Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework

Stacy B. Ehrlich
Jenny Nagaoka, Camille A. Farrington, and Ryan D. Heath

University of Chicago Consortium on School Research

11th Annual Community Schools Forum
November 20, 2015

Thank you to the Wallace Foundation for their generous support of this work.
Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework

Developmental Experiences Can Happen in All Settings

Children are shaped by their interactions with the world, the adults around them, and how they make meaning of their experiences no matter where they are.

Developmental Experiences Require Action and Reflection

Children learn through developmental experiences that combine Action and Reflection, ideally within the context of trusting relationships with adults.

Developmental Experiences Build Components and Key Factors of Success

Over time, through developmental experiences, children build four foundational components, which underlie three “key factors” to success.

Foundational Components

- **Self-Regulation**: includes awareness of oneself and one’s surroundings, and managing one’s attention, emotions, and behaviors in goal-directed ways.
- **Knowledge**: is sets of facts, information, or understanding about self, others, and the world. **Skills**: are the learned ability to carry out a task with intended results or goals, and can be either general or domain-specific.
- **Mindsets**: are beliefs and attitudes about oneself, the world, and the interaction between the two. They are the lenses we use to process everyday experience.
- **Values**: are enduring, often culturally-defined, beliefs about what is good or bad and what is important in life. Values serve as broad guidelines for living and provide an orientation for one’s desired future.

Key Factors

Being successful means having the **Agency** to make active choices about one’s life path, possessing the **Competencies** to adapt to the demands of different contexts, and incorporating different aspects of oneself into an **Integrated Identity**.

Download the full report at ccsr.uchicago.edu and wallacefoundation.org

This framework synthesizes decades of research evidence, practice wisdom, and theory to capture a holistic view of children’s developmental needs from early childhood to young adulthood. Whether at home or school, in an afterschool program, or out in their community, young people are always developing. Broader societal contexts, systems, and institutions shape youth development—often creating big disparities in opportunities and outcomes. Adults also play a pivotal role, and can give young people a better chance at successful lives by understanding and intentionally nurturing their development.
Overview of Presentation

- Presentation:
  - What do we mean by young adult success?
  - What are the factors that underlie success in young adulthood?

- Small Group Activity

- Presentation:
  - How can adults support the development of these factors?
  - At what ages is the development of individual factors most salient?

- Small Group Activity

- Concluding Remarks
What Do We Mean by Young Adult Success?

What exactly do we hope our children will be able to accomplish as adults?
Foundations of Young Adult Success Framework

Goals

Articulate what is known about how to support the development of young people across settings.

- *What* skills, attitudes, and behaviors contribute to a successful transition into young adulthood: cognitive and “noncognitive”

- *How* adults can promote positive development of these foundations of success through developmental experiences.

- *When* key windows open for development of these skills, attitudes, and behaviors.
1. Draw from research, theory, and practice knowledge across a range of disciplines
2. Take a “Whole-Child” Perspective

- Social & Emotional Development
- Physical Development & Health
- Language Development
- Knowledge and Skills
- Arts and Music
3. Developmental approach: Early childhood to young adulthood
4. Multiple settings: School, home, community, out-of-school
5. Consider role of context versus individual
Foundations of Young Adult Success
Three Key Factors: Agency, Competencies, and Integrated Identity
The Role of Agency, Competencies, and Integrated Identity

**Agency** is taking an active role in shaping and managing one’s chosen path rather than being at the mercy of external forces.

**Competencies** are the abilities that enable people to effectively perform roles, complete complex tasks, or achieve specific objectives to achieve success.
The Role of Agency, Competencies, and Integrated Identity

**Integrated Identity** means having a consistent sense of who one is across time and across multiple social identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, profession, culture, gender, religion).
Key Factors Build on a Set of Four Foundational Components

- Components both support the development of each other and of the key factors, *and* contribute directly to success in young adulthood
  - No one component alone is sufficient (e.g., no silver bullets)
- Components are malleable, grow over time, and serve as leverage points for supporting development
What are the Foundational Components that Underlie the Development of the three Key Factors?

- Self-Regulation
- Mindsets
- Knowledge & Skills
- Values
Foundations of Young Adult Success
A Pause for Questions
SMALL GROUP READING ACTIVITY

- You will have five minutes to read the excerpts. As you read the excerpts, highlight sentences or phrases that resonate with you or seem particularly significant.

- After you finish reading the excerpts, you will have five minutes to make notes about two questions.
  1. What is your interpretation of the meaning or significance of the phrase or sentence? Are there connections you can make between it an experience you’ve had or idea you or someone else has raised?
  2. What are the implications of the sentence or phrase for your work?

- We will then spend 15 minutes going through the questions in small groups. Each person will have 3 minutes to go through his or her responses.
How Do We Build the Foundations of Young Adult Success?
Developing the Key Factors and Foundational Components

Learning is a process of both:
- Building neural connections in the brain
- Developing understanding in the mind

Children/youth need opportunities to practice, practice, practice
- Act and have varied experiences
- Make meaning of experiences
- Build relationships
Youth Learn and Grow through Developmental Experiences

Developmental Relationships

- Contribute
- Describe
- Practice
- Evaluate
- Choose
- Connect
- Tinker
- Envision
- Encounter
- Integrate
What are the Critical Areas of Development during Different Stages of Early Life?

Early Childhood
(Preschool, Ages 3-5)

Middle Childhood
(Elementary School, Ages 6-10)

Early Adolescence
(Middle Grades, Ages 11-14)

Middle Adolescence
(High School, Ages 15-18)
A Pause for Questions
READING PROFILES ACTIVITY

1. (5 minutes) Read the profile individually.

2. (5 minutes) Individually respond to the first 2 questions.

We will then work together in small groups. One person should act as note-taker.

3. (5 minutes) Quickly discuss the assets and barriers your youth has (questions 1 and 2)

4. (15 minutes) Together in your group, develop a response to question 3, starting to design what a developmental experience for a young person such as the one you read about in your profile.

What kind of developmental experience or support can a community school provide this student that draw on his/her assets, help address barriers and help promote the key factors for young adult success?

5. (10 minutes) Group share-outs
Key Takeaways
Key Takeaways for Practice

- Development is:
  - always happening everywhere
  - multifaceted and interconnected

- Experiences and social interactions are the vehicles for development – and depend on how children make meaning of them.

- Development is facilitated by strong, supportive, and sustained relationships with adults and peers.

- Adult practices are more effective when intentional, developmental, and focused on key factors that matter
Policy Implications

- The current policy emphasis on content knowledge and test-based accountability—both in and out of school—undermines practitioners’ ability to provide developmental experiences
  - Provide “safe space” to become learning organizations

- Support strong collaborations between out-of-school programs and schools

- Consider the inequitable distribution of resources—these feed into inequitable opportunities afforded to some
  - How can structures and systems be used to change the balance and create more equity?
Thank you!

Report, infographic, and executive summary are available for download at consortium.uchicago.edu and wallacefoundation.org

Contact info: Stacy Ehrlich sehrlich@uchicago.edu