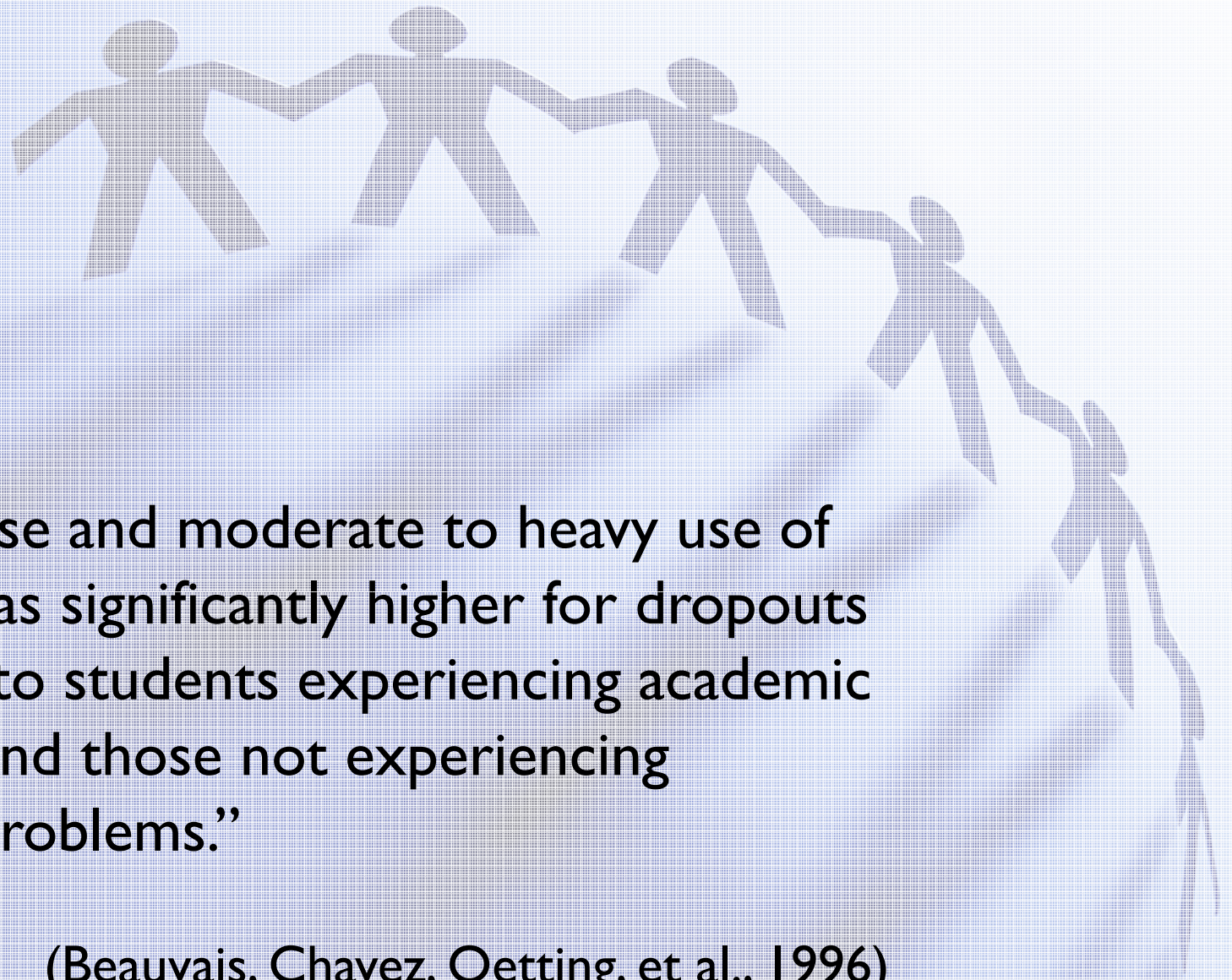# First Trust, Then Participation: Connecting Native Families to Their Children's Education

Dawn M. Mackety, Ph.D.

"Education and the Native American Student" Webinar Series
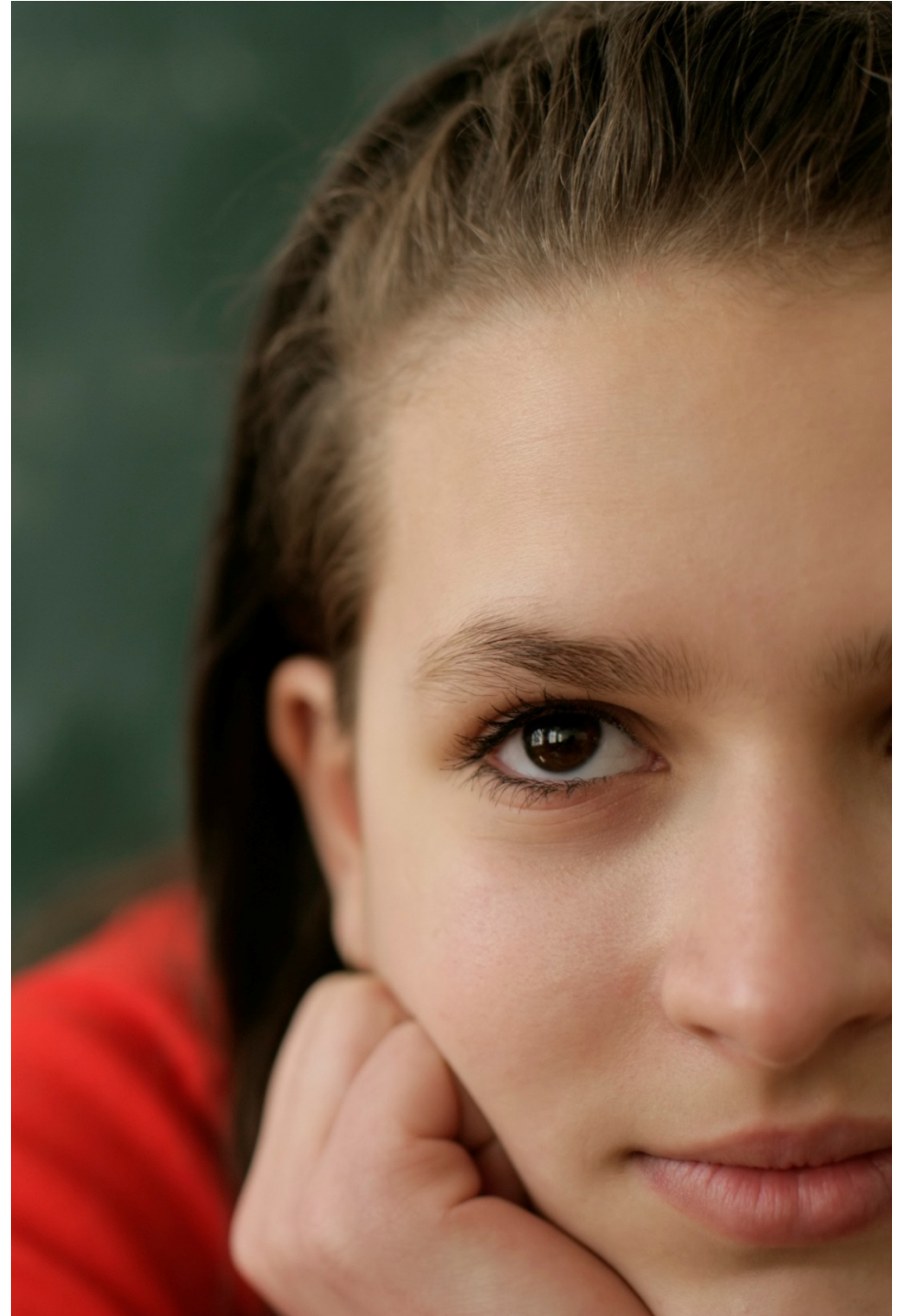National Indian Education Association & Native American Center for Excellence

9/12/2012

"Lifetime use and moderate to heavy use of all drugs was significantly higher for dropouts compared to students experiencing academic problems and those not experiencing academic problems."

(Beauvais, Chavez, Oetting, et al., 1996)
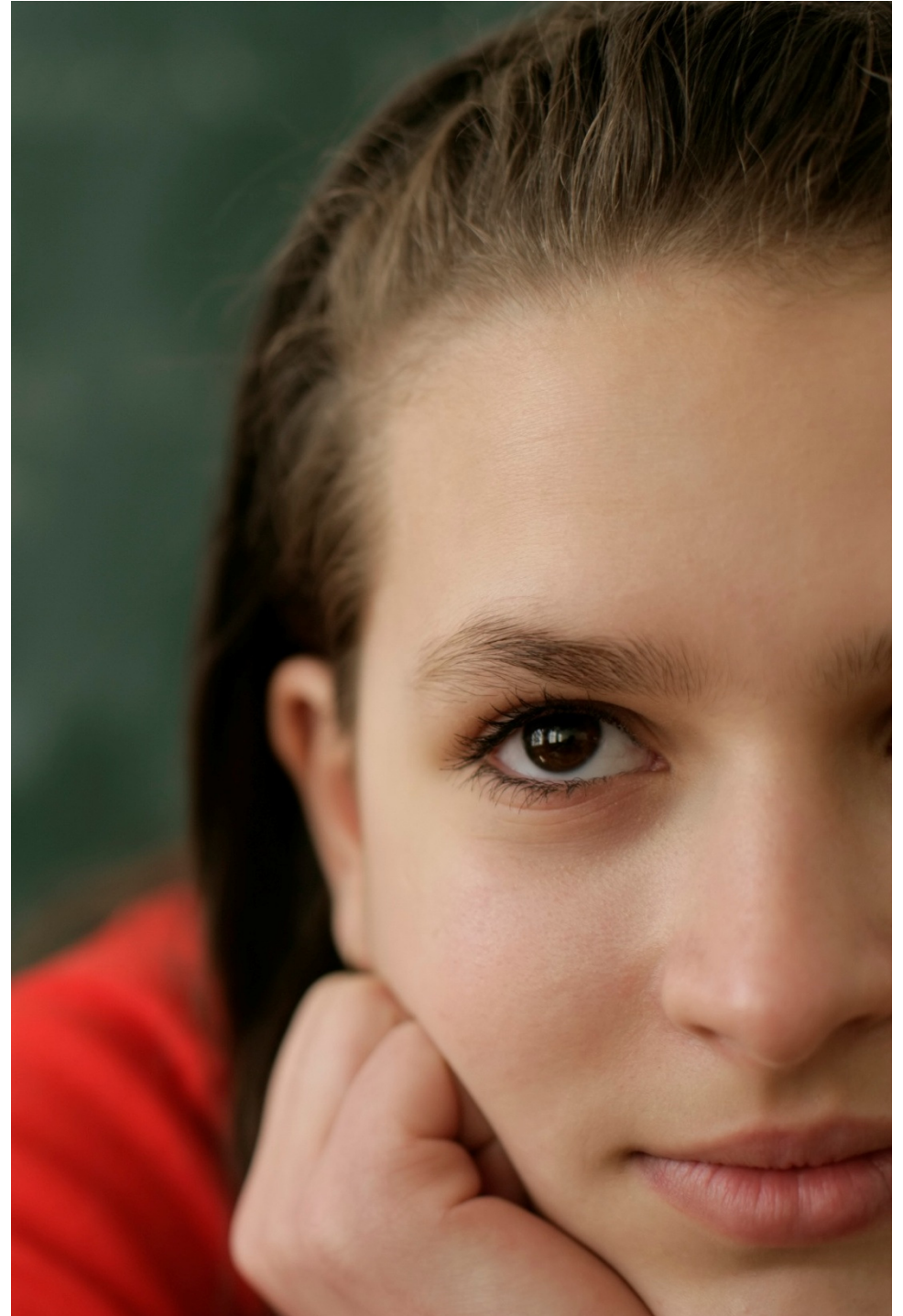Three school districts, five reservations in SW-USA

Overview

- Family engagement and student achievement

- Types of engagement

- Barriers to engagement

- Ways to encourage engagement

- Tips to keep them coming back

Overview

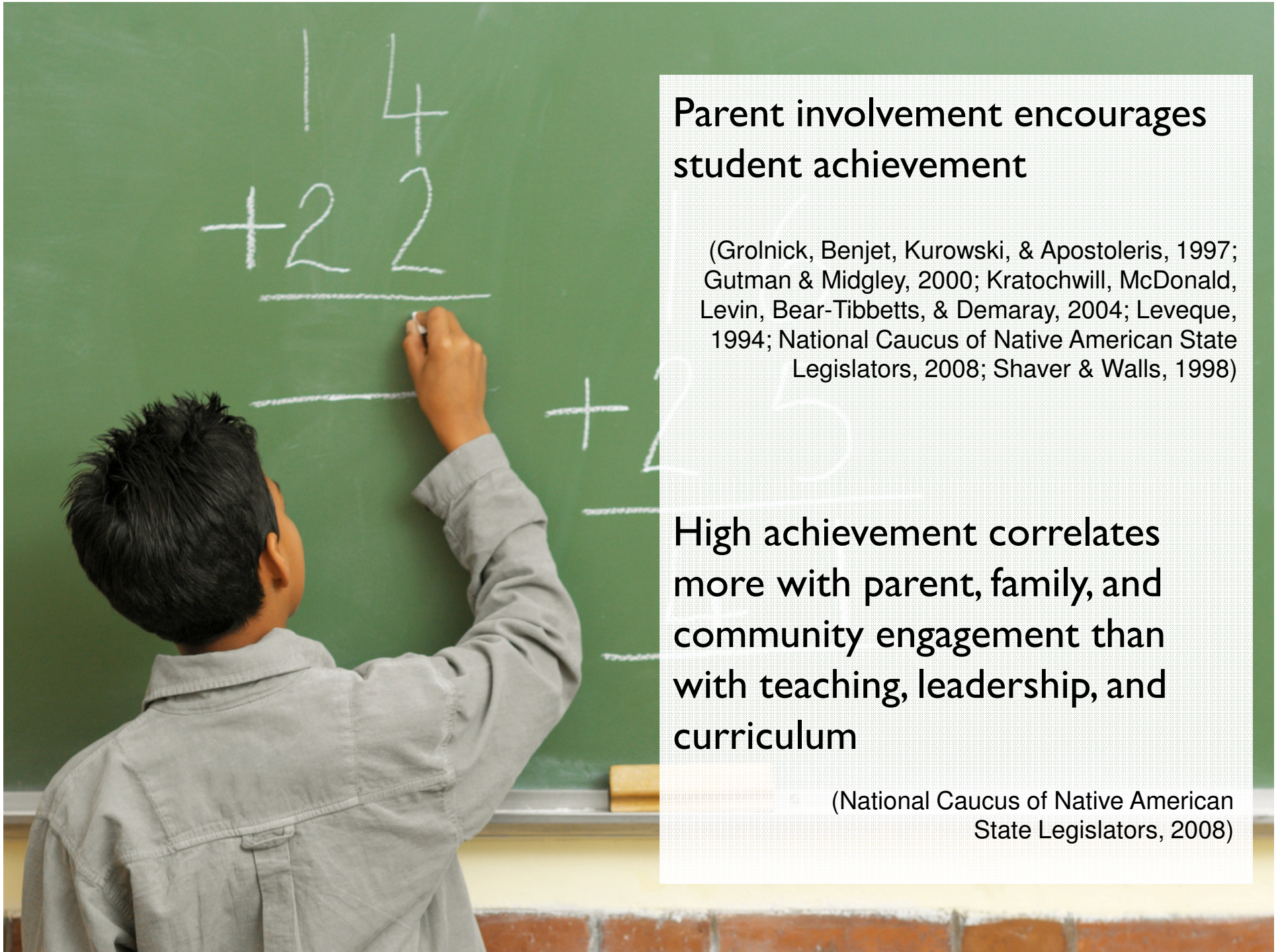- **Family engagement and student achievement**

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Parent involvement encourages student achievement

(Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Kratochwill, McDonald, Levin, Bear-Tibbetts, & Demaray, 2004; Leveque, 1994; National Caucus of Native American State Legislators, 2008; Shaver & Walls, 1998)

High achievement correlates more with parent, family, and community engagement than with teaching, leadership, and curriculum

(National Caucus of Native American State Legislators, 2008)

Students whose families participate in schools show significant improvement in behavior and academic outcomes

(Kratochwill, McDonald, Levin, Bear-Tibbetts, & Demaray, 2004)

Support from parents, family, relatives, and the community improves student resilience and persistence

(LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, & Whitbeck, 2006; Teufel-Shone, Siyuja, Watahomigie, & Irwin, 2006)

Caring families who support education are the most important reason Native students persist in school
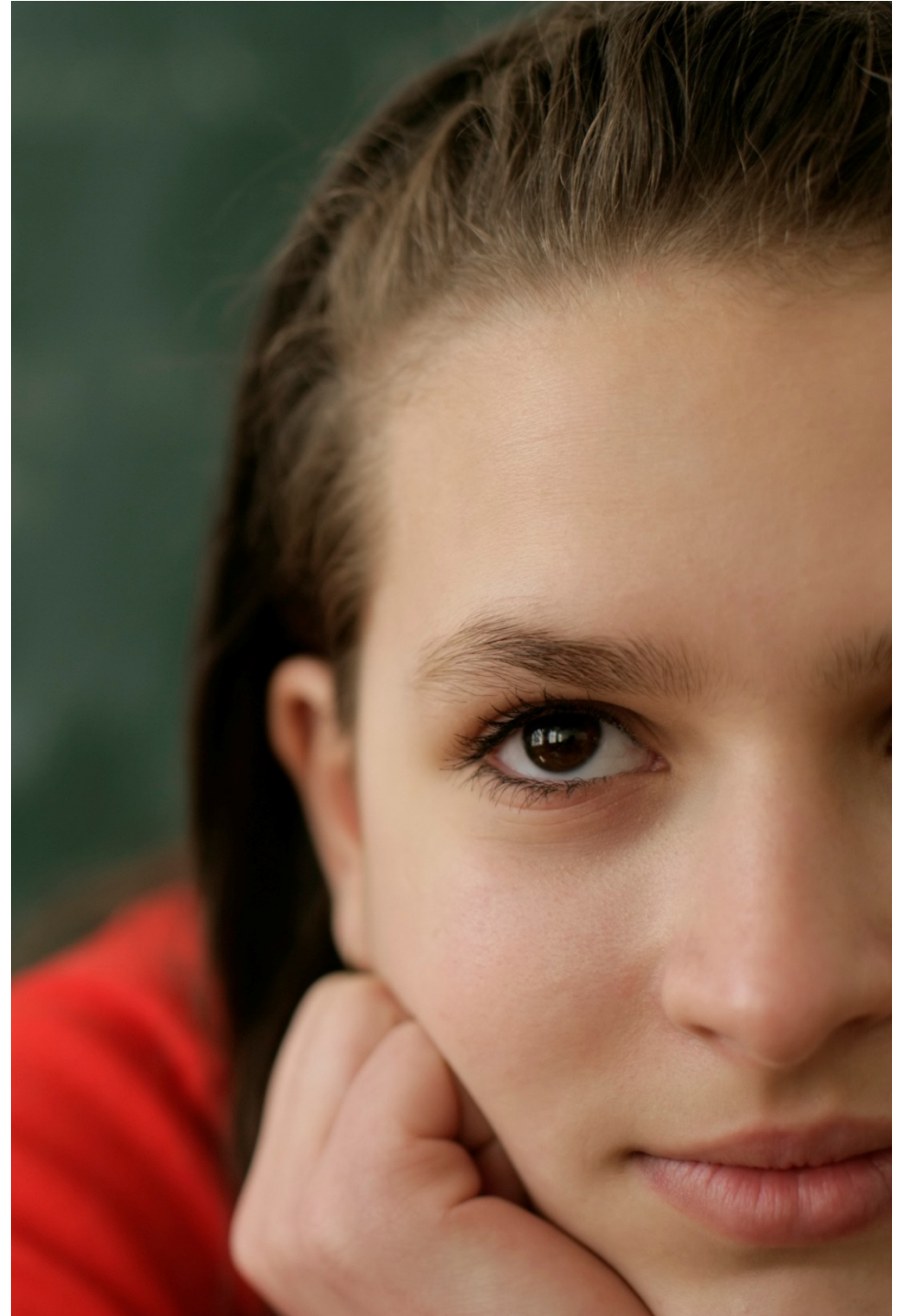
(Taggart, 2001)

The most successful schools include the community and incorporate Native culture, knowledge, and expertise into daily school life

(Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001)

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Why Parents Get Engaged

- Help child succeed, build confidence

- Connect with the school

- Build relations with staff

- Volunteer

- Respond to an invitation

- Attend school events

- Monitor progress

- Fix a problem

(Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008)

School-Oriented Engagement

- Communicating about children

- Attending student-centered events

- Volunteering

- Advocating for children

(Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008)

Home-Oriented Engagement

- Showing interest

- Helping with school work

- Encouraging, rewarding

- Reading

- Meeting children's needs

- Involving extended family, community

(Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008)

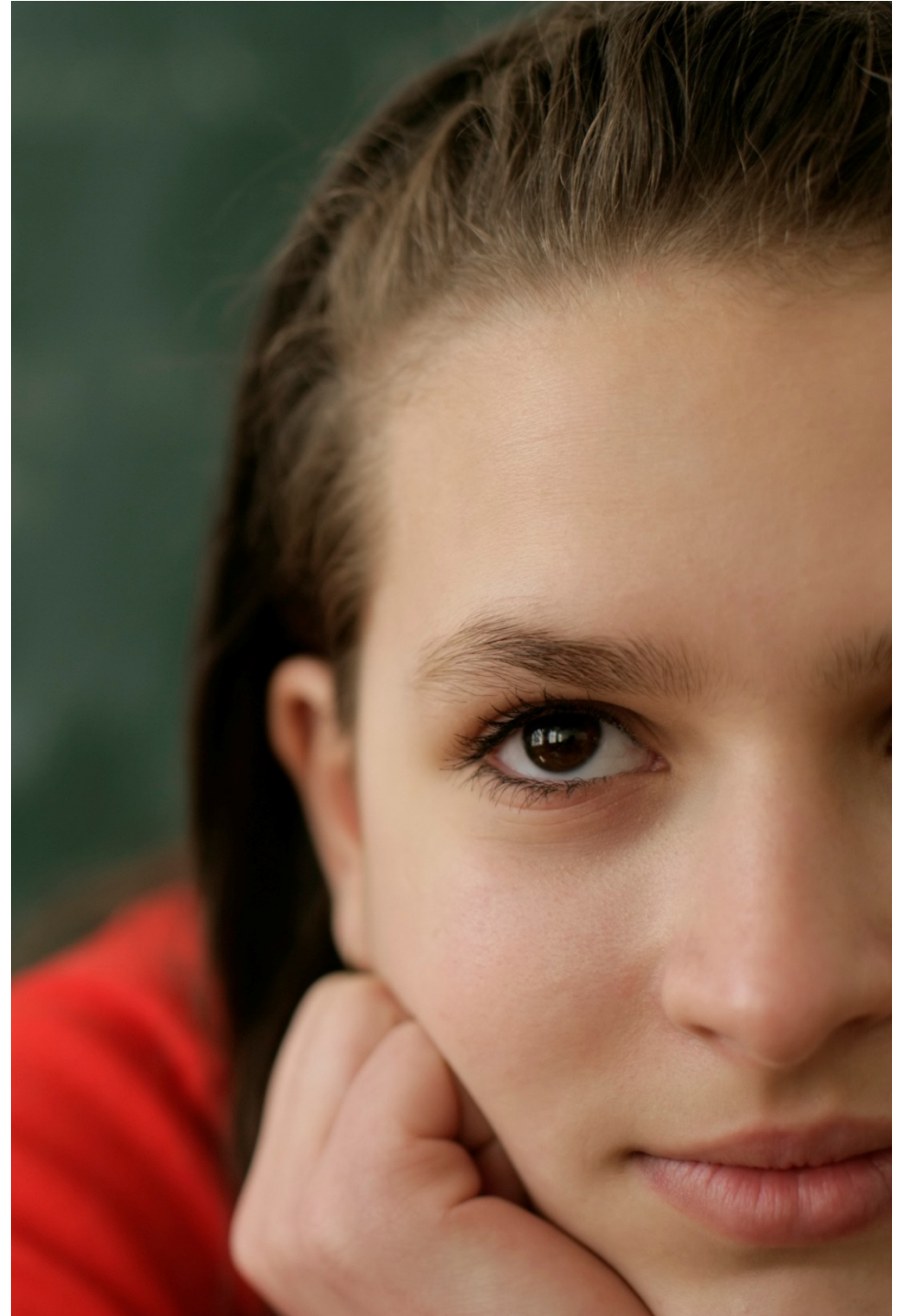Home-based involvement occurs more often than school-based involvement.

It's the <u>quality</u> of parent involvement, not the <u>quantity</u>, that ultimately determines academic success.

(Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007)

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Barriers

Mobility

(Zehr, 2007)

Personal and family needs come first

(Ward, 2005)

Schools are too big, crowded, far away, intimidating

(Deloria & Wildcat, 2001;
Reyhner, 1992; Ward, 2005)

Unwelcoming School Environment

Difficulty breaking into established groups, relationships, routines

Unable to "negotiate the system"

Feeling intimidated, unwelcome

Being interrupted, ignored

Others' lack of respect

Uncomfortable with teacher, staff, other parents

Negative communications

Fear of making mistakes, failing

Perceptions of racism, discrimination

Lack of confidence

(Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008)

Prior Negative Experiences

Lack of exposure to good models of parent involvement

Lack of exposure to stable families

Failed attempts

Forced assimilation

"Cultural memory"

Children's negative experiences

(Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008)

Boarding Schools

"A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one. I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead.
Kill the Indian in him,
and save the man."

--Colonel Richard H. Pratt, 1892

(Wilkinson & Biggs, 1977)

Historical trauma produced by a boarding school experience in the family history may negatively influence parent involvement.

(Sanderson, 2011)
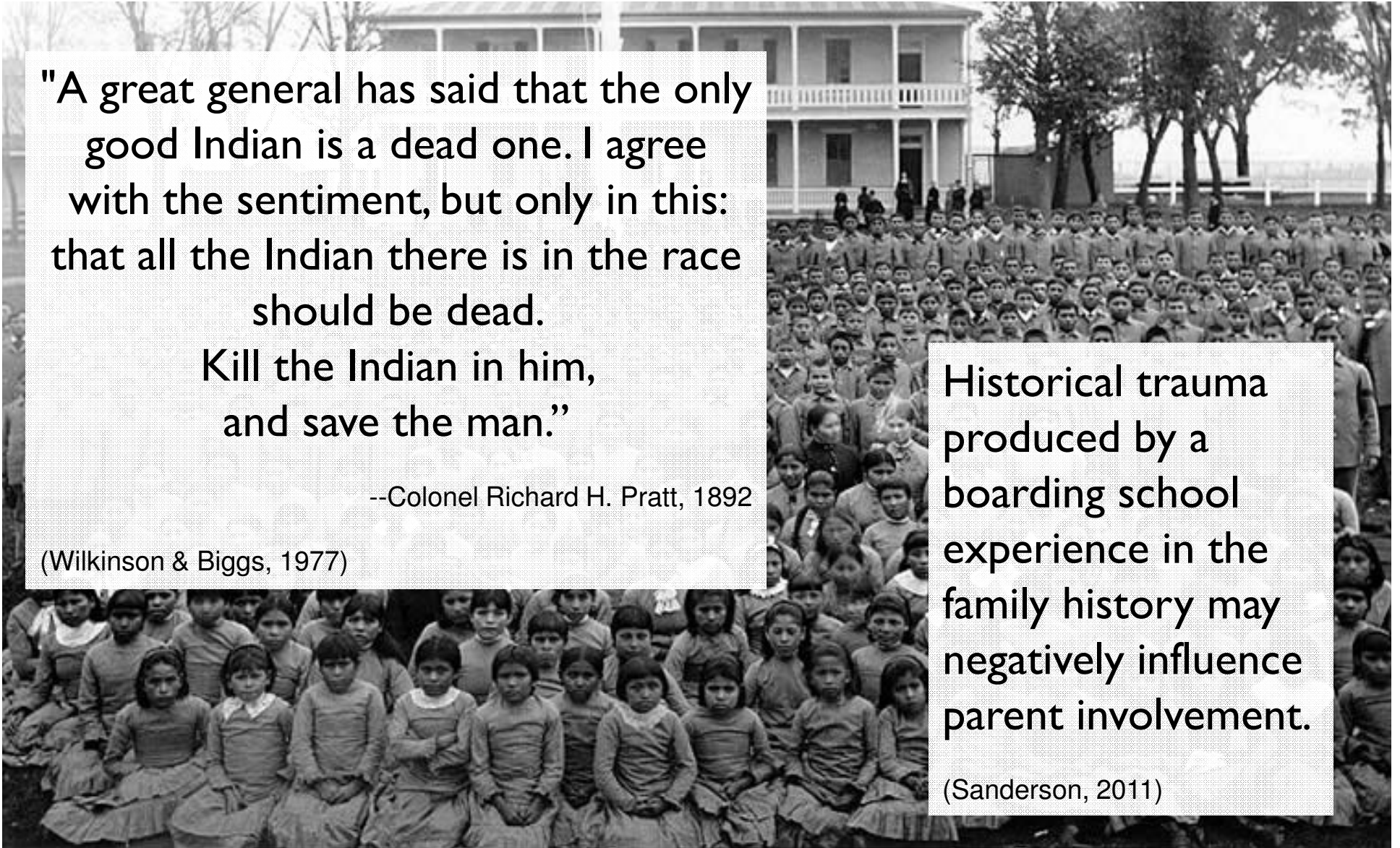
Cultural Discontinuity & Insensitivity

- Overrepresentation of Indian students in special education

- Schools named after individuals who supported Native oppression

- Inaccurate portrayal of Native history

- Alienates parents, confuses children

(Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008)

Different Communication Styles

- Unsure how to act appropriately

- Being interrupted

- Lack of "proper" English

- Extreme shyness

- Need for interpersonal relationship

- Cultural tendency to withdraw, avoid conflict, disengage if uncomfortable, avoid eye contact

- Encourage children to "walk away" from a problem

- Stories rather than short answers

(Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008)

Home-Oriented Barriers

- Lack of phones, electricity, access

- Substance abuse, domestic issues, incarceration

- Scheduling, time

- Transportation

- Family size, childcare

- Financial issues

- Too far from school

(Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008)

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Positive Communication & Climate

- Positive notes about children

- Open-door policy

- Positive, personal correspondence

- Recruit, retain Indian staff, volunteers

- Safe, positive school climate

(Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008)

Cultural Relevance

- Cultural curricula & programs

- Culturally competent staff

- Family culture clubs

- Parents present in classrooms

- Staff respect parents' cultural, educational values

(Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008)

Relationships

- Friendly, genuine parent-staff relationships

- Personal encouragement, invitations

- Liaison to welcome & assist

- Listen

- Build trust

(Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008)

Family Friendly

- Acknowledge family strengths

- Family events

- Dinners

- Resource centers

- Afterschool activities

- Carpooling

- Childcare

(Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008)

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Role of Cultural Programs

Having cultural programs in the school encourages parent involvement…

Even if Native students don't identify with their culture.

(Powers, 2006)

Involve Tribal Members

- Tribal afterschool study hall

- School-tribe dinners

- Culture, language curriculum

- Elders volunteer in classrooms

- Tribal members on hiring teams

- Tribal members & school staff PD

(Bruce & Edwards, 2009)

Engage from the Inside Out

- **Inside-out approach**: first trust, then programs

- **Expand parent roles**: <u>from</u> parents supporting <u>to</u> parents participating

- **Shared leadership**: embed ownership in the community

- **Beyond academics**: academics are a means not an end

(Kushman & Barnhardt, 2001)

Invite Partners

- Tribal education departments

- Native community centers

- State Native education associations

- State Native education advisory councils

- Native parent advisory councils

- Regional Comprehensive Centers

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Miigwetch (Thank You)

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