Changing the Odds: Pathways to Young Adult Success

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The Forum is committed to changing the odds that all children and youth are ready for college, work and life.

We connect leaders to ideas, services and networks that can help them make more intentional decisions that are good for young people, even in the face of limited resources.

We help leaders who are trying to improve & align policies, plan & partner for impact, and/or strengthen programs & adult practice.
Beating the Odds vs. Changing the Odds
KNOWING THE ODDS, CHANGING THE ODDS:

THE SOCIAL GENOME PROJECT
### Key Determinants of Being “On Track”

**Family Formation:**
- Marriage, Delayed parenthood, Maternal education & employment
- Normal birthweight babies

**Early childhood (0-5):**
- Reading & math skills
- Social behavior

**Middle childhood: (5-11)**
- Reading & math skills
- Social-emotional skills

**Adolescence (11-19):**
- High school grad w/c+
- No convictions, No children

**Young Adults (19-29):**
- Live independently
- P.S. degree or above poverty income

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The Path to Improved Outcomes Starts with Providing Opportunities powerful enough to literally Change the Odds

Commitments to equality, access and completion are important steps that can help youth move along the path. More specific commitments to ensure equity, quality and readiness are needed to change the odds.

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On READINESS
Policy, Research and Education Leaders Affirm Student Readiness is More Than Academic Success

The 2002 NRC report, Community Programs that Promote Youth Development, identified 4 developmental domains that predict adult success:

- **Physical development**
  - good health habits, risk management skills

- **Intellectual development**
  - school success, critical thinking, decision-making, life skills, vocational skills

- **Psychological and emotional development**
  - good mental health, positive self-regard, self-regulation, coping skills, autonomy, effective time management

- **Social development**
  - connectedness, sense of place, attachment to pro-social institutions, ability to navigate cultural contexts, commitment to civic engagement

The 2019 SEAD Commission Report, A Nation at Hope, affirms this broader definition.
Focus of Development Changes as Children Grow Older

Providing the right experiences for growth requires knowledge of child and youth development. The development of the four foundational components, along with agency, integrated identity, and competencies, occurs at different stages throughout childhood and adolescence. Development into a successful young adult entails growth of the self and one’s abilities to interact with others and navigate the broader world. We define success beyond education and employment to include healthy relationships, a meaningful place within a community, and contributing to a larger good.
On Readiness...

What Employers want

When the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) asked employers participating in its *Job Outlook 2018* survey which attributes—beyond a strong GPA—they most value, employers indicated that problem-solving skills and an ability to work in a team are the most desired attributes and are of equal importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving skills</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work in a team</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills (written)</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong work ethic</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical/quantitative skills</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills (verbal)</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail-Oriented</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You believe the students actually have these skills. What would you do?

On Readiness...

Want More Kids to Be Ready?

You’ve designed a study to demonstrate that low-income, minority students who had completed well-designed apprenticeships with trained and motivated volunteer professionals helped them build job skills. A group of local HR professionals designed an entry-level interview suitable for high school students.

After being interviewed, only 27% were given scores that would have netted employment.

Why? The HR professionals explained that they were not expecting the students to have specific content knowledge related to the jobs . . . but they were expecting them to be able to offer specific instances in which they demonstrated teamwork, problem-solving, persistence, initiative, conflict resolution and other skills deemed critical for success in the workforce.
On Readiness...

Want More Kids to Be Ready? Help Them Name and Appreciate the Skills They Already Have

The researcher, believing that the students had these skills, designed a simple intervention. He set up modules to help them identify and describe examples from their lives (apprenticeship or beyond) in which they had effectively demonstrated each of these six named skillsets.

When re-interviewed by different HR staff, the percentage of students who were rated employable . . .

. . . doubled.
**PARENTS KNOW THIS INTUITIVELY**

Top Skills & Traits named by parents (Learning Heroes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible decision-making</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-motivation</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from mistakes</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What language do you use . . . and with whom?
Does it vary . . . with young people, with parents, with colleagues?

Parents Choose “Life Skills”

QUESTION: Which one term do you prefer to describe the skills and traits that you identified as important?

- "Simple"
- "All encompassing"
- "Because you use them everyday in life, schools, jobs and family"
On QUALITY
Developmental Experiences Happen in All Settings
On Quality...

Practice Base for How Learning Happens

LEARNING SETTINGS
- Teaching and practicing social, emotional, and cognitive skills
- Embedding social, emotional, and cognitive skills into academic learning
- Safe and relationship-based learning environments

STUDENT EXPERIENCE
- Rigorous academic content and learning experiences
- Engagement, ownership, and purpose
- Sense of belonging and connection to community

STUDENT OUTCOMES
- Academic success and educational attainment
- Civic and community engagement
- Life well-being
- Workforce and career readiness

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The Science of Learning and Development

THE TRIGGERED BRAIN

Adversity doesn’t just happen to children, it happens inside their brains and bodies.

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Relationships, environments with safety & belonging, rich instruction, individualized supports and intentional development of skills, mindsets & habits – it is this combination of things that we are talking about with Whole Child Personalization. - Dr. Pamela Cantor
“Developmental Practices” that cut across systems and settings

- Trust & Respect
- Continuity
- Caring, culturally responsive
- Consistency in practices
- Predictability in routines
- Meaningful work
- Inquiry as a major learning strategy
- Well-designed, collaborative
- Ongoing feedback
- Opportunities to develop metacognitive skills

- Explicit instruction in social, emotional, and cognitive skills
- Infusion of opportunities to use social emotional skills
- Educative & restorative approaches to group management
- Identification of barriers
- Integrated services

IT STARTS HERE!
**read-i-ness**

**NOUN**

1. the *willingness* to do something

2. the state of *being fully prepared* for something

**COM-B Model**

- **Capacity**
- **Motivation**
- **Opportunity**
- **Behavior**

**How does belonging fit in?**

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Do I Belong Here?

Peer doesn’t say “hi” in passing

I’m not sure I belong.

No one here likes me.

Less effort towards relationships.

Yes, I belong!

They just didn’t see me.

Be more direct next time.

Interpretation

Response

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Belonging and Equity

Addressing educational achievement gaps and other inequitable life outcomes requires structural solutions.

Structural inequality and discrimination → Lower sense of belonging → Inequitable outcomes

“In the meantime”
Addressing issues related to the diversity of staff and volunteers and the appropriateness of programming and curricula can increase the chances that youth participants...

Feel safe showing their skill levels
Feel supported enough to try
See the relevance of the
Feel confident their
Capacity Motivation Opportunity Behavior will be interpreted correctly

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"I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather.

As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized."

-DR. HAIM GINOTT
THE POWER YOU CARRY
Connecting Readiness To Student Experiences

THINK – PAIR - SHARE
SHARE ONE STORY WITH A NEIGHBOR

What was your preferred way to learn when you were a young person?

What do you do to create a relationship rich learning environment?

Strong Relationships
Environments filled w/ Safety & Belonging
Rich Instructional Experiences
Individualized Supports
Developing Skills, Mindsets & Habits
Workshop: How do your “official” practices align with “developmental” practices?

- **Prohibitive policies and practices.** Limit or cut-off opportunities to foster youth readiness.
- **Not Prohibitive policies and practices.** Do not actively prohibit or promote youth readiness.
- **Promotional policies and practices.** Encourage opportunities and pathways to promote youth readiness.
- **Incentivizing policies and practices.** Enable the promotion of youth readiness through funding and other incentives.

**Relationships**

**Environments**

**Instructional Experiences**

**Individual Supports**

**Building Skills & Mindsets**
On EQUITY
We have to get kids ready to play in the game

This starts by asking them how they see the games, the rules, and the resources in their communities

Equity has to be linked to readiness
Equity has to be linked to broader opportunities for learning and engagement

“Acquiring social, emotional and cognitive skills is important for all students, but equity means acknowledging that not all students are the same in terms of the assets they bring, the challenges they face or the opportunities that they can access.”

From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope

(emphasis added).

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SEAD Youth Development Work Group: Building Partnerships in Support of Where, When & How Learning Happens

A Youth Development Work Group was created to ensure that the “community” ring had a voice in shaping the final reports and recommendations.

The group also created its own issue brief.

Youth Development Work Group Recommendations

- Include youth development partners in setting a clear vision.
- Strengthen and expand adult capacity.
- Create and support engaging learning settings throughout the day and the year.
- Provide systems and supports to maintain partnerships.
- Leverage resources efficiently and equitably.
Where and When Learning Happens

During School:
- Core academic classes
- Elective Classes
- Formal and informal school spaces (e.g., cafeterias, hallways, libraries, buses)
- Extracurricular activities (e.g., clubs, mentoring, sports)
- Enrichment and development opportunities

Before/After School, Summer:
- Civic and employment opportunities (e.g., service learning, volunteering, jobs)
- Community learning settings (e.g., libraries, museums, zoos, parks)
Think of a young person you know: How does their experience vary across these different settings?

For young adults, how would you change the settings & places in the picture?

Where and When Learning Happens
Connecting Readiness, Equity, Quality to the Where/When Graphic helps...

- reinforce the roles that families, communities, peers
- specify the full range of learning environments
- promote consistent standards for all learning environments
- acknowledge that adult educators cross institutional boundaries
- affirm the need for consistent recognition and cross training
- recognize the cumulative impact of differences in access and quality across learning environments
- advocate for better and more data
- highlight the need for more and better funded supports and for coordinated partnering

It’s important to know where and when engagement and learning aren’t happening...

...so we can take collective action.
How do you set the climate and make the weather . . .

...throughout your sphere of influence?
is the proud home of...

Helps leadership groups build broader partnerships, set bigger goals, use data better and implement bolder strategies.

Builds quality improvement systems to strengthen practices and programs serving young people.

Supports state and local policy leaders.

Mobilizes action by and for young people.

Works to expand economic mobility and close the opportunity gap in America.

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