Using Asset Mapping as a Complementary Approach to Improving Outcomes and Impact

**Collective Impact and Asset Mapping:  Complementary Approaches to Improving Outcomes**

**Impact: marked effect or influence; measurable and observable**

# Collective Impact and Asset Mapping

Complementary approaches to improving student outcomes and school-community relationships.

# Collective Impact:
## *Engaging the Greater Community*

An organizational model that encourages collaboration across different sectors within a community…

Education

Government

Community

…to focus on shared goals for student success.

# Five Conditions of Collective Impact

**Common Agenda**: Shared vision for change; well-defined problem, approach to a solution, and agreed upon actions.

**Collaboration**: Stakeholders from different sectors- schools, government, community

**Data-driven Improvement**: Data collection & analysis; progress monitoring and refinement of strategies

**Mutually Reinforcing Activities**: Activities must be differentiated yet coordinated through a shared plan of action

**Backbone Organization**: The organization serves as the hub- , communicating, coordinating, and facilitating the collective impact effort
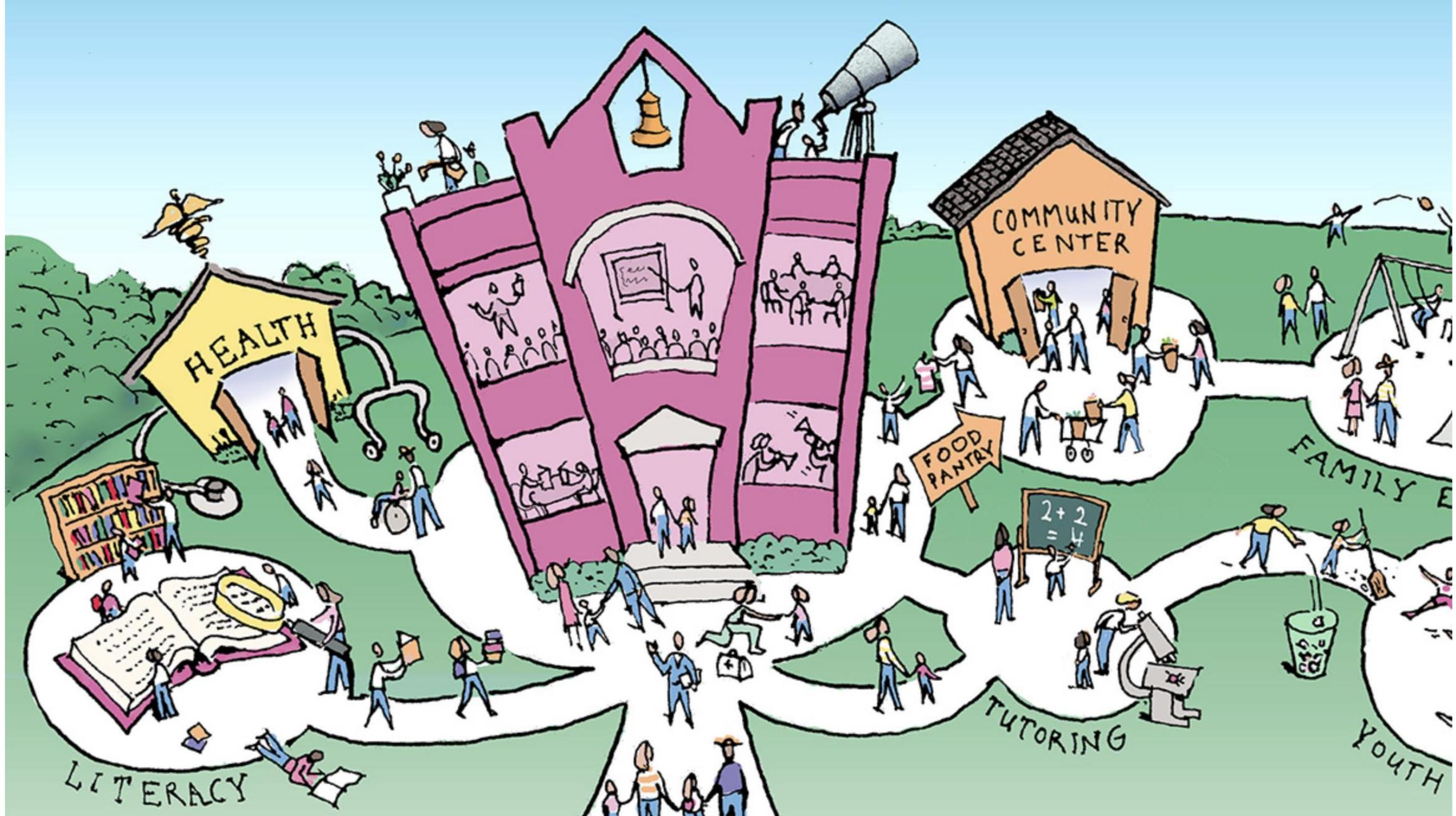
# Asset Mapping: the process of identifying and documenting the skill, capacities, resources, and priorities within any community.

- Reveal and discover or uncover the strengths of a community, especially its residents and their associational life. There are many processes and places that highlight communities' physical strengths, civic community, institutions, or resources, but very few that lift up residents and their informal associations.

- When we're working on strengthening communities, residents and their associations are often the most powerful levers. Asset mapping is a valuable process to start to reveal them.
  - Develop a sense of empowerment and community pride among participants. It is rare that participants in this process will not say something like, "I felt so proud to live here. I'm overwhelmed with opportunity and possibility." Through this process itself, you'll develop a sense of empowerment for the people who participate.
  - Provides real data for people to imagine the action that they can take as a community. This is a blend of feeling good about the community and what it has to offer but also imagining what action people should take.
  - Asset mapping is a tool for shifting power in order to take action. If this process doesn't lead to those two things, it is a theoretical, academic exercise.
  - Guides future relationship building that can further discover and connect assets, creating even more community power.

# Asset-Based Community Walking Map



**Information Gathering**

**What needs community attention, distinct from systems attention?**

    What gifts and hidden treasures are there in the community?

    What assets do we have that could be used to address the community need?

**Identify Bumping Spaces**

    Plot the spaces where people come together naturally or as part of groups – use different colors to distinguish between those spaces that are obvious and those that are not.
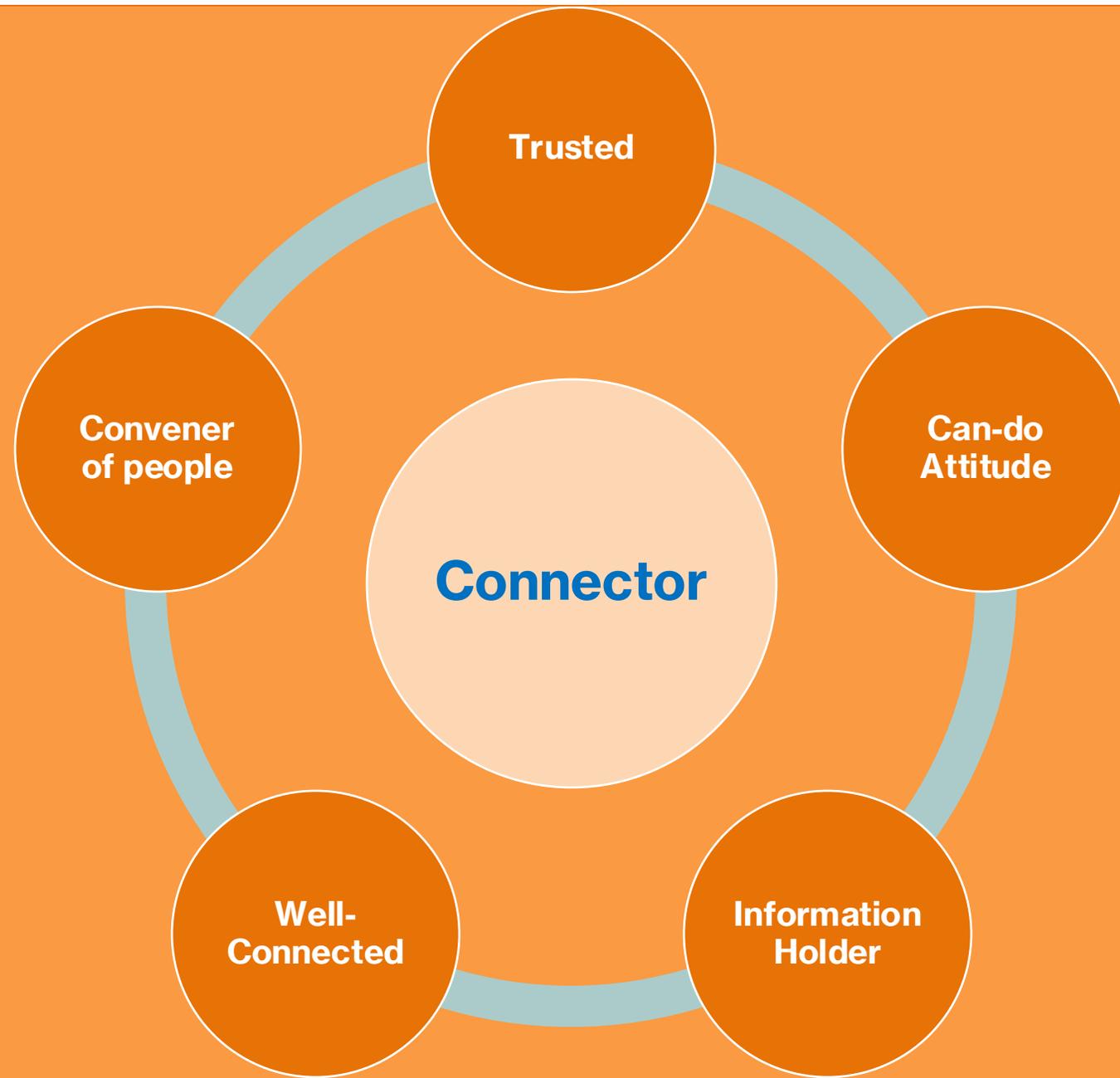
**Identify Local Associations**

    Use a different color to map the associations around the bumping spaces (e.g. Restaurant might have a karaoke night, faith group events, running club, specialty markets, etc.
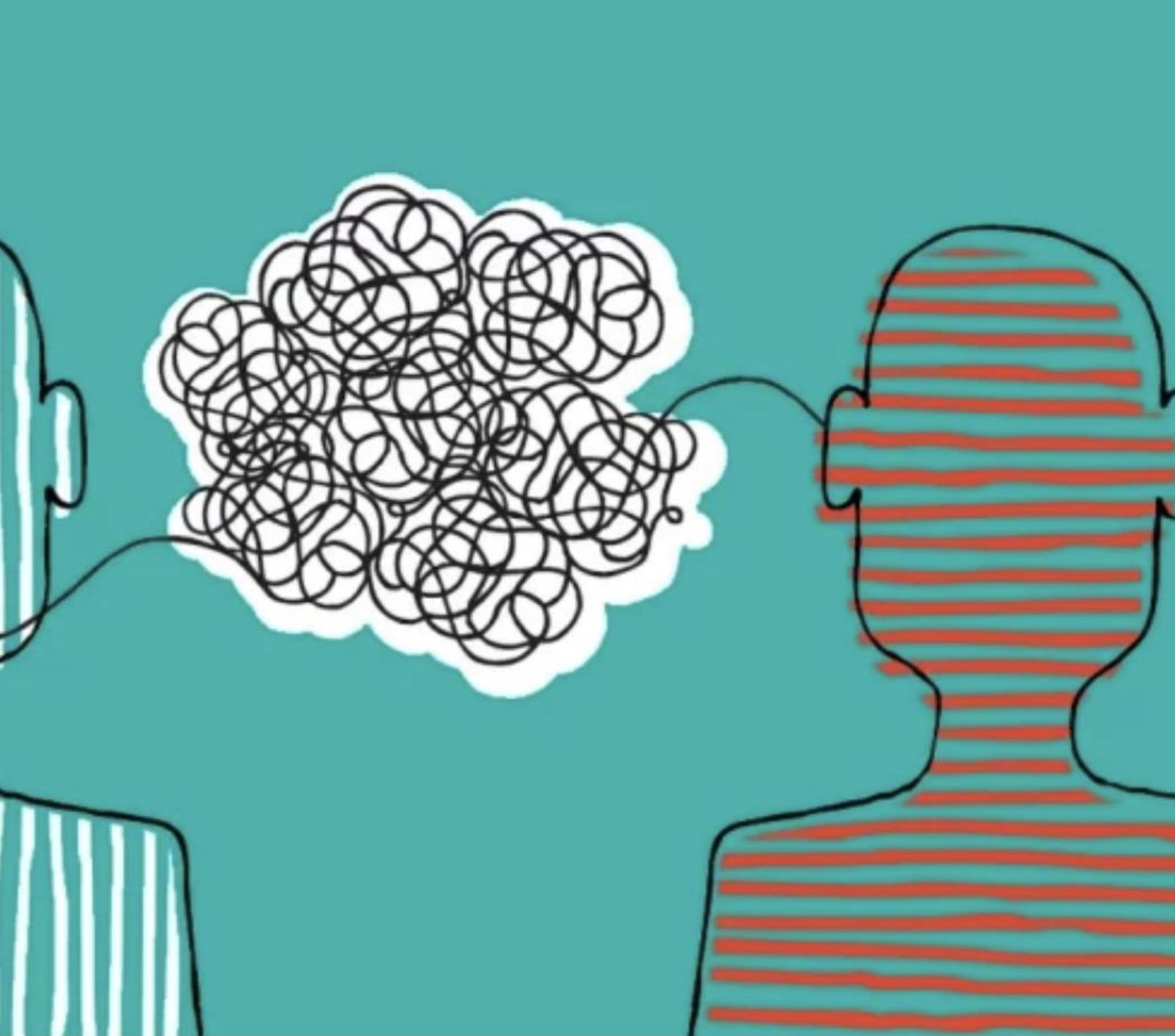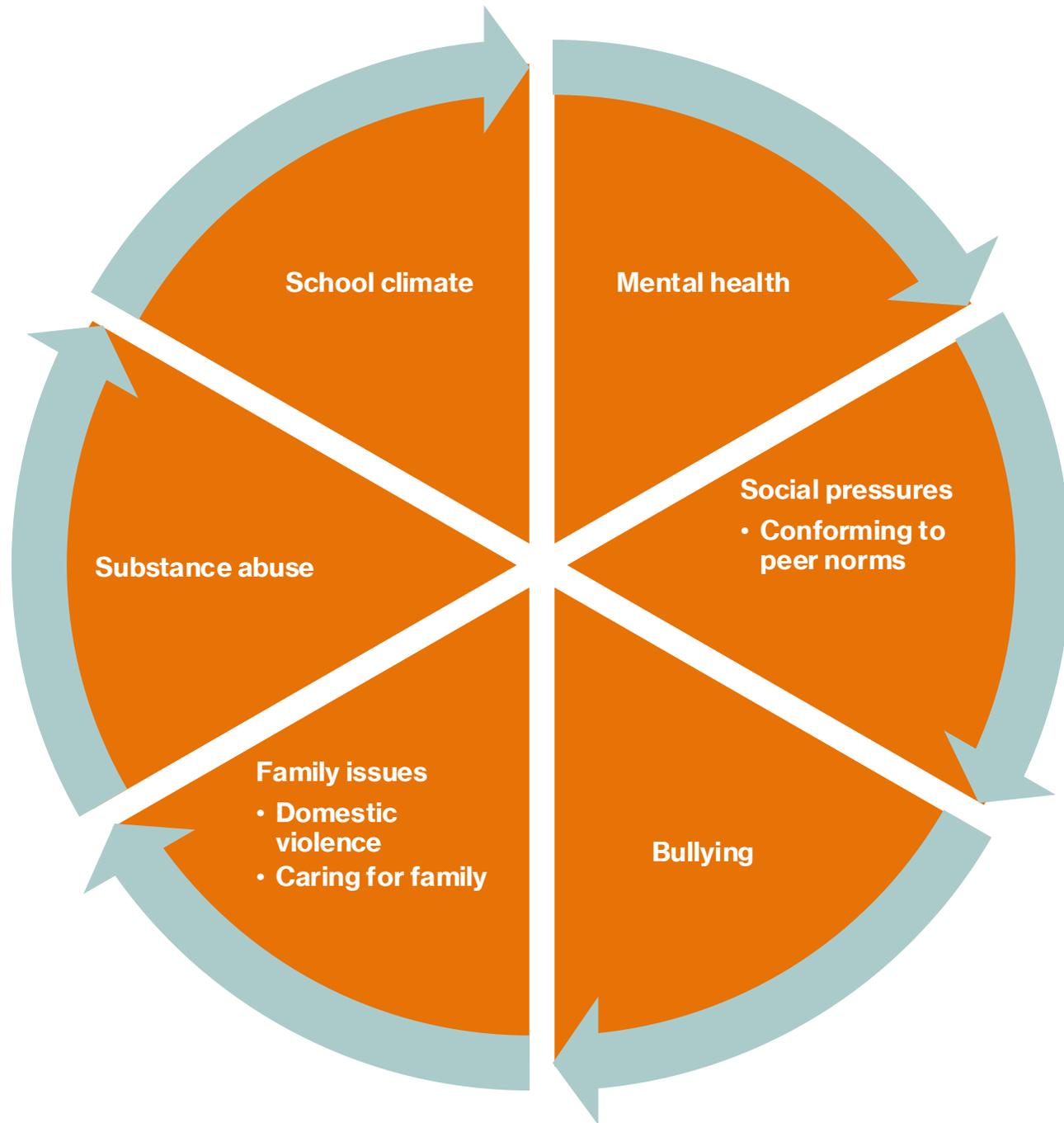
# Learning Conversations: Finding Connectors

• What is it that people care about enough to do something about?

• What gifts and talents would they like to contribute to the community?

• What would need to happen for them to join like-minded people in the community building effort?

**So, how can collective impact help to solve a problem that looks like this????**

School climate

Mental health

Social pressures
- Conforming to peer norms

Bullying

Family issues
- Domestic violence
- Caring for family

Substance abuse

- **Equity Issues**
  - **SES**
  - **Disability**
  - **Students of color**
  - **Juvenile justice system**

- **Barriers to attending**
  - **Illness**
  - **Transportation**
  - **Housing**
  - **Family Responsibilities**

# Engage the Greater Community

## Shared Accountability

- Community mentors

- Experiential learning

- Apprenticeships

- Career fairs

- Support services

# Family-School-Community

**Activate**

**Engaging and culturally relevant instruction**

**Positive messaging not negative**

**Set work schedules for students**

**Opportunities at home and in the community to make up for lost learning in the classroom**

**Engage stakeholders in the development of reward systems for attendance and other key behaviors**

**Rewards include not only tangible items but time with teachers and staff to build relationships**

**Frequent and consistent messaging from all stakeholders**

**Public recognition for success**

**Visual reminders in the community**

# What the research says about reducing chronic absenteeism...

*Schools take a comprehensive approach to involve families and the community in ways that help students reduce chronic absenteeism.*

*Frequent and positive communications with all stakeholders about learning and the impact of chronic absenteeism.*

Sheldon & Epstein, 2004

**Intensive**
20% plus

**Moderate**
10-20%

**Universal**
Less than 10%

**Percent of Effort**
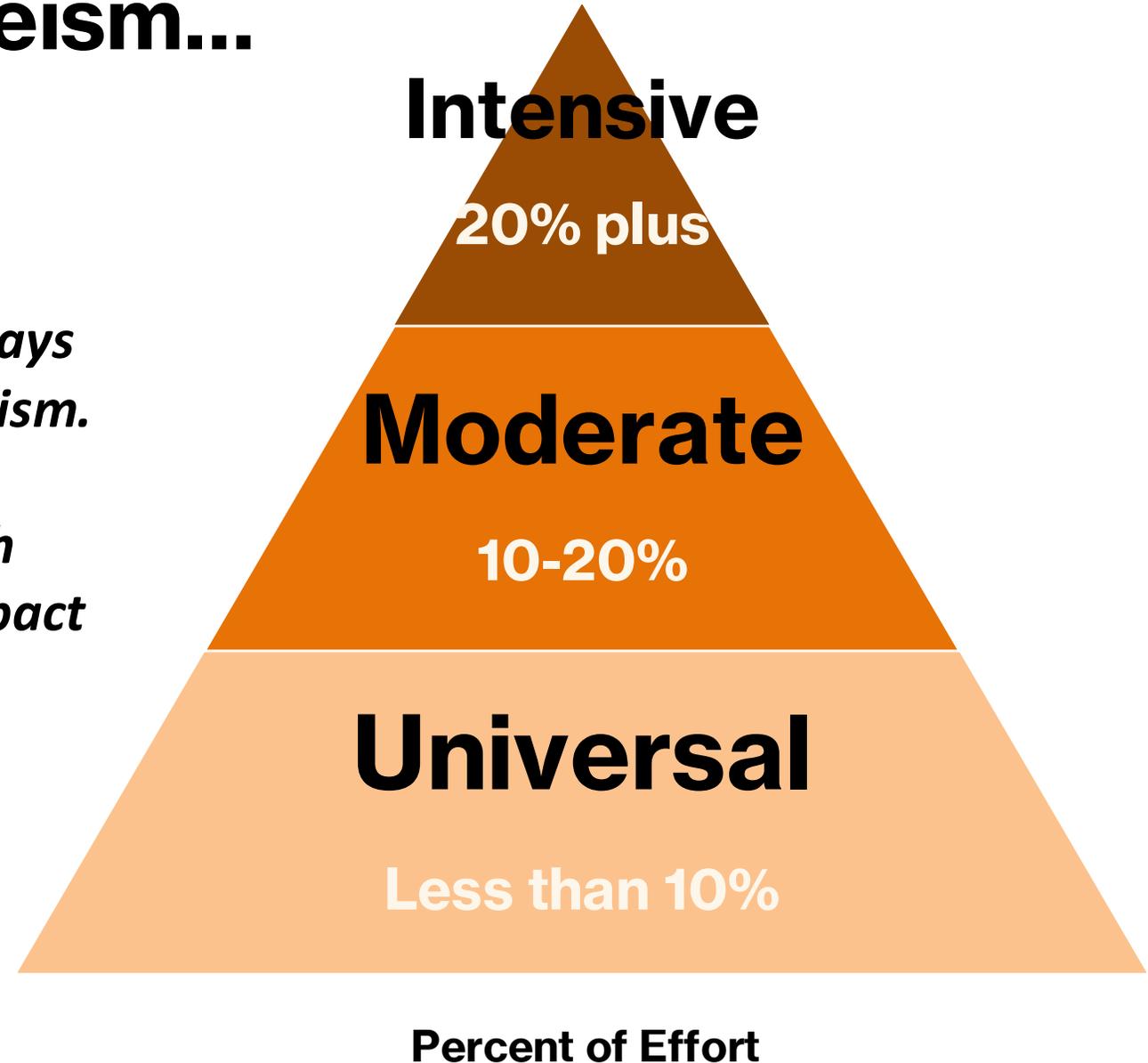
# How to Ruin a Good Thing!

- **Slipping into a deficit mindset.** One of the most common pitfalls is viewing the community through a "needs-oriented" lens, which focuses on problems rather than existing strengths. This can distort leadership, create a sense of dependency on outside experts, and damage community pride.

- **Overlooking informal or unofficial assets.** An asset map that only lists registered nonprofits or institutions misses the critical informal assets that often form the basis of a community's social life. These can include things like a neighborhood block captain, a trusted barber, or informal gathering places.

- **Jumping straight to solutions.** Many well-intentioned coalitions skip the foundational inventory phase and move directly into program design. This can result in duplicating services, wasting resources, and alienating local partners whose work was overlooked.

- **Failing to explain the purpose.** Community asset mapping is not a universally understood term. If you don't clearly explain the "why" behind the process, residents may be reluctant to share information or to see the value in their own contributions.

# The Devil is in the Details

- **Under-engaging residents.** Effective mapping brings residents in as co-authors and co-designers, ensuring local knowledge is centered.

- **Exacerbating the digital divide.** A rich process should use hybrid approaches that combine online tools with offline workshops.

- **Unproductive meetings.** Whether in-person or online, logistical issues can hinder community participation.

- **Ignoring participant expectations.** Community members want to see their input used. If you are not clear from the beginning about the project's scope, you risk eroding trust when residents do not see their suggestions implemented

# Asset Mapping is a Journey

- **Treating it as a one-and-done exercise.** A community asset map is a living document, and assets will change over time as organizations open or close and people move. If the map is not regularly updated, it quickly becomes outdated and loses its value.

- **Ignoring data quality and privacy.** Without clear policies on consent, data security, and anonymization, you risk violating the privacy of community members. For example, a map of domestic violence shelters should never reveal exact locations.

- **Data disorganization.** An asset map can be overwhelming to manage, especially when collecting large amounts of data. Failing to establish a clear system for collecting and organizing information can lead to errors and make the data unusable.

- **Cherry-picking input.** When planners only include information that aligns with their pre-existing ideas, they invalidate the input of community members. A transparent process that includes all input, including dissenting views, helps to build trust.

## From Ideas to Action

*Use tools from improvement science (such as PDSA and action research cycles) to test, implement, and refine collaborative strategies.*

# Getting Started Resources

- https://www.nurturedevelopment.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Guidesheets.pdf

- https://collectiveimpactforum.org/what-is-collective-impact/

- https://www.schoolsthatlead.org/blog/how-to-use-collective-impact-model