# Positive Youth Development
## An Examination of the Field

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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**T H I S   R E P O R T** , *Positive Youth Development: An Examination of the Field,* presents an overview of the role of philanthropy in this field: the work that has been done, and potential areas for future investment based on the most recent research into Positive Youth Development (PYD) programs and their results.

## Concept Definition

Although many researchers, practitioners and funders in the field have defined PYD in different ways, the core concept is best described as:

A process of human growth through which adolescents move from being taken care of to taking care of themselves and others; an approach where policy, funding and programming are directed at providing supports to young people as they build their capacities and strengths to meet their personal and social needs; and a set of practices that adults use to provide youth with the types of relationships and experiences needed to fuel healthy development.[1]

As this definition explains, PYD focuses on promoting the healthy development of all young people, not just those considered "at risk." Many practitioners originally made a clear distinction between PYD–which is focused on all young people–and risk-reduction programs that focused on a smaller number of youth practicing unhealthy behaviors or at risk of doing so. Today the interrelationship of these two approaches is more commonly acknowledged, and PYD programs both help some young people maintain safe and healthy behaviors, and redirect others toward healthier and more positive ones.[2]

Despite differences in settings and activities, programs that follow a PYD approach share a common purpose: to build on young people's strengths, helping them cultivate their talents, increase feelings of self-worth and use the confidence and skills they gain to make positive, healthy decisions about how to live their lives.

## Foundation Support for PYD

Interest in and funding of PYD programming has increased exponentially in recent years. Although foundations have supported work in such areas as mentoring, civic engagement, and after-school programming for many years, these foundations have begun to make their funding decisions part of a more comprehensive PYD approach.

### Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Over the past 18 years, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has funded 18 programs with PYD elements. Some were direct-service programs (most often focusing on PYD's potential to reduce substance use among young people but sometimes focusing on risk-taking behavior such as unprotected sexual activity), and others involved research and evaluation.

RWJF's funding of *A Study of Positive Youth Development* falls into the second category. This landmark study was conducted in three parts from 1996 to 2000 by Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Ph.D., and colleagues of the Center for Young Children and Families (now the National Center for Children and Families), and William H. Foster, Ph.D., of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA), both housed at Columbia University.

It examined the effectiveness of youth development programs on reducing or preventing risk-taking behavior, including substance abuse. Based on a literature review, their study highlighted the need for more research into the benefits of focusing on youth development, and called for systematic evaluation of program designs to identify the best mix of program elements. The authors then established a framework to guide this evaluation, proposing that an effective PYD initiative needs to provide:

■ A goal of strengthening young people's abilities and competencies.

■ An atmosphere of hope in which the youth development work can take place.

■ Program activities that support the young person's interests and talents, a chance to practice new skills and opportunities for personal and group recognition.

Based in part on the findings of Brooks-Gunn and Foster, RWJF initiated its current and largest PYD program. *After School: Connecting Children at Risk With Responsible Adults to Help Reduce Youth Substance Abuse and Other Health-Compromising Behaviors* is a national program that supports demonstration projects in three sites (Boston, Chicago and the San Francisco Bay Area) designed to connect at-risk urban youth with responsible adults in activities after school.

### Other Foundations
Other foundations that fund work in the PYD field include:

■ *Annie E. Casey Foundation*, which has an overall focus on vulnerable children and families, including a focus on training front-line workers in child welfare, child care, juvenile justice, youth services, and employment and training. The Casey Foundation also funds programs directed at teenagers' reproductive health.

■ *Charles Stewart Mott Foundation*, with its special program area, Promising Practices in After-School Programs. The Promising Practices programs support the evaluation of after-school programs and strengthen awareness of and advocacy for these programs.

■ *Edna McConnell Clark Foundation*, which provides program support to 20 local and national organizations with proven success at serving youths.

■ *Edward W. Hazen Foundation* stresses the value of training youth in grassroots organizing. It funds specific projects that do this, and it also seeks to involve more funders in youth organizing by increasing their understanding of and support for the concept.

- *Surdna Foundation's* focus is on supporting young people to take direct action to solve serious problems in their schools, neighborhoods and society at large. Approaches to this support include service learning in the school system, cross-generational partnerships to address specific problems and identifying, through formal evaluation, the best practices to build civic engagement among youth.

- *Wallace Foundation*, which focuses on support of out-of-school learning, especially for urban children from low- and moderate-income families. Current projects involve building community leadership support for such programs and strengthening family support for participation in after-school programs.

- *W.K. Kellogg Foundation*, especially through its Kellogg Youth Initiative Partnerships, which seek to design an effective community-based program model for PYD work.

- *W.T. Grant Foundation*, which seeks to improve the quality of youth development research and the use of this research by scholars, policy-makers, practitioners, advocates and the media.

The work of these and other foundations is augmented by a support structure of intermediary organizations that provide information, resources, training, technical assistance and evaluation expertise to direct-service programs, funders and policy-makers. The work of these intermediary organizations has played a critical role in strengthening and unifying the PYD field.

## Areas on Which to Focus

From a review of the work of these foundations and intermediary organizations and of research in the PYD field, this paper identifies four areas that offer the greatest potential to advance PYD work:

1. **Strengthen out-of-school time programs.** The field needs more knowledge about out-of-school time (OST) programs: how they can better incorporate a PYD approach and how they can be structured so that more students join and stay in the programs. A recent RAND Corporation identified the need to improve the quality of OST programs (and of their evaluation), and the Harvard Family Research Project's Out of School Time Learning and Development Project– funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation–has developed a database of OST program evaluations that supports both program development and evaluation. The Harvard Family Research Project is also studying the factors that promote participation in OST activities. This research and the Mott Foundation's "Promising Practices in After-school Programs" network provide a strong foundation upon which further work can build.

2. **Improve recruitment, training and ongoing support for youth workers.** A youth worker is an individual who works with or on behalf of youth to facilitate their personal, social and educational development and enable them to gain a voice,

influence and place in society as they make the transition from dependence to independence. In 2004 a national conference of stakeholders in the PYD field called for a focus on the professional development of youth workers and began to develop a strategy to build this focus. The group identified the need for common standards and competencies for youth workers, better and more consistent training, career ladders, methods to create visibility for the profession of youth workers and processes for evaluating the effectiveness of professional development activities. Several organizations have begun to work on training and certifying youth workers, and some colleges and universities are offering degrees or courses in youth development.

3. **Disseminate new program quality assessment tools.** In 2005 the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, Mich., published its Youth Program Quality Assessment[3] tool (PQA). Developed with support from the W.T. Grant Foundation and the Michigan Department of Education, the Youth PQA was designed to reliably measure seven dimensions of program quality. An organization can also use the tool for self-assessment, including the identification of a need for staff training. The tool has proved effective in a range of PYD settings but still needs to be more widely disseminated, supported and used.

4. **Implement policies that support coordinated PYD systems.** The nature of PYD is that it focuses on a population–youth–whose needs change across the stages of adolescent development. Although many discrete PYD programs operate in many communities, they may not realize their full potential until these discrete programs are part of a coordinated system that can respond to changing developmental needs across organizations and sectors. Creating such a coordinated system requires service providers and other community organizations to work with local, state and federal policy-makers. The Federal Youth Coordination Act provides some support for such collaboration. Illinois, Connecticut and Iowa are among the states providing models of state-level actions to strengthen coordinated youth development systems.

## Recommendations for Future Funding and Support

What specifically can the philanthropic sector do to contribute to the four "areas of focus" described above? What kinds of projects are most needed? Which are likely to have the most positive effects on the PYD field?

This report presents a range of possible actions that foundations can take. Some would influence the PYD field broadly; others would have a more targeted impact.

### Options with the Broadest Focus

1. *Support a large-scale, long-term PYD policy project with a rigorous evaluation component.* Such a project would involve the establishment and support of state or regional PYD policy institutes to produce youth policy advocates and experts,

and contribute to the development of meaningful youth policy. Established to affect policy discussions and decision-making, the institutes would engage youths as integral partners, with opportunities to share their perspectives on policy issues of importance to them, their families and their communities. These institutes would develop policy recommendations built on sound PYD principles and support collaborations among youths, youth development practitioners, policy experts and policy-makers. Successful collaborations would serve as resources for policy-makers on youth-related issues.

2. *Support a program designed to integrate the work of discrete sectors of the PYD field.* For example, a program could address obesity prevention via a community youth development program that centers on the continued revitalization of neighborhood parks. Such an approach would combine work in the health care sector with that of city government, including components of job training and vocational skill development, and address the important developmental issue of obesity. This example applies to foundations such as RWJF with an existing focus on obesity. Other cross-sector efforts could be tailored to the goals of other foundations.

### *Options Targeted to Evaluation and Partnership*

3. *Launch a multisite, experimental study design evaluation of one or more programs that have proven effective at preventing risk behaviors among youths in initial studies.* In the studies cited in this report, the need for more and better evaluation of PYD programs comes up repeatedly. The National Academy of Sciences report [4] on PYD lists a number of factors thought to be critical to PYD programs, but argues for a more systematic evaluation of whether these factors are, in fact, the most important. A number of programs, especially those relating to reducing health risk behaviors, have shown initial positive results and could benefit from more rigorous evaluation.

4. *Form complementary partnerships between foundations around PYD work.* One foundation's area of expertise in PYD may well complement another's. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, for example, focuses on direct support to a small number of organizations with proven success in youth development work. A second organization wishing, for example, to evaluate the effectiveness of certain approaches could use the McConnell Clark Foundation's grantees as a pool of organizations with which to work.

*Options Relating to Measurement and Assessment*

5. ***Identify foundation projects that have developed assessment tools and broaden the use of these tools in the PYD field.*** As part of RWJF's national program, *Reclaiming Futures: Communities Helping Teens Overcome Drugs, Alcohol & Crime*, national program office staff developed and pilot-tested the Youth Competency Assessment (YCA), a tool for use with justice-involved youth that looks at three domains:

   - Repairing harm and developing positive norms and values.

   - Creating a healthy identity.

   - Connecting to family, peers and community.

   These domains all have parallels in a PYD approach. Could this tool, or other tools developed by other programs, be used to strengthen the PYD approach of the program for which the tool was designed, or as a model for assessing another program? Foundations could fund and investigate such options.

*Options With a Specific Impact*

6. ***Launch a PYD initiative for children of immigrant families.*** Although all young people face challenges as they make the transition to adulthood, those challenges are particularly heightened for many because of the vulnerable circumstances in which they live. An especially vulnerable group is the children of immigrant families, for whom the effort to adjust to American society may be especially stressful. A small number of mentoring projects targeted to Latino youth show promise, but there is little research on their effectiveness. Nor has sufficient research been conducted on youth development among young people from any of the Mexican, Central and South American, or Caribbean families that make up the majority of immigrants to the United States. An initiative focusing on the immigrant Latino population could begin to address this deficit.

**Positive Youth Development:** An Examination of the Field • **Executive Summary**

In an ideal world, young people receive support from their families, peers and caring adults in a range of settings that helps them make a successful transition from adolescence into young adulthood. However, few, if any, young people live in an ideal world.

For those growing up in low-income communities, the rapid physical, psychological and social changes they experience during adolescence are exacerbated by a host of environmental factors, including:

- high levels of joblessness;

- inadequate housing;

- limited services;

- under-resourced and under-performing schools;

- widespread availability of alcohol and illegal drugs;

- lack of safety.

Many of these youths struggle through adolescence. They are unprepared to handle the new challenges that young adulthood presents and unsure of just how to lead healthy, productive lives.

Many practitioners realize that adolescence offers the last opportunity to intervene in the lives of large numbers of youths via the settings to which they are still connected.[5] In response, some have taken a holistic view of young people in the context of family, school and community, employing a positive youth development (PYD) approach to reach and involve them in meaningful activities that build on their assets and potential.

This examination of the PYD field was conducted for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) as part of its focus on promoting healthy communities and lifestyles and reducing the toll of substance abuse among our nation's young people. This report also comes at a time when respected researchers and practitioners from an array of disciplines have identified PYD as a valuable approach that warrants increased support and further examination.[6, 7, 8, 9]

## Report Objectives

This examination of the field of positive youth development (PYD) seeks to:

- Define positive youth development;

- Summarize the current state of the PYD field, including recent research findings, organizational leaders and principal sources of financial support;

- Suggest strategic initiatives for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and other foundations to consider that may support the healthy development of young people.

## Building on Previous RWJF-Funded Research

This project builds on previous RWJF-funded examinations of positive youth development conducted from 1996 through 2000 by co-principal investigators *Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Ph.D.*, and William H. Foster, Ph.D., of Columbia University, with results published through 2003.

*Appendix One* contains a list of all PYD-related projects funded by RWJF since 1988.

# What is Positive Youth Development?

Field definitions of Positive Youth Development (PYD) abound, but a few common themes predominate. The major elements of a PYD *process*, *approach*, *methodology, philosophy* or *perspective* are *opportunities, competencies, connections, supports* and *contributions*. The best definitions describe not only the approach but also what is needed to ensure its implementation. Youth Development Strategies, Inc., offers just such a definition:

*A process of human growth through which adolescents move from being taken care of to taking care of themselves and others; an approach where policy, funding and programming are directed at providing supports to young people as they build their capacities and strengths to meet their personal and social needs; and a set of practices that adults use to provide youth with the types of relationships and experiences needed to fuel healthy development.*[10]

Key to PYD is promoting the healthy development of *all* young people, not just those considered "high risk" or "at risk." PYD approaches help some young people maintain safe and healthy behaviors, and redirect others to engage in healthier and more positive actions.[11] The focus is on promoting the social, emotional, spiritual and mental well-being of young people.

## PYD Objectives and Features

The objectives[12] of PYD are to:

- Promote bonding with family, peers, school and community;
- Facilitate healthy social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and moral development;
- Nurture a belief in the future;
- Cultivate self-efficacy and self-determination;
- Foster a positive identity;
- Support prosocial norms;
- Foster resilience;
- Nurture spirituality.

National, community-based and faith-based organizations; schools; police departments; libraries; museums; and parks and recreation departments are implementing programs designed to meet many of these objectives. Despite differences in settings and activities, these and other efforts employing a PYD approach share a common purpose: to build on young people's *strengths*—helping them cultivate their talents, increase feelings of self-worth and use the confidence and skills they gain to make positive, healthy decisions.

Key features of PYD programs include:

- physical safety;
- psychological safety;
- appropriate structure;
- modeling of prosocial behavior;
- supportive relationships with adults and peers;
- opportunities to gain a sense of belonging;
- meaningful challenges and experiences;
- opportunities to build skills.

In some cases, PYD approaches move beyond a discrete organization running programs for youth to the community as a whole. In these community youth development (CYD) efforts, the goal is to create a continuum of developmentally appropriate opportunities for young people to contribute to their communities. Such an approach is intended to simultaneously support young people, strengthen families and improve local conditions.[13]

# What are the Major Research Findings on PYD and Their Effects on the Field?

This section of the report describes important PYD research:

- An RWJF-funded study by Brooks-Gunn and Foster that outlines goals for PYD initiatives.[14]

- A meta-analysis of PYD program evaluations conducted by Catalano and colleagues.[15]

- A review of community-level programs for youths undertaken by the National Academy of Sciences (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine Committee).[16]

- A meta-analysis of empirical studies of youth development programs currently under way at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

## BROOKS-GUNN AND FOSTER: A STUDY OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

This landmark study was conducted in three parts from 1996 to 2000 by Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Ph.D., and colleagues at Columbia University's Center for Young Children and Families (now the National Center for Children and Families), and William H. Foster, Ph.D., of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. It examined the effectiveness of youth development programs on reducing or preventing risk-taking behavior, including substance abuse.

The study's three components were:

- A literature review;

- Design of a model for effective youth substance use prevention programs;

- Preparation of the study's findings for publication.

Researcher Judie L. Roth, Ph.D., was the lead author of the publications that came from this grant.

### Literature Review

The literature review identified three broad classes of youth development programs:

- Those that focus on positive behavior and work to enhance young peoples' competencies and assets, considered the positive youth development ideal.

- Those that concentrate on specific problem behaviors and work to build competencies and assets.

- Those that attempt to build young peoples' skills to resist risk-taking behavior.

The investigators concluded that, despite theoretical support for the benefits of a youth development approach, strong empirical evidence was just beginning to emerge. In addition, they found that a number of elements seem critical to the success of programs, including a flexible range of activities and supports that address the needs and characteristics of young people, connection to a caring adult and sustained efforts over time.

However, they could not find any evaluations that systematically varied program design to determine which, or what mix of, elements are necessary for program effectiveness. Their findings were published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.[17]

### *Model Design*
The second part of the study examined how theories of healthy adolescent development can guide the structure and content of youth development programming, and explored whether principles of youth development were used to help youths already engaged in high-risk behaviors.

### *Conclusion*
The investigators concluded that PYD programs appear to have a sound basis in adolescent development theory, and that specific directions for programming may be drawn from that knowledge base. They described the primary purpose of youth development programs–to identify the strengths of adolescents and build on them– and three frameworks upon which most programs have been based:

- Developmental transitions (i.e., the biological, social and psychological changes experienced during adolescence).

- Ecological/contextual models (i.e., the influence multiple contexts–family, peers, school, workplace, neighborhood, community and country–have on adolescent development).

- Risk and resilience models (i.e., the cumulative nature of risk factors on program effectiveness and the role of resiliency in counteracting risks).

Although the investigators found that youth development programming shows promise of obtaining positive results for health-related outcomes, such as prevention of substance abuse and related behavioral health problems, they concluded that the evidence is not definitive, in part because the programs reviewed were small in scale. In addition, they found limited application of a youth development perspective in the juvenile justice, foster care or mental health rehabilitative systems.

## Goals, Atmosphere and Activities

The study's investigative team sought to clarify the term *youth development program* by identifying three features—goals, atmosphere and activities—that distinguish PYD from other types of programs for youths.

The investigators developed operational definitions of each of these elements to help develop survey and standardized observational measures that could advance the field's understanding of why some programs are better than others at promoting positive youth development. These definitions are:

### Goals

Promote positive development by building young people's abilities and competencies, even when seeking to prevent problem behaviors. The researchers further defined these abilities as the "5 Cs" of PYD: *Competence, Confidence, Connections, Character* and *Caring*.

### Atmosphere

Leaders and staff create and nourish an atmosphere of hope. Staff and the program environment should seek to:

- *Encourage* the development of supportive relationships with adults and among peers.

- *Empower* youths through staff efforts and activities that encourage them to engage in useful roles, practice self-determination and develop or clarify their goals for the future.

- *Communicate expectations* for positive behavior by defining clear rules and consequences and encouraging healthy behaviors.

- *Provide* opportunities for recognition by rewarding positive behaviors within the program or by structuring opportunities for public recognition of skills.

### Activities

PYD programs provide formal and informal opportunities to cultivate interests and talents, practice new skills and gain personal and group recognition by building youths' skills, broadening their horizons and increasing the supports available throughout their lives.

## CATALANO AND COLLEAGUES: PROMISING FINDINGS FOR PROBLEM BEHAVIOR REDUCTION

The study, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, identified and summarized the results of PYD intervention evaluations; identified elements contributing to both the success and lack of success in PYD programs and program evaluations; and offered suggestions for improving evaluation approaches.

Of the 77 program evaluations examined, 52 were excluded either because the evaluation did not meet the study's scientific criteria or, in spite of meeting the criteria, the evaluation did not produce evidence of program impact.

The 25 programs designated as effective, based on the evidence presented in the evaluation, met the criteria of:

- employing a control or strong comparison group with measures of behavioral outcomes, including at least one of the acknowledged PYD objectives;[18] and

- having at least one significant effect.

Although the researchers acknowledged that PYD is not yet well defined, they did conclude that the most effective PYD programs used skills-building and environmental/organizational change among their strategies, and targeted a combination of settings. Twenty-four of the programs found a significant reduction in problem behaviors that ranged from alcohol and other drug use to high-risk sexual behavior and violence.

### *Deficiencies in PYD Evaluation Research*

The researchers cited the following as deficiencies in PYD evaluation research that must be addressed in order to provide convincing evidence of effectiveness:

- Few experimental studies employ random assignment, and the number of well-designed quasi-experimental studies is limited.

- There are relatively few follow-up studies.

- Standardized measures that could be applied within a comprehensive outcomes framework are lacking, thus limiting consistent assessment and interpretation of outcomes across studies.

- Published evaluation results provide incomplete program information regarding the implementation process, youth development constructs addressed, or the hypothesized relationships between constructs and outcomes measured.

They also noted that some PYD programs with the potential to produce an impact were not considered in their review, either because they were in the early implementation stages or because they lacked an evaluation component.

## NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES REPORT: DEVELOPMENT OF A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK THAT COULD UNITE THE FIELD

In response to the growing evidence and research base supporting PYD, in 2000 the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences established the Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth.

Comprising researchers from sociology, psychology and education, among other disciplines, the committee was charged with determining what is known about community interventions and programs designed to promote positive youth development. In addition, the committee was asked to identify those programs with sufficiently strong evidence to suggest that they could serve as models for communities to employ in enhancing their youth programs.[19]

Published in 2002, the committee's report, *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development,* made a major contribution to the field by advancing knowledge on healthy adolescent development.

The committee analyzed seven "reputable" reviews and meta-analyses of prevention and promotion programs for youths (10 to 18 years old) published between 1997 and 2000. All were published in peer-reviewed journals or in government documents that used rigorous methods of review in order to "reduce the potential biases associated with reviews conducted by groups with high stakes in positive or negative conclusions."[20]

Because the committee found the distinction between prevention programs and PYD programs unclear, it considered programs with a primary focus on prevention as well as those with an explicit youth development framework from the fields of mental health, violence prevention, teenage pregnancy prevention and youth development. The reviews conducted by Roth and Brooks-Gunn, as well as by Catalano and colleagues, are among those the committee examined.

### Committee Assessment of Other Reviews

The committee gave high marks to the review by Catalano and colleagues, disagreeing with those who felt it was an error for the researchers to include only those programs with significant results.

Citing the relative newness of the PYD field, the need to find out what works and the impossibility of drawing conclusions from non-significant evaluation results, the committee made the same decision in conducting its analyses.

However, its members acknowledged that there are many reasons why evaluations produce non-significant results, ranging from poor program implementation, participant attrition and weak outcome measures to inadequate specification of what outcomes should be affected.

The RWJF-funded review conducted by Roth and colleagues also received praise from the committee for providing what it considered to be comprehensive evidence that community-based youth development programs can be effective. The committee identified several laudable aspects of the review:

- Its focus on community-based rather than school-based programs;

- Inclusion of a framework to categorize youth development programs;

- Insistence on rigorous evaluation standards.

However, the committee questioned the researchers' conclusion that programs incorporating more elements of the framework showed increased positive outcomes. Calling the evidence for such a conclusion "weak," the committee stated that "the number of assets and features included in specific programs has not been systematically manipulated in such a way that such a conclusion is warranted at this point based on experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations."[21]

Finally, the committee acknowledged the importance of both reviews for providing valuable information about promising programs that warrant replication and rigorous evaluation.

However, it also lamented that none of the evaluations examined for either review offered useful information about such issues as generalizability, long-term effects or specific aspects of programs that were most effective for specific outcomes or population groups.

### Results

Based on its review of theory, practical experiences and empirical research, the committee developed a conceptual framework and research agenda to promote healthy youth development. The framework describes the specific components of positive development in each of four categories:

- Physical development

- Intellectual development

- Psychological and emotional development

- Social development.

Acknowledging that research on community program contexts has been limited, the committee identified the features of what it termed "positive developmental settings":

- Physical and psychological safety

- Supportive relationships

- Opportunities to belong

- Positive social norms

- Support for efficacy and mattering
- Opportunities for skill-building
- Integration of family, school and community efforts.

### *Promoting Use of the Report's Frameworks*
This synthesis of research and practice represents a significant advancement in the field that validates much of the practice-based literature.

Karen Pittman and Nicole Yohalem of the Forum for Youth Investment have encouraged use of the report among practitioners, researchers, policy-makers, funders and advocates by promoting its major themes and providing each constituency with practical suggestions for making use of its findings.[22]

- *Researchers:* The report's recommendations about social indicators and research can be used to support the development and use of community indicators.

- *Policy-Makers and Funders*: The new frames presented in the report can be used to strengthen funding guidelines and policy development in general.

- *Practitioners*: The features of positive developmental settings outlined in the report can be used as a basis for staff training, program design and program standard and assessment tool development.

- *Advocates:* The report can be used as a tool to support dialogue across the education, youth development and prevention fields.

### *Conclusions and Ideas for Moving Forward*
The committee did an exceptional job of summarizing the major themes that have emerged from research conducted over the last decade, and these themes set the stage for the discussion of recent PYD research and practice that follows.

- The goal of reducing or preventing youth problems and the goal of promoting youth strengths are not mutually exclusive, and collaboration would be mutually beneficial across fields.

- Academic achievement, while an essential developmental outcome, is only one outcome within one domain among an array that we must help young people attain.

- Some efforts designed to help young people are actually counterproductive (e.g., rigid, autocratic classrooms).[23]

- Although the positive development of all young people is important to achieve, those youths in greatest need are more vulnerable than others and thus should be a priority.

The committee also identified the need for:

- cross-sector discussions about the most effective ways to collaborate across systems and settings. Such discussions would be particularly relevant to promoting the healthy development of vulnerable youths.
- infrastructure investments in youth programming.

## PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS THAT FOSTER PYD: A META-ANALYSIS

The first results of a large-scale meta-analysis of youth development program evaluations will soon be completed, adding both breadth and depth to the current body of knowledge. Psychologists Roger Weissberg (University of Illinois at Chicago) and Joseph Durlak (Loyola University) are identifying, coding and conducting a research review of empirical studies of youth development programs to identify the characteristics of those that foster PYD.[24]

Via searches of computer databases (e.g., PsycInfo, ERIC, MEDLINE, Dissertation Abstracts) and reference lists of individual reports and previous reviews, hand searches of major journals, review of Society for Prevention Research conference proceedings and contact with researchers for additional data, Weissberg and Durlak identified 665 interventions.

The analysis identified 179 specific and 489 universal school-linked and non-school program studies. Of the 489 programs examined, the vast majority—78 percent—was school-based, with 13 percent community-based and 9 percent family programs. Although this research is not yet complete, the researchers have begun to share their findings and to develop and share recommendations. The researchers have reached the following conclusions:

- PYD yields significant effects in the short and long term.
- A broad array of outcomes is positively influenced.
- Some socially/clinically significant changes are impressive.
- PYD programs work equally well for children with and without presenting problems.

Weissberg and Durlak caution against comparing effect size across settings (i.e., school, community and family) because programs differ in focus, method and goals.

### Additional Research and Practice Generated by the NAS Report

It will take some time before the Weissberg and Durlak research is completed, the findings widely disseminated and discussed and additional research undertaken. However, there is growing evidence that the groundbreaking NAS report has garnered increased attention for PYD across disciplines and is helping to move the field toward a common language and framework.

The report's conceptual framework has begun to be used in the development of youth policies and programs, the design of evaluations and in setting grantmaking priorities. Several of these developments are described below.

- *Highlighting the importance of PYD in addressing adolescent mental health.* An important development due, at least in part, to the NAS report was the creation of a PYD commission as a component of the Adolescent Mental Health Initiative of The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands. The Trust convened seven commissions to review the research on mental disorders in adolescence and to suggest agendas for the advancement of research, treatment, prevention and public policy. Each of six commissions studied one of the following mental health disorders: anxiety; schizophrenia; substance and alcohol abuse; depression and bipolar disorder; eating disorders; and suicide. The seventh commission focused on PYD and the promotion of mental health in adolescence rather than treatment of disorders.

  All of the commission working papers were published as *Treating and Preventing Adolescent Mental Health Disorders: What We Know and What We Don't Know.*[25] The book addresses the current state of knowledge regarding each of the six mental health issues listed above, defining each disorder, outlining and assessing available treatments, discussing prevention strategies and suggesting a research agenda. In terms of PYD, the commission found evidence that well-designed, well-implemented, youth-centered programs that consciously use a youth development model have positive outcomes for young people and their communities.

- *Using the NAS report to examine the youth worker's world.* In an effort to better understand youth workers, researchers at the University of Nevada undertook a national study designed to identify the characteristics of people who work directly with youth in non-school-time programs.[26] They examined associations between youth workers' experience, training and educational background, and their self-reported competency in implementing the features of positive developmental settings.

  As expected, this report found that those with formal training in youth development rated their competencies higher than those without such training. Very few youth workers, however, consider themselves competent in providing opportunities for skill building, which is an essential component of a PYD approach, and integrating family school, and community efforts, which is critical to ensuring that efforts are complementary and additive.

## Which Foundations Are Leaders In Supporting PYD?

Many foundations throughout the United States support PYD programming. This report describes several that fund at the national level and have made long-term and/or large-scale commitments to supporting work in the field:

- W.T. Grant Foundation

- Wallace Foundation

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation

- Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

- Annie E. Casey Foundation

- Surdna Foundation

- Edward W. Hazen Foundation

Current program priorities and initiatives of these foundations developed out of a deep knowledge of PYD, acquired over many years. (*Appendix Two* contains a list of all foundations included in this section of the report.)

This chapter also briefly discusses RWJF-funded PYD efforts, and ends with a summary of important intermediary organizations that also support PYD programs and initiatives.

## WILLIAM T. GRANT FOUNDATION

Founded in 1936, the W.T. Grant Foundation's mission is to help create a society that values young people and enables them to reach their full potential. Although the foundation does support some direct-service PYD activities, its primary investments seek to improve the quality of youth development research and the use of empirical evidence by scholars, policy-makers, practitioners, advocates and the media.

The majority of the foundation's grantmaking supports research to improve understanding of the impact of environments on youth–how families, schools and other programs influence youth, and how these environments can be improved.

Believing that the traditional model of communicating research findings is too "one-way" and ineffective in improving practice, the Grant Foundation seeks to create communication between and among the scholars, policy-makers and practitioners with whom it works.

Current funding initiatives include:

- *After-school programs.* The Grant Foundation has identified after-school programs as an area where it seeks to build more knowledge about what's effective. It is funding a wide range of programs, including:

  - An examination of whether involvement in activities such as sports, community service and those provided by faith-based institutions contributes to positive adolescent development.

  - A research review of more than 500 empirical studies of youth development programs to identify the characteristics of those youth programs that foster positive youth development.

  - Development of an observation-based assessment tool that measures the extent to which specific aspects of program practices likely to foster healthy youth development are, in fact, youth-centered.

## WALLACE FOUNDATION

The Wallace Foundation identifies three areas of focus for its work, including one relevant to PYD—out-of-school time (OST) learning. Key Wallace Foundation-funded programs on OST learning include:

- *Learning in Communities.* Learning in Communities is a city-based strategy for children, particularly those from low- and moderate-income families. It is designed to provide opportunities for meaningful participation in high-quality programs outside the school that contribute to learning achievement, development and eventual career success. Building on more than a decade of experience in supporting such learning opportunities in urban parks, libraries, literacy programs, and museums, the Wallace Foundation provides funds to a select number of cities to ensure that resources are directed only at programs that deliver high-quality learning opportunities, and that children attend often enough to obtain positive benefits. The program commits political, business and community leaders around the importance of providing high-quality programs.

- To support the Learning in Communities project and to obtain information that would benefit the field nationally, the foundation commissioned the RAND Corporation to identify, frame and assess the relevant issues in the OST field. Findings from this research are presented in *Section Four* of this report entitled, "What are the Most Important Developments in the Field?"

- *Parents and Communities for Kids (PACK).* The PACK initiative is designed to improve learning outcomes through activities outside traditional school for children ages 6 to 10—the years when basic literacy skills are established. It is also focused on engaging parents and community institutions in supporting learning and finding more effective ways for institutions to collaborate with families to create a more supportive climate for learning. Four communities—New Haven, St. Paul (Minn.), Detroit and Boston—each were awarded implementation grants of $1.5 million over four years.

- *Urban Parks Initiative.* Funded from 1990 to 2003, the Urban Parks Initiative was designed to improve the quantity and quality of urban parks for public use, particularly in low-income neighborhoods, and to broaden urban leaders' understanding of the importance of parks to the health and vitality of cities.

Since 1990, grants totaling $38.6 million have supported 19 public/private partnerships in 17 cities. These partnerships have worked to create new parks in underserved neighborhoods and to conduct urban reforestation, restoring landscapes and bringing new activities to both neighborhood and metropolitan parks.

The foundation supported national and regional forums to share lessons on park development and their contributions to community revitalization. In 2000 the foundation awarded $3 million in final grants to support urban park collaborations, physical improvements and intergenerational activities, and to help establish a national organization to represent urban parks and possibly provide a network for encouraging informal learning through park projects around the country. (For additional information, see *www.pps.org/upo/*).

## W. K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation supports PYD through its youth and education grantmaking programs, which focus on programs to improve children's learning. Its currently funded projects are part of a 20-year commitment that the foundation made in 1987 through its Kellogg Youth Initiative Partnerships.

■ *Kellogg Youth Initiative Partnerships (KYIP).* The premise of KYIP is that all young people are assets, and that communities have a responsibility to help them develop. Three diverse Michigan communities are the target of this initiative– an inner-city section of Detroit; two isolated, rural counties; and a southeastern section of Michigan that includes the mid-size city of Battle Creek and several small towns.

Through this initiative, the foundation attempts to advance PYD by providing a program model for communities that has two major goals:

1. to encourage community collaborations devoted to helping young people develop to their fullest potential;

2. to transform traditional grantmaker-grantee relationships and foundation-based programming procedures into local, intimate partnerships and community-based programming.

The knowledge gained during the first 10 years of the initiative is shared in the foundation report, *W.K.Kellogg Youth Initiative Partnerships 1987–1997: Lessons Learned from the Crucial First Decade of Positive Youth Development Through Community-Based Programming.*

## EDNA MCCONNELL CLARK FOUNDATION

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation is working exclusively with a small number of high-performing, youth-serving organizations. Its goal is to strengthen these organizations' ability to help young people (9 to 24 years old) from low-income families achieve better outcomes, i.e., improved educational skills, preparation for the world of work and success in avoiding high-risk behavior.

The foundation also makes a limited number of grants to support its work in the PYD field, primarily to intermediary organizations such as:

■ *Child Trends:* To complete a review of youth development research and best practices on job preparation and civic engagement and the final sections of the initial youth development outcome compendium developed by the organization for the foundation.

■ *Public/Private Ventures:* To research and write a series of background papers on effective interventions for helping older youths transition successfully to adulthood.

- *Academy for Educational Development* (AED)*:* To bring to scale the Community Youth Mapping Project, developed and managed by the AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research.

These organizations are described in more detail later in this chapter.

## CHARLES STEWART MOTT FOUNDATION

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation supports efforts around the globe that promote a just, equitable and sustainable society. As part of this work, it has developed a special program area, Promising Practices in Afterschool Programs, and has funded these PYD-related activities:

- *21st Century Community Learning Centers Initiative.* Launched in 1998 by the Mott Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative is an evaluation of the after-school program, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research. The centers, established to provide quality after-school programming to young people and learning opportunities to families and community members, are operating in more than 7,500 rural and urban schools in 1,400 communities. The foundation made a seven-year commitment of $100 million to support the centers' training and evaluation and to build public support for after-school programs.

- *The Afterschool Alliance.* The foundation has made a $2.6-million grant to support the work of the Afterschool Alliance, a collaboration of public, private and non-profit groups committed to raising awareness of and expanding the resources for after-school programs. Such programs offer children, especially the traditionally underserved, various academic and interpersonal supports to strengthen their cognitive, social, physical and emotional development.

- *School-Based/School-Linked After-School Programs.* Studying the impacts and identifying the best practices of school-based/school-linked after-school programs is the purpose of a four-year, $3.6-million Mott Foundation grant to the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The longitudinal study, conducted by the university's Wisconsin Center for Education Research and Washington-based Policy Studies Associates, is examining the effects of best practices among after-school programs on children and youths, particularly those from underserved populations and at risk of school failure.

## ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

Since the early 1990s, the Casey Foundation has supported a number of long-term, multisite initiatives designed to reform specific child- and family-serving systems. More recently, the Casey Foundation has invested in innovative policy and practice initiatives that address the related challenges of strengthening distressed neighborhoods, alleviating family poverty, reconnecting fathers and families, providing better health care and preventing community violence. Two such initiatives are:

- *Making Connections.* As part of its Making Connections program, the Casey Foundation developed strong partnerships with local grassroots campaigns in cities to deliver technical assistance that revolves around neighborhood needs and community issues. Each Making Connections site works with a team to help promote family-neighborhood strengthening in a variety of ways. Participating cities include Denver, San Diego, San Antonio, Detroit and Providence (R.I.).

- *Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development.* Designed to promote more effective functioning of multiple systems in high-need communities, the initiative has focused on demonstrating ways that states, localities and neighborhood groups can reorganize and integrate their efforts to support vulnerable children and families and improve distressed neighborhoods.

The Casey Foundation also supports activities that provide sound data and analysis on critical issues affecting disadvantaged children and families, and the knowledge and tools that practitioners, policy-makers and citizens need to advance their efforts on behalf of children. Two examples are:

- *Kids Count:* A national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the United States by providing policy-makers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being.

- *Place-Based Philanthropy:* By identifying and partnering with like-minded foundations, the Casey Foundation seeks to increase philanthropic resources available to advance the mission of improving results for disadvantaged children and their families.

Two additional Casey Foundation initiatives also are relevant to PYD:

- *Human Services Workforce Initiative.* The initiative is the first national effort to address recruiting, training and retaining human service professionals—a group of approximately 3 million people. Casey Foundation staff conducted a study of the job conditions of front-line workers in child welfare, child care, juvenile justice, youth services and employment and training. Results of this study have been published in *The Unsolved Challenge of Systems Reform: The Condition of the Frontline Human Services Workforce.*[27]

- *Plain Talk Initiative.* This is a community-based initiative launched 10 years ago in five urban areas to reduce teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted

diseases among sexually active youths. Employing a family mobilization strategy, the initiative is designed to improve adolescent reproductive health outcomes by:

- improving the quantity, quality, timing and content of adult/teen communication about protection and responsibility;

- identifying and strengthening formal and informal social networks through adult-peer education and mobilization strategies;

- creating new connections between residents and neighborhood institutions to ensure that teens have access to developmentally and culturally appropriate reproductive health services;

- changing community norms on issues related to risk reduction, protection and responsibility.

## SURDNA FOUNDATION

The goal of the Surdna Foundation's Effective Citizenry program is to support young people to take direct action to solve serious problems in their schools, neighborhoods and society at large.

Surdna provides support in the two program categories: Young People Taking Direct Action and Strengthening the Groundwork for Meaningful Youth Involvement.

■ *Young People Taking Direct Action* involves:

- Developing service-learning tied to school curricula.

- Supporting youth-organizing efforts focused on schools, other youth-serving institutions and broader community problems.

- Fostering active resolution of contentious community conflicts within schools and in the wider community.

- Developing youth communications through traditional media and the Internet that focus on helping young people express their own views.

- Improving public attitudes toward youth in society.

■ *Strengthening the Groundwork for Meaningful Youth Involvement* entails:

- Supporting the documentation and evaluation of effective practice that leads to a stronger understanding of the productive roles young people can play as citizens.

- Helping intermediary organizations and networks that provide training, evaluation and organizational development, and generally help build the field.

- Creating active linkages between youth development and efforts to change communities and public policy.

## EDWARD W. HAZEN FOUNDATION

The mission of the Edward W. Hazen Foundation is to assist young people, particularly youths of color and those disadvantaged by poverty, to achieve their full potential as individuals and as active participants in a democratic society.

The foundation focuses on school reform and on developing young grassroots leaders who are committed to improving the quality of life in their communities. The Hazen Foundation funds youth and community-based organizations to provide a range of youth-organizing initiatives and fosters networking and capacity-building among youth organizers and leaders.

Hazen also seeks to increase other funders' understanding of and support for youth organizing. Many of the funders already committed to youth organizing are members of the Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO), which Hazen helped create. FCYO is a collective of national, regional and local grantmakers and youth-organizing practitioners dedicated to advancing youth organizing as a strategy for youth development and social justice. Its mission is to substantially increase the philanthropic investment in and strengthen the organizational capacities of youth-organizing groups across the country. *Appendix Three* lists FCYO members.

## Other Interesting Foundation Initiatives in PYD:

■ The five-year, $4.3-million James Irvine Foundation project to strengthen the management and organizational capacities of 10 youth-serving nonprofit organizations in Fresno and Los Angeles.

■ Publication of *Principles for Quality Youth Development Programs that Contribute to Emotional and Behavioral Health of Preteens,*[28] the result of a two-year Lucile Packard Foundation study conducted by Public/Private Ventures to assess the effectiveness of the foundation's youth development grantmaking program and offer lessons for future grantmaking in Northern California's San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

■ The Walter S. Johnson Foundation's efforts to increase the quality, availability and accessibility of programs that serve disadvantaged or underserved youths and that are founded on the youth development principles and practices laid out in the NAS report.

## Selected RWJF Grants in Support of PYD

Presented in chronological order, these RWJF projects illustrate the diversity of RWJF-funded efforts to support youth development.

■ *Best Friends Youth Development Program for Teenage Girls*, 1990–2003: Developed and implemented by the Best Friends Foundation in Washington, for girls in grades six to 12, the program had as its central messages the importance of waiting until marriage to be sexually active and abstaining from drinking, smoking and using illegal drugs. The program included an eight-session curriculum taught primarily by teachers, as well as dance and fitness classes and community service projects. Each girl chose a teacher as a mentor. This program had expanded to 23 sites in 14 states serving 4,280 girls by the end of the last grant. An evaluator hired by Best Friends, Robert Lerner, Ph.D., of Lerner and Nagai Quantitative Consulting, found that, at every grade level, program participants were far less likely than a comparison group of girls to have ever smoked, consumed alcohol, used drugs or had sex. (For more Information see *Grant Results*.)

■ *Proyecto HEAL*, 1992–1997: Conducted by Youth Development in Albuquerque, N.M. and part of the national *Program to Address Socio-Cultural Barriers to Health Care in Hispanic Communities,* the project recruited 95 youths, ages 9 to 12, and conducted health education and leadership classes in collaboration with local schools; provided "Strengthening Families" training to parents; and conducted community health education through activities such as health fairs. (For more information see *Grant Results*.)

■ *Evaluating a Model Program for Mentoring High-Risk Children*, 2000–2002: Public/Private Ventures conducted a test of the feasibility of evaluating the Friends of Children, a Portland, Oregon-based mentoring program for youths in high-risk settings. The program, designed to address the need for more effective mentoring of young people at highest risk, uses paid full-time mentors to serve as trusted and

dependable confidantes, modeling successful behaviors and lifestyles to no more than eight children at a time. The mentors spend at least four hours per week with each child, engaging in one-on-one educational and leisure activities for up to 10 years. (For more information, see *Grant Results*.)

- *Intergenerational Work on Community Cohesion*, 2001–2003: Urban Tree Connection in Philadelphia conducted a project designed to create stronger social linkages in a poor urban community with high rates of unemployment, substance abuse and crime. Project staff identified and met regularly with informal neighborhood leaders (such as block captains), who gathered residents to identify potential sites, then devise and implement open-space beautification plans for their blocks. Residents became engaged in efforts to clean up and beautify three neighborhood blocks and turn one into an urban park. The project also developed after-school programs and gardening clubs where neighborhood children learned gardening skills, conducted plant sales, and created and maintained gardens. The program continued to expand and receive addition funding after the RWJF grant ended. (For more information, see *Grant Results*.)

In addition to supporting programs that employ a PYD approach, RWJF has contributed to examinations of the field. For example, RWJF was one of several foundations that supported *Getting Things Done: The Impact of National Service on Critical Social Issues,* a two-day forum held in 2003 to stimulate new thinking about the future shape and purpose of national service. Among the issues explored during the forum, conducted by the International Center for Innovation in Civic Participation (now called Innovations in Civic Participation), was youth development during after-school hours. (For more information, see *Grant Results*.)

The Foundation's current PYD initiative–*After School: Connecting Children at Risk with Responsible Adults to Help Reduce Youth Substance Abuse and Other Health-Compromising Behaviors*–supports out-of-school-time interventions.

## Intermediary Organizations

The number of institutions and organizations implementing programs that employ a PYD approach continues to grow. Seeking to be effective in their efforts, these schools, libraries, neighborhood health centers and community-based organizations, among others, look to intermediary organizations for information, resources, training, technical assistance and evaluation expertise.

Intermediary organizations are making important contributions to the evolving PYD field by providing much-needed capacity-building assistance to youth-serving organizations, youth workers and advocates and by serving as coordinating centers that promote a coherent PYD approach.

They also play a major role in the education of funders and potential funders of programs, policy-makers and other decision-making bodies by conducting research and disseminating the results, as well as findings from other studies; providing forums for discussion of critical issues; and recommending strategies, policies and programs that contribute to the field's growth.

The intermediary organizations described below were chosen because of their prominence in the literature and high visibility in the field. All are supported by a combination of funding from foundations, government agencies, private organizations and individual donors.

| Name and Web Site | Major Activities | Comments |
| --- | --- | --- |
| SEARCH INSTITUTE<br>*www.search-institute.org* | • Conducts research.<br>• Creates *publications and tools*.<br>• Conducts: (1) an annual *Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth National Conference* which has an attendance of 2,000–3,000 adults and youths; (2) a *Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth listserv*; and (3) network of state asset-building initiatives/alliances with national organizations.<br>• Provides limited consulting and technical assistance and some training. | Created framework of 40 developmental assets— positive experiences, relationships, opportunities and personal qualities that young people need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible and that communities, organizations and individuals must work to provide.<br><br>Although complex, the framework is becoming more widely used and proving an effective support to PYD program development. |

**Positive Youth Development:** An Examination of the Field • Leaders in Support

| Name and Web Site | Major Activities | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| THE FORUM FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT *www.forumforyouth investment.org* | • Research and analysis.<br>• Communications.<br>• Leadership and public engagement.<br>• Advising, consulting and training.<br>• Network development.<br>• Long-term support. | This is the go-to organization for all things policy-related, in large part because of the connections and visibility of CEO Karen Pittman. |
| ACADEMY FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT Center for Youth Development and Policy Research *www.aed.org* | • Public education.<br>• Research.<br>• Policy formulation.<br>• Technical assistance for communities that seek to expand opportunities and support systems for disadvantaged young people. | Areas of focus include school-to-work transition, service-learning, employability for out-of-school youths, youth leadership development, youth and community relationships, youth with disabilities and youth worker training.<br><br>Identified best practices in youth worker training and developed supporting resources. Also delineated the steps for building a local infrastructure for youth development. |
| PUBLIC/PRIVATE VENTURES *www.ppv.org* | • Program evaluation, especially of large-scale programs and approaches.<br>• Synthesis of benefits of successful programs. | Recent focus on reducing violence among youth, including evaluations of *gang prevention and intervention programs* and participation in *national faith-based initiatives* to provide youths in high-risk settings with mentoring, educational and employment services. |
| INNOVATION CENTER FOR COMMUNITY AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT *www.theinnovationcenter.org* | • Youth and civic activism.<br>• Service learning.<br>• Community, organizational and youth and leadership development.<br>• Program evaluation. | Focus on identifying exceptionally innovative organizations that work to engage youth as equal partners with adults, mobilize communities and diverse groups and make the most of existing resources. The center also works to disseminate information about such organizations. |

| Name and Web Site | Major Activities | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES, INC. *www.ydsi.org* | • Research and evaluation.<br>• Technical assistance. | New organization; director has extensive experience. |
| AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM *www.aypf.org* | • Education for policy-makers on:<br>  - Youth education issues<br>  - Youth development and community involvement strategies<br>  - Approaches to job training and workforce development. | The organization conducts about 40 annual educational briefings for congressional staff; federal, state and local government officials; national nonprofit and advocacy association professionals; and the press. |
| CHILD TRENDS *www.childtrends.org* | • Research organization, key source of data on all issues related to youth development.<br>• Expertise in reviewing and summarizing the youth development literature and developing strategic recommendations for next steps. | Operates Child Trends DataBank, a Web site that contains information on national trends and research on more than 100 key indicators of child and youth well-being that range from alcohol use and teen dating violence to steroid use and unmet dental needs. Sponsored *What Do Children Need to Flourish? Conceptualizing and Measuring Indicators of Positive Development.*[29] |
| CHAPIN HALL CENTER FOR CHILDREN *www.chapinhall.org* | • Works primarily with lawmakers to support sound policy development around economic programs for youth and families; child welfare services, community resources for child and youth development; community development strategies; and education.<br>• Issues reports, discussion papers and working papers. | Based at the University of Chicago. |

| Name and Web Site | Major Activities | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| NATIONAL NETWORK FOR YOUTH<br>*www.nn4youth.org* | • Advocacy organization that works primarily on behalf of homeless, runaway and other disconnected youth.<br>• Also conducts training on youth issues for staff in community-based organizations. | Holds annual winter conference in Washington, D.C. |
| NATIONAL COLLABORATION FOR YOUTH<br>*www.nydic.org* | • Provides a comprehensive online resource for practitioners, including publications, Web links and e-newsletters, program information, funding sources, professional development opportunities and research and evaluation summaries. | A coalition of more than 50 national, nonprofit youth development organizations that make up the National Human Services Assembly (National Assembly). |

## What are the Most Important Developments in the Field?

Based on a review of the work of these foundations and intermediary organizations and of research in the PYD field, the author, in this paper, identifies four areas that offer the greatest potential to advance PYD work:

1. Strengthen out-of-school-time programs.
2. Improve recruitment, training and ongoing support for youth workers.
3. Disseminate new program quality assessment tools.
4. Implement policies that support coordinated PYD systems.

### Strengthen Out-of-School-Time Programs

The field needs more knowledge about out-of-school-time (OST) programs, how they can better incorporate a PYD approach and how they can be structured so that more students join and stay in the programs.

A recent RAND Corporation study showed the need to improve the quality of OST programs (and of their evaluation). In addition, the *Harvard Family Research Project's Out-of-School Time Learning and Development Project*, funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, has developed a database of OST program evaluations that supports both program development and evaluation. The Harvard Family Research Project is also studying the factors that promote participation in OST activities. This research and the Mott Foundation's Promising Practices in After-School Programs network provide a strong foundation upon which further work can build.

#### *Current OST Initiatives*

Some interesting current OST initiatives include:

■ The W.T. Grant Foundation is aligning a significant portion of its efforts around after-school programs to highlight important evidence-based work that can be used to shape policy and practice.

■ The Wallace Foundation is supporting Out-of-School Learning, an initiative designed to provide high-quality informal learning opportunities for children and families, especially in low-income communities.

■ The Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health is supporting efforts in northern California designed to provide access for elementary and middle school-aged children to after-school programs that promote PYD.

- Established as part of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, 21st Century Community Learning Centers were operating in 6,800 schools in 1,587 communities across the United States in 2005.

- The National Institute on Out-of-School Time and the Academy for Educational Development's Center for Youth Development and Policy Research are creating a strategic plan for workforce development for the OST field.

- Cross-Cities Network is working with 25 leaders from citywide after-school initiatives in major cities to increase the capacity and knowledge of high-level leaders, improve the effectiveness of citywide after-school initiatives and contribute to the development of a coherent vision for the field at the national level.

- Funded by the Met Life Foundation and conducted by the After School Corporation, the Discovering Community Initiative is a six-site national project designed to foster more positive attitudes and stronger affiliations among teachers, students and parents within school communities.

- The San Francisco Beacon Initiative is a public-private partnership that offers opportunities, services and activities to promote the healthy development of young people, families and communities, through its eight centers that serve 7,000 youths and adults annually. (The Initiative is being evaluated by Public/Private Ventures).

### *RAND Corporation Study*[30]

RAND conducted a broad-ranging literature review to identify, frame and assess the relevant issues in the OST field. The review of 1985–2003 databases focused on group-based programs that provide care for school-aged children (6 to 18 years old) during non-school hours and that also attempt to improve behavioral, social and academic development outcomes.

RAND was to determine what is known with some certainty and what is speculative about claims being made in five major issue areas:

- Level of unmet demand.

- Types of outcomes to which participation in OST programs is expected to contribute.

- Determinants of quality in program offerings.

- Determinants of participation.

- Practices that ensure quality programming is available to meet local demand.

The review of OST program evaluations revealed that:

- Very few evaluations have been rigorous (i.e., failed to use a control group).

- Most did not control for self-selection bias, making it difficult to conclude that differences between participants and non-participants were wholly attributable to program effects.

- Among the most rigorous evaluations, only modest positive effects were found for reducing risky behaviors, such as drug use or teen pregnancy.

- The evaluations provide few insights into whether existing programs offer safe and healthy environments.

- Little evidence of achieving similar behavioral effects with other OST programs was provided.

- The cost-effectiveness of OST programs relative to other interventions, including expansion of the school day, is not well understood.

The findings led the researchers to recommend that policy-makers and program implementers remain skeptical of claims about unmet demand for programs as well as claims that programs are able to meet multiple needs or produce positive impacts on a range of outcomes.

The report states that "improving the quality of offerings in existing programs should take precedence over rapid growth in supply." That would require careful planning and implementation, as well as significant funding. Suggestions to improve quality include:

- More systematic program evaluations, especially for large, publicly-funded programs, with proper controls for self-selection and, where possible, for the effect of participation levels on outcomes.

- Documentation of the effect of different program designs or contexts on outcomes, and determination of the effects by age group or class of participant.

- Dissemination of standardized measures of participation levels and intensity.

- Development and dissemination of tools to collect and report cost and other information necessary to undertake cost-effectiveness evaluations.

- Development of effective forums and incentives to disseminate existing standards, guidelines and best practices, as well as those that are new and evolving.

### Out-of-School-Time Learning and Development Project

With funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Harvard Family Research Project is conducting the Out-of-School Time Learning and Development Project. The project is promoting the strategic use of information to improve the quality, accessibility and sustainability of OST programs.

#### Database

At the center of the project's work is its Out-of-School Time Program Evaluation Database. The database, which contains profiles of OST program evaluations and detailed information about each evaluation report, is designed to provide accessible and timely information that will support the development of high-quality OST evaluations and programs and promote discussion of evaluation issues and priorities in the field among stakeholders.

It provides detailed information that can help those who are developing evaluation designs, considering a program for implementation or developing grantmaking priorities. (The database was, for example, a valuable tool for use in preparing this report.)

The database also contains electronic links to actual evaluation reports, when available, as well as contact information for program directors and evaluators. Its search mechanism allows users to refine their exploration of the profiles to specific program and evaluation characteristics and findings information. All evaluations included in the database must meet the following criteria:

- The program/initiative operates during out-of-school time.
- The evaluation is designed to answer a specific evaluation question or set of questions about a specific program/initiative.
- The evaluated program/initiative serves children ages 5 to 19.

*Identifying Predictors of Participation in OST Activities*
The Harvard Family Research Project is also in the first year of a two-year quantitative study of the individual and contextual predictors of participation in OST activities. Attracting youths to OST and PYD programs and sustaining their participation are critically important to maximizing the potential benefits of such programs to participants.[31]

In a related analysis project, the study is employing data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics–Child Development Supplement (PSID-CDS) and the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS88) to examine:

- What are the child, family, school and neighborhood predictors of participation? In particular, are disadvantaged youths less likely to have access to or participate in OST activities?
- How do child, family, school and neighborhood characteristics interact to predict participation in OST activities?

In its first year, the study has found:

- Youths from families with lower incomes and less education are less likely to participate in a wide variety of OST activities. Black and Hispanic youths participate less frequently in some activities, although Blacks participate more frequently in community-based youth programs.[32]
- Participation rates are highest in community programs, summer camps, and after-school programs when parents report medium levels of neighborhood collective efficacy (i.e., the shared expectations and mutual engagement by adults in the active support and social control of children).
- Participation rates for community programs and summer camps are highest in neighborhoods with the fewest problems (e.g., modest amounts of garbage or broken glass on the block), but participation rates for after-school programs are highest in neighborhoods with the most problems.[33]

*Examining Issues and Opportunities in OST Evaluation*

In addition to developing and managing the evaluation database, the Harvard Family Research Project publishes briefs on current research and evaluation work in the OST field. Entitled *Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation*, the briefs describe the project's research as well as that of others, summarizing key findings.

One of the center's earliest briefs–*Evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs: A Guide for State Education Agencies*[34]–offers an in-depth look at 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) evaluation requirements and provides practical and clear guidance regarding how to implement state and local 21st CCLC evaluations.

Other critical issues in the field are also examined via briefs, such as understanding and measuring attendance in OST programs (#7) and promoting quality through professional development (#8). One recently released brief gathered findings from several implementation and impact evaluations to develop a set of what it considers to be promising strategies for attracting and sustaining youth participation in OST programs, including:

- Reaching out directly to youths and their families in their homes and communities.
- Matching the program's attendance goals to participant needs.
- Recruiting friends to join together.
- Giving high school youths extra opportunities.

*Promising Practices in After-School Programs*

Funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, this national network of statewide after-school partnerships seeks to:

- Create a sustainable structure of statewide, regional and local partnerships, particularly school-community partnerships, focused on supporting policy development at all levels.
- Support the development and growth of statewide policies that will secure the resources needed to sustain new and existing after-school programs.
- Support statewide systems to ensure that programs are of high quality.

Because scaling up and sustaining successful after-school programs will require coordinated and collaborative efforts and systems across many public and private sectors, the Mott Foundation also funds the After-School Technical Assistance Collaborative, which works to help strengthen the capacity of states to build and sustain statewide infrastructures.

In 2005 there were 31 statewide networks. The foundation anticipates eventually having networks in all 50 states.

## Enhancing Professional Development Opportunities for Youth Workers

A youth worker is "an individual who works with or on behalf of youth to facilitate their personal, social and educational development and enable them to gain a voice, influence, and place in society as they make the transition from dependence to independence."

In 2004 a national conference of stakeholders in the PYD field called for a focus on the professional development of youth workers and began to develop a strategy to build this focus.

The group identified the need for common standards and competencies for youth workers, better and more consistent training, career ladders, methods to create visibility for the profession of youth worker and methods for evaluating the effectiveness of professional development activities.

A number of organizations have begun to work on training and certification of youth workers, and some colleges and universities are offering degrees or courses in youth development.

### A Strategic Plan for Attracting, Developing and Retaining Youth Workers

Representatives from federal agencies; national youth-serving organizations; higher education; state, city, and community-based programs; policy organizations; and foundations came together at a conference in Racine, Wis., in 2004 to:

- Take stock of the state of professional development among youth workers.

- Develop a collaborative strategy for addressing professional development issues.

Those who attended made the commitment to work to create and support a coordinated national professional development system that would meet the needs of youth workers and the field.[35]

Two reports published in 2003 laid some of the groundwork for discussions held during the conference:

- An Annie E. Casey Foundation report documented the difficult conditions under which front-line human service staff work and the large numbers of minorities working in the field.[36]

- The National Institute on Out-of-School Time and the Academy for Educational Development (AED) Center for Youth Development and Policy Research released *Building a Skilled and Stable Out-of-School Time Workforce.*[37]

Participants in the conference identified the need to develop:

- Standards/competencies for the field and accountability at all levels for meeting them.

- Training and delivery systems for all direct service workers and volunteers.

- Career ladder and plan to reinforce and compensate workers for continued professional development and movement on the career ladder.

- Evaluation strategy for determining the impact of the system.

- External support plan and a strategic communication campaign that achieves a higher level of visibility for the youth development profession.

Two by-products of the conference are a youth worker coalition, created to help achieve strategic objectives, and the *Next Generation Youth Work Coalition Bulletin,* which the coalition published for the first time in February 2006. In addition, a subset of conference participants has continued to meet, determining how to frame, launch and advance the initiative.

### Training and Certification

Described briefly below are examples of programs that seek to advance the professional development of youth workers:

- *Achieve Boston Professional Development Infrastructure*
  Achieve Boston is a collaborative effort involving city government, youth-serving and community-based organizations, foundations and research centers, and it has developed a training system for youth workers.

- *National Training Institute for Community Youth Work*
  Located at the Academy for Educational Development (AED), the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work (NTI) was established in 1997 to strengthen the field of youth development through the preparation and professional development of youth workers. Other AED-connected activities include:

  - *Advancing Youth Development: A Curriculum for Training* for use with youth workers, developed by AED's Center for Youth Development and Policy Research and the National Network for Youth.

  - *The ABCs of Youth Work: Assessing What it Takes to Attract, Develop and Sustain Youth Workers,* a pilot program AED is conducting in collaboration with the BEST (Building Exemplary Systems for Training Youth Workers) Network and the Forum for Youth Investment, designed to influence policies and practices to support youth development work and to increase the visibility of the profession.

- *Youth Development Institute*
  The Youth Development Institute (YDI), part of the Fund for the City of New York, provides professional development to youth workers via training, technical assistance, publications and other resources.

- *YouthBuild USA Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship*
  Youth development has been recently added to the U.S. Department of Labor's list of "apprenticeable" occupations—jobs that can be learned through apprenticeship training. In 2001 the Labor Department funded YouthBuild USA in Somerville, Mass., to design a national, registered apprenticeship training program to strengthen and professionalize the field of youth development.

In addition, the following colleges and universities offer education in youth development:

- In spring 2005 the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University offered a course entitled Youth Development and Education Policy.

- The University of Minnesota continues to offer its Master of Education degree in Youth Development Leadership through its College of Education and Human Development.

- Clemson University offers a Master of Science in Youth Development degree through its online programs, sponsored by the College of Health, Education, and Human Development.

- The University of Northern Iowa offers a graduate degree in Youth/Human Service Agency Administration in its School of Health, Physical Education and Leisure Services.

- Brandeis University's Heller School for Social Policy and Management offers a degree program in Policies and Services for Children, Youth and Families.

- The Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance, comprising faculty from Colorado State University, Kansas State University, Michigan State University, Montana State University and the University of Nebraska, offers a graduate degree in youth development.

## Assessing the Quality of PYD Programs

In addition to understanding the needs of youth workers and seeking to professionalize their work, efforts have also been under way to assess the quality of PYD programs. Although many instruments measure program quality (see *Appendix Four*), one of the most promising measures developed for this purpose is the Youth Program Quality Assessment (PQA) tool.[38]

Published in 2005 by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, Mich., and developed with support from the W.T. Grant Foundation and the Michigan Department of Education, the Youth PQA was designed to reliably measure seven dimensions of program quality:

1. Safe environment
2. Supportive environment
3. Interaction
4. Engagement
5. Youth-centered policies and practice
6. High expectations
7. Access

An organization can also use the tool for self-assessment; it also contains training on quality improvement methods. The tool has proved effective in a range of PYD settings, but still needs to be more widely disseminated, supported and used.

Analysis of data from the Youth PDA Validation Study indicated that, across the board, virtually all types of youth-serving organizations suffer from low quality. In addition, the researchers found that "relationships between quality variables representing structure and process in youth settings suggest how participatory organizational policies impact quality at the point of service."[39]

To date, the measure has been used in settings ranging from classrooms to after-school programs to gang prevention efforts. It includes a training program that enables staff to improve program quality in deficient areas, once they have been identified.

According to Karen Pittman, who has high praise for the Youth PQA, the tool meets a pressing need in thousands of settings where youth-serving programs are being offered. She predicts that it will help make program quality become a priority, and points to the many youth-serving organizations across the Unite States that could benefit from its use.

Use of the instrument has also been recommended by other leaders in the field, including Jane Quinn, assistant executive director for community schools at the Children's Aid Society.

## Implementing Policy to Support PYD

The nature of PYD is that it focuses on a population—youth—whose needs change over time and across the stages of adolescent development. Although many discrete PYD programs operate in many communities, they may not be able to realize their full potential until these discrete programs become part of a coordinated system able to respond to these young people's changing developmental needs, across organizations and sectors.

Creating such a coordinated system requires that service providers and other community organizations work with local, state and federal policy-makers. The Federal Youth Coordination Act provides some support for such collaboration, and Illinois, Connecticut and Iowa are among the states providing models of state-level actions to strengthen coordinated youth development systems.

### Federal Youth Coordination Act (H.R. 856/S. 409)

This bipartisan legislation passed the U.S. House of Representatives on November 15, 2005, by a vote of 353–62. It was introduced to implement recommendations from the 2003 White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth, which found that federal youth programs are administered across 12 departments and agencies with little coordination. The act establishes a Federal Youth Development Council to:

- Ensure communication among federal agencies serving youths.
- Assess youths' needs and the quantity and quality of federal supports to help meet them.
- Set quantifiable goals and objectives for federal youth programs and develop a plan to reach them.
- Develop demonstration projects for special populations of youths.
- Conduct research and identify and replicate model programs.

In addition, the National Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health, which grew out of the process that developed *Healthy People 2010,* supports both a PYD perspective and a multilevel approach to promoting adolescent health.

### Illinois Social and Emotional Standards

Social and emotional learning (SEL)—the process of acquiring the skills to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships and handle challenging situations effectively—is an important aspect of PYD. Illinois has incorporated SEL into its State Learning Standards.

Illinois has set benchmarks for elementary through high school around three goals:

1. Development of self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
2. Use of social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

3.  Demonstration of decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school and community contexts.

Other states, such as New Jersey, Florida, South Carolina and Washington, are also considering a similar move. If such standards are put in place, SEL will have the same parity as math and reading in state curricula and they will open additional avenues for the promotion of PYD.

## *Other Actions to Reinforce PYD*

Other actions designed to strengthen the PYD perspective and approach in local and state government programs include:

■ The San Francisco Department of Public Health's adoption of *Youth Development Standards of Practice*. Made up of definitions, guiding principles and organizational, programmatic, community/family and training/evaluation guidelines, the standards are part of a quality improvement strategy to increase the effectiveness of programs that promote the healthy development of young people.[40]

■ The *Connecticut Community for Youth Development* (CCYD) is a statewide project of multiple agencies that fosters the development of youth ages 12 to 18 by providing training and information to direct service workers, supervisors, planners, youth advocates, youth funders and program managers. It also operates a state-level steering committee that coordinates youth programming and includes representatives from a wide range of state agencies. One product of this project is a tool to help youth program managers and staff plan program evaluations and conduct their own simple evaluations–*Assessing Outcomes in Youth Programs: A Practical Handbook*.

■ The *Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development* is a state-led interagency initiative designed to better align policies and programs and to encourage collaboration among multiple state and community agencies on youth-related issues. It is charged with promoting the use of PYD principles in state policies and programs and facilitating the use of effective youth development practices in communities throughout the state. The state has also developed a *Youth Development Results Framework* that identities five major results areas and program components that support these results; the framework is widely used throughout the state to support effective and coordinated youth development programs. Iowa has also published a *Lessons Learned* report about collaborations in the pilot communities.

■ Working with the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Forum for Youth Investment, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) is providing state policy-makers with supports to strengthen state youth policies and programs. In September 2005 NGA co-hosted a conference on strengthening youth policy for legislators and legislative and executive staff from 13 states. A second institute was to be held in the summer of 2006.

## Recommendations for Future Funding and Support

What specifically can the philanthropic sector do to contribute to the four "areas of focus" described above? What kind of projects are most needed, and are likely to have the most positive effect on the PYD field?

This report presents a range of possible actions that foundations can take. Some would influence the PYD field broadly; others would have a more targeted impact.

- The funding options with the broadest focus:

  1. Support a large-scale, long-term PYD policy project with a rigorous evaluation component.

  2. Support a program designed to integrate the work of several discrete sectors of the PYD field.

- Options targeted to evaluation and partnership:

  3. Launch a multisite, experimental study design evaluation of one or more programs that have proven effective at preventing risky behaviors among youths in initial studies.

  4. Form complementary partnerships between foundations around PYD work.

- An option relating to measurement and assessment:

  5. Identify foundation projects that have developed assessment tools and broaden the use of these tools in the PYD field.

- Finally, one option with an important specific target:

  6. Launch a PYD initiative for children of immigrant families.

### 1. Support a Large-Scale, Long-Term PYD Policy Project With a Rigorous Evaluation Component

"Policy is likely the last evolutionary phase in the professional maturing of the youth development field," according to *Youth Development Policy: What American Foundations Can Do to Promote Policy in Support of the Emerging Field of Youth Development*.[41]

Prepared for the Marion Ewing Kaufmann Foundation by Brandeis University's Institute for Sustainable Development, Center for Youth and Communities, the report states that youth-focused, policy-oriented organizations at the local, state or federal levels are sorely lacking. Yet we know that without a cohesive youth

development policy, young people and those who care about them will continue to struggle to make sense of the "scattered pieces" of the youth development system described in this report.

A large-scale, long-term PYD policy project with a rigorous evaluation component would involve the establishment and support of state or regional PYD policy institutes. These institutes would produce youth policy advocates and experts, and contribute to the development of meaningful youth policy.

Established to affect policy discussions, recommendations, proposals and decisions, the institutes would also engage youths as integral partners, with opportunities to share their perspectives on policy issues of importance to them, their families and their communities.

These institutes would develop policy recommendations built on sound PYD principles and facilitate collaborations among youths, youth development practitioners, policy experts and policy-makers. Those that are successful would come to be seen as resources for policy-makers on youth-related issues.

## 2. Support a Program to Integrate the Work of Several Discrete Sectors of the PYD Field

For example, a program could address obesity prevention via a community youth development program that centers on the continued revitalization of neighborhood parks. Such an approach would combine work in the health care sector with that of city government, including components of job training and vocational skill development, and address the important developmental issue of obesity. This example applies to foundations such as RWJF with an existing focus on childhood obesity. Other cross-sector efforts could be tailored to the goals of other foundations.

## 3. Launch a Multisite Experimental Study Design Evaluation of One or More Programs That Have Proven Effective at Preventing Risky Behaviors Among Youths in Initial Studies

In the studies cited in this report, the need for more and better evaluation of PYD programs comes up repeatedly. The National Academy of Sciences report [42] on PYD lists a number of factors thought to be critical to PYD programs, but argues for a more systematic evaluation of whether these factors are, in fact, the most important. A number of programs, especially those relating to reducing health risk behaviors, have shown initial positive results and could benefit from more rigorous evaluation.

Possible programs that could be considered for such evaluation include:

- *Teen Outreach Program* (TOP) [43, 44, 45] A school-based, teen pregnancy and dropout prevention program, TOP involves weekly one-hour classroom sessions that

integrate the developmental tasks of adolescence with lessons learned from community service of at least 30 minutes each week. The original program evaluation and two replications all found that the program reduced rates of pregnancy, school suspension and class failure among participants, relative to control/comparison youths.

- *Children's Aid Society–Carrera Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program*[46] This multicomponent youth development program recommended for use with urban Black and Hispanic, socioeconomically disadvantaged youth, ages 13 to 15, provides daily after-school activities. The evaluation found that the program helped female participants to delay the initiation of sexual intercourse and resist sexual pressure. It also assisted sexually experienced female participants to increase their use of dual methods of contraception. While the evaluation also found reduced rates of teen pregnancy among participants, relative to comparison youths, it showed no additional statistically-significant positive behavioral changes in participating males, relative to comparison males.

- *Reach for Health Community Youth Service* [47, 48, 49] This program combines a health promotion curriculum (40 lessons per year over two years), including sexual health information, with three hours per week of community service. The evaluation showed delayed initiation of sexual intercourse, an effect that continued through 10th grade. The program also assisted sexually active participants in reducing the frequency of sexual intercourse and increasing the use of condoms and contraception.

- *School/Community Program for Sexual Risk Reduction Among Teens* (SCP) [50] SCP is based on social learning and diffusion of innovation theory and is designed to reduce unintended teen pregnancy. The program's two major behavioral objectives are to postpone the initiation of voluntary sexual intercourse and promote the consistent use of effective contraception, including condoms, among those who choose to have sex. The evaluation found a significant decline in pregnancy rates among females ages 14 to 17 in the intervention portion of the county, compared to pre-program levels–from 77 pregnancies per 1,000 to 37 per 1,000. No other county showed a similar decline in pregnancy reductions. The researchers also found that the teen pregnancy rate increased again after some program components, including contraceptive services provided by a school nurse, were discontinued.

- *CASASTART* [51] A community-based, school-centered substance abuse and violence prevention program, CASASTART was developed by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. The program employs a PYD framework; brings together key stakeholders in community schools, law enforcement agencies and social service and health agencies, and uses intensive case management to provide and coordinate services to counteract the various factors that make children vulnerable to substance abuse and juvenile delinquency. Compared to a matched control group, children in the program reported significantly less drug use, less drug selling, fewer violent offenses, lower levels of association with delinquent peers, less peer pressure and promotion to the next grade more frequently than control group youths.

### 4. Form Complementary Partnerships Between Foundations Around PYD Work

One foundation's area of expertise in PYD may well complement another's. For example, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation focuses on direct support to a small number of organizations with proven success in youth development work. Another funder wishing to evaluate the effectiveness of certain approaches might use the McConnell Clark Foundation's grantees as a base from which to work.

The intensive process that youth-serving organizations must successfully complete in order to be supported by McConnell Clark provides a strong indication that they are well established and well run. The foundation identifies those organizations most capable of benefiting from intensive support, then draws on experts in organizational development, nonprofit management and evaluation to assist them with creating a business plan for growth.

### 5. Identify Foundation Projects That Have Developed Assessment Tools and Broaden the Use of These Tools in the PYD Field

As part of RWJF's *Reclaiming Futures* national program, designed to help teenagers caught in a cycle of drugs, alcohol and crime, program staff developed and pilot-tested the *Youth Competency Assessment* (YCA). The tool targets three domains: repairing harm and developing positive norms and values, creating a healthy identity; and connecting to family, peers and community. All of these have parallels in a PYD approach.

Could this or other tools be used either to strengthen the PYD approach of the program for which the tool was designed, or as a model to assess another program? Foundations could fund and investigate such options.

The YCA, for example, seems to have the potential to expand the reach of PYD to young people–those involved in the criminal justice system–who have historically been viewed from a deficits perspective. The opportunity to achieve this expansion, and with it, recognition of the strengths of juvenile offenders, would be an impressive achievement.

### 6. Launch a PYD Initiative for Children of Immigrant Families

Although all young people are presented with challenges as they make the transition to adulthood, there are many who, because of the vulnerable circumstances in which they live, are particularly challenged. For instance, children of immigrant families frequently face an especially stressful adjustment to American society which can sometimes hinder positive development.

A small number of mentoring projects targeted to Latino youth show promise, but there is little research on their effectiveness. Nor has sufficient research been conducted on youth development among young people from any of the

Mexican, Central and South American, or Caribbean families that make up the majority of immigrants to the U.S. An initiative focusing on the largest immigrant population -- Latinos -- could begin to address this deficit.

Moving forward, a Latino youth development initiative could take several forms. Two programs that may be useful as models are:

■ *The Aspira Mentoring Program,* a community-based model that employs mentoring relationships to encourage Hispanic youths to enter careers in substance abuse and mental health. It was developed by the Aspira Association, Inc., the only national nonprofit organization devoted solely to the education and leadership develop-ment of Puerto Rican and other Latino youths. The program manual, *Mentoring Hispanic Youth in Substance Abuse and Mental Health Careers: A Community-Based Model,* is a potential resource.

■ *The Family Mentoring Project,*[52] implemented by the University of Nebraska at Omaha as part of its urban outreach focus under the Community Outreach Partnership Center Program. The Family Mentoring Project provided approximately one year of mentoring for at-risk 10-year-old Latino children and their parents. A pre- and post-test analysis of 11 non-mentored and 20 mentored youths revealed positive gains on social skills for mentored children as reflected in self-ratings and mothers' ratings on the Social Skills Rating Scale (SSRS). Also based on the SSRS, mothers reported decreases in three problem behaviors for mentored children. In addition, by post-testing, the mentored children and their mothers compared very favorably with the SSRS standardized samples on both skills and problem behaviors.

**Summary**

POSITIVE youth development holds significant promise. If implemented correctly, it is an approach to structuring services, systems and supports for young people that will enable them to develop the skills and competencies they need to thrive as they encounter the myriad challenges of adult life.

Despite uncertainty about how to define PYD, many people believe that they know a PYD program when they see one. What they see are Big Brothers and Big Sisters as well as other mentoring programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, after-school programs, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, rites of passage programs, service-learning, 4-H clubs and youth leadership programs.

However, few people can describe the features that classify it specifically as a PYD program. Even among experts in the field–researchers and practitioners alike– there is no agreed-upon definition of positive youth development. However, this situation is changing, thanks to many of the developments described in this report, with the National Academy of Sciences report, *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*, chief among them.

Increasing clarity about the features of programs and settings is critical to promoting the healthy development of young people. These emerging features include:

- Appropriate structure;
- Physical and psychological safety;
- Supportive relationships with adults;
- Meaningful experiences;
- Opportunities to build skills.

Research, policy and practice are needed to apply that knowledge in support of the healthy development of young people.

We hope that the information provided in this report and the recommendations offered, including those from researchers and practitioners, will be of value.

Promising evidence abounds concerning the effectiveness of a PYD approach in promoting the healthy development of young people and their successful transition to adulthood.

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## RWJF-Funded Positive Youth Development Projects

1.  Study of the Effectiveness of Youth Development Programs in Building a National Youth Development Campaign to Prevent Substance Abuse Prevention
    *http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/031826.htm*

2.  A Study of Positive Youth Development
    *http://www.rwjf.org/programareas/resources/product.jsp*

3.  A Study of Positive Youth Development (continuation of above)
    *http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/035504.htm*

4.  Circle of Health: Early Intervention and Prevention for Native American Youth
    *http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/040553.htm*

5.  Intergenerational Work on Community Cohesion
    *http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/041308.htm*

6.  Development of a Substance Abuse Prevention Leadership Network
    *http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/044097.htm*

7.  The Fighting Back Program
    *http://www.rwjf.org/reports/npreports/fightingback.htm*

8.  The Fighting Back Program: San Antonio, TX
    *http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/043102.htm*

9.  Reducing Substance Abuse and Violence by Identifying and Intervening With At-Risk Truant Youth
    *http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/036449.htm*

10. Community-Based Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention Program
    *http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/038971.htm*

11. Enhancing the Health of Disadvantaged Urban Youth Through a Program of Fencing, Tutoring, and Mentoring
    *http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/035986s.htm*

12. Workshop on Indicators of Safety and Security of Adolescents
    *http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/030196s.htm*

13. Defining Effective Drug Prevention Programs: What Works?
    *http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/034433.htm*

14. Linking the Family Friends Intergenerational Model with the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program
*http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/030780s.htm*

15. Community-Based Pregnancy Prevention for High-Risk Minority Adolescents
*http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/038108.htm*

16. Enhancing Health and Life Chances for Disadvantaged Urban Youth
*http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/021292.htm*

17. The Best Friends Youth Development Program for Teenage Girls
*http://www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/029684.htm*

18. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
*http://www.teenpregnancy.org/*

# Selected Foundations Funding Positive Youth Development

WILLIAM T. GRANT FOUNDATION
570 Lexington Ave., 18th Floor
New York, NY 10022
212-752-0071
*www.wtgrantfoundation.org/*
President: Robert C. Granger

WALLACE FOUNDATION
Two Park Avenue, 23rd Floor
New York, NY 10016
212-251-9700
*http://www.wallacefoundation.org/*
President: M. Christine DeVita

W. K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION
One Michigan Avenue East
Battle Creek, MI 49017
269-968-1611
*http://www.wkkf.org/*
President: Sterling Speirn

EDNA MCCONNELL CLARK
FOUNDATION
415 Madison Avenue, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10017
212-551-9100
*http://www.emcf.org/*
President: Nancy Roob

CHARLES STEWART MOTT
FOUNDATION
Mott Foundation Building
503 S. Saginaw Street, Suite 1200
Flint, MI 48502
810-766-1753
*http://www.mott.org/*
President: William S. White

ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION
701 St. Paul Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
Phone: 410-547-6600
*http://www.aecf.org*
President: Doug Nelson

SURDNA FOUNDATION
330 Madison Avenue, 30th Floor
New York, NY 10017
212-557-0010
Executive Director: Edward Skloot
*http://www.surdna.org/*

EDWARD W. HAZEN FOUNDATION
90 Broad Street, Suite 604
New York, NY 10004
212-889-3034
*http://www.hazenfoundation.org/*
President: Barbara A. Taveras

# Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing*

*Member Organizations*
Active Element Foundation
Albert A. List Foundation
Beldon Fund
Boston Women's Fund
Boston-area Youth Organizing Project
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Catholic Campaign for Human Development
Center for Third World Organizing
Colorado Progressive Coalition
Commonstream Fund
Edward W. Hazen Foundation
Cricket Island Foundation
Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund
Ford Foundation
Fund for Social Change/FAR Fund
James Irvine Foundation
Jewish Fund for Justice
Levi Strauss Foundation
LISTEN, Inc.
Merck Family Fund
Movement Strategy Center
New World Foundation
New York Foundation
Open Society Institute
Philadelphia Students Union
Public Welfare Foundation
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
School of Unity and Liberation
Surdna Foundation
Third Wave Foundation
Tides Foundation

*Source: FCYO Web site *http://www.fcyo.org/sitebody/about%20FCYO/index.htm*
accessed December 11, 2005.

# Appendix Four

## YOUTH PROGRAM QUALITY ASSESSMENT TOOLS

| Tools Reviewed | Primary Purpose | | | | | Methodology | | | | Target User | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Accreditation | Accountability | Evaluation | Self-Assessment | Improvement | Observation | Interview | Survey | Documentation | Program Leader | Program Staff | Youth | External Reviewer |
| **American Camp Association Accreditation Standards**<br>*http://www.acacamps.org/parents/accreditation/stdsglance.htm* | ■ | ■ | | | | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | | | ■ |
| **Assessment Indicators for Organizational Practices**<br>*www.ydsi.org* | | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | ■ | ■ | | |
| **Beacons Activity Observation Tools Public/Private Ventures**<br>*www.ppv.org* | | | ■ | | | ■ | | | ■ | | | | ■ |
| **Cause & Outcome, Skill & Action, Membership & Modeling (CO-SAMM)**<br>*www.facstaff.wisc.edu* | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| **High/Scope Youth Program Quality Assessment**<br>*www.highscope.org* | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ |
| **Networks for Youth Development Assessment Manual**<br>*www.fcny.org/portal.php/syd/* | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| **NSACA Standards for Quality School-Age Care**<br>*www.nsaca.org/standards_glance.htm* | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| **NYEC Education Development Network Criteria and Self-Assessment**<br>*www.nyec.org/* | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| **NYEC Promising & Effective Practices Network Self-Assessment**<br>*www.nyec.org/pepnet/* | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ |
| **Program and Activity Assessment Tool**<br>*http://learningstore.uwex.edu/Program-and-Activity-Assessment-Tool-P911C172.aspx* | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| **School-Age Environment Rating Scale**<br>*www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers/sacers_frame.html* | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | | | | ■ | | | ■ |
| **Standards for Baltimore After-School Opportunities**<br>*www.safeandsound.org/page.php?id=1* | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ |
| **YouthNet Standards of Quality Performance**<br>*www.kcyouthnet.org/standards1.asp* (school-age)<br>*www.kcyouthnet.org/standards_teen.asp* (teen) | | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |

**Source:** Forum for Youth Investment. July/August 2003. **"Quality: Building the Evidence Base."** *Forum Focus* 1(1): 2–4.