



CHRISTENSEN  
INSTITUTE

# Who You Know

Innovations that Enrich & Expand Networks

@juliaffreeland

@ChristensenInst

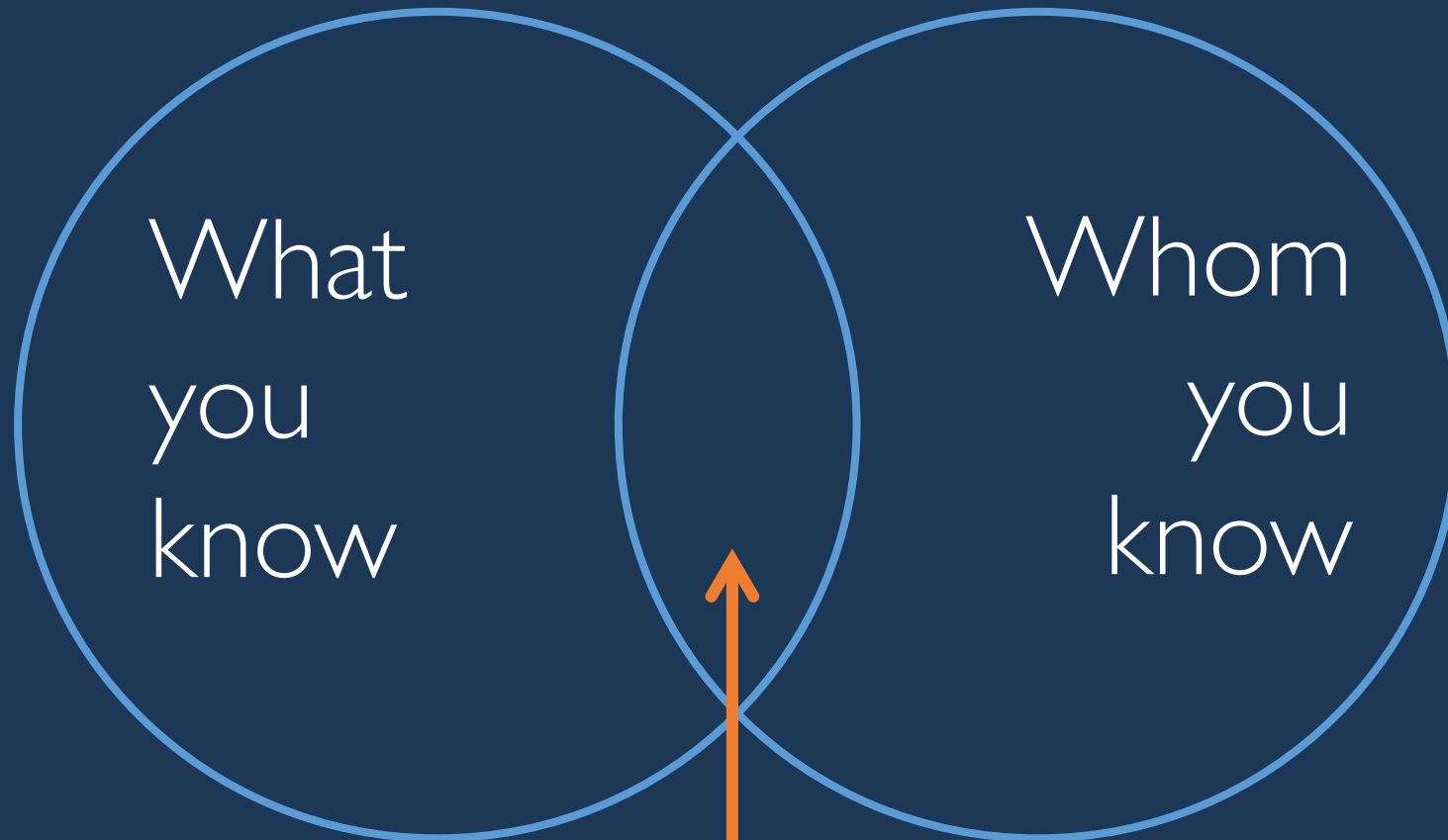
How did you get here?

Who helped you?



1. Why networks matter
2. Data on uneven access to relationships
3. Emerging innovations that enrich and expand connections in young people's lives
4. ~~Q & A~~ Q & Q & A





Opportunity



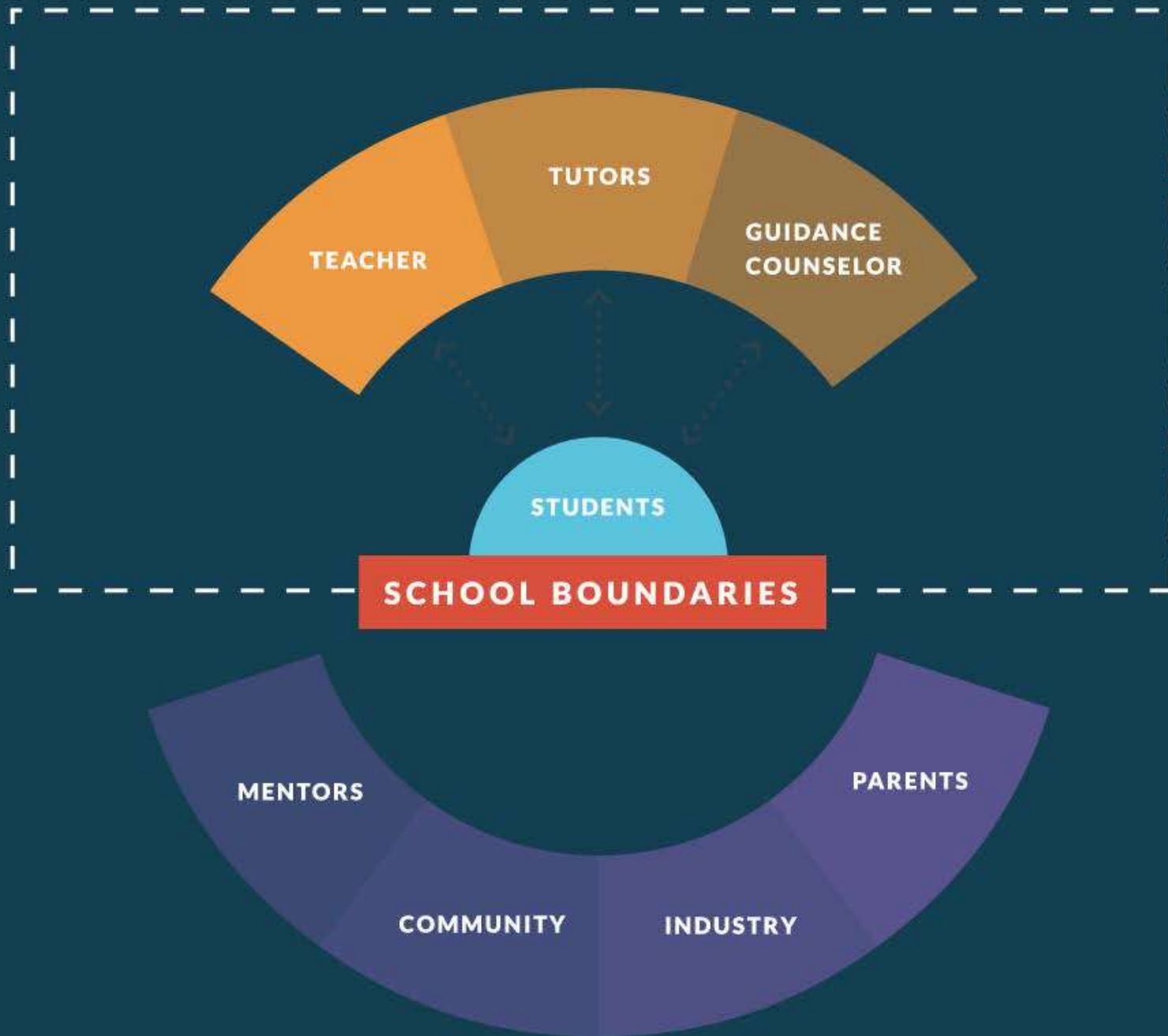
“a miniature community, and embryonic society”

What  
students  
know

Who  
students  
know

Opportunity





“The clearest message that we get from  
this 75-year study is this: **50%!**”  
“Social ties boost survival by 50%!”  
- relationships keep us  
- Holt-Lunstad, 2017  
happier and healthier. Period.”

- Robert Waldinger on  
Harvard's Grant &

Glueck study



50%

of jobs come through  
personal connections





# What is social capital?

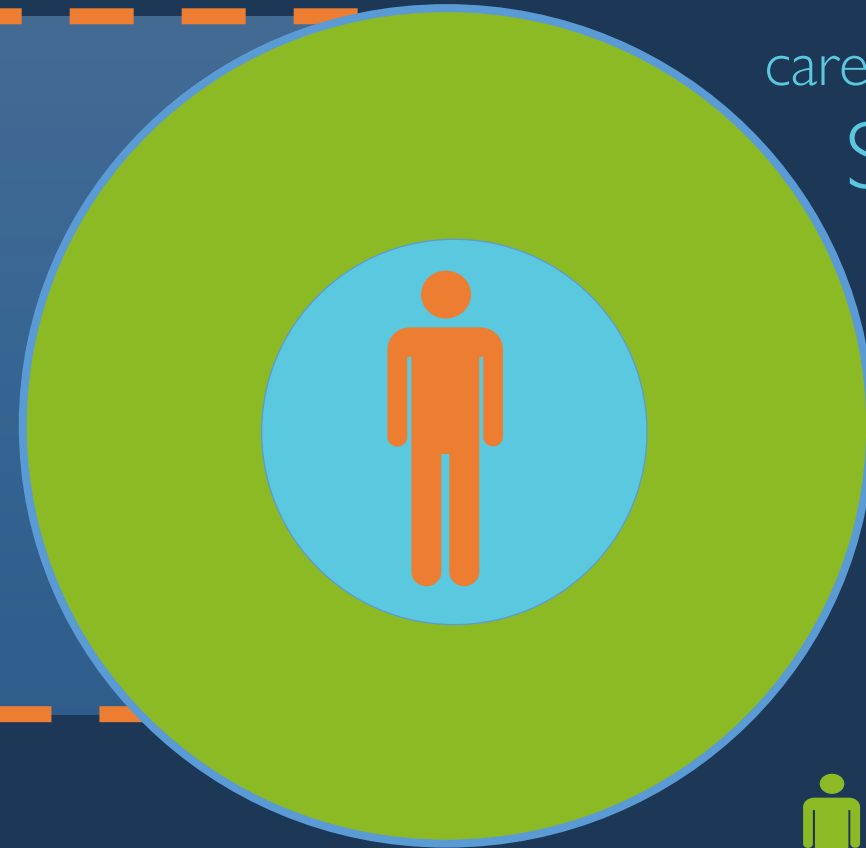
Social networks have value.

Connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that human investment in social relations with expected returns in crisis conditions that – Robert Putnam – can further their potential and the marketplace. – Ian Lin

their goals, as those goals emerge and inevitably shift over time.



# Relationships



care, resources

Strong Ties



Weak Ties

new information,  
opportunities

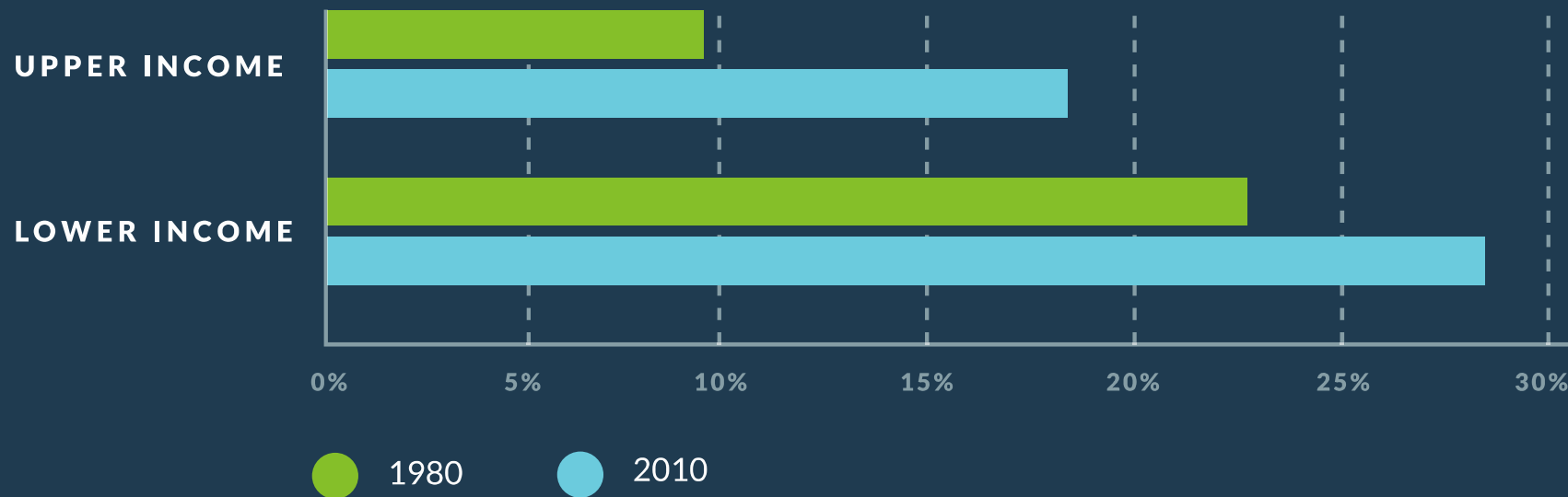


Because of a wide range of social and political factors  
(housing policy, geography, income differences, racial  
discrimination, tax policy and institutional designs)

young people report **unequal access to  
relationships**

# We are living farther apart by income

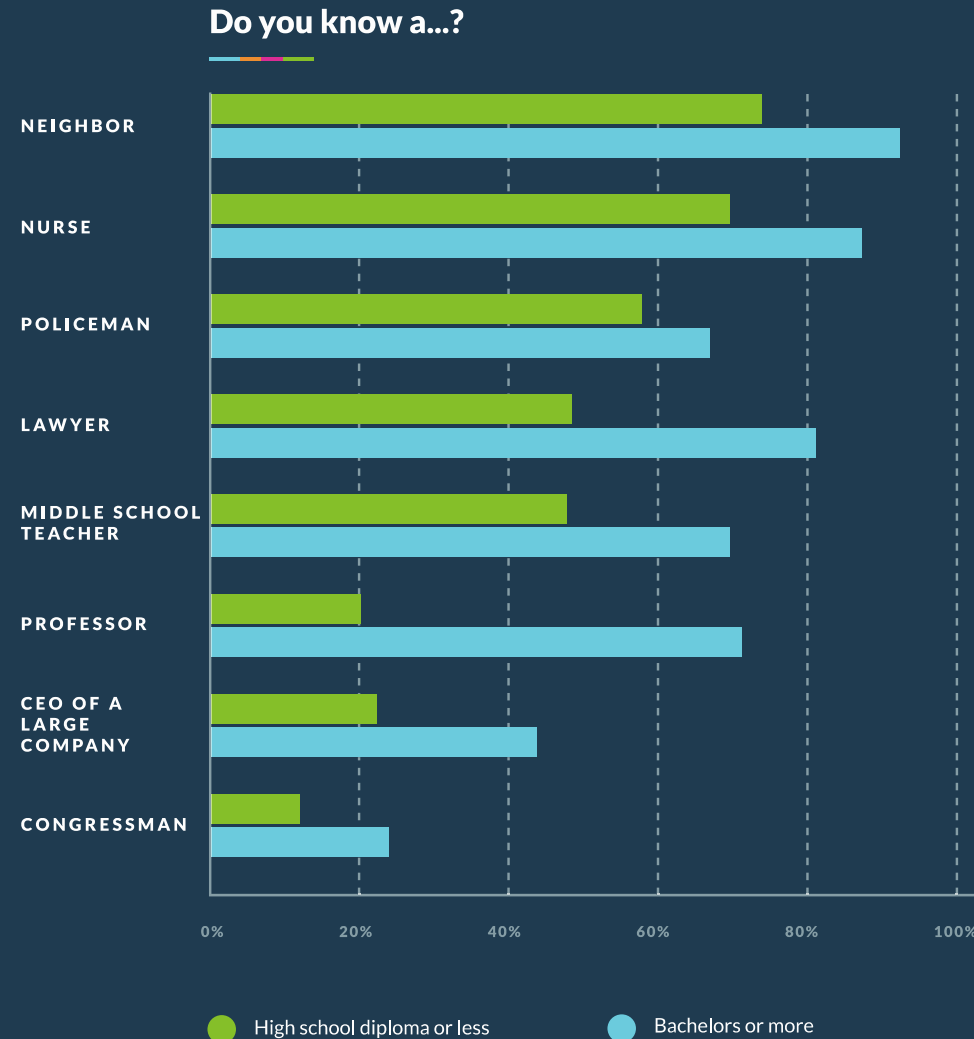
Percent of households living among others from similar income levels



Source: Pew Charitable Trust

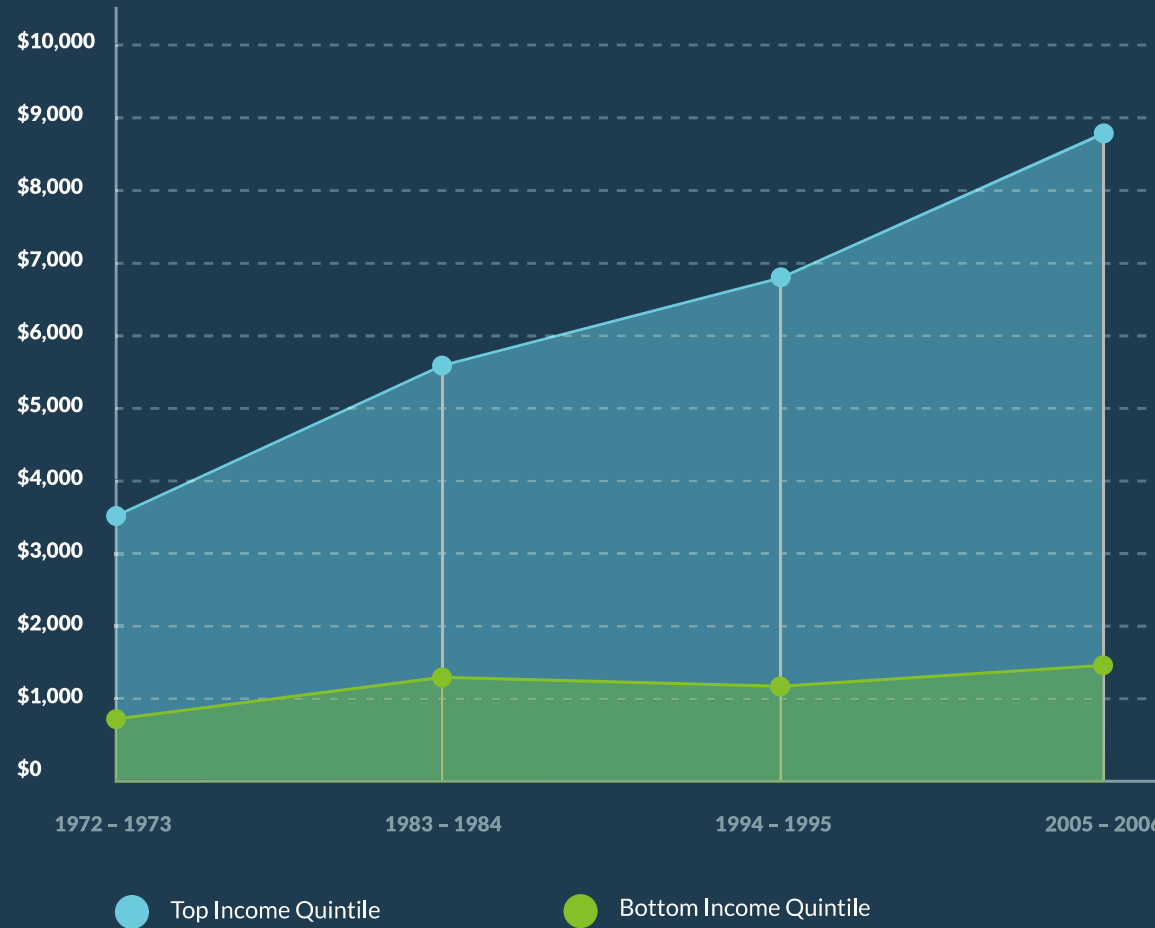


# Parents' own professional networks differ



Source: Putnam, 2015 based on Pew survey data

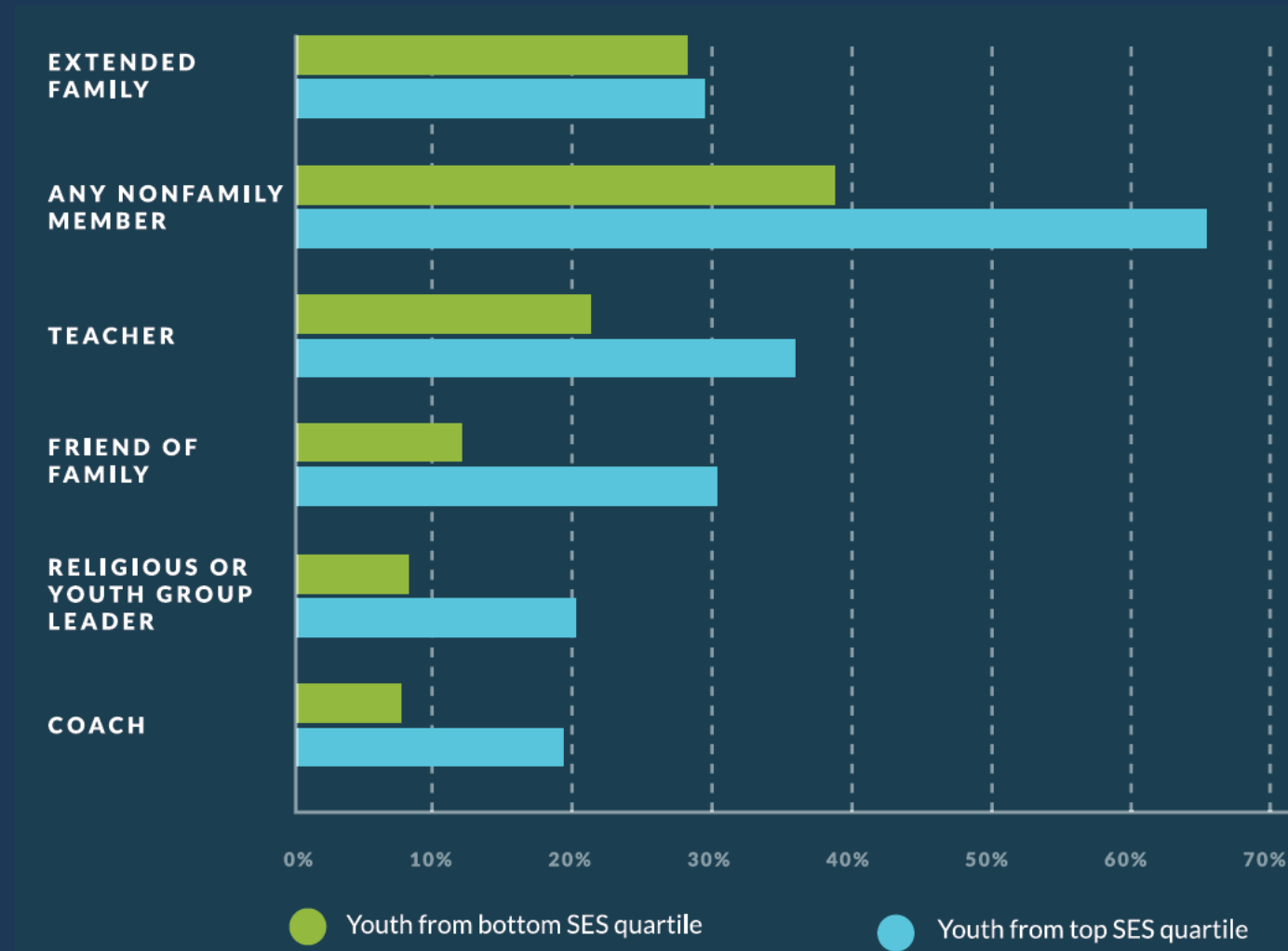
# Gaps in enrichment spending are growing



Source: Duncan & Murnane, 2011.



# Students report different access to informal mentors



Source: Putnam, 2015 based on *The Mentoring Effect*

We all have inherited  
networks.





What are the consequences  
of relationships on education  
and opportunity?



# Benefits of positive, diverse relationships

- ✓ Higher grades, higher levels of motivation
- ✓ Less likely to drop out of high school, more likely to re-enroll
- ✓ Greater rates of college enrollment
- ✓ Greater rates of college retention
- ✓ Career advice and exposure to labor market opportunities
- ✓ Long-term reservoir of social capital



Limited access to networks  
has costs:

- Dropping out,  
staying out
- Economic Despair
- Lost Einsteins



A view of Earth from space, showing the blue and white horizon of the planet against a dark, star-filled sky. The text "Innovations on the horizon?" is centered in white.

Innovations on the horizon?

# Modularity Theory

To improve outcomes, we need to control the variables that *impact* performance...Is the education system prematurely modularized?



“When we shrink the problem, the solution shrinks with it; when small solutions are applied to a huge problem, they don’t work; and when weak antipoverty initiatives don’t work, many throw up their hands and argue that we should stop tossing money at the problem altogether. Cheap solutions only cheapen the problem.”

– Matthew Desmond



Interdependent architectures increase performance

Modular architectures decrease costs and unlock customizability

Industries fluctuate between interdependent and modular architectures



1960 .....> 1990

Healthcare

Afterschool

Housing

Extracurriculars

Mentorship

Tutoring

Summer

Developmental  
Time

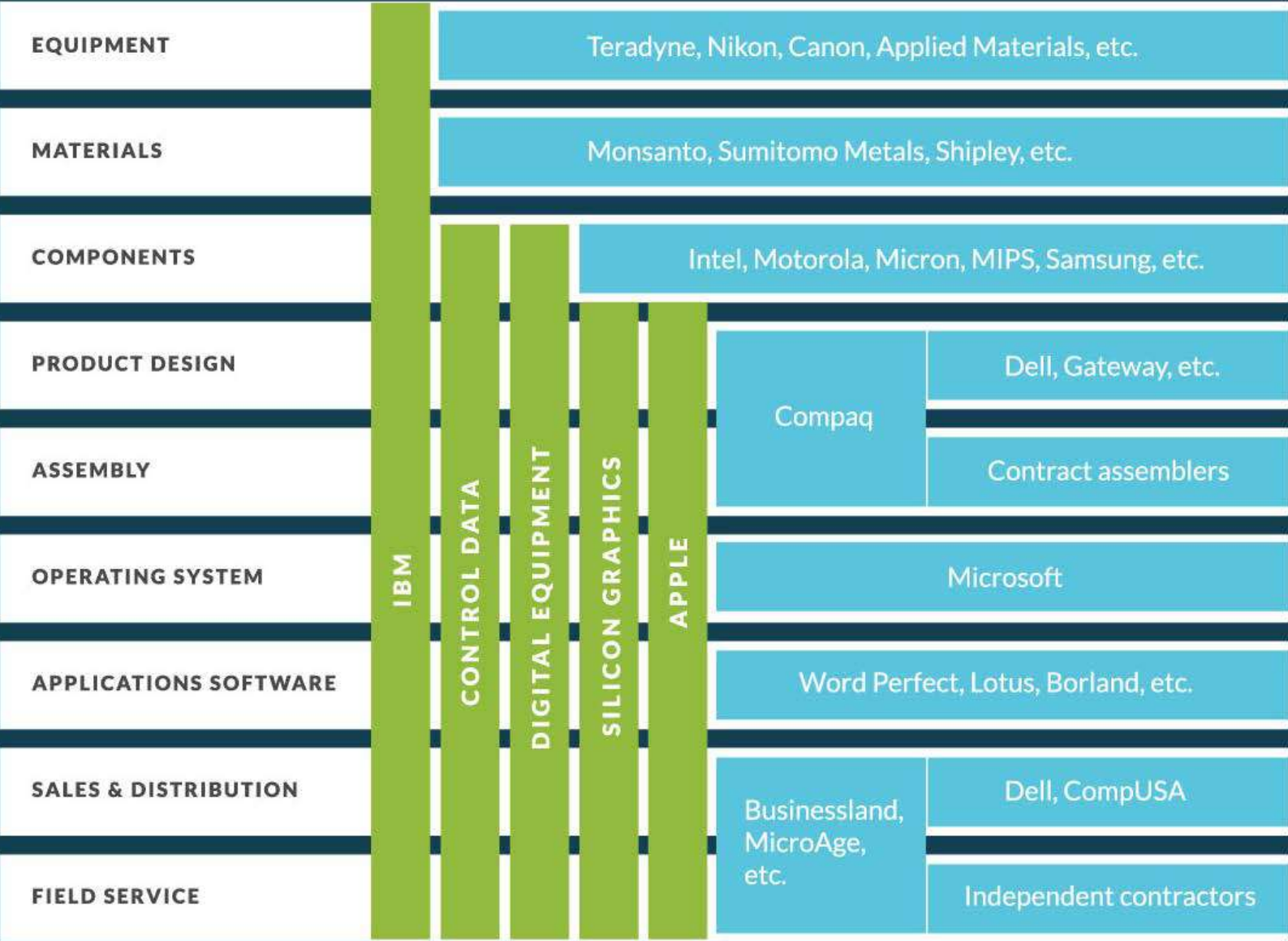
Academics



Integrated Student Supports



BY ALL MEANS





# To what end are you integrating functions and funding?

Healthcare

Afterschool

Housing

Extracurriculars

Mentorship

Tutoring

Summer

Developmental  
Time

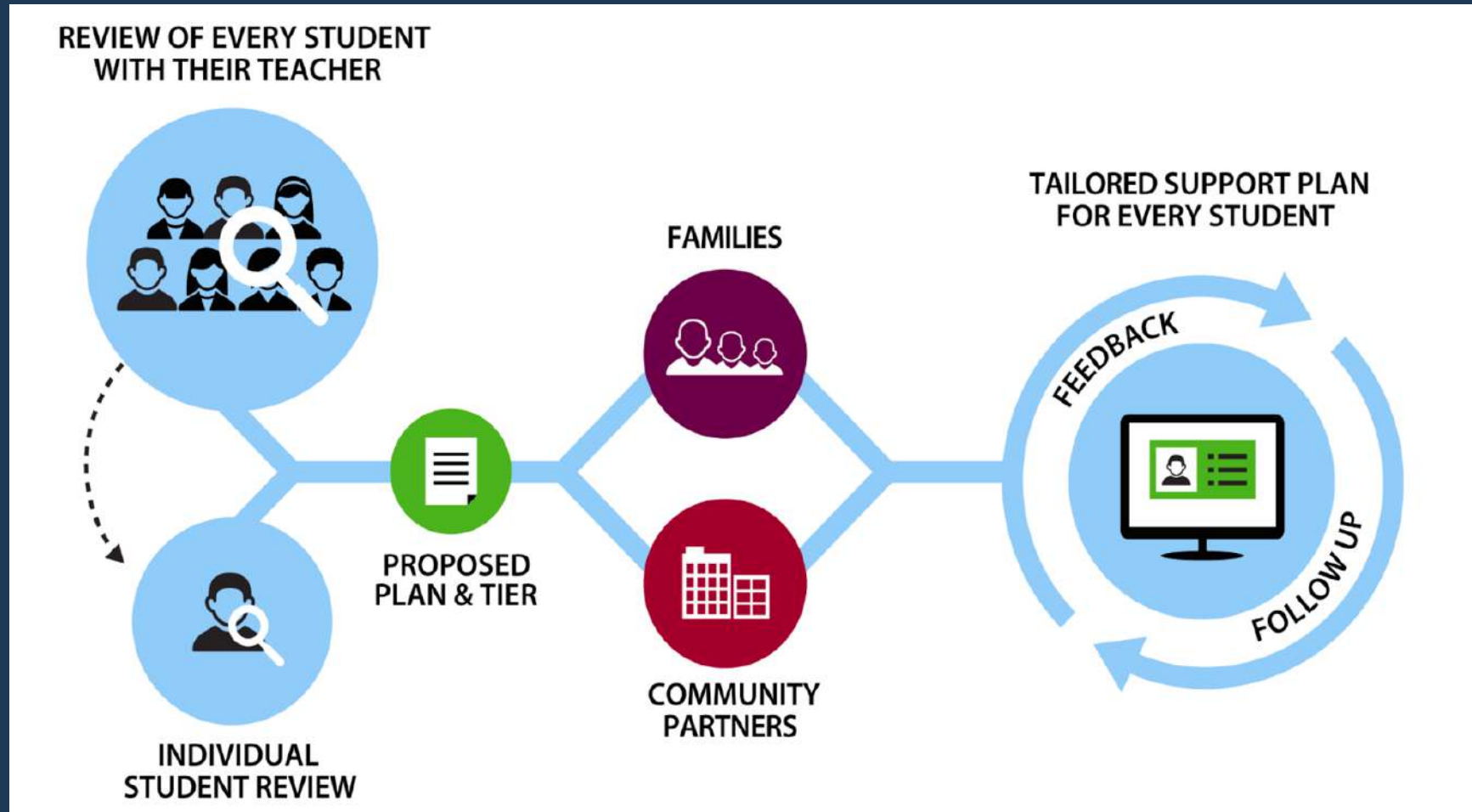
Academics

↑  
Integrated Student Supports  
↓

- ✓ Health outcomes
- ✓ Test scores
- ✓ College matriculation
- ✓ College graduation



# City Connects

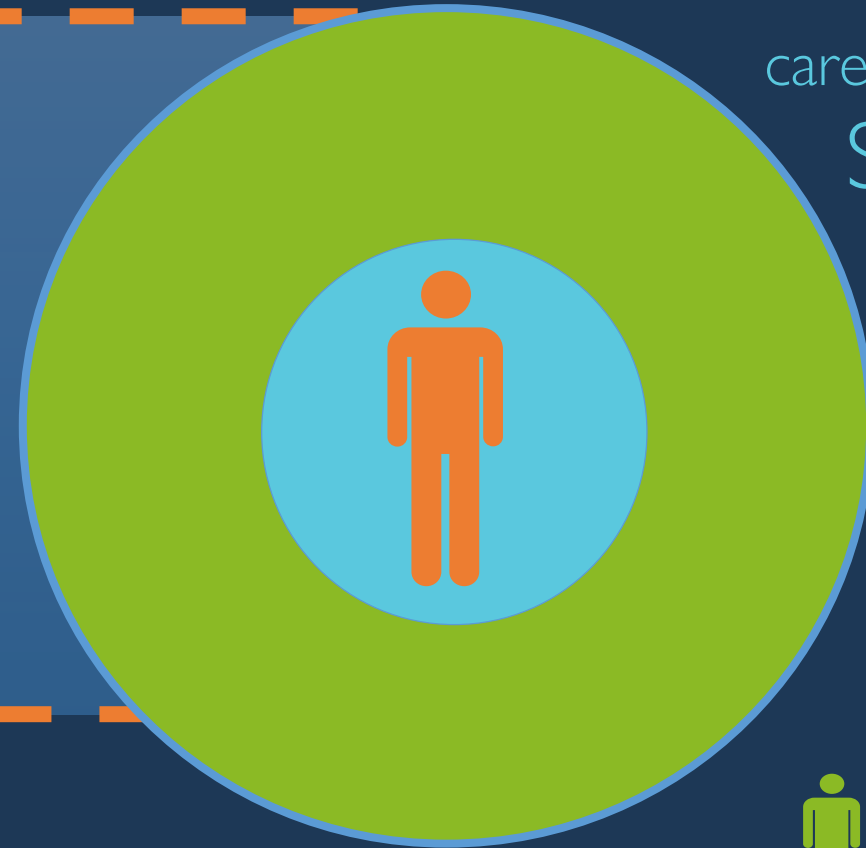


“Someone said to me once, ‘you’re connectors.’ But **that’s too mechanical.** This thing isn’t mechanical. It’s knowing the child, and knowing the parent.”

- Mary Walsh, Founder



# Relationships



care, resources

Strong Ties



Weak Ties

new information,  
opportunities



Can *disruptive technology* expand young people's access to networks that expand horizons and opportunities?

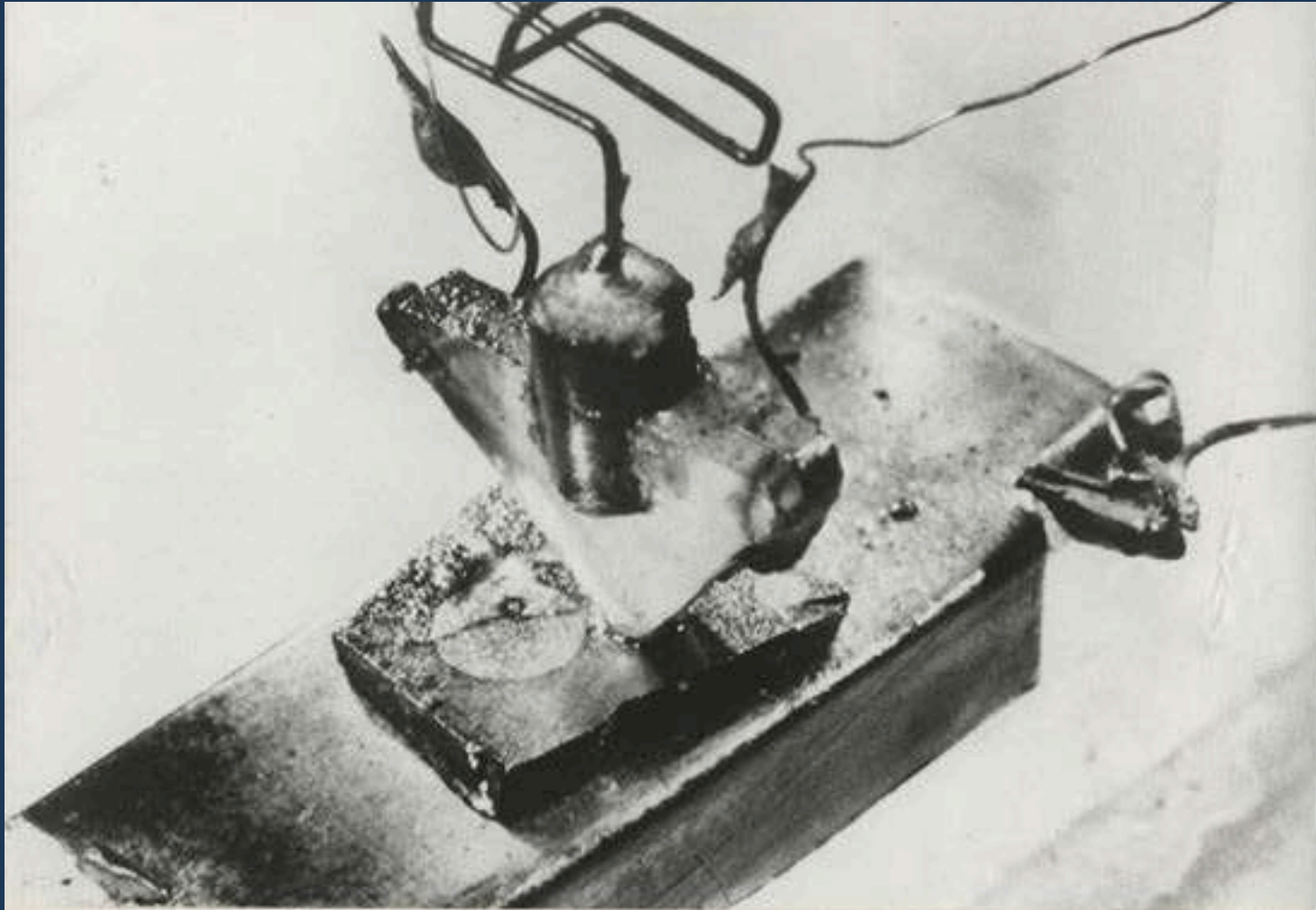


Mainstream social  
networking tools  
aren't getting us  
there





Two types of innovation:  
Sustaining Innovations &  
Disruptive Innovations



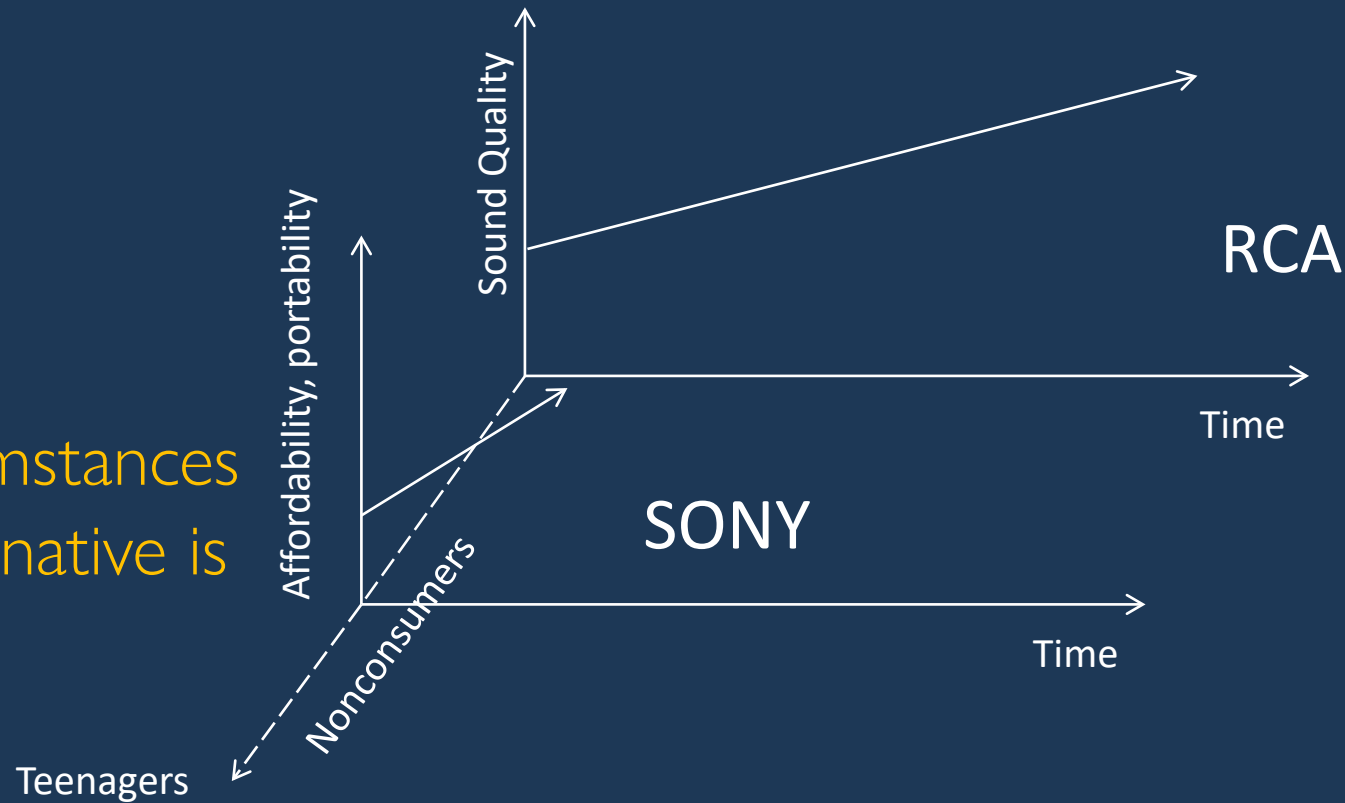
**THE FIRST TRANSISTOR AS IT WAS PATENTED BY THREE  
NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING BELL LABORATORIES SCIENTISTS**





# Disruptive innovations start off simple

Targeting circumstances where the alternative is nothing at all



Social networking sites disrupt how  
*we maintain* connections....

... but not *who* we forge them with.

*They sustain* our networks.



How many Facebook “friends” know each other in real life?

93%



“

Facebook has been focused on helping you connect with *people you already know*. We've built AI systems to recommend "People You May Know". But it might be just as important to also connect you with *people you should know*-- mentors and people outside your circle who care about you and can provide a new source of support and inspiration. - Mark Zuckerberg



A new approach:  
edtech that  
connects



# Tracking technology that expands networks

College guidance, access, success

Offering relationships where the alternative is nothing at all

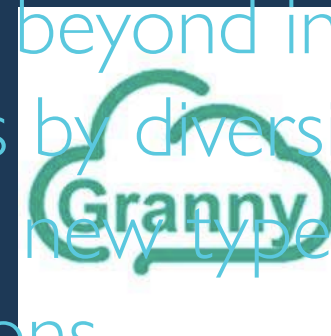


Project-based learning, industry engagement



Academic Support & Encouragement

Reaching beyond inherited networks by diversifying access to new types of connections



\* some fully virtual, some blended

expanding access to virtual or blended relationships is not necessarily best for forging *strong ties*, but tech is powerful for introducing *weak ties*




# The Strength of Weak Ties





# Emerging platforms to *curate* local connections



A view of Earth from space, showing the blue and white horizon of the planet against a dark, star-filled background. The text is overlaid on this image.


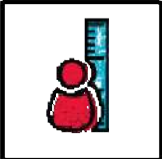


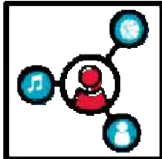
5 Charting a future to a more caring *and*  
networked system for young people  
Places to Start

# #1 Take Stock of Relationships

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_  
Respondent: \_\_\_\_\_  
ID: \_\_\_\_\_

HOUSEHOLD

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP?      STUDENT NAME      AT RISK?

 Express Care	 Challenge Growth	 Provide Support	 Share Power	 Expand Possibilities
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FRIENDS      CLUBS/ORGANIZATIONS/CHURCH

- Measure your assets first across a range of domains;
- Different relationships offer different benefits to healthy development;
- Treat relationships as outcomes unto themselves



# #2 Ensure anchor relationships

“Young people are more likely to graduate if they have access to a web of supportive relationships ... At least **one stable, anchoring relationship** can act as a gateway to this wider web of support.”

- Jonathan Zaff,  
America's Promise  
Alliance



# #3 Explore emerging tools in edtech

Technology is best used for relationships otherwise out of reach or to coordinate existing assets in the community, NOT to address gaps in care or strong ties



# #4 Explore instructional models that connect to community and industry

Emerging project-based and place-based learning models are designed to increase the number of slots through which outside adults—online and offline—are contributing to learning



educurious  
learning that connects

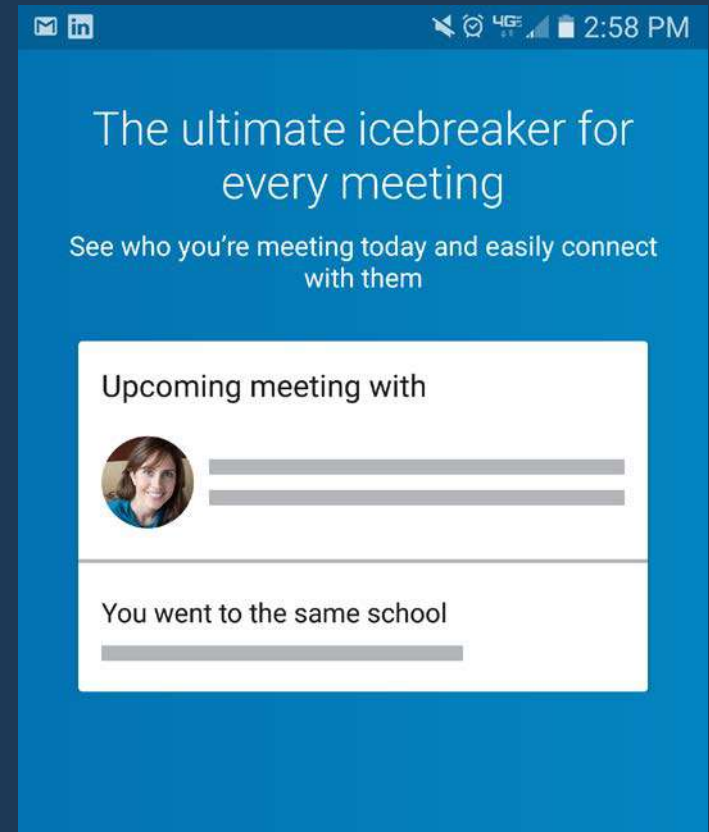


DREAMWAKERS  
nepris



# #5 Broker connections with homophily in mind

*Similarity breeds trust.* Can new connections be forged on the basis of shared background, interests, experiences rather than emphasizing difference or asymmetry or power?



FOREWORD BY **CLAYTON M. CHRISTENSEN**

**JULIA FREELAND FISHER**

WITH DANIEL FISHER

# WHO YOU KNOW

Unlocking Innovations That  
Expand Students' Networks

**JOSSEY-BASS**  
A Wiley Brand

Free Market Map of  
Relationship Tools  
[whoyouknow.org](http://whoyouknow.org)







# Questions?

Keep in touch!

[jfreeland@christenseninstitute.org](mailto:jfreeland@christenseninstitute.org)

[www.christenseninstitute.org](http://www.christenseninstitute.org)