

Nov., 2011

Do children emanating from economically challenged environments struggle to connect a quality education to their future financial well-being?

A first-of-its-kind study, reveals the answer to that question.

Through funding from the Sherwood Foundation, Weitz Foundation, Omaha Community Foundation, The African American Unity Fund, and the Omaha Public School District, the Institute for Student Empowerment, conducted a first-of-its-kind survey devoted to answering the question, “Do students who come from economically challenged environments, struggle to connect a quality education to their future financial well-being?”

“If a student does not view education as a means to upward mobility and financial independence, that student has a high probability of tune-out and disengagement, as it relates to his academic pursuit,” said Wes Hall, CEO of the Institute for Student Empowerment. Hall, went on to say, “How can we expect a student to vigorously participate in a process that he/she does not understand or attribute a benefit beyond the classroom?”

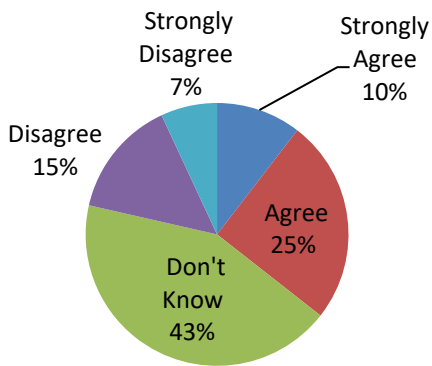
Through a partnership with the Omaha Public School District, Hall and his staff were allowed access to classrooms throughout the district, as well as, being assigned their own independent classroom, with 25 students. Through direct interaction and observation, the team identified recurring patterns of behavior and debilitating attitudes regarding education, believed to contribute to disengagement, truancy, disciplinary challenges, and dropout. To prove those assertions, the team created a student survey comprised of questions designed to further measure their assumptions.

The survey was conducted during the school day and the process was overseen by classroom teachers. 2000 students in grades 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> were surveyed and of that number, 1445 completed the survey. Below you will find the results of the survey.

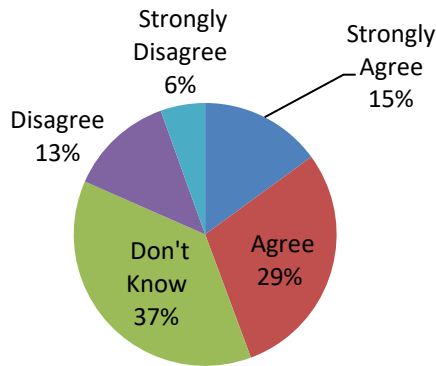
Although academic scholarships associate a monetary value to each grant, students struggle to connect information with future finances.

	<b>% Agree</b>	<b>% I don't know</b>	<b>% Disagree</b>
<i>Money comes from information</i>	<b>35</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>I seek out information on my own</i>	<b>44</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>I know how to turn information into money</i>	<b>33</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>26</b>

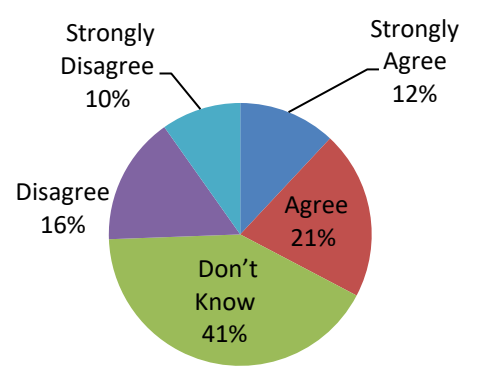
**Money comes from information**



**I seek out information on my own**



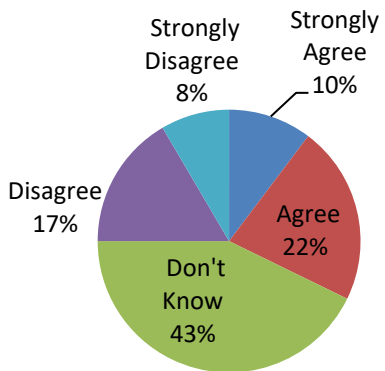
**I know how to turn information into money**



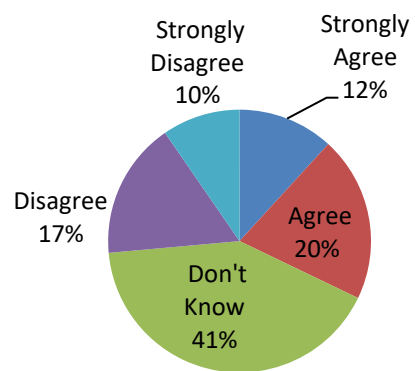
Although connecting an education to future upward mobility is a requisite to doing well in school a significant amount of students are not receiving help in making the connection. To the question, “The adults in my life use education to make money,” surprisingly 26% didn’t know and 20% disagreed.

	% Agree	% I don't know	% Disagree
<i>My teachers help me connect information to money</i>	<b>32</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>25</b>
<i>My school environment teaches me how to connect information to money</i>	<b>32</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>27</b>
<i>The adults in my life teach me how to use education to make money</i>	<b>54</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>The adults in my life use education to make money</i>	<b>45</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>21</b>

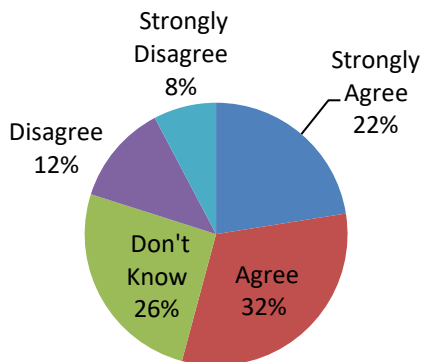
**My teachers help me connect information to money**



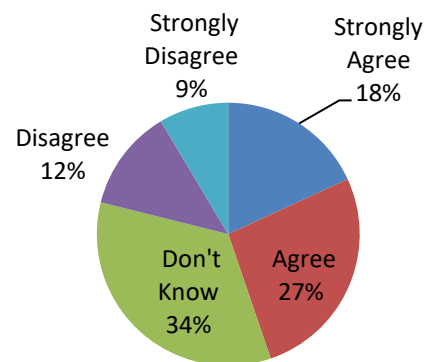
**My school environment teaches me how to connect information to money**



**The adults in my life teach me how to use education to make money**



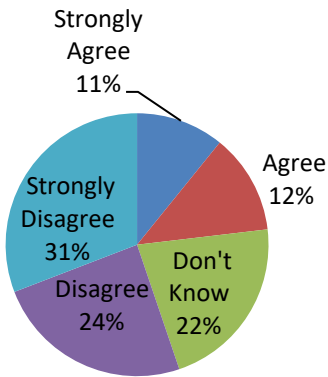
**The adults in my life use education to make money**



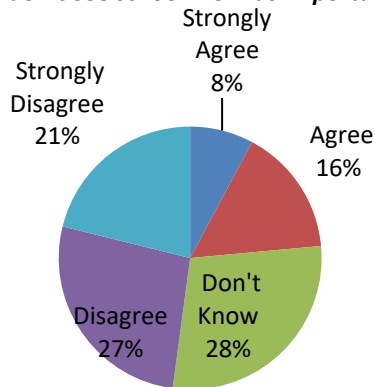
Despite the enormous amount of positive stimuli students receive verbally about education and their future well-being, ample information to the contrary appears to be making a great or a greater impression on many students. An interesting amount of students don't believe they need a quality education to attract money.

	% Agree	% I don't know	% Disagree
<i>I don't need education to make money</i>	<b>23</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>55</b>
<i>I don't connect school with money, so I don't see school work as important</i>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>I'm not going to use most of the information I learn in school after I graduate</i>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>42</b>

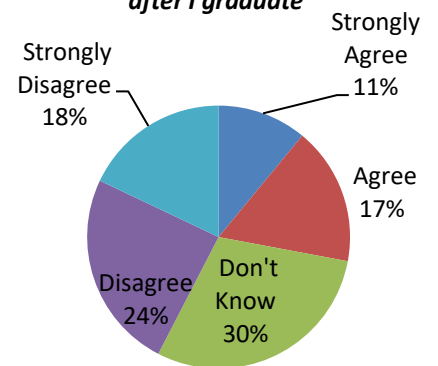
***I don't need education to make money***



***I don't connect school with money, so I don't see school work as important***



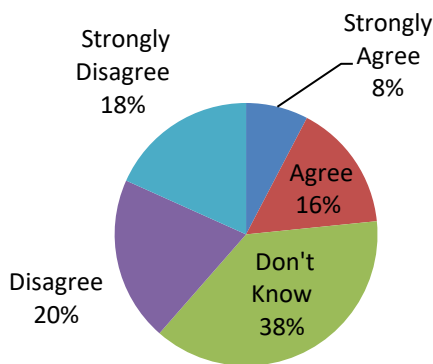
***I'm not going to use most of the information I learn in school after I graduate***



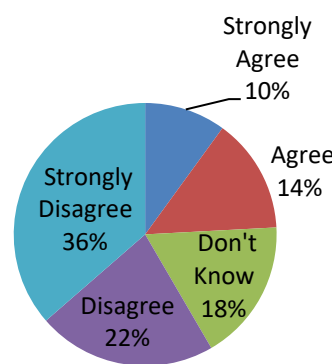
Many high school students are still experiencing significant peer pressure relating to the subject of being or acting smart. The appearance of being or acting educated is frowned upon in many student/peer circles and alarmingly more than half of the students only come to school to socialize not to be educated.

	% Agree	% I don't know	% Disagree
Speaking intelligently is frowned upon amongst my friends	24	38	38
I'm embarrassed to be smart around my friends	24	18	58
I come to school to see my friends	55	25	20

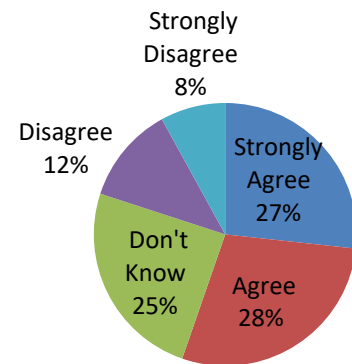
**Speaking intelligently is frowned upon amongst my friends**



**I'm embarrassed to be smart around my friends**



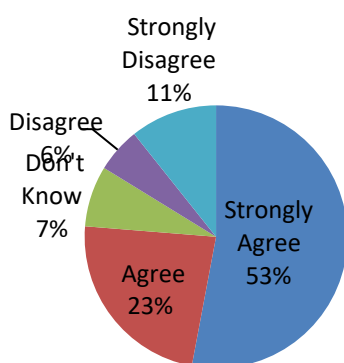
**I come to school to see my friends**



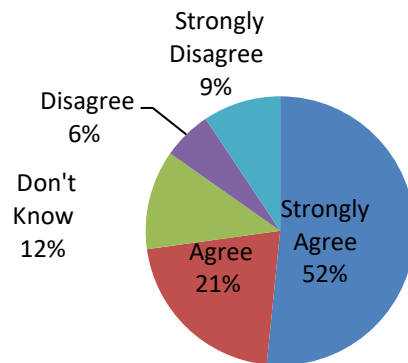
While an overwhelming amount of students agree they go to school to get an education (76%) and that they go to school so they will one day obtain a diploma (73%), many of those same students do not see education as a means to future finances (34%).

	% Agree	% I don't know	% Disagree
I come to school so I can get a good education	76	7	17
I come to school so I can one day get a diploma	73	12	15
Graduating from high school will help me attract money	66	18	16

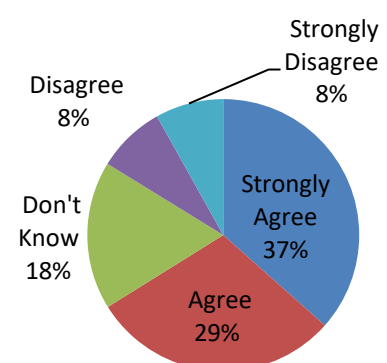
**I come to school so I can get a good education**



**I come to school so I can, one day, get a diploma**



**Graduating from high school will help me attract more money**



## **Proposition**

The data suggests, a significant number of students do not connect a quality education to their future financial well-being. While national conversations identifying the disconnect are underway, few, if any, have documented the severity of the challenge, and fewer still have identified intentional efforts designed to remedy the problem.

True reform should consider the aforementioned disconnect and seek to incorporate strategies that aid students in connecting education to future finances. Academic constructs designed to help students, parents and teachers quantify information should be put in place to assist in creating the new language.

Continued research, observation and introduction of information, can assist in determining the positive impact corrective information has on student achievement. By introducing information that impacts critical thinking/problem solving in the area of connecting a quality education to future financial independence, we can then measure its effect on the achievement gap.

As a result of the findings, the Institute developed a specialized curriculum constructed to aid students emanating from economically challenged environments gain a deeper understanding of education and its enormous impact on their future well-being. The curriculum is currently being used as part of the, "Greatness Academy," an elective course created by the Institute. Students receive a credit toward graduation upon successful completion of the course.

For results based on the total sample of national students, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3$  percentage points.

For more details about the Institute for Student Empowerment visit: [www.weshall217.com](http://www.weshall217.com)