

# Educational Theory Supporting the GradPlus Pilot Project

## The Problem

In low-income areas, high school students often struggle with achieving graduation and securing post-secondary educational opportunities due to a lack of educational resources. This situation, combined with the pressure to attain a well-paying job, makes the ability to financially support oneself seemingly improbable. As a result, high school students become less likely to graduate and more likely to drop out.

A lack of a completed high school education increases the likelihood of students engaging in criminal activity, therefore making early intervention crucial and necessary. According to labor economist Lance Lochner, “[t]he idea that education raises skill levels and wage rates, which then lowers crime, is not a new one” due to multiple studies proving this point since the 1970s (Lochner, 1999). Also, a study, conducted by Olof Aslund, Hans Grönqvist, Caroline Hall and Jonas Vlachos regarding the correlation between education and criminal behavior, found that “[e]ducation typically raises expected earnings from legitimate work, thereby making crime relatively less appealing” (Aslund et al., 2018). **When quality higher education leads to better opportunities for work and income, children and young adults become less likely to commit crimes. These positive, direct correlations support why educational institutions need to provide all New Jersey youth with the most superior educational opportunities possible in order to improve their quality of life.**

**To increase high school students’ interest in post-secondary opportunities, Embrace Relief intends to use its tutoring approach that numerous educational theories and research studies, including those of the U.S. Department of Education, support.**

## Educational Theory: Tutoring

**Studies consistently prove that tutoring exists as one of the best ways to improve grades and test scores. Tutoring offers a more individualized educational approach than the traditional classroom setting approach. Studies show that an increased amount of time spent studying leads to improved test scores and improved grades in school.**

According to the Department of Education, tutoring leads to increases in students’ academic achievement, self-confidence, and learning motivation (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). GradPlus, Embrace Relief’s tutoring program created with its partners at GERA, expects more from students who signed up for the program. The program intends to push students to study and complete the SAT and TABE exams to the best of their ability.

The U.S. Department of Education lists tutoring as a tool for high school improvement and dropout prevention (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The USD OE report focuses on students who are required to participate in academic tutoring due to the risk of falling behind. Students who come from middle or upper-class households often have the resources to provide their children with academic tutoring when they fall behind. Schools that typically require academic tutoring of their students are generally in high-income areas, which contribute more in taxes to their school systems, resulting in more dollars spent per pupil (Semuels, 2016).

However, students who come from low-income families cannot afford the same tutoring opportunities for their children



(Bruno, 2017). GradPlus' students voluntarily seek academic tutoring. **With GradPlus' help, public schools plan to supplement their already-existing tutoring programs or replace them in order to better prepare students for college or vocational school.**

Studies suggest that a tutoring situation, one-on-one arrangements or small-group study, will benefit at-risk and low-income high school students in the Paterson School District. A study conducted in Chicago during the 2013-2014 school year showed that students who were matched with tutors and given 100 hours of tutoring had higher math exam scores, lower math failure rates, and fewer failures in non-math related courses (Bruno, 2017). This groundbreaking study claims that tutoring also benefits high school students. A study completed in 1984 by Chicago educational psychologist, Benjamin Bloom, found that tutoring gave students a "bump of two standard deviations above students in a control group" (Bruno, 2017).

## **Our Approach: GradPlus**

Embrace Relief designed GradPlus with these educational theories in mind. Tutoring raises graduation rates and increases interest in post-secondary education.

**At the beginning of the school year, GradPlus will engage with educational institutions and community organizations in New Jersey to mobilize as many volunteers as needed to help coordinate a support system for at-risk students. GradPlus will offer opportunities for vocational training or college prep, by preparing students for college entrance exams and vocational certification tests, such as the SAT and TABE test. Ivy Prep tutors will conduct the sessions from 3 pm to 5 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the participants' public schools.**

GradPlus will provide students with guidance from members of the FBI Newark Citizens Academy Alumni Association (FBICAAANJ), Passaic County Sheriff's Department, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Paterson Police Department, and the United Nations. An important objective of a component of GradPlus is to provide students with positive role models, who can help them envision a brighter future.

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