

Positive Youth Development Resources

At a Glance



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Introduction

All young people require access to positive experiences, both in school and in their communities. Those spending time in communities with a wealth of opportunities encounter less risk and ultimately show evidence of higher rates of successful matriculation into responsible adulthood (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Adolescents who have a positive transition from the teen years to adulthood develop the potential of being more civically engaged. This, in turn, can create stronger community ties as they work to improve and/or maintain the neighborhoods in which they live. Due to these benefits, the youth development field has seen a shift from focusing efforts solely on preventing youth from engaging in problematic behavior to examining the effects of positive youth development.

Positive youth development focuses on all the resources and assets in a community that aid in offering young people positive choices, experiences, and support (Lerner, 2004; Pittman, Irby, & Ferber, 2001). The role of positive youth development is to form affirmative relationships between young people and caring adults and to utilize the skills of both parties to strengthen youth-related programs.

Resources on Positive Youth Development

Web-Based Resources

Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), is responsible for federal programs that promote the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities. The Web site provides a brief, yet precise, overview of positive youth development.

<http://www.ncfy.com/ydfactsh.htm>

National 4-H

The National 4-H Headquarters Web site reports that one of the premier goals of 4-H youth development is to create opportunities that promote positive youth development. The Web site includes documents and presentations on 4-H and positive youth development, including a slideshow prepared by Cathann Kress (director of youth development, CSREES-USDA) on the essential elements of 4-H.

<http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/index.htm>

Kress presentation:

<http://www.national4h-headquarters.gov/library/elements.ppt>

Social Development Research Group, University of Washington

This site provides a detailed report on the origin of positive youth development and summarizes what has been discovered as a result of numerous research studies.

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/PositiveYouthDev99/preface.htm>

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment provides evidence-based practices to provide educational and protective services that assist citizens in making informed decisions. The department coordinates prevention and intervention efforts to identify “best practices” for children and youth across state agencies. The Web site includes a list of links to organizational Web sites that include best practices for positive youth development.

<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/ps/bestpractices/topicsubpages/positive.html>

Forum for Youth Investment

The Forum serves as a nonprofit youth advocacy organization dedicated to helping young people obtain the supports, opportunities, and services needed to prosper and contribute where they live, learn, work, play, and make a difference. The Forum provides youth and adult leaders with the information, technical assistance, training, network support, and partnership opportunities needed to promote positive youth development. The organization’s founder and executive director, Karen Pittman, is a leading authority on youth development and a major influence behind the positive youth development movement.

<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/>

Building Partnerships for Youth

Building Partnerships for Youth is a coalition formed between the National 4-H Council and the University of Arizona to help organizations provide youth ages 9 to 13 with both motivation and capacity to make healthy choices. This comprehensive Web site features effective youth development programs, curricula, newsletters, fact sheets, and several strategies on promoting positive youth development.

<http://ag.arizona.edu/fcs/bpy/>

Promising Practices in After-School System

Created by the Academy for Educational Development, the Promising Practices in After-school (PPAS) System is an effort to find and share things that are working in after-school programs. The PPAS Web site is not only for **after-school program directors** who want to improve the quality of their programs, but for program staff, volunteers, parents, community members, policymakers, funders, researchers, and anyone interested in the well-being of children and youth.

The PPAS Web site includes information on planning activities for programs, locating funds, and looking for new curricula. The Web site includes a number of activities that utilizes a positive youth development framework. There are also links to other sites that include exercises and activities for youth of all ages.

<http://www.afterschool.org>

Organizations

Search Institute

Search Institute is a nonprofit organization with a mission to provide leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote healthy children, youth, and communities. The organization is best known for its **40 Developmental Assets** framework, which focuses on positive youth development through experiences and personal qualities that young people need to become competent, responsible adults.

<http://www.search-institute.org/>

America’s Promise

America’s promise focuses on community capacity building by uniting citizens to help meet the needs of children and youth. The organization utilizes five promises to perpetuate character and competence of young people by connecting organizations to maximize essential resources. The five promises are examples that reflect a direct link to positive youth development. They are: ongoing relationships with caring adults; safe places with structured activities; a healthy start; marketable skills; and opportunities to give back/serve.

<http://www.americaspromise.org/>

Applied Developmental Science Institute, Tufts University

The Applied Developmental Science Institute is conducting a study that is funded by the National 4-H Council to investigate positive and problem behaviors of youth across the country who are involved in 4-H. Researchers of the *4-H Study of Positive Youth Development* examine the experiences of young people across the early years of adolescence by focusing on key characteristics of positive youth development (i.e., the five Cs: competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring/compassion). The research evaluates the impact of positive youth development on key assets: families, communities and community-based programs for youth – especially those in 4-H programs. The researchers (led by Dr. Richard Lerner, a leader in the study of public policy and community-based programs aimed at positive youth development) have provided some interesting findings of the impact of positive youth development on a diverse group of young people involved in 4-H youth development programs.

http://ase.tufts.edu/4hStudy_PYD/index.html

National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth

The National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth (NCFY) provides links to information that will help support young people and families. The site includes information about youth and family issues for: youth/students, parents, community members, and youth service professionals. The NCFY Web site offers information for and about young people, including ways young people can get involved in the community, ideas about how to support young people through various activities, and suggestions for academic projects related to youth service practice and policy.

<http://www.ncfy.com/>

University of Wisconsin Extension Service

From 1993 to 1995, The University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Service launched a nationwide project to determine the day-to-day experiences that are essential for young people to gain exposure to positive youth development. As a result, the essential experiences of youth development were found to be critical in gaining positive outcomes. The Web site lists best practices of youth development as outlined in the Program and Activity Assessment Tool developed by the

University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Service. This information provides a wealth of activities and strategies that can be utilized to ensure that youth are exposed to positive youth development through county level programming.

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/paat/index.html>

Reference Books and Resource Guides

Community Programs to Promote Youth Development

This book, published by the National Academy Press, provides a framework for healthy positive experiences among young people, reporting on several domains of positive youth development (physical, intellectual, psychological, and social development). The book offers recommendations for policy, practice, and research to ensure that programs are well designed to meet the needs of youth.

Eccles, J. S., & Gootman, J. A. (Eds.). (2002).

Community programs to promote youth development. Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Liberty: Thriving and Civic Engagement among America's Youth

Liberty examines what it means to develop as an exemplary young person who is thriving within the community and on the rise to a positive future. Several key characteristics of positive youth development are presented along with organizations that have been successful in promoting the concept (i.e., 4-H). This is a recommended reference for anyone from developmental psychologists to policy makers to youth workers who have an interest in understanding a young person's ability to thrive in society.

Lerner, R.M. (2004). *Liberty: Thriving and Civic Engagement among America's Youth*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Youth Action for Educational Change: A Resource Guide

This resource guide gathers the stories of young people engaged in meaningful educational change. The information provides youth workers with the tools and knowledge needed to be effective partners in the quest to achieving positive youth development. Articles and publications included in

the resource guide are accessible via libraries or the Web.

Wilson-Ahlstrom, A., Tolman, J., & Jones, K. (2004). *Youth Action for Educational Change: A Resource Guide*. Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment, Impact Strategies, Inc.

Also available online at:

<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/workingpapers/yaecresourceguide.pdf>

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