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Foundations for Young Adult Success

A Developmental Framework



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Executive Summary

Every society in every age needs to grapple with the question of what outcomes it hopes to produce in raising its young. What exactly do we hope our children will be able to accomplish as adults? What vision guides our work? How do we make that vision a reality for all children? How do we better harness what is known in the research, practice, and policy arenas to ensure that all youth have what they need to successfully meet the complex challenges of young adulthood? Preparing all youth for meaningful, productive futures requires coordinated efforts and intentional practices by adults across all the settings youth inhabit on a daily basis.

To address these questions, this report aims to build a common understanding of young people’s developmental needs from early childhood through young adulthood and proposes a developmental framework of the Foundations for Young Adult Success. The framework is the result of synthesizing research, theory, and practice knowledge from a range of disciplines and approaches. This work is influenced by ideas spanning the last century, from Dewey’s theory of learning from nearly a century ago to cutting-edge findings in neuroscience on how the brain works. It integrates these perspectives into an accessible framework designed to guide the efforts of all adults who are responsible for raising, educating, or otherwise working with children and youth.

In the past several years, a large number of frameworks and standards have been created to provide guidance on what young people need to learn. The Foundations for Young Adult Success developmental framework describes how to enact these frameworks and standards across the settings in school, out of school, and at home. It characterizes the experiences and relationships youth need to develop into young adults who have agency, an integrated identity, and the requisite competencies to successfully meet the complex challenges of young adulthood and become thriving, contributing members of their communities. The approach described in this report: (1) identifies three key factors of young adult success (agency, an integrated

identity, and competencies) and four foundational components (self-regulation, knowledge and skills, mindsets, and values) that underlie them, (2) takes into account what we know about how children develop, (3) considers how the backgrounds of and contexts in which young people live affect their development, and (4) makes the intentional provision of opportunities for young people to experience, interact, and make meaning of their experiences the central vehicle for learning and development.

What Do We Mean by “Success” in Young Adulthood?

Most policy efforts attempt to address socioeconomic gaps in youth outcomes by focusing on educational attainment as the central investment in preparing youth for adulthood. However, while building an educated workforce is one of the core goals of our investments in young people, it is far from the only goal. Success also means that young people can fulfill individual goals and have the agency and competencies to influence the world around them. This broader definition of success is based on the synthesis of literature from various fields, as well as interviews with practice experts and youth service providers (see box entitled *Project Overview and Methodology* p.3), who articulated their larger role as helping young people develop an awareness of themselves and of the wide range of options before them,

competencies to pursue those options, and the ability to make good future choices for their lives as engaged citizens in the world. This larger focus is inseparable from goals related to college and career.

Context Plays a Crucial Role in Providing Equal Opportunities to All Youth

The picture of young people as self-actualized masters of destiny is complicated by persuasive research on the role of context in shaping youth outcomes, specifically, structural forces that govern socioeconomic life in the United States (e.g., segregation, discrimination, joblessness).¹ From this perspective, a young person is fundamentally the product of experiences and social interactions, within and across a range of contexts, from the immediate setting to larger institutions to cultural norms, all of which collectively shape the developing individual.² Larger contextual factors of society, the economy, and institutions (such as schools) play a central role in the inequitable opportunities afforded to young people, as well as in their ability to see opportunities as viable options and take advantage of them. The obstacles to following a successful path to adulthood and the opportunities available to young adults vary greatly by the contexts they inhabit. Thus, there is a fundamental tension between preparing children to live in the world that is often cast as a tacit acceptance of a profoundly unjust status quo and equipping them to face, navigate, and challenge the inequitable distributions of resources and access that so often limit their opportunities and constrain their potential. It is within these tensions that we explore broad multidisciplinary evidence from research and practice about the underlying constructs that support a successful transition into young adulthood.

Ingredients of “Success” that Comprise the Developmental Framework for Young Adult Success

What are the ingredients necessary for young adults to succeed? Building a common set of objectives and having a clear understanding of how to foster development is a

critical step in eliminating the silos that adults working with young people often operate within. To this end, the report provides a framework of foundational components and key factors for success in young adulthood. The report organizes the definition of young adult success around three **key factors**; these are *agency*, *integrated identity*, and *competencies*. These factors capture how a young adult poised for success interacts with the world (agency), the internal compass that a young adult uses to make decisions consistent with her values, beliefs, and goals (an integrated identity), and how she is able to be effective in different tasks (competencies). The three key factors allow a young adult to manage and adapt to changing demands and successfully navigate various settings with different cultures and expectations. However, a person can have strong agency, identity, and competencies in one setting without being able to automatically transfer those to a new setting; having an *integrated identity* means that a person has consistency and coherence across different roles in different settings.

The Three Key Factors

Agency is the ability to make choices about and take an active role in one’s life path, rather than solely being the product of one’s circumstances. Agency requires the intentionality and forethought to derive a course of action and adjust course as needed to reflect one’s identity, competencies, knowledge and skills, mindsets, and values.

Integrated Identity is a sense of internal consistency of who one is across time and across multiple social identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, profession, culture, gender, religion). An integrated identity serves as an internal framework for making choices and provides a stable base from which one can act in the world.

Competencies are the abilities that enable people to effectively perform roles, complete complex tasks, or achieve specific objectives. Successful young adults have sets of competencies (e.g., critical thinking, responsible decision-making, ability to collaborate) that allow them to be productive and engaged, navigate

¹ Bowles & Gintis (1976, 2002); Duncan & Murnane (2011); Lewis (2011); Massey & Denton (1993); Putnam (2015); Wilson (1990, 2012).

² Neal & Neal (2013); Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979, 1986).

Project Overview and Methodology

In November 2013, the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (UChicago CCSR) was awarded a competitive grant from the Wallace Foundation to build a conceptual framework that articulates what is needed to guide children and youth to become successful young adults. The charge was to analyze and synthesize the best of research evidence, theory, expert opinion, and practice wisdom in the service of identifying the broad range of factors critical for young adult success. We consolidated current understanding of how these factors can be fostered in schools, communities, and homes from early childhood to young adulthood. In addition to a thorough grounding in published research, the project included interviewing and holding convenings and meetings with experts in research, policy, and practice across a range of fields and disciplines. To further ground the synthesis in real-world problems, we also interviewed a diverse selection of nine youth and the adults who work with them in schools, community programs, and agencies in Chicago and developed youth profiles. We sought to find the points of agreement across disparate perspectives, raise the points of contention, and leverage the collective wisdom to best understand the full scope of factors essential to young adult success and how to develop them.

The Three Phases of the Project

To achieve a cohesive and comprehensive framework, the project team undertook three phases of information-gathering. Each successive phase built upon the work of the previous phase, and each phase was defined by a different goal and set of questions:

- **Phase I:** We focused on defining “success” and identifying the factors that are critical for success in young adulthood, particularly in college and at the beginning of a career.
- **Phase II:** Building on the critical factors identified in Phase I, we sought to understand how each factor developed over the course of early life, from the preschool years through young adulthood. We focused on the identification of leverage points for best supporting children’s holistic development, keeping in mind that child and youth development occurs in multiple settings.
- **Phase III:** We aimed to consolidate current understanding of how critical factors of young adult success can be fostered in a holistic, coordinated way across schools, community organizations, and homes, from early childhood to young adulthood. We focused on a ground-level, practitioner perspective in considering how to best organize adult efforts to promote the development of children and youth.

Each phase of work culminated in internal working documents to help us consolidate our progress and thinking. The white paper that resulted from Phase I, *A Framework for Developing Young Adult Success in the 21st Century: Defining Young Adult Success*, is available at <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Wallace%20Framework%20White%20Paper.pdf>. The current report is a culmination of the three phases of work outlined above, with an emphasis on our learnings from Phases I and II. Findings from Phase III will be explored in future work.

across contexts, perform effectively in different settings, and adapt to different task and setting demands.

The Four Foundational Components

Underlying the capacity for the three key factors are four **foundational components** that span both cognitive and noncognitive factors. These four foundational components are *self-regulation*, *knowledge and skills*, *mindsets*, and *values*. The foundational components are

developed and expressed in multiple spheres—within the self, in relation to others, and in the broader world(s) one inhabits.³ The role of each component is threefold. First, when young people have experiences and make meaning of those experiences, each component interacts to promote the development of the other foundational components and the three key factors. Second, they enable healthy and productive functioning at every stage of life. Finally, they directly contribute to young adult

³ The notion that positive youth development requires skills in both the interpersonal (or social) and intrapersonal (or self) domains has been put forth by other models and frameworks

of skills necessary for success in the 21st century (e.g., Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013).

success. The foundational components were chosen because they are malleable; that is, they can be changed by experiences and the efforts of and interactions with other people, in both positive and negative ways, and then be internalized. As young people engage in ongoing experiences that help them develop the foundational components, these components can become internalized as automatic responses (or habits) that become a core part of their identity; this automatic behavior allows them to then be transferred across contexts. While all of the foundational components develop throughout every stage of a young person's life, the development of specific components is more salient during some stages than others. Young people develop the foundational components and key factors through experiences and relationships, and these are always embedded within larger societal, economic, and institutional contexts that influence how youth perceive the opportunities and obstacles posed by their environments.

Self-Regulation is the awareness of oneself and one's surroundings, and the ability to manage one's attention, emotions, and behaviors in goal-directed ways. Self-regulation has numerous forms, including cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and attentional regulation. Self-regulation is a key developmental task during early and middle childhood.

Knowledge is the sets of facts, information, or understanding about oneself, others, and the world. **Skills** are the learned abilities to carry out a task with intended results or goals. Building academic knowledge and skills is a key developmental task during early and middle childhood, although it occurs through all stages of development.

Mindsets are beliefs and attitudes about oneself, the external world, and the interaction between the two. They are the default lenses that individuals use to process everyday experiences. Mindsets reflect a person's unconscious biases, natural tendencies, and past experiences. Though mindsets are malleable, they tend to persist until disrupted and replaced with a different belief or attitude.

Values are enduring, often culturally defined beliefs about what is good or bad, and what is important in life. Values include both the moral code of conduct one uses in daily activities (e.g., being kind, being truthful) and long-term "*outcomes*" of importance (e.g., getting an education, having a family, contributing to the community) that may not necessarily have a right or wrong valence. Values develop through a process of exploration and experimentation, where young people make sense of their experiences and refine what they believe in. Values are a key developmental task during middle adolescence and young adulthood.

Developmental Experiences and Relationships Support Success

Development is a natural, ongoing process that happens as young people observe the world, interact with others, and make meaning of their experiences. Regardless of the degree of adult guidance, children will still "*develop*" in some way, learning how to do things and coming to conclusions about themselves, their prospects, and their paths forward. They will develop some skills and preferences, and they will likely figure out what they need to know to get by. And yet, the developmental benefit of children's experiences can be enhanced and directed by others to help youth best formulate and internalize the developmental "*lessons*" from these experiences.⁴ However, the nature and number of children's opportunities for development vary significantly by race and socioeconomic class.

The foundational components and key factors of young adult success are mutually reinforcing, helping young people to both learn from and proactively shape their worlds. The core question for practice is how these foundational components and key factors can be intentionally developed. How do children learn knowledge, skills, values, mindsets, and the complex processes of self-regulation, as well as develop competencies essential to success in the 21st century? The essential social context for this process is what we term **developmental experiences**. Developmental experiences are most supportive of youth's needs when they occur within what the Search Institute calls **developmental**

4 Vygotsky (1978).

relationships.⁵ Development is nurtured in the context of strong, supportive, and sustained developmental relationships with adults and peers. Developmental experiences offer opportunities for young people to engage in various forms of *action* and *reflection*. It is through ongoing cycles of age-appropriate action and reflection experiences that young people build the four foundational components (self-regulation; knowledge and skills; mindsets; and values), and develop agency, an integrated identity, and competencies.

Developmental Experiences

Developmental experiences are opportunities for action and reflection that help young people build self-regulation, knowledge and skills, mindsets, and values, and develop agency, an integrated identity, and competencies. These experiences are “*maximized*” in the context of social interactions with others. Experience must be assigned meaning and be integrated into one’s emerging sense of identity if it is to have lasting or transferrable benefit. Mediating young people’s thinking about their experience is one important way that adults aid in learning and development.

When young people have the opportunity to make contributions that are valued by others, they gain self-confidence and come to see themselves as capable and able to effect change in their own lives and in the larger world. What matters most for development is not the intentions of adults, but their actual enactment of practices in relation to young people, how young people experience those practices, and the meaning young people make of those experiences. This has training and professional development implications for teachers, parents, childcare providers, and youth workers.

Developmental Relationships

Critical to the process of making meaning out of developmental experiences are strong, supportive, and sustained relationships with caring adults who can encourage young people to reflect on their experiences and help them to interpret those experiences in ways that expand their sense of themselves and their horizons.

The iterative and fundamentally relational processes of experiencing, interacting, and reflecting represent a critical engine for children’s development and as such are the core of the conceptual model linking experiences and relationships with outcomes.

Strong, supported, and sustained relationships with caring adults provide an important space for youth to experiment, try out roles and behaviors, and receive feedback that helps to build an integrated identity. However, in order to provide the best experiences for youth, it is imperative to understand where youth are *developmentally* throughout their young lives. This understanding allows for more appropriate interactions between adults and youth. A contextual understanding of children’s development offers guidance on how to design direct experiences in ways that provide the right kinds of support and challenges to growth at various stages of early life. Each component develops at different rates over the life course. So when is the most crucial time to be focusing on supporting the maturation of each of our four components? Do they all hold equal weight at different stages of development?

Developmental Progression toward Young Adulthood

Development is multifaceted (social, emotional, attitudinal, behavioral, cognitive, physical) and each aspect of development is inextricably connected to the others. This report takes a developmental perspective because, in order to design and deliver the most effective experiences for youth, it is imperative to understand where youth are developmentally throughout their young lives. This understanding makes it possible for adults to match more appropriate experiences and interactions to the developmental needs of young people.

The practices of adults are more effective when they are intentional, are focused on the foundational components and key factors that support the ability to transition successfully into young adulthood, and are based on an understanding of where youth are developmentally. The development of the key factors of young adult success (competencies, identity, and agency) and

5 Search Institute (2014).

the four foundational components that underlie them (self-regulation, knowledge and skills, mindsets, and values) occurs at different rates from early childhood through young adulthood. Consistent and supportive interactions with caregivers provide the greatest opportunity for cognitive stimulation, and in ways that can have long-lasting impacts on children’s development. Whereas appropriate stimulation supports continuing development, a lack of stimulation can create barriers to later development, potentially requiring more intensive intervention later.

Different factors develop at different rates over the course of life. So when is the most crucial time to be focusing on supporting the maturation of each of the four components or three key factors? Do they all hold equal weight at different stages of development? Below, we highlight the most salient areas of growth during each stage of development, with an eye toward (1) which foundational components or key factors are most influenced by input, experiences, and interactions with others; and (2) which components or key factors need to be developed during the earlier stages to facilitate positive development at later stages. However, it is crucial that adults not exclude other areas of development when engaging with children and youth; nearly every aspect of the foundational components and key factors is forming, or is at least being influenced by the experiences youth encounter, at every stage of life.

In brief, the key developmental tasks during early stages of development are:

- Early childhood (ages 3 to 5): Self-regulation; interpersonal (social-emotional) knowledge and skills
 - Middle childhood (ages 6 to 10): Self-regulation (self-awareness and self-control); learning-related skills and knowledge; interpersonal skills
 - Early adolescence (ages 11 to 14): Group-based identity; emerging mindsets
 - Middle adolescence (ages 15 to 18): Sense of values; individuated identity
 - Young adulthood (ages 19 to 22): Integrated identity
- What happens as adolescents transition into young

adulthood is strongly shaped by the ways in which and degrees to which earlier developmental tasks were met. They draw upon the foundation laid in each preceding stage or the interventions that have successfully compensated for prior developmental lapses. To meet the development tasks as one embarks on young adulthood, a young person should be able to draw upon strong relationships with adults and peers; the foundational components of self-regulation, knowledge and skills, mindsets, and values; and the agency, an integrated identity, and competencies to take an active role in shaping their life course.

Implications for Practice, Policy, and Research

The vision behind the Foundations for Young Adult Success developmental framework is about building a society where all children grow up to reach their full potential, regardless of which side of the economic divide they were born. Currently, opportunities for rich and varied developmental experiences through K-12 schooling and informal education are largely determined by family resources; to address these inequities, it will not be enough to simply expand options by adding more well-run programs, providing a few more resources, or reforming a subset of schools. It will take a transformation of adult beliefs and practices within the existing institutions and structures that shape children’s learning and development. It will mean building a collective sense of responsibility for expanding the possibilities for all young people, not just for our own children. It means integrating afterschool providers’ lens of youth development with educators’ knowledge of learning theory with families’ deep understanding of the unique needs and circumstances of their children. By drawing from the knowledge, approaches, and experience of many different adults from many different settings, we can give the next generation of young people the opportunities they need to meet their full potential.

The Foundations for Young Adult Success developmental framework has clear implications for schools, youth organizations, and families; but without larger transformations in the policy landscape and larger societal and economic context, there are limits to what

can be achieved. Many questions remain about how to more effectively support the development of young people and what policies and structural changes are needed; these form the basis for the research agenda needed to guide these transformations. Along with parents and families, the world we envision for the next generation of young people will require the joint efforts of educators and youth practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. Below we provide implications for teachers, youth practitioners, parents and families, policymakers, and researchers.

Implications for Educators, Youth Practitioners, and Parents and Families

1. **A narrow focus on content knowledge in isolation from the other foundational components undermines learning and development.** Learning and development are holistic processes dependent on interactions among all of the foundational components (self-regulation, knowledge and skills, mindsets, and values). There may be conceptual reasons for distinguishing between “*cognitive*” and “*noncognitive*” factors, but this distinction has no functional meaning. Cognition, emotion, affect, and behavior are reflexive, mutually reinforcing, and inextricably associated with one another as a part of development and learning. Adults will make little headway if they target only one particular component or subcomponent in isolation.
2. **Taking a developmental lens is essential to ensuring that structures and practices meet the developmental needs of the young people being served.** Although a lot is known about development, too often, there is a mismatch between the structures or practices in a youth setting and the developmental needs of the young people being served. Schools, youth programs, and even families are too often oriented to adult needs and goals (e.g., maintaining classroom discipline) instead of taking a youth-centered approach.

3. **Ensuring all young people have access to a multitude of rich developmental experiences is imperative to their success.** Growing up in marginalized communities adds to the complexity of developing into a young adult who is poised for success. While having agency equips young people to make choices and take action, their ability to successfully pursue a desired path also depends on social relationships, financial resources, and countless other external factors that are inequitably distributed. Further, the task of “*integrating*” one’s identity is vastly more complicated for low-income youth and youth of color than it is for children who grow up within the social and behavioral norms of the dominant white, middle-class culture.⁶ Responding to this reality requires a careful balance of pragmatism and aspiration. The Foundations for Young Adult Success developmental framework is designed to strike a balance between helping youth thrive in the world as it is, and develop the skills and dispositions they need to challenge a profoundly unjust status quo.⁷

Implications for Education and Youth Policy

1. **The current policy emphasis on content knowledge and test-based accountability undermines practitioners’ ability to provide developmental experiences.** Content knowledge is an essential part of what young people need to learn for the future, whether in school, at home, or in afterschool programs, but it is far from the only thing that matters. Policies that put too great an emphasis on content knowledge and standardized tests create incentives for practitioners to see the teaching of content knowledge as the sole outcome of interest. As this report has shown, the other foundational components not only facilitate engagement and learning of content knowledge, but they also are important developmental outcomes in and of themselves. Policies that promote these other foundational components would help to create conditions that foster both the learning of academic content and the development of young people more holistically.

6 Deutsch (2008); Fedelina Chávez & Guido-DiBrito (1999); Phinney (1989); Phinney & Rosenthal (1992).

7 This report does not directly address how development of the key factors and foundational components may play out differently for different groups (e.g., by gender, sexual

orientation, immigrant status, involvement in the juvenile justice system) and what specific barriers, assets, and needs each subgroup may have. This is a critical area of investigation that should be pursued.

2. Proceed carefully with incorporating “*noncognitive*” measures into accountability systems. The policy window for a more holistic approach to the development and learning of young people is opening; there is growing discontent over standardized testing. Recently, a movement to integrate alternative measures of student success into school accountability systems has gained some momentum, exemplified by the California “*CORE*” districts that have received No Child Left Behind waivers allowing them to include social-emotional factors and school climate measures in place of test scores as accountability metrics. This holistic approach to evaluating students is in alignment with the Foundations for Young Adult Success developmental framework; however, some caution is necessary when using these new measures for accountability purposes. Many important questions remain about measuring noncognitive or social-emotional factors and about their suitability for an accountability system that was developed around standardized tests.⁸
3. Policy needs to provide the “*safe space*” for schools and out-of-school programs to become learning organizations. The ambitious vision given in the Foundations for Young Adult Success developmental framework does not provide a clear roadmap of specific practices, strategies, or programs to implement. Moving from the current approach to schooling to a more holistic and developmentally aligned approach will require trial and error. Just as young people need opportunities to tinker and practice in order to learn, practitioners also need opportunities for tinkering and practicing, as well as making mistakes, as they learn new ways of teaching and working with young people. In an age when accountability is a dominant way of managing schools, and increasingly out-of-school programs as well, the space to make mistakes is very small. For real shifts to happen in practice, schools and out-of-school programs need to become learning organizations that provide opportunities for adults to learn, and policy needs to provide the “*safe space*” to do so.

Gaps in the Research

1. What practices and strategies promote the development of identity and agency? While researchers have learned a tremendous amount about development in the last several decades, many questions remain unanswered. In this report, we provided a developmental trajectory for the key factors for young adult success—agency, an integrated identity, and competencies. However, this relied on piecing together a number of existing theories; rarely if ever has the development of agency, for example, been studied longitudinally from early childhood through young adulthood. Theory has provided guidance on how an early sense of “*self*” underlies later identity formation, but this area is understudied in empirical research. While there is converging evidence that supports each of the developmental experiences we identify in this report, as well as the importance of developmental relationships, we do not know which specific combination of experiences would best promote the formation of an integrated identity and agency. We also still lack a strong understanding of how all of the foundational components outlined here link directly to the development of agency, an integrated identity, and competencies.
2. What can be done to intervene with young people after developmental windows close? The Foundations for Young Adult Success developmental framework includes four foundational components—self-regulation, knowledge and skills, mindsets, and values—which are all crucial factors in a person’s development toward optimal capacity. What happens if youth do not grow each of these foundational components in the developmental period during which they are most malleable? What types of interventions should we invest in—and for whom and at what period in their lives—if children seem to be falling behind? And for the youngest children, how can we even be sure that a child is falling outside of “*normative*” development, given how very wide the range of development is during the early years?

⁸ See Duckworth & Yeager (2015) for a discussion of the uses and limitations of existing measures.

3. What is the interaction of experiences in different settings? This report also raises a number of questions about the experiences youth encounter in the various settings they inhabit on a daily basis. We know quite well that what youth experience in school often varies from their experiences with friends, at home, or even in other educational settings. What we do not know is the extent to which those experiences need to be coordinated and supportive of each other, even if they are not teaching the same skills. How much do practices at home support or inhibit what teachers, youth workers, and others aim to do with youth? How aligned do those practices need to be? And can effective practices in one setting ameliorate negative experiences in another setting?

4. How can the key factors and foundational components best be measured for different purposes? Measurement is a core part of evaluating needs and gauging progress in any field. With the growing interest in factors other than academic content knowledge and skills, the number of assessments created to measure these factors has also grown. As discussed in the policy implications section, a number of questions about these factors and the assessments complicate their immediate implementation into practice. Some key questions include: Is this factor best conceived as an individual characteristic that can be cultivated over time or as a situational response to particular settings, opportunities, or expectations? How can we disentangle young people's prior capacities from changes induced by setting factors such as adult practice, opportunities for developmental relationships and developmental experiences, or the culture and climate of the place? What is the developmental trajectory on these measures and what are thresholds for what young people need?

In short, the demand for measures of noncognitive or social-emotional factors has far outpaced the state of the field of measurement for these same constructs. In

a case such as this, there is great potential for measurement instruments to be misused, to produce faulty data, to conflate statistical significance with meaningfulness, or to otherwise lead practitioners down a fruitless path. We strongly urge caution in the use of measurement tools until the science of measuring these important constructs catches up with the interest in and demand for them.

Conclusion

The Foundations for Young Adult Success developmental framework is a first step in guiding practitioners, policymakers, parents, and researchers in working together around a vision of building a society where all children grow up to reach their full potential regardless of differences in their backgrounds. Ensuring that young people grow into successful young adults requires investments in their learning and development from birth to young adulthood so that all of them have ongoing opportunities to truly reach their potential.

Making this vision a reality will require a collective responsibility for all young people. It means asking practitioners to question their own beliefs about what is possible and rethink how they work with young people on a day-to-day basis. It means asking policymakers to focus on a bigger picture and broader set of outcomes and to consider policies that would support the efforts of practitioners in developing young people. It means asking researchers to provide accessible, meaningful, and actionable answers to core questions of policy and practice. It means asking families to understand the needs of their children and work with the institutions they cross everyday so that these needs are met. It means asking for change within existing institutions and structures while also asking what new institutions and structures might better serve our vision. Addressing the inequities of opportunities facing young adults will require more than equipping young people with the capacity to navigate the world as it exists now, it will mean that they are also able to envision and create a better world for future generations.