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# New Directions in School Reform

## Youth-Focused Strategies versus Youth-Centered Reform

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*America's high schools must be redesigned to become communities that provide a high level of academic rigor for all youngsters so that they will be prepared to pursue postsecondary education. To preserve democracy, we must educate all students so that they will be able to participate as voters and as members of groups or organizations that form the basis of our democracy. Schools must teach students to be self-motivated learners, and be places where students gain social and civic competencies as well as academic skills. In order to achieve these goals, schools have to become more personalized and offer a purpose to students by demonstrating a connection between the world of work and their lives.*

— Creating a New Vision of the Urban High School  
Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2001

Many of the reform strategies currently shaping the nation's high schools incorporate efforts to increase youth voice, choice, challenge and connection to school and community. Advisor/advisee groups, readers and writers workshops, youth panels during school reform processes, school-community liaisons — widespread reforms like these all demonstrate an attention to young people's needs as learners and human beings. Strategies like these are becoming the benchmarks of cutting edge school reform. They are among the menu items from which districts mix and match selections to create improvement efforts.

It is not clear, however, that these youth-focused strategies stem from deeper changes in belief systems, in policies and structure, or in budget and accountability. Implementing youth-focused improvement strategies is not the same as creating youth-centered learning environments. School districts and school administrators have an enormous capacity to compartmentalize change. Active student and community involvement in strategic planning may not translate into ongoing involvement in decision making, assessment and implementation, even if the experience was credited with creating real breakthroughs in thinking. Success with block scheduling and team teaching in magnet programs or theme schools may not translate into structural changes in all schools.

A set of initiatives is underway — spearheaded by foundations and national organizations — built on the premise that school and community leaders have to work together to transform high schools into places where every student achieves at high levels (e.g., the continued work in the Annenberg Challenge sites, the Carnegie Corporation and Gates Foundation-sponsored Schools for a New Society Initiative, the Public Education Network's Schools and Community Initiative, the work of the Cross-City Network for Urban School Reform). Many of these initiatives also emphasize the importance of listening to and involving students and parents themselves.

There is no doubt that school districts engaged in district-wide reform efforts are doing more to engage school and community leaders and students at the building, neighborhood and district/city levels. The question is, to what extent do the proposed strategies reflect a revised belief system in which efforts to create small schools, theme schools, structured work experiences, student advisories, youth councils, team teaching, block classes, K–16 articulation, etc. are strategies and structural changes that are tied together by a clear set of beliefs about teaching and learning?

Every district involved in creating a school reform plan will have to address the core resource challenges: qualified teachers, limited resources, inadequate supplies and facilities, gaps in building and district level leadership and statewide standards. Every district will propose strategies to address these issues as well as more direct strategies to improve the content and rigor of classroom instruction and, in some instances, non-classroom-based learning.

It goes without saying that the recommendations made in the districts' plans are made because in some way they contribute to improved teaching and learning and promise to increase student achievement. District-wide improvement plans, however, afford researchers and advocates a unique opportunity to assess the rationales and recommendations included against a more powerful question: How do they contribute to student learning? Which of the essential ingre-

dients recognized as central to engaged learning are addressed by leadership training, small schools, service-learning or expanded AP classes? In other words, how do the strategies add up to create fundamental differences in the high school learning experience?

## Why This Question, Why Now?

The Carnegie Corporation has answered this question:

*Across the country there have been many creative efforts aimed at structuring, organizing, and funding schools that support the development of school cultures to engage students in challenging learning. This work has shown us some elements of high school redesign that are effective: small schools, academic rigor, personalization, teacher collaboration and performance-based assessment, parent and community involvement and links to the real world through project-based learning, community service and internships.*

*...the standards movement has challenged schools to have high expectations for all students... It is time to build on these efforts, to share this success with all urban schools, not just a few; with all students, not just a few. We must seize the moment.*

Creating a New Vision of the Urban High School  
Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2000

School superintendents and other district leaders demonstrate an increasing willingness to tackle district-wide reform and entertain whole school change efforts. This is especially true when it comes to high schools, institutions largely neglected during previous reform movements. Education research and practice are converging around a set of design elements that are effective and delivering models and technical supports that help ailing schools get from where they are to where they need to be. And this research is being bolstered by research on non-school structured learning environments (e.g., youth arts/media programs, workforce preparation programs) and, increasingly, new school learning environments (e.g., CBO schools, charter schools, community schools).

There are, however, potentially dangerous knowledge gaps that may hamper districts' success at "build[ing] on these efforts." First, there are still gaps in implementation knowledge, or "secure" knowledge in the words of Peter Kleinbard<sup>1</sup> — practical knowledge about how to implement well-researched ideas. Second, there are probably large gaps in our knowledge of how multiple reform elements interact, especially when they have not been "pre-mixed" into a school reform model (e.g., Talent Development). Third, and perhaps most serious, there are gaps in knowledge about the current status of the districts and schools being reformed. Consequently, sledgehammers may be lifted to walls just in need of repair in some schools while not being wielded in schools in which there is little worth salvaging.

Asking the question — how do specific reform recommendations contribute to improved student learning? — will not fill the gaps. But it will help to identify them.

1. In a recent interview, Peter Kleinbard, former program officer with the Wallace Funds and current director of the Youth Development Institute, offered this assessment of the school to career movement. "We may have had enough knowledge, but we didn't have enough secure knowledge ... as a result, a lot of bad practice occurred."

The risks are even higher with high school reform. Districts and schools are selecting multiple design elements to implement simultaneously. Even if there is good implementation knowledge about individual elements, it is probably fair to say that there is limited knowledge about how different elements complement or offset each other.

## Identifying the Core Elements of Youth-Centered Reform

Over the past several years, the Forum for Youth Investment has had the opportunity to participate in and facilitate conversations that help us crystallize what we mean by youth development (see Attachment 1, What Do We Mean When We Talk about Promoting Youth Development?), and to use this understanding of youth development to help high schools support student learning. These conversations and efforts have led us to what we call a youth-centered vision of education reform, taking young people and their development seriously in all that happens inside schools. The conversations have started from a variety of vantage points — school reform, youth development, youth engagement, effective learning environments, etc. But the themes and lessons that emerge from these conversations are remarkably consistent, helping us to identify what we mean by youth-centered learning. Five themes stand out:

1. **Climate.** Improving learning in high schools requires improvements not only in the quality of curriculum and instruction, but also in culture and context for learning.
2. **Instruction and Curriculum.** Improving learning in high schools requires teaching and instructional approaches that emphasize challenge, relevance, contribution, engagement and high expectations.
3. **Connections.** Improving learning in high schools requires connections to more people and more places across more time.
4. **Outcomes.** Improvements in academic learning will, inevitably, be linked to improvements in other outcomes — emotional, social, physical, ethical, vocational, etc. — sometimes as cause, sometimes as effect, sometimes as correlate.
5. **Engagement.** Improving learning in high schools requires youth engagement — both in the process of learning and in the process of school reform.

Together, these themes constitute a coherent approach to school reform. They also combine to form a new way to assess and shift existing reform efforts, ensuring that they are rooted in what we know about young people and their development. It is worth looking at each of these themes in greater detail, while understanding that they are best understood as a package rather than in isolation.

### **Theme One**     **Improving learning in high schools requires improvements not only in the quality of curriculum and instruction, but also in culture and context for learning.**

What we know about how youth grow and develop helps us to identify the supports and opportunities that make for effective learning environments — the essential inputs that all young people need.

In the end, effective learning hinges on connecting students with competent staff and challenging curricula. This is no small feat given national teacher shortages and high schools in which the majority of students are currently in rudimentary classes that prepare them neither for college nor work. But seasoned scholars, in education and community youth programming, suggest that there are other elements. Adria Steinberg, in the context of the Margins to Mainstream project at Jobs for the Future, has identified five core supports and opportunities that make for effective learning environments. The Learning First Alliance, in its publication titled *Every Child Learning: Safe and Supportive Schools*, names a total of seven key features. Michele Gambone and Jim Connell name five, and have linked them to increases in academic performance (see Attachment 2, Inputs for Learning Environments). Most recently, the National Research Council has put its stamp of approval on this list of inputs that support development and learning, pulling together research on education, families and community organizations in its ground-breaking report, *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*.

These lists of essential elements reinforce the need to think about the full learning experience as one that requires purpose (in contrast to Paul Hill’s admonition against “shopping mall” high schools), personalization (responding to students’ familiar refrain that they are not known or respected), engagement (heeding student and educator calls for relevance and real-life connections) and, most important, consistently high expectations. These themes link back to the basics of what we know about supporting young people’s growth and development, including, but not limited to, their cognitive development:

- **attention to basic needs;**
- **safe, structured places;**
- **caring relationships and personalization;**
- **high expectations and standards;**
- **challenging, relevant experiences;**
- **connections to community, networks, and role models; and**
- **opportunities for voice, choice and contribution.**

**Theme Two: Improving learning in high schools requires teaching and instructional approaches that emphasize challenge, relevance, contribution, engagement and high expectations.**

The instructional encounter — the interaction between student, teacher and content — is at the heart of all school reform efforts. If the instructional encounter does not change as a result of a reform initiative, it is hard to claim that it has been successful. If, on the other hand, the way that teachers, students and content relate to each other has shifted in a way that supports better learning, then reform has genuinely occurred. A real test of a youth-centered approach to reform is, then, the extent to which it points the way to better instruction.

Consider the list of youth development “inputs” — features of effective learning environments — listed above. Most of these “inputs” are as much about teaching and instruction as they are about the environment in which that teaching occurs. Teachers communicate and demonstrate high standards. It is through particular instructional techniques — active learning, inquiry-based teaching, project-based learning approaches, for instance — that students access challenging, relevant, engaging experiences. The actions of teachers and the mode of instruction determine whether young people’s learning experiences are personalized and rooted in relationships.

Education research identifies each of these youth development inputs as a characteristic of high-quality, effective instruction and curriculum. Again, the Learning First Alliance (2001) cites “a challenging and engaging curriculum for all students” and “frequent opportunities for student participation, collaboration, service and self-direction” as two essential features of safe and supportive schools, and backs this claim with a review of the research. Research on student motivation has made clear that high expectations, appropriate challenge, choice and autonomy and relevance are essential features of instruction that engages and sustains student attention (e.g., Deci and Ryan, 1991, Patrick et al., 2000, Adelman, 1978). Evaluations of service-learning, experiential education and active learning approaches — again, emphasizing challenge, relevance, contribution and the like — yield positive academic outcomes, better educational attainment and a broad range of positive developmental gains (e.g., Billing, 2000; Expeditionary Learning, 2001; Oden, Kelly, Ma, and Weikart, 1992). Unfortunately, studies by Reed Larson and colleagues (Dworkin, Larson, Hansen, Jones and Midle, 2001; Larson, 2000; Larson and Verma, 1999) suggest that American adolescents spend only a small part of their days fully psychologically engaged — in contexts where they consistently report high challenge, high concentration and high motivation. Young people particularly seldom report engagement during the school day.

As one practitioner and advocate says, “youth development is good pedagogy.” Putting young people at the center of

school reform taps into a range of effective instructional strategies and aligns them into a common picture of what young people need in order to achieve.

### **Theme Three: Improving learning in high schools requires connections to more people and more places across more time.**

What happens in school and out of school, during school hours and outside of those hours, involving school personnel and involving other adults and peers, are intimately connected. It may be a mistake to see out-of-school programming as a solution to schools' academic challenges; this attitude can result in either a re-allocation of scarce resources from school reform to after-school programs, or inside of after-school programs that recreate ineffective school practices. Yet, the importance of out-of-school opportunities to academic learning is clear. Young people do most of their engaged learning outside of schools.<sup>2</sup> Academic success has been convincingly linked to well-designed after-school programs, especially in the younger grades where after-school programs have most effectively gone to scale. And community-based organizations have long provided many of the "essential elements" described above. The question is: How do schools more intentionally link out-of-school opportunities with school reform efforts without turning the out-of-school hours into homework help and academic tutoring programs? More generally, how do schools work with families and communities to ensure that all students have access to:

- **more people:** parents, extended family, mentors, paid and volunteer youth professionals, employers and peers who are committed to helping them meet needs, build skills, make connections that reinforce their academic learning and improve their futures;
- **more places:** homes, businesses, youth centers, faith institutions, colleges and universities; and
- **more time:** during school, immediately before/after school, evenings, weekends and summers.

The challenge at hand involves expanding learning opportunities — building a system of learning experiences and learning supports outside of the school day and school building that are robust, accessible, well-supported and of consistently high quality. Just as important — especially for schools and reform leaders — is the work of building connections and blurring the lines between in-school and out-of-school learning opportunities.<sup>3</sup> At the moment, efforts to improve what goes on during the school day, inside the school building are largely disconnected from work to create and improve school-based out-of-school programs, to strengthen community-based out-of-school opportunities, and to use community resources to support students' learning during the school day. Again, it is vital that these other spaces in which communities make commitments to learning do not replicate what goes on during the school day. But it is certainly time to link these fragmented efforts into community-wide commitments to learning. This is the vision that Paul Hill and his colleagues call a "community partnership strategy":

*The Community Partnerships strategy is based on a radical approach to improving educational opportunities in a city. It acknowledges that the traditional boundaries between the public school system's responsibilities and those of other community agencies are themselves part of the educational problem... the strategy opens new options for education, asking "How can this community use all its assets to provide the best education for all our children?" The Community Partnerships strategy would include multiple public and private providers. It would in addition be a genuine community-wide system in that all the community's resources, not simply its schools, would be available in an organized way to meet children's educational needs and their general well being.*

Paul Hill, Christine Campbell, James Harvey  
*It Takes a City*, 2000

2. See review of Reed Larson's research in *FYI Newsletter*, Volume 1, Issue 1, August 2001. The Forum for Youth Investment.

3. For a fuller discussion of what it would mean to blur the lines between school and community, see *Learning Opportunities for Children and Youth: Expanding Commitments, Blurring the Lines*, a working paper available at [www.forumfyi.org](http://www.forumfyi.org).

**Theme Four: Improvements in academic learning will, inevitably, be linked to improvements in other outcomes — emotional, social, physical, ethical, vocational, etc. — sometimes as cause, sometimes as effect, sometimes as correlate.**

Our hopes for young people are larger than academic success. When young people enter adulthood, they must be literate in a range of academic areas in order to succeed and thrive. They must, in other words, have a strong base of academic and cognitive competence. But they must also, and equally, be competent in a range of other areas: They should be able to navigate social life and communicate effectively; they should have strong ethical and civic commitments and competence; they should be ready to make their way into the world of work; and they should be physically and emotionally healthy and skilled. Ask most parents, teachers and community members about their hopes for young people, and some version of this list will emerge. Ask researchers what young people need in order to successfully transition into adult life and they will footnote this broadened picture of positive youth outcomes (National Research Council, 2001).

*Schools cannot and should not be held responsible for this full range of positive youth outcomes.* Any teacher or administrator will tell you that their school is stretched and strained to satisfy their basic academic mandate. But schools, at minimum, should heed a basic principle of the medical profession and ensure that they do no harm in these other areas — for instance, by missing opportunities to link students with basic health services, by numbing their interest in civic life through teaching practices that are anathema to democratic principles, or by failing to address climatic issues that make students feel emotionally and physically unsafe.

Just as important, schools will have little success in supporting academic outcomes if they do not pay some attention to these other outcomes. School connectedness research, the documented impacts of some social/emotional learning approaches, and basic knowledge of human development demonstrate the interdependence of the areas of development. When young people are thriving socially, emotionally, physically and ethically, they are more able to learn. Well-being in these other areas is simply a necessary precondition to academic achievement.

Conversations with reform leaders indicate that schools who have put all their eggs into the basket of “academic press” — an exclusive focus on achievement — are hitting a glass ceiling in their achievement data, and are recognizing the need to support the other youth outcomes that are preconditions to academic success. At the same time, many schools are ready to redefine “academic achievement” broadly enough to include elements of workforce development, citizenship education and ethical development — recognizing that meaningful work and community life are the genuine end goals of schools. Whether in the service of academics or in support of a bigger picture of a fully-prepared young person, many school reform efforts are rooted in an expanded sense of positive youth outcomes. There are two ways in which schools, and other organizations, have been steadily broadening their definition of outcomes:

1. ***beyond cognitive functioning*** to include the other areas in which young people and adults need to function (social, vocational, physical, civic, moral/ethical, etc.); and
2. ***beyond competence*** (i.e., skills, knowledge mastery) to include other attributes important to function (e.g., confidence, connections, character, sense of contribution).

Often, schools seek to address these non-academic outcomes by creating a set of programs meant to “take care” of these issues. Character education, conflict resolution, life skills, service-learning, drug abuse prevention and school-to-work programs fill students’ non-academic hours. These programs are important, and have often been shown to support both students’ academic success and the broader vision of learning outlined here. But investments in these programs are risky. They are often implemented without a firm understanding of the need they are responding to, and without a way to track how students are doing in the non-academic areas on which they focus. They are too often set apart from the academic work of the school, not seen as integral to learning or integrated into the daily practice of

teaching and learning. They often target a pre-selected group of “high-risk students,” ignoring the developmental needs of those not on the edge of real troubles, and aim to address or prevent problems rather than aiming at positive outcomes. And they are often developed without drawing on the expertise and resources of the community that surrounds the schools — organizations and institutions with the mission and expertise to address these non-academic outcomes. For all these reasons, a full slate of school-based programs is not a sign that schools have removed the barriers to students’ academic learning, or are supporting a broadened picture of learning that will ensure that young people are fully prepared for adult life.

**Theme Five: Improving learning in high schools requires youth engagement — both in the process of learning and in the process of school reform.**

Young people learn the most when they are engaged, emotionally and intellectually, in the subject matter they are learning. Learning models rooted in engagement — High Scope’s active learning approach, the Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound school redesign model, etc. — have demonstrated their effectiveness in promoting long-term academic success, and research on student motivation and cognitive development confirms that students learn best when they take on active roles and real responsibilities. Engagement is equally critical to young people’s development — especially for older youth, for whom words like “relevance” are the watchwords of meaningful experiences. Recognizing all this, many schools and districts have made tentative and sporadic forays into youth engagement — through service-learning, active and experiential learning strategies, and the like. Unfortunately, research indicates that, in the United States, opportunities for engagement and leadership actually decline in availability as young people get older (Sipe & Ma with Gambone, 1998). And young people say that they are seldom engaged in their schools, either with their heads or their hearts (Larson, 2000).

If they are seldom engaged in their learning, young people are even less often engaged in the school reform efforts that shape their schools. Many schools have made at least some commitment to young people as stake holders in school reform processes — through an occasional youth summit or panel, a handful of focus groups, perhaps a student representative on a school board or reform steering group. But many have expressed challenges and resistance as they think about youth voice and engagement as an institutionalized, systemic element of the district’s ongoing work. And opportunities for engagement are generally few and far between. An examination of comprehensive school reform models in use around the United States indicates that only a handful treat young people as important actors in the process. In local and national meetings of educational decision makers around the United States, young people are either absent entirely or included only in token ways.

Yet there are numerous reasons to believe that engaging young people in school reform is a critical step in improving schools. As with other kinds of engagement, youth action in school reform will almost certainly improve the learning outcomes for the young people involved. More pragmatically, young people have it in their power to stymie any school reform efforts — is indicated by a recent school-wide meeting in a San Francisco Bay area high school, where students attacked an effort to break down their school into a number of smaller units because they felt they had no voice in or knowledge of the process. More positively, young people have also proven their ability to bring about educational change, through efforts around the country. In the words of Eric Braxton, head of a youth organizing effort called the Philadelphia Student Union, “if schools are going to work, students are going to have to be the agents of change, they’re going to have to lead the change in schools.”

## From Ideas to Impact

The Forum is not steeped in the details of school reform. Our expertise is in youth development, and our experience is in helping organizations and institutions create strategies for change. Over the years we have made two observations about change, especially systems change:

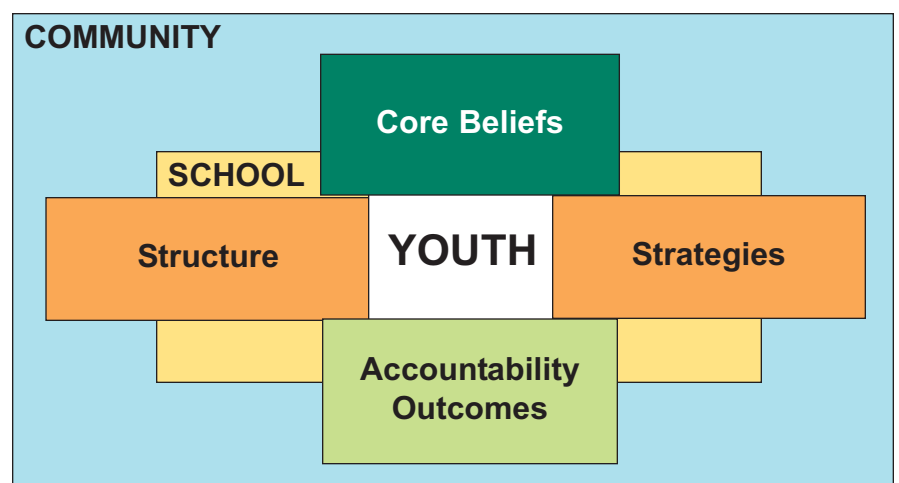
1. Deep changes are called for when those who have the authority have the combination of solid research and familiar experiences that indicate how improvements in these “marginal” areas — learning environments, non-academic outcomes and youth-centered instruction — will yield improvements in “mainstream” outcomes — academic achievement and long-term success.
2. Deep changes are sustained only when those who have to implement the changes a) believe that there is a need for change; b) believe that there is the potential for change; and c) believe that there are real levers for change available and within their reach.

It is our experience that for the most part educators agree with the themes and principles offered in this paper. The challenge is to give them the evidence needed to call for the change and the tools, time and resources needed to assess, strategize and implement. This means putting processes in place that involve all stake holders (including students) in answering three questions:

1. **The need for change.** To what extent are these elements generically in place in high schools? How would students, teachers, administrators and parents rate these learning environments? How do the ratings change across subgroups of students within a high school?
2. **The potential for change.** To what extent are these elements malleable? What are the specific changes in mission, structure, policy, programs, practices and assessment goals that could yield improvements in specific elements?
3. **The levers for change.** To what extent are these elements reflected in the various “programs” and curricula within high schools (e.g., alternative schools, academies, advisories, community planning bodies) or being recommended to high schools? To what extent were these programs implemented to respond to gaps in these elements? To what extent are they providing these supports?

Practically, real change usually also requires that reform leaders ask a different set of questions that help them assess the level and types of changes needed. We encourage reform leaders to use several broad questions, which correlate with the five themes we have explored, to keep young people at the center of their school reform planning:

1. To what extent do proposed reforms help to create a climate, culture and environment that supports young people’s learning?
2. Do the proposed reforms bring about changes in instruction and teaching that are aligned with what we know about how young people learn and develop?
3. To what extent are out-of-school and community-based learning opportunities and supports considered a vital component of their school redesign strategies, and do reform proposals help to blur the lines between school- and community-based learning opportunities?



4. How do the proposed reforms support students' development in non-academic areas — as supports, complements and products of academic learning?
5. How do districts/schools propose to engage young people in the school redesign process?

In examining proposed reforms, it is important to be on the lookout not only for core beliefs that reflect a youth-centered approach to learning, but also for the concrete evidence that these beliefs are translated into 1) current or proposed structures; and 2) specific reform strategies described by the districts. One can imagine a matrix that maps each of the five themes (improved school environment and culture; youth-centered instruction and teaching; extended places, people, times; broader outcomes; youth participation) against these three areas of change, charting the extent to which the themes are reflected in various aspects of the districts' plans (see Attachment 3: A Matrix for Analyzing Reform Proposals).

## Advocating for Change

Youth-centered reform efforts offer real and constructive opportunities for school and community leaders to come together to craft common agendas that not only change schools but improve learning, by creating greater and tighter synergies between what goes on in and beyond the school building, during and outside of the school day, and with and beyond school personnel. Enacting change of this magnitude requires many things: Growth in public will and engagement, strong leadership in and outside of the schools, and the alignment of resources with youth-centered perspectives in mind, among other things. One particularly important ingredient is the presence of a catalyst organization, able to work independently from but in partnership with schools, which can act as an advocate and expert in a youth-centered approach to education reform.

While many things are critical, the first step is to shift the perspective — to come at the challenges of school reform from a vantage point that recognizes young people as central to transforming schools. The Forum has been struck by the extent to which changing the frames — from academic achievement to learning; from school reform to learning supports; from teachers to educators, guides, coaches — helps move the discussion. If you are interested in helping to make that change — or in exploring what it would mean to do so — we invite you to go to our Web site to browse several publications that continue to explore these shifts in perspective:

1. *FYI Newsletter: Young People Continually Learning*. Volume 1, Issue 1. A 15-page newsletter with over 50 links to student essays, stake holder interviews, program profiles, research, meeting reports, annotated bibliographies and member Web sites.
2. *Students Continually Learning: A Report of Presentations, Student Voices and State Actions*, co-published by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Forum for Youth Investment. (Also available in hard copy from the Forum or CCSSO.)
3. *Learning Opportunities for Children and Youth: Expanding Commitments, Blurring the Lines*, a Forum working paper that focuses squarely on the importance of linking learning that goes on in and outside of the school building, during and outside of the school day.

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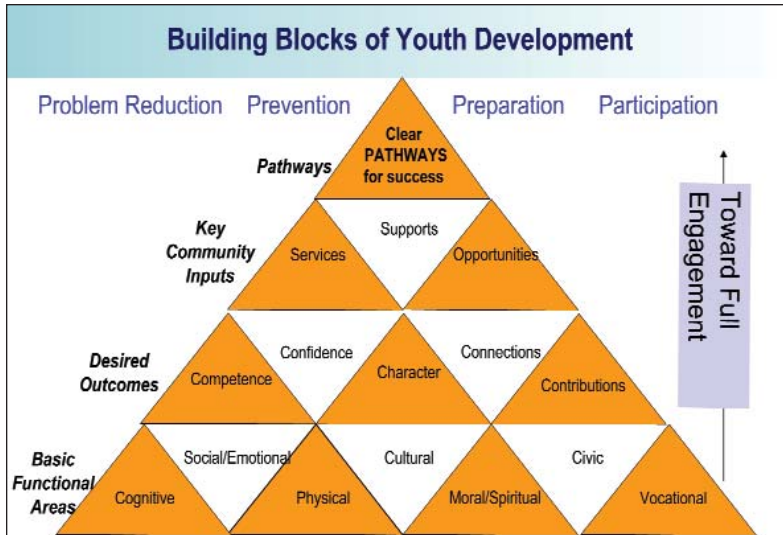
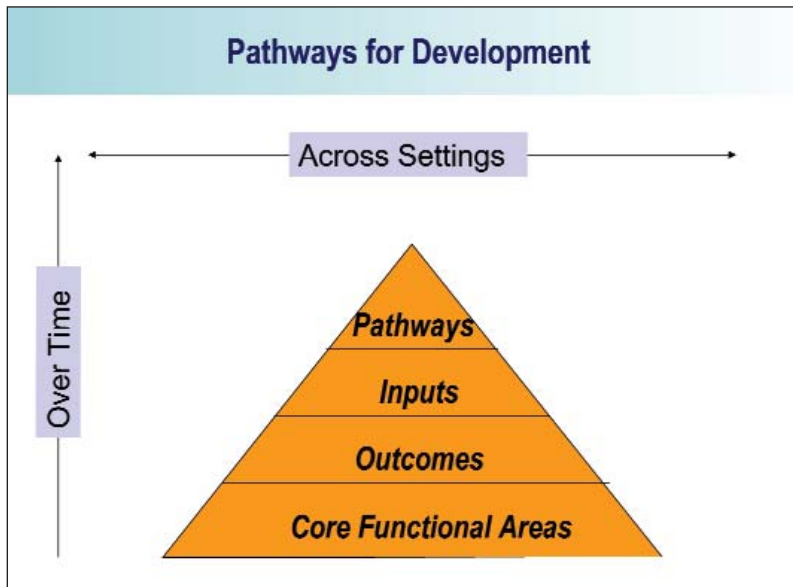
**Attachment 1**

# What Do We Mean When We Talk About Promoting Youth Development?

The Forum for Youth Investment has four bumper sticker phrases that may help define a youth development approach: “Problem free” is not fully prepared, fully prepared is not fully engaged. Reducing problems is critical. But getting young people out of the red is not enough.

*Academic competence, while essential, is not enough* — young people have to be able to function across a range of areas — academic, social, vocational, moral, civic, physical.

*Competence itself is not enough* — young people need skills and knowledge, but they also need to be confident, connected, contributors. And they need a sense of character.



Services are not enough — young people need supports and opportunities. Doing things to them and for them is not sufficient.

Programs are not enough — young people do not need to drop in and out of programs, or be placed in and out of programs. They need pathways. They need an array of supports over time and across settings that help them get where they are going

## Attachment 2 Inputs for Learning Environments: Consistencies across Education and Youth Development Research

<b>Learning First Alliance</b> Core Elements of Safe and Supportive Learning Environments <sup>i</sup>	A physical plant that promotes safety and community School-wide approaches to improving school climate, safety, and discipline	A continuum of supports for the few students who need them	Orderly and focused classrooms	Respectful, supportive relationships among students, school staff, and parents	Involvement of families, students, school staff and the surrounding community	Standards and measures to support continuous improvement based on data	A challenging and engaging curriculum for all students	Frequent opportunities for student participation, collaboration, service and self-direction
<b>Jobs For the Future (JFF)</b> Essential Supports and Opportunities <sup>ii</sup>				Caring relationships	Connections to expanding networks and opportunities Culture of peer support for effort		Cognitive challenge	Community membership, voice, and contributions
<b>The Forum for Youth Investment</b> <sup>iii</sup> Services, Supports and Opportunities	Stable places	Basic care and services	High quality instruction and training	Healthy relationships with peers and adults	High expectations and standards		Challenging experiences	Opportunities to participate and contribute
<b>Community Action for Youth Project (CAYP)</b> Supports and Opportunities <sup>iv</sup>	Physical and emotional safety	Adequate nutrition, health and shelter		Multiple supportive relationships with adults and peers			Challenging and engaging activities and learning experiences	Meaningful opportunities for involvement and membership
<b>Center for Youth Development</b> Principles and Practices of CBO Schools <sup>v</sup>		Young people have the supports they need to learn	Schools are personalized and flexible	Trusting relationships Constant access	Expectations are high		Learning is challenging and relevant	Young people have opportunities to make a contribution
<b>Milbrey McLaughlin/ Public Education Network</b> Dimensions of a Learning Environment <sup>vi</sup>	Safety		Quality content and instruction	Respond to diverse talents, skills, interests Build on strengths Choose appropriate materials Provide personal attention Reach out	Social capital Multiple "teachers"	Feedback and recognition Clear rules	Embedded curriculum Cycles of planning, practice, and performance Clear focus	Feature youth leadership and voice Responsibilities for the organization

i Learning First Alliance. (2000, May, Draft). Every Child Learning: Safe and Supportive Schools. Washington, DC: Learning First Alliance  
 ii Steinberg, A. (2001). Coming of Age in 2001: A Position Paper on Effective Learning Environments for 15- to 24-Year-Olds. Created in conjunction with the Margins to the Mainstream project. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future  
 iii Council of Chief State School Officers and the Forum for Youth Investment. (2001, April). Students Continually Learning: A Report of Presentations, Student Voices and State Actions. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.  
 iv Connell, J.P., Gambone, M.A., & Smith, T.J. (May 2000). Youth Development in Community Settings: Challenges to Our Field and Our Approach. The Community Action for Youth Project.  
 v Thomas, J., & Smith, S. (2000). CBO Schools: An Educational Resource Whose Time Has Come. Issue Brief 1. Washington, DC: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Academy for Educational Development.  
 vi McLaughlin, M. (2000, April, second printing). Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development. Washington, DC: Public Education Network. The phrases here are subsumed in Community Counts under the general themes of "youth-centered," "knowledge-centered," "assessment-centered," and "community."

**Attachment 3**

<b>A Matrix for Analyzing Reform Proposals</b>			
	Beliefs and Core Values	Policies/Structures	Practices/Strategies
<p><b>Broad Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic</li> <li>• Vocational</li> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Emotional</li> <li>• Physical</li> <li>• Civic</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Climate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention to basic needs</li> <li>• Safe, structured places</li> <li>• Caring relationships and personalization</li> <li>• High expectations and standards</li> <li>• Opportunities for voice, choice and contribution</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Instruction and Curriculum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging, relevant experiences</li> <li>• Authentic assessment</li> <li>• High expectations and standards</li> <li>• Opportunities for voice, choice and contribution</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Youth Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for voice, choice and contribution</li> <li>• Youth-led, youth-only structures/processes</li> <li>• Youth inclusion in adult structures/processes</li> <li>• Youth input affects policy</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Connections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrating community resources into the school</li> <li>• School-based out-of-school opportunities</li> <li>• Links between school and community-based learning experiences</li> <li>• Connections to community, networks and role models</li> </ul>			

NOTE: Attachment 3: A Matrix for Analyzing Reform Proposals was revised in January 2004.

## Attachment 4

<b>SAMPLE: Youth-Centered High Schools</b>			
	<b>BELIEFS AND CORE VALUES</b>	<b>POLICIES/STRUCTURES</b>	<b>PRACTICES/STRATEGIES</b>
<b>Broad Outcomes</b> Academic Vocational Social Emotional Physical Civic	"Success is not an option, it's a requirement" All barriers to learning must be eliminated Mental and physical well-being of students are essential	Identify peripheral barriers to learning (causes of behavior/academic problems) School-wide intervention program for students with behavior/emotional challenges Onsite school psychologist and social workers with open door and confidentiality policy for all students Confidentiality for students who need help The school day extends beyond the school walls (internships through career academies)	Teacher teams meet weekly with school psychologist to discuss students with learning/behavior difficulties Students who act out are referred to school psychologist or social worker Behavior contracts (negotiated with students) are utilized for behavior modification All students are taught about the importance of mental health Students have internships at local businesses
<b>Climate</b> Attention to basic needs Safe, structured places Caring relationships and personalization High expectations and standards Opportunities for voice, choice and contribution	School is a home away from home "Safety – Safety – Safety" — the stage is set outside the school The school is part of the community — "if we share it with then they will help us care for it" Parents/families are part of the school community Every child has a name and a story	No graffiti — any graffiti is covered up before students enter the school grounds (if possible) High visibility of parents and teachers between classes, before and after school No Tardy Policy — reduces class interruptions Principal is accessible and known to all students School facilities are well kept, clean, bright and colorful — grades/ academies are clearly defined in clusters around the campus by different colors, signage. Cultural diversity is valued and celebrated	Parent patrols in the hallways during classes to enforce tardy policy Parent/teachers patrols at entrance and exit to the school before and after school Principal is on her "perch" in front of school every morning and afternoon greeting students and overseeing movements Parents supervise underground tunnel and escort students across the busy street to and from school Cultural diversity days are a regular part of school culture
<b>Instruction and Curriculum</b> Challenging, relevant experiences Authentic assessment High expectations and standards Opportunities for voice, choice and contribution	"Development, Development, Development" (For teachers) High expectations for all students (No honors' classes — all students taught at the same level — their grade level)	Modular Block Scheduling Team teaching Common Planning Time across teams and across departments Ongoing teacher development in core subject and career academy areas High School Career Academies AP classes are electives — any student willing to do the work can take the class Academic probation for student who fall below a 2.0 Regular parent contact Provide the supports necessary for students to succeed School site ability to hire, fire and evaluate teachers (done through a committee of the SBM)	Team teaching (four teachers share four subjects and the same students ) Socratic seminars Inquiry based learning Group projects based on experiential learning (pairing students according to strengths and weaknesses) Senior Projects Portfolios Student-Led Lessons Class evaluations Teacher mentoring Advisories Monthly in-service for teachers Common two-hour weekly conference period for teachers that allows master schedule development and thematic lesson planning and review of student progress Academic contracts for students who are struggling — this includes parent/teacher conference After-school tutoring program Saturday school for students who are behind
<b>Youth Engagement</b> Opportunities for voice, choice and contribution Youth-led, youth-only structures/processes Youth inclusion in adult structures/processes Youth input affects policy	Student Voice valued/seen as equal contributors to maintenance and promotion of school culture and climate Open communication between students and teachers	Student participation and equal voting rights on SBM — ability to make decisions on budget, curriculum and school policy	Advisories Process to collect student input on issues to be voted on in SBM (suggestion box, surveys) Peer mentoring — older youth mentor younger youth Class evaluations Service learning/intern
<b>Connections</b> Integrating community resources into the school School-based out-of-school opportunities Links between school and community-based learning experiences Connections to community, networks and role models	The school is part of the community and can not operate in isolation Families and parents are part of the school and should feel welcome Partnerships with local businesses are essential for the development of the community and the students Partnership with the local university will help our students gain access to higher education opportunities	Parent participation and equal voting rights on SBM- ability to make decisions on budget, hiring and school policy Campus open to the community during and beyond the school day (a multi-use site) Community and business partnerships integrated into curriculum in career academies as internships/ job shadowing	Neighborhood Academic Initiative partnership with Local University to prepare students for college and offer full scholarships Partnership with local bank, hospital and software development company for internships, job shadowing, mentoring and tutoring in career academies Bilingual Parent Center offering with paid part-time director and three parent representatives offering ESL classes, translation services, letter writing, parent volunteer coordination Sliding scale health care center open to the public Gym open to community members School available to CBO's for after-school programs including sports and art