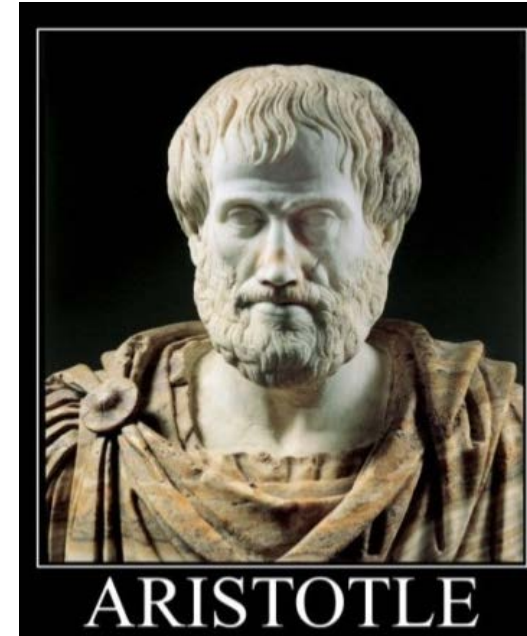


Learning Character



*“We become just by the practice of just actions,
self-controlled by exercising self-control,
and courageous by performing acts of courage.”*

Cycles of Practice in Context

Active Ingredients in Programs for older youth

1. Grappling with Challenges, including moral challenges
2. Investment in Meaningful Goals
3. Constructive Peer Processes
4. The Expertise of Staff

Active Ingredients of Programs

1. Grappling with **Ch**allenges, including moral challenges
2. **I**nvestment in Meaningful Goals
3. Constructive **P**eer Processes

ChIPS

1. Grappling with Challenges

Grappling with Real-world Challenges, in a Supportive Prosocial Environment with Trusted Program Leaders

Program Structures for Older Youth

- **Youth-led Projects:** Service projects, political actions, art productions, creating videos, running activities for children
- **Substantive Roles for Youth:** Group leader, Blogger, Board member, Dance captain, Cameraperson

An FFA member facing a life or death challenge

- “It’s just me. I’m the one that has to push myself to do these things no matter how badly I don’t want to step in that pigpen, I gotta do it, gotta do it.”

Sarah



Features of programs that facilitate character development

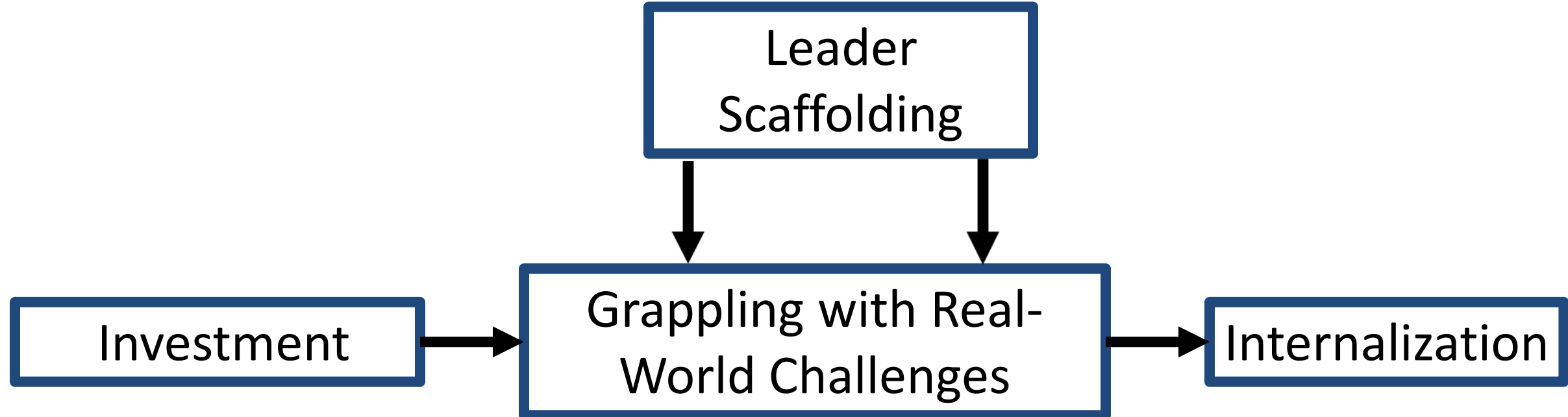
- are youth centered, youth have agency
- adult staff can develop strong trusting relationships
(Aisha Griffith)
- cultivate a culture of action and learning
- participation is voluntary

2. Youth's Investment in Pursuit of Meaningful Goals

- Short-term. “I like doing it.” “I’m good at this”
- Long-term, developmental, career. “I wanted some future-building for me”
- Altruistic. “this is actually something that is making a difference. I actually teach someone something.”

Challenge Model of Character Learning

for older youth



3. Constructive Peer Processes, With Leader Scaffolding

First Ingredient:

Constructive peer dialogue:
reflective discussion and problem
solving. (Heath, 1998; Kirshner, 2015; Larson et al.,
2013; Watkins et al., 2007; others)



3. Constructive Peer Processes, With Leader Scaffolding

Second Ingredient: Collective Investment (Wood et al., 2007; Salusky et al., 2014; Larson et al., 2016)

Roles confer both responsibilities and rights

-- duties/obligations and opportunities for agency

Step 1. Youth voluntarily took on roles,
and became invested



Step 2: Experienced Demanding
Role Obligations

Emergent Instrumental Demands

People don't behave as expected.

- “I thought you tell one kid what to do and they will all follow that direction. But you have to tell each and every one of them.” – Amir

Competing goals

- “not being bias – to see their different views, and just report them, and my opinion too.” – John

Emergent Motivational Challenges

Emotional Strain

- “You just get on your last nerve --just finding a way to settle the situation without hurting the – derailing the entire program.”

Self-Doubt

- “I’m not gonna be able to answer the questions.”

Wavering Commitment to the Role

- “I just didn't want to do it anymore. I wanted to be done with it.”

Step 3: How Youth Overcame Challenges

Pre-existing disposition to persevere

- “I’m not the kind of person that just backs outta things because I don’t like em.” – Rosa

Leader and peer instrumental support: reframing, encouragement, coaxing

Peers and Motivation



Collective Investment in Work

- “I wanted to be there for them.”
- “People are trusting me, wanting me to do it, so I will do it, I’m not backing down.”

Social Control?

- “Not letting friends down”
- “They kind of just push you to do better. From there, you feel pressure but **it’s good pressure.** You’re like, they’re rooting on for me, so I gotta do this.” -- Alexandra

Step 4: Character Development & Transfer

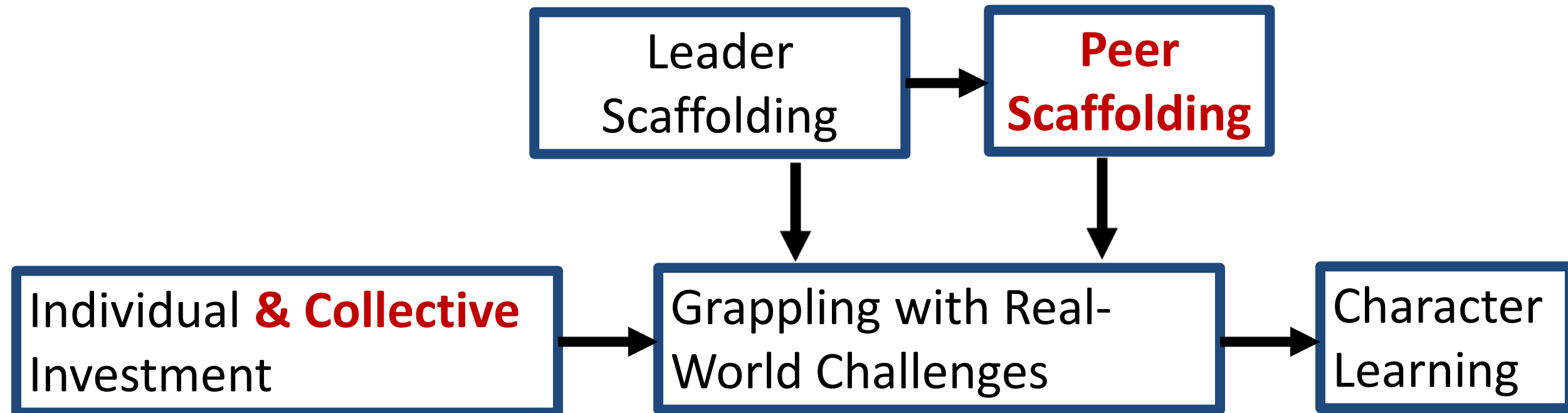
- “I just saw myself as a very responsible person. I thought I could be trusted with a lot of things, and **it made me want to stay that way.**” -- Rosa

Transfer to other contexts

- Before, I didn't do anything in my house. But now I help out whenever I can...with the laundry. I go to the grocery store. Before I didn't do that, **because I didn't see why!** – Rosana
- It has certainly increased my work ethic in school, my ability to stay on top of everything at school. -- Gabriel

Challenge Model of Character Learning

for older youth



4. The Expertise of Staff





Thank You!

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Articles available at:

www.youthdev.illinois.edu

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