warm and stately green, with the respect and awe the deep heart saw as if thrilled to some unseen, the love perhaps and the tapping saps that had stormed the thread of the bowl. So he gathered up his woven cup and in it he placed his soul.

That poem was written by a 16-year-old girl who was by any measure we would use, a juvenile delinquent, somebody who clearly was struggling with her life and the people around her and Gisa had that unerring capacity to see her humanity and look at ways of nurturing that and bringing it out. So Gisa had the soul of a champion.

For the 26<sup>th</sup> Konopka Lecture we needed a champion and we found one, and he is here with us today. Pedro Noguera, who is a Professor in the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University. Also, I have learned this morning, no stranger to Minnesota, and the Twin Cities in particular. Dr. Noguera is the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education. He is a champion. He is a champion for looking at the ways that schools and families and communities must move together to nurture the health and the development and the learning of our children, securing a place for them in the world. It is a pleasure to have you here, and we welcome you to the Twin Cities.

**Dr. Pedro Noguera**

Good Morning. It is a pleasure to be here in Minnesota with you on this chilly outside, warm inside morning, and such an honor to be invited to give this lecture in the memory of Gisa Konopka. I have had a chance to look at some of the biography of Dr. Konopka and her very important work here, not just in the Twin Cities, but beyond; and I can only say that if more of us would do work to build on that legacy, we would live in a very different world.

We live in a strange time, a time where there is much fear and uncertainty about our future. A time when the political rhetoric is so out of sync with the social reality. I was thinking about George Orwell's 1984, and how apropos it is for the times we live in now, where war is supposed to bring peace, where security is based on some desire to protect us, where increasingly our leaders encourage us to be very afraid. These are strange times and the slogan adopted by this administration, No Child Left Behind, is perhaps the strangest of all. It is as though if you merely say it, it happens, right? We live in a reality-based administration, they say, right?; where they can create their own reality. I was on CNN two weeks ago, Paula Zhan Show, and I was featured there with two republican activists and they kept talking about No Child Left Behind is one of the greatest triumphs of the Bush Administration. I kept looking at them like where do they get this from. But it just speaks to the ways in which our political rhetoric is so disconnected from the reality what is actually happening in our country. We are leaving lots and lots of children behind. And I often point out to people, as I did this morning, that that slogan, Leave No Child Behind, didn't come from the Bush Administration, it came from the Children's Defense Fund. And when Marion Wright Edelman and her colleagues came up with it, it didn't mean we should test the kids as often as possible. It literally meant that in a wealthy nation we should be able to ensure that all children have adequate nutrition, that they are safe and well nourished, and have adequate health care; but we are so far away from that right now. It is so ironic that a law that calls itself Leaving No Child Left Behind makes no provision, for example, for eyeglasses. We know that large numbers of children who can't read actually can't read because they can't see. Hard to read if you can't see.

My colleague, Richard Rothstein, wrote a book I encourage you to read called "Class and Schools" three years ago. He used to be an economist that wrote for the New York Times on education. If we are really interested in closing the achievement gap, we could do lots of things that would never have touched schools, that actually would raise test scores. Like, getting kids who need them, eyeglasses. Or making sure the kids who had cavities got their teeth fixed. Making sure we got lead paint out of their homes. Making sure that children with asthma missed fewer days of school because they are using emergency rooms to handle an illness that we know now how to treat effectively.

We are leaving lots of children behind. If you look throughout this country, one of our national embarrassments is the fact we have the greatest number of children in poverty amongst advanced, industrialized nations—one out of five. And when you consider the fact that what it takes to be poor, legally poor in America means you have got to be really poor. It means that there are a lot of people just above that poverty rate who are also just barely getting by. And we know that despite the fact that we have a law on the books that says that we should have integrated schools, right?; isn't that what the Brown decision was to bring for us? Today, we have schools that are more segregated now than ever. The average African-American, Latino student attends not only a segregated school, but a school where they are most likely to be concentrated with poor children, in schools that are under-funded, where basic facilities and instruction materials are often sparse and not available to them.

We know from the research that if we really were interested in closing the achievement gap, and that again is part of the rhetoric, we want to close the gap. We know that the gap begins before the kids even arrive in school. That some kids get to go to quality preschools, where they receive an enriched education so that they come to school stimulated, middle-class children come to school knowing hundreds of more words than poor children. They also come to school knowing standard English.

Poor children, typically, in this country, if they get preschool, get it from someone who is paid minimum wage, who is not trained, and end up spending a lot of time in front of a television. Our own government's research has shown us that the most effective anti-poverty program they adopted and the Great Society efforts of the Johnson Administration was Head Start. We know that because the children who get Head Start when you compare them to similar children who don't earn more money, more likely to graduate from school, more likely to go on to college, less likely to go to prison, because by focusing on children when they are young it benefits them throughout their lives. We are one of few advanced industrialized nations that does not make access to quality preschool universal.

I have a colleague at Harvard, Kathy McCartney, who studies preschool programs and she explained she was at an international conference and was asked by some Italian researchers what it is she was studying and she explained that she was studying the effectiveness of various early childhood programs; and they looked at her and said, well, that is a very American focus, isn't it? And she thought that no criticism was implied by the remark. She said, well, what are you Italians focusing on? And they said, well, we are focused on how to get the very best early childhood programs for all children. She said, oh, different focus.[sic]

We know what it takes, we know what it takes, but we don't do it. We don't do it, and because we don't do it we have a dropout rate in most cities in the country that exceeds 50%. I would encourage you to read, a document came out by the Gates Foundation this year, or at least in the last year called "A Silent Epidemic". Finally truth in the dropout figures. Rod Page, the former secretary of Education was named Secretary because supposedly he had produced the "Houston Miracle." Under his leadership we were told that Houston now had the best urban public schools in the country; only to find out after he was appointed that one of the ways you raise test scores in Houston is by getting rid of kids that bring them down. Because they had had a dropout rate that was over 50% in Houston. But Houston is not alone. That is true in Chicago, that's true in New York, that's true in Baltimore, Detroit, New Orleans, it is true in the nation's capital. Maybe one day we will get an education president that will say, "I will start to show you how to improve our public schools by starting in the nation's capital." [sic] Because the nation's capital is hardly a model for public education.

So there is a huge gap between our rhetoric and the reality of what is happening, not only in our schools, but what is happening in children across this country. And the irony is that as a country we pretend that we can solve the problems facing young people through schools alone. Each time President Bush is asked what he is doing about poverty, as he was after we saw the scenes of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina and were reminded once again that there are lots and lots of poor people in America who are very often rendered invisible until there is a catastrophe of that kind, and he comes back with: well, there's No Child Left Behind...

Well, there are limits to what schools can do. And today we pretend that we can ask schools to raise test scores and hold schools that serve poor children to the same standards as we hold children in affluent communities to, even though we know that children in poor communities typically do not have their basic needs met and those schools do not have the resources to begin to meet those needs. We have designed systems of accountability where we rank schools on the base of test scores as though this will somehow make schools improve, as if pressure and humiliation would provide incentives they need to get it together. The state of Florida puts letter grades on schools so that the public will know that you can go to an "A" school, or "B" school, or "C" school, all the way down to an "F" school. As if putting the letter on the building would somehow some sign of their tough standards. Now I would think that the state of Florida puts an "F" on the building, the state should be sued if it continues to allow children to go there. It is like allowing someone to live in a condemned building. We don't do that when it comes to buildings, but we do do it when it comes to schools. I visited Edison High School in Miami, a double FF school. I didn't know you could be a double FF, and I asked the principal, well, how do you get to be double FF? And he said, well you simply fail the state exam two years in a row. I said well, what happens if you fail a third time on this state exam? And he said, well we will fail a third time because 85% of our children don't speak English, if they have to take an exam in English. They just arrived in this country from Haiti, so they will fail. I said, are you worried about failing? He said, not at all.[sic] He said the state says they will take us over but I know they can't take us over, because there are too many triple F schools throughout the state. What's more, I'm quitting this job at the end of the year. Now, everyone I've spoken to about this principal described him as dedicated, committed, hard working, but he was simply tired of being pressured and belittled for his inability to raise test scores. So he was off, leaving education entirely. And then he said, you know, the crazy thing about this policy is the state can't take us over because they don't know what to do. If they were to get control of Edison High School, would they have something they have been holding back on? That they would *now* make available to the children there. [sic] It is really a cruel joke. Because the record of state takeovers of school districts across this country is abysmal. Everywhere it has been done, state departments of education end up saying we want out, we are giving up. When they did it in Compton, Compton is no better after eight years of state control. Trenton

still under state control, no better. Roosevelt, small district in New York, been under state control for over 20 years; still widely regarded as one of the worst school districts in the state of New York. The idea that you can pressure and humiliate schools and threaten them with takeovers like some kind of mortgage country is ludicrous. But we keep pretending, and our politicians keep pretending that they can use tough rhetoric to improve schools, instead of doing the basic things that we know really start to make a difference for kids.

We know that in the schools that are low performing, there are a myriad of issues that aren't being addressed. Shortage of qualified teachers for example. Qualified in that they actually have degrees in the subject they teach, and actually have an ability to teach the children they serve. We have a shortage of such personnel in our schools. We have a shortage of capable principals. We have too many schools where the staff cannot teach the children because they either can't speak the language, or they don't understand the culture, or even more profoundly they are simply afraid of the children they serve. If you are afraid of the children you teach chances are you can't teach them. Children can tell when you are afraid of them. Often they say the reason why so many of our schools are so unsafe, the reason why we are increasingly relying on metal detectors and guards and cameras to make our schools safe which is so ironic because it means we are turning our schools into prisons to make them safe, ignoring the reality that prisons are not safe places. That safety is not a product of security, safety is a product of strong relationships between adults and children.

The biggest shortage in many of our schools is a shortage of adults with moral authority. Moral authority is not authority rooted in a title or in a uniform, it is rooted in a relationship. Adults who have moral authority are adults who are able to get kids to listen to them, to follow their instructions, and therefore able to guide them because of what they represent in the eyes of those children. All of us know of adults who have that ability, don't we? They are the ones you call on when the classroom is out of control, to bring order again. They are the ones who can come, adults and children now not because they are big and intimidating, but because of who they are and what they represent, there are a shortage of these adults in our schools today. And consequently we have schools that are unsafe, because we have created environments where we are so fixated on control and so unconcerned about the environment we have put the children in. It is easy to blame schools for this, but as I said before, schools have been set up. Set up because they lack the resources to respond to the challenges, set up because we pretend that we can solve problems that are not educational through education.

I have a principal I work with in the Bronx, she is a committed, caring individual. When her students don't come to school she calls home to find out why they are not there. She has a student that comes late consistently, it frustrates her. He is a good student, so she decided she wanted to find out so she called. She calls, no one answers. So she takes the extra step, she is going to do a home visit and she is going to do it at night in a dangerous neighborhood, because she cares so much to get that student to school. So she goes into a dangerous apartment building, climbs five flights of stairs, knocks on the door. Greeted by the grandmother who doesn't speak English. And she says in her broken Spanish she wants to know why it is that Luis is not coming to school and the grandmother looks at her and says you want to know? Come inside. She points to a man in a wheelchair, see that man, that is Luis' father, he had a stroke three months ago. He used to run the bodega, he can't do it anymore; Luis runs the bodega now. He is there until three in the morning every night. If he needs to sleep late sometimes, I let him. If he doesn't work in the bodega, we are out on the streets. Do you have help for us? Now, being a caring and intelligent individual, she was smart enough to say, let your son sleep. We might not like the fact that kids have to choose between going to school and supporting their families, but some kids do. The sad thing is, that there is no safety net to support families when the care provider and an income earner becomes ill and the burden has to fall on the children to support that family. But that is the kind of society we live in, and that is the reason why asking schools to do more to raise test scores without paying attention to the needs of the children and families they serve, is not just senseless, it is cruel.

It is easy to say, "no excuses," when you have no excuses. There are some kids who have got some legitimate excuses. There are some kids for whom getting to school each day is a major accomplishment, who demonstrate incredible resilience that many of us as adults could not demonstrate on our own. The fact that they come, the fact that they try, the fact that they make an effort, we should applaud them for

this, not belittle them, not berate them for their test scores. And it is not because raising standards and raising achievement isn't an important goal, it is an important goal; but it is because it takes more than narrowly focusing on test scores to educate children. But that is not new information, is it? We have known that for a long time, right? Abraham Maslow, great psychologist on child development remind us a long time ago about the hierarchy of human needs and the base of that hierarchy was that children need good nutrition, security, love and nurturing in order to experience healthy development. And when the basic needs are not met, they often experience great difficulty. Difficulty developing, and certainly difficulty in learning because you cannot separate the two. Hungry children don't do so well. Abused and neglected children have trouble concentrating. To ignore these needs is to pretend that you can raise the standards without addressing the very conditions under which children live and it simply does not work.

And so we are seeing over and over again that because we don't address these needs, large numbers of kids are in fact being left behind. Because a third of children in this country don't have access to quality health care, we have kids with asthma who miss many days of school because they can't get preventive care. We have large numbers of children who miss school simply because their families move a lot; they are highly transient because they can't find stable, affordable housing. Moving often affects your performance in school. We have large numbers of kids who will come from families that are in crisis, no father present. Large number of kids who are being raised by someone other than their biological parent; by a grandparent, by a relative, by group homes and foster homes, because large numbers of families in this country are disintegrating. And again we have no safety net in place to make up for what families can't provide. And so instead what we do is we hold kids accountable for conditions that kids don't create.

We have communities where crime and disorder and environmental degradation make the environment in which kids toxic. I was in Detroit earlier this year, Detroit is a dying city. Once one of our nation's great cities it is literally a dying city. You go to downtown Detroit and you find this Renaissance Center the last hope they have for keeping some money in Detroit and they tell you when you get there, don't leave; because they can't assure your safety if you leave the Renaissance Center. And you go down the block, if you do leave and you find Hudson's which was once one of the great department stores, the pride of the city, now boarded up. It says everything about Motor City, doesn't it? It explains why everyone who can, leaves the city, and why those who are left behind are faced with conditions that are deteriorating rapidly and there is no hope in sight. And as a nation we would rather point the finger and say it is Detroit's fault that they are suffering, it is the mayor's fault, it is the citizen's fault, even though we know that there aren't the resources in Detroit to address the fundamental crisis, ongoing crisis that besets children and families in that community. And Detroit is not alone, because again, what Katrina reminded us is that there are lots of pockets of deep and concentrated poverty throughout America and people are shocked by the scenes in New Orleans, shocked to see what was happening at the Super Dome, shocked to see that how neglected, how deprived, so many people in this country are. But think about New Orleans, think about the pride so many people showed in the Saints this year. Because it took less than a year to get that stadium back up, to get that football team playing again, to get those tickets that sell for hundreds of dollars back on-line so that the Saints could generate community pride; meanwhile if you travel through New Orleans the city looks like hell. They haven't even picked up the debris, much less rebuilt the homes so people could move back.

This is a wealthy nation we live in. We have other countries offering to send foreign aide to New Orleans, as though it were a third-world country. Offering to send doctors, offering to send water, because people couldn't get bottled water. The reason why we have such disparities in achievement, disparities that consistently correspond to race and class throughout America, this achievement gap, that now is the focus of so much of the work of educators. The reason why we have it is because we have profound and persistent social inequality. That's the truth.

The educational testing service, they were the ones that put out the SAT, they'll tell you the strongest predictor for how well a student does on the SAT is their families income. And if you combine family income with maternal education, you can predict how well kids will do. Because family background is the strongest predictor of educational attainment and achievement. We've known that for a long time. But what we also know is that education remains the most effective means we have in this country to help

people escape poverty. It is the pathway to the American dream, it always has been. Horace Mann, the first architect of public education, the first advocate argue that we needed schools because schools would serve as the great equalizer of opportunity. That it would be through schools that we would ensure that America would not become a cast society. A society where your birthright determined what you could accomplish. And so education is integral and central to the way we think about the American dream. Because without access to education there is no American dream. And many of us have realized that dream, through education. How many of you today come from a family where neither of your parent's graduated from college? And how many of you graduated from college? Look around the room, myself included. Neither of my parents graduated from high school, all six of my brothers and sisters graduated from college, some of the best colleges in this country. All of us are living proof that your background should not determine what you accomplish through education or what you can accomplish through life.

Now ask yourself, how common is it to find schools where the background of children does not determine and does not predict how well they will achieve. Increasingly when I go to schools, what I find particularly interestingly not in urban schools, but in suburban schools, is that it is rare to find kids who don't speak English in honor's classes as their first language, at least. It is rare to find kids who come from single-parent families in gifted classes. Three out of five poor kids anywhere that is associated with success, because instead of education being the pathway to opportunity, instead of schools serving as institutions that deliberately cultivate the talent in children, too often our schools function like sorting machines, where we look at the background of children and how well they are prepared, and then assign them based upon some perception or some measure of their supposed ability. And in most of our schools we deliberately assign our best teachers to teach our brightest, highest achieving kids, and our weakest teachers to teach our neediest kids. And we do this not because the research says it is going to work, we do it because it is politically expedient to do so. Because teachers with seniority will sometimes say, I don't want to teach remedial students, I don't want to teach special ed, I don't want to teach ESL, so we assign that to the new people, and we do it because the parents of the high achievers won't allow us to put anyone who is incompetent in the classroom with their kids. They demand access to qualified, competent teachers and if they don't get it, they let their voices be heard, they go above the head of the teacher to the principal, they go beyond the principal to the superintendent to the board, they file law suits, they do whatever they can because they believe they have a right to quality education for their children.

Poor parents make a crucial mistake. Their mistake is that they too often trust schools. Too often they send their kids and hope for the best. Not knowing that in too many of our schools we have built in inequality into the way we practice, into the way we treat kids. And again, I see this as much in affluent school districts as I do in poor communities. I was working with a very affluent school district in New Jersey, Mont Claire, very liberal community. I was doing a workshop with the administrators there on the achievement gap, and I was trying to explain how certain practices and policies contribute to these disparities and achievements, by denying kids opportunities to learn. And the principal of the high school was new there, he was listening, he said you know as I'm hearing you I'm thinking that we are doing something wrong at the high school. I said, well what is it? He said, well I was noticing the other day that several of the African American boys in my school linger in the hallway between classes, the bell rings and they are still lingering, and I don't know why, they are always late so I decided one day I was going to follow them, and I followed them and I noticed they were all going to the basement. I said why were they going to the basement? He said, well that is where our special ed classes are, and they are embarrassed to be seen going to the basement. He said, do you think maybe we need to get them out of the basement?

You know sometimes what we do to children is so blatant, it is amazing that no one has said this has got to stop, this has got to stop, this is unfair. We use discipline in schools, primarily as a way to get rid of kids we don't want. I was at a school in Berkeley, CA and being given a tour by the assistant principal, he was very proud of new computer lab and new classrooms, and he was showing me off and then we get to his office and he sees a little boy about this high out the door waiting for him. Shakes his head, he turns to me, he says do you see that boy? He said there is a prison cell in San Quinton waiting for that boy. I said a prison cell, I said how do you know that? He says well his father is in prison, he has got a brother in prison, and I can tell by the way he behaves that is just where he is headed. And then I asked, well given what you know about this child, what is the school doing to keep him out of prison? And he turns to me

and he says, I didn't think that was my job. In fact, what he is about to do with this boy who is being raised by a sick grandmother, was to put him on an indefinite suspension where they would send the work home, so they could continue to collect the average daily attendance, even though they knew full well that that grandmother could not provide for the needs of that child. So they were pretty much going to ensure that he was on a pathway to prison, at eight years old.

We use two strategies in most schools to discipline kids. We start with humiliation, and then we work our way to exclusion. If we are really interested in changing behaviors so that kids become self-disciplined, neither strategy works. Because to become self-disciplined you actually have to be taught how to behave. You actually have to focus on the character of children. You actually have to just not focus on the rules, but on the values behind the rules and you have to recognize that kids who are not invested in learning, are kids who will act out because school is based on a social contract between student and school. And the contract, though never written, is based on a simple idea that in exchange for an education we expect the children to behave. Well which children are the one's who misbehave most? The children who are not getting an education. And the crazy thing we do in school is we take kids who don't like school and we suspend them, send them home; as if this would change their behavior and the evidence shows that we keep suspending the same kids over and over again, you would think at some point someone would realize, guess what? This doesn't work. Maybe we are actually giving them more of what they want.

I was at a school in Cleveland where they were about to give a boy who had been truant three days suspension for being truant. He said to the assistant principal, give me five, I need some more sleep. And the assistant principal was ready to oblige because in fact what the strategy was, get rid of the kids that cause trouble.

And I don't like the strategy that we use in our society to deal with crime. We think that there is a certain number of criminals out there that we just incarcerate all of them, then us good, law-abiding citizens will be safe, isn't that the theory? Except the problem is we often don't know how to distinguish the good law-abiding ones from the criminals. And sometimes those we thought were good and law-abiding behave like criminals. I was at a school in West Oakland where they undererrate pressure from the superintendent to raise test scores, raise test scores, and the school kept coming back saying our problem, our fundamental problem is we have too many disruptive students. And until you can help us solve the problem with disruptive students we can't teach and therefore test scores won't rise. So finally the superintendent was desperate, he said, okay, I'm going to assign a specially trained teacher to work with your most disruptive kids and we are going to put them in a separate wing of the building, on a separate schedule, so they don't interact with anyone else and then, you better be able to teach these kids, right? And they said, this will work. So they went around, they identified the biggest trouble makers in the school, came up with 22 African American males that all the teachers said were the biggest, most difficult children to work with and put them in this special room with an African American teacher, gave them an Afro-centric curriculum, promised them field trips and internships because they said they are going to make sure this is not a little prison, this is going to be a great opportunity; at least they promised those things. In fact, none of those things were delivered, took the kids a couple of days to realize they were really just being isolated from everyone else, so they quickly turned on this young inexperienced teacher, so it got ugly in that room very quickly. But the most interesting thing about the story is, that when I asked the teachers well how is your classroom now that they got rid of the most disruptive students, what do you think they said? New kids have emerged that previously weren't any trouble, and now they are acting out. And you know what they thought? They said, you know what we need, we need one more of those classrooms. We have just one more classroom for disruptive kids, then we could solve the problem here. And you can imagine where this would go. Eventually you would have a school full of isolated classrooms, no kids in the regular classroom, and still not much difference. Why? Because I pointed out to them, I said, you know I have been in the school and I noticed that some of your teachers never have a problem with disruptive students. Why don't we find out what they do. Why don't we ask them how it is that they are able to teach in a classroom without spending all their time yelling and sending kids out of the classroom. Why don't we actually learn from what works. It is amazing, we do very little of that in education. Learn from what works.

We have master teachers out there who know how to teach kids, all kinds of kids. But we rarely honor and recognize and learn from them. We even have schools that have shown us that it is possible to create learning environments where even poor kids can be very successful. And if you don't believe me, go to the Education Trust website, Education Trust is a national policy advocacy group based in Washington, DC. They have a website where you can get a document called "Dispelling the Myth"; on high performing, high poverty schools. And what you will find when you study the document and look at the findings from the research on these schools is that there are over 3,000 schools in the country, which is good news. But what's more, the existence of these schools is all the proof we need that the problem is not the children.

The problem is the way we treat the children. The problem is the fact that we don't do what it takes to create more such schools. And such schools end up being isolated and seen as exceptions and exceptional, therefore can't be replicated.

In too many of our schools they have in place what I call a normalization of failure. Failure has been normalized because the adults who work there blame failure on the parents. Blame it on the community, blame it on the kids themselves, or sometimes they get very politically sophisticated and they blame it on the governor, or they blame it on the President, or on global warming, or something else because they are looking for some place to point the finger; when in fact the schools that teach all kids well are people who don't point fingers at all; because they accept responsibility for the children they serve.

Such schools exist. I get to visit such schools. These are places where they focus on the quality of what they do. They're not satisfied by saying we have a program, they actually look for evidence: does the program work? These are schools that build strong relationships with parents and with care providers because they know that all parents can and must play a role to support their children and most will, if encouraged to do so. Because the vast majority of parents would rather see their kids succeed than fail. These are schools that have strategies to ensure that the needs of kids are being met, the needs of teachers are being supported, that there is a deliberate approach to what they do because they have created a culture that affirms the importance and the value of learning, so these are schools where it is cool to be smart. And again, I get to visit such schools throughout this country. And some of them serve kids in the projects and some serve recent immigrant kids who just came across the border and in all of these schools the background of the children is not seen as an obstacle.

I know Minnesota, like many communities, is in the midst of major demographic change, being brought about by immigration. Immigration is our history, we are a nation of immigrants and immigration is our future. I don't care how many fences they build, how many moats, how many guards they put on the border, immigrants will keep coming. They will come first of all because we need them. So ironic that we don't like to admit that our economy is dependent upon immigrant labor. The same people who sometimes are the most opposed to immigrants have nannies at home who can't speak English who just arrived. Have someone cutting their grass who just came in and may not even have a green card. Because whole industries in construction, in restaurants, in hotels, in agriculture are dependent upon immigrant labor because those industries do not pay wages that Americans will accept, do not offer benefits, and therefore we rely on those who are so desperate that they will take the jobs Americans consider too dirty. So immigrants will come. And our major corporations will make sure they come, whether or not they come illegally or we adopt a guest work or walker program, they will come. For the same reason that immigrants have always come, to improve their lives. And they will come because conditions in their own countries are so bad, that they would rather risk crossing a border, risk going through the desert risk riding on an inner tube across the Gulf of Mexico in the hope that things might be better if they get here.

Think about the risk involved to so many immigrants, to go to communities where they know ahead of time people don't like them, where they don't speak the language, where they are going to have to work hard as hell to make it, and we scorn those people, and we scorn their children, and blame them for soaking up resources, never acknowledging the incredible contribution they make to this country, building this country as they always have.

(RECORDING BRIEFLY STOPPED/ TAPE CHANGE)

Immigrant kids in our schools are over-represented amongst our most successful and our most at-risk. Today if you look at every single major university, all the Ivy's, MIT, Stanford, you will find that close to a third or more of the undergraduates are recent immigrants; and they typically out perform US-born children of any race. And you will also find that in every doctoral program in physics, in math, in computer science, 70-80% of the doctoral students are also immigrants. Because American students don't want PhDs in those fields, they want MBAs. So all our engineers and scientists, if it weren't for those immigrants none of that research and development would happen here. But it is also true that immigrants are over-represented amongst the kids who are most at-risk, who are dropping out, particularly Latino immigrants. And what is important to recognize is they drop out not to hang out on the corner and drink, they drop out because they have a pressure and a responsibility to work. They take the same strong work ethic that leads some to go to MIT and put it to work in our fast food restaurants and gas stations and elsewhere. And they leave school because they can see the writing on the wall and they know that this education is not leading anywhere and if you are 16 and still can't speak English and can't do the work, then chances are you probably are not going to go to college and if you can do the work, and you are bright and capable but you are undocumented, then you also know you can't go to college, so the incentive to stay in school is gone and so those kids end up dropping out. And here is the tragedy and the irony; the fastest growing segment of our population today in this country are Latinos. If you look at the birthrate patterns, Latinos will be the fastest growing population for many, many years to come.

Latinos are more likely to be poor than any other ethnic group in this county, and also more likely to be employed. Ironic that you could be both employed and poor at the same time. Well, it is because they are employed at the lowest wage jobs, which means that what we are creating in this country are apartheid-like conditions. Where a certain class of people will be trapped almost permanently, especially if they don't get access to education to doing the dirty work. Hardly the American dream that Mann and Jefferson and others talked about education providing.

We know that in many schools that if the kids that come to us who are fluent in their native language that do the best. Not only fluent but literate, because if you are literate in the language you speak then your ability to acquire English is much greater. Because we use our first language as the bridge to acquire the second language. We also know that kids who come to us illiterate in that native language often end up semi-literate in both languages by the time they finish our schools. Because we live in a country that doesn't value language difference. In fact we are passing English-only laws. English that is all we are going to take here, only one, English. We think us American's can't handle more than one. Those Canadians, they can do two; those crazy Canadians they can do French and English, but not us, we just go with English.

I was in Curaçao, the average person in Curaçao speaks four. They speak Spanish, Dutch, Papiamentu, and English. They think it is a good thing to speak more than one language. So with a group of students in Philadelphia recently I asked, how many of you can speak more than one language? The only kids that could speak more than one language was one kid from Morocco who could speak seven, and one kid from South Africa who could speak eight languages.

At a time when our economy is globalized, increasingly, we've got to engage in trade and commerce with other nations...speaking more than one language is a good thing. Adopting laws that ensure we will only speak one, not a wise idea. But that is the path we are on. And that's unfortunately what contributes to so many of the problems that immigrant children experience in schools. Because when you live in a society and when you live in a community where immigrants are seen as a threat where they are not valued, then children who are acculturated, because they will acculturate anyway; once you are here you will acculturate. You will acculturate by watching TV, you will acculturate by playing on the playground.

Well, as you are acculturating, you often become estranged from your parents, and we know that many adolescents become estranged from the parents anyway. That is the nature of adolescence, right?...is to become estranged from your parents. Well, when you compound that with the fact that you no longer speak the language of your parents or you are embarrassed to speak that language, in fact you are embarrassed by everything your parents do. Now, again, that is something that is common amongst

teenagers, right? Then you end up with kids who no longer have connections either to their families or to the adults who serve them. And guess what happens to those kids? They become prime candidates for gangs. And in many of our communities what we are seeing is a surge of gang membership amongst recent immigrants. Amongst Salvadorans, amongst Mexicans, and not just those, there are Indian Crips in Milpitas, CA. You think Indians are the nerds, they are the one's who have Indian Crips in Milpitas. You have Cambodian Bloods in LA. Why? Because as is always been true, immigrants who are marginalized and estranged and who are picked upon and bullied will seek out means to protect themselves, and will seek out groups where they can find a sense of belonging. And so we have got to realize if we are concerned about gangs and we are concerned about the lack of safety in our communities, then we have got to do a better job at integrating those immigrants and making them feel like they are a part of this country. Because it has always been the case that our schools play a role in socializing and acculturating new immigrants. And if we don't continue to do that job, we will find our society even more divided, more polarized than ever before.

So we have got to be very attentive to what we are doing in our schools and our communities to serve the needs of immigrant parents, how we are working with their families, do we have people on staff that can communicate, that can speak the language, that can serve as a bridge to those communities, because if we don't what we will find is that instead of immigrants being a resource, a source of growth and revitalization for our communities, it will be a source of discord and conflict. Not a good thing.

We know too, that if we are going to create the kinds of schools we need and go beyond the slogans of No Child Left Behind, we are going to have to create schools that have the capacity to respond to children's needs. Now I think I am running out of time so I am going to go faster than I had intended and talk about how to create the kind of community partnerships that are so critical.

I will start by saying that there are good examples out there, across the country and if we have time for questions and answers, I can give some very concrete examples of where this is happening, what is occurring that we could learn from that you could bring to the Twin Cities. But the first thing, again, is to recognize that schools can't do it all alone and therefore since they can't we are going to have to devise policies that bring the resources to school. Particularly schools that serve poor communities have to function more like community centers than schools alone. Because they have to have social workers on site, they have got to have doctors and optometrists who come to the site to serve the needs of kids and sometimes even their families because if you don't do that, you put that burden on teachers. And teachers can't teach content and address social and emotional and health needs of children simply not their expertise and simply unfair and too great a burden. So we have to build these kind of partnerships.

Now there are models for these full-service schools now throughout the country. Too many of these models are isolated. Children's Aid Society in New York has created 10 such schools where you have a full-range of services that do not fall on the back of the principal or the teachers, they have got other personnel with the expertise providing after school care because they know again that children who come from families that are struggling and working hard need to be in a safe environment for longer periods of time. The thing is that this costs money. But, the money invested in creating such schools is money well spent because it is money that therefore does not have to be spent on emergency rooms. It is money that doesn't have to be spent on incarcerating people because you would engage in prevention work. So I encourage you to talk to your leaders in local government, because local government has to play a role. In the cities where these efforts are being supported, like Chicago, for example, it is typically because there are mayors and elected officials who aren't in charge of schools who have taken it on. Who have a broader vision of what it takes to educate children. And don't think it is simply up to the schools to do the job.

These are cities that recognize that the foundation to a healthy community, and I point out to people, talk to your real estate agents. Real estate agents will let you know that the quality of the schools has direct bearing on property values. So even if you are a senior citizen and don't have any kids in schools, you have an interest in assuring that there is good education being provided because your property values depend on it.

Now, I could also point out your Social Security also depends on it. Because if we don't have productive young people working, guess what, you are going to be in trouble, all of us will in retirement. So we have to have a bigger vision, and I'm calling it civic capacity building because we have to see our schools as being at the core of the social infrastructure in our communities. These are institutions that have the ability to serve needs of children because children require to go there by law and because many poor families rely on their schools, even if not for an education, for food, for some degree of health care, for stability, for warmth in the winter, and we've got to recognize that schools can do more if they are given the support to address these other needs.

And so I would also encourage you to think about how we can enlist the private sector to support our schools. But it is very important that we have a very clear sense of what we want when we approach the private sector to engage in partnerships with schools. There is a school, for example, in Atlanta that serves homeless children and they have a partnership with Target so every year kids get new sneakers, new clothes, in the winter time new coats, and Target gets good publicity. And we know that our businesses like good publicity.

So let's figure out how to be creative in engaging our broader community, and I have to add here, that one of the constituencies that we cannot leave out if we want this to work are the kids themselves.

I was in New Bedford, MA, they had a huge problem there with youth/juvenile homicides. They asked me to come in and help them figure out what was going on and devise a plan with the community. They brought together the courts, they brought the police department, the school district, and mayor's office, the churches, every major constituency was in the room talking about what to do about juvenile violence except the kids. I said, how ironic, the people who are killing themselves are not the ones here, and do we even know why so many young people are being killed in New Bedford? And they looked around and said, no. I said, do you really think we can solve this without them? And most of what we are trying to address, whether it be achievement in schools, or drop out rates, or gangs, you cannot solve unless you actually directly engage young people. First of all to figure out what is going on and secondly, what might work as a response to this problem. So have the courage to talk to young people and to include them in leadership roles.

Be sure that as you engage in this kind of planning that you set clear, measurable goals with benchmarks so that you can know whether or not what you are doing is leading to genuine improvement, whether or not you are actually making progress and not spinning your wheels, otherwise people are going to say why are we spending this money? Why invest public dollars or private dollars in efforts where there is no evidence that it is working. So the kind of data you collect at the beginning and that you monitor and use to guide your efforts can be very important for ensuring accountability. Accountability is important. Transparency is important. Quality control is important. And you can only do that if you get good data, and you can monitor good data on the effectiveness of your efforts. You have also got to make sure that as you develop your plan you have an ability to finance that plan, because if you don't have a long-term strategy for sustaining your efforts what you will find is that good works get undone by unstable funding. And over and over again many of us can say, you know back in the 70s we had a really great program here. What happened? Well, we stopped funding it. And people can often recite and remember programs that were working that we no longer have simply because we cease to support them. And so we need to figure out ways how do we stabilize funding, so we can ensure that good work, and it should be good work that is measurable and that we have evidence to support can be sustained over time. And we can do that by either enacting laws as they have done in San Francisco and Oakland, for example, where there are laws in place now that ensure that 5% of the general fund of the city budget goes to youth services, can't be touched. So that ensures stability and funding for youth services, and you can do it by linking some of these efforts to economic development activities. So that the activities themselves are generating funds to support themselves. And I could talk about some ways you can do that too.

It is very important that you have a means to coordinate various jurisdictions, the school district, and mayor's office, the county, because you can't do those things, I'm looking at Judith who is trying. You end up with turf battles, you end up with competing agendas, you end up with politicians who make great speeches and do nothing to follow-through because they are much more concerned about whether or not

their voters will support this larger effort. And so we can't allow our politics to undermine the work that we know is so important, we have got to have a means to circumvent and rise beyond small agendas so that the larger needs of this community take precedent and priority.

Key principles that are important to be reflected in these plans and in your efforts, because what we are really talking about is building a safety net here in the Twin Cities to support young people. A safety net that can make up for what families can't provide. A safety net that can make it possible for schools to be more effective at meeting the needs of the children they serve; and a safety net that brings resources into schools and to children and their families so that we are engaged in prevention work, rather than waiting for problems to arise to react to them. And one of the key principles has to be that of empowerment. We have to be willing to empower young people and their families because if we view this as missionary work—as we do this—as charity, then all we do is reinforce dependency, and nothing changes.

We have got to invest and provide resources that give people the tools to take greater responsibility for their lives. And you can do that by first of all engaging in discussions over goals and plans, there is a community organization I refer you to: Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston. It is the first example I know of in the country of a blighted urban area that has been revitalized without displacing poor people. Because most revitalization efforts involve getting rid of poor people. The Dudley neighborhood in Roxbury has been revitalized, a major turn around, you can read a book called "Streets of Hope" which documents this turn around through the leadership that was cultivated in the Dudley neighborhood, and through partnerships that were established between local foundations, city government, to ensure that that community development organization had support. They made an effort, for example, in Dudley to ensure that all constituencies in Dudley were represented, because this is a community that has Latinos, African Americans, Cape Verdeans and elderly Irish people who did not leave when their kids did. And so they make sure that all of those constituents as well as churches and businesses are represented on that local development corporation, because they want everyone to feel represented. And majority rule, sometimes, does not ensure that.

And so if you look at Dudley and look at the efforts that they have engaged in, what you see is an empowered community that is now better able to advocate for itself and addresses problems not through handouts, but through its own efforts. A much better model for eliminating poverty.

We know that we also have provide links between poor people and particularly poor kids and individuals and institutions with power and resources. Sociologists call this building social capital and it's the social capital that creates ties between the poor and those with wealth and resources and knowledge and information that helps poor people to become less poor. I give you an example, again, comes from Boston, of Citizen Schools. Citizen Schools is an initiative that brings adults who don't work in schools and they work as mentors with kids in schools and outside of schools because what they are trying to do is give these young people access to influential adults who not only teach them things like, what it is like to work in a law firm or what it is like to be a professor or a doctor or an accountant, but also people can end up writing letters of recommendation who can end up referring them for jobs, who can end up letting them know when there are openings because a part of what you need when you are poor is access. And you need someone who can open doors for you.

So think creatively. How do we create linkages between communities that are presently isolated by virtual poverty with communities that have resources and have the ability to provide support. We need to make sure that even as we put greater resources into schools, we also provide those schools with the support they need so principals who increasingly are going to be expected to act as CEOs because they have got to manage these large complex organizations, have the support they need. The principalship is increasingly one of the most difficult and demanding jobs in the country. I am worried because we were trying to create a program for principals when I was teaching at Harvard and we created a long list of all the things we felt principals needed to know and we said, you know what, to know all of these things you have to be in grad school for about eight years. And right now most principals don't get nearly the level of preparation they need to do the jobs they are doing and so we end up with people who are floundering and who are trying their best, but they need more help in how to manage these complex organizations.

And again, there are people out there with managerial experience who could help them to do this if we provided that kind of support and reinforcement.

We need to make sure that there are always evaluations built into what we do so we have quality control and so that we are not lapsing into the same kinds of low standards and inefficiency that characterizes too many poverty programs in the past. This is a list of interventions that are working around the country, I don't have time to elaborate on them now, and this is just a set of strategies that I want to close with that we've got to employ young people to help young people become more successful. We have got to demystify for them what it takes to be successful in school. There are a lot of kids who don't know what an "A" paper looks like, never seen an "A" paper. We need to show them. Show them an "A" paper, show them why it is an "A" paper, explain it to them, and demystify it. We need to teach kids, particularly poor kids who are not white and middle class; what my friend Lisa Delpit calls the codes of power. And one of the codes of power, are knowing when to speak standard English, when it is time to pull up your pants and take the hood off your head, because if you don't know those things you will find opportunity denied, because you look like someone who might rob me and therefore I am not going to hire you. And while that might not be fair, young people need to know that life is not fair and that people make judgments about them all the time, and the more equipped they are to be able to transgress these borders that separate us in society, the better chance they will have of being able to take care of themselves and their families. We need to make sure we speak to young people very early about their futures. Because here is a basic and simple truth about kids: Kids who think they are going somewhere behave differently than kids who think they are going nowhere.

I have a colleague, Kristin Luker, Kristin Luker has been studying teen pregnancy for several years now, wrote a book called *Dubious Conceptions*. She asked herself a question: why is it that middle class girls are less likely to have babies as teenagers than poor girls? The answer to that question through her research is not about sex. Sex *is* involved. But middle class girls are having sex, too. The difference is college. If you think you are going to college you think having a baby at 15 is a bad idea. If you are going nowhere in your 15-year-old head, you can rationalize the decision to have the child. If we want our kids to make different choices, we have to give them something concrete to aspire to, and we have to do that not in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, but much, much earlier. Where we plant the seeds and show them what it takes to go to college, what it takes to get a career that will enable you to support yourself. What kinds of occupations are available to you?

There is a community, and I'll close with this, just outside of West Palm Beach called Belle Glade. Belle Glade is a very, very poor community, most of the families have no indoor plumbing, dirt roads. Belle Glade produces more professional football players than any community in the United States in the last 15 years. If we wanted to get pharmacists and doctors and engineers out of Belle Glade, we could get them too. But we value football players. So we make sure kids who show potential in football, get the support they need. If the Twin Cities were interested in producing talent from the young people you have today, if you recognize that your future as a community rests on what you do now for children, then I encourage you to get very creative and very courageous in taking the steps you need to take to ensure your own future.

I wish you the best, thank you.

### **Closing remarks by Michael Resnick, Ph.D.**

They liked it! And Gisa would like it. Gisa Konopka would like what you said, she would like how you said it, and we appreciate that you just didn't stop with painting a stark portrait of the problems of our kids. You talked about pathways to success and how to make a difference. The importance of evidence-based strategies, benchmarks, coordinated sustained efforts, the involvement of all sectors, a coherent safety net, true partnership, empowerment, preparation for life. Thank you.