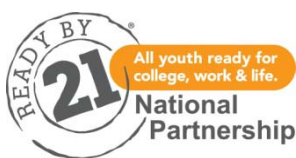


READY PICKS

Recommended Reading for Leaders Committed to Changing the Way they Do Business

BROADER PARTNERSHIPS **BIGGER GOALS** **BETTER DATA** **BOLDER STRATEGIES**



The Ready by 21 Partnership is committed to ensuring that all young people are ready for college, work and life.

Attaining this goal requires coordinated supports from all sectors – education, business, government, non-profits and the community – as well as from families. These supports not only improve students flow through the education pipeline from pre-K through post-secondary completion, they insulate the pipeline with basic services and broader opportunities for learning and development.

Each issue of READY PICKS focuses on one or more of “**the 4 Bs**” – the capacities leaders need to strengthen to do business differently, and offers our best picks of research, tools and examples selected from the work of Ready by 21 Partners, Ready by 21 places and others committed to big picture change.

In this issue, we explore the range of supports older youth need as they transition to adulthood. We begin by reviewing several surveys of young adults in which they identify supports they consider important to their success as adults. We include a survey that targeted a particularly vulnerable population of young adults – those who have recently aged out of the foster care system. Interestingly, the needs they point to are quite similar to those identified by broader samples of youth. In addition to summarizing results from several surveys, we review and organize nearly 40 policy and practice recommendations that have emerged in the past few months related to expanding supports for older youth.

Focusing intentionally on older youth and the transition to adulthood exemplifies the “bigger goals” leaders need to adopt in order to ensure all young people are ready for college, work and life.

THE FEATURED B

BIGGER GOALS

Children and youth need early and sustained supports from birth through early adulthood. As the transition to adulthood becomes longer, more complex, and more varied, it is crucial that young people have access to effective supports throughout the transition phase. In the last few months, a range of reports focused on expanding supports for older youth have come across our desks. Results from several surveys of youth and young adults offer a valuable lens into what supports are critical from their perspective. After summarizing what young people tell us, we turn to a flurry of proposals issued recently by researchers and policy advocates, including recommendations from the most recent edition of [The Future of Children](#), which focuses on this topic. We are glad to report that these recommendations are consistent with what young people themselves say is necessary.

“[Can I Get a Little Advice Here?](#),” a new poll by Public Agenda, surveyed young adults age 22 through 30 on their experience with high school guidance counselors. As young people approach high school graduation, they make critical decisions regarding their future. While families play a key role in such decisions, high school counselors can be at the forefront of supporting the transition to adulthood. Unfortunately, two-thirds of young people gave a “poor” or “fair” rating to guidance counselors in terms of helping with postsecondary education decisions, and 35 percent gave the lowest possible score of “poor.” In terms of careers, counselors did not fare any better, with 62 percent young adults saying they did not receive adequate information related to careers. Students who felt their counselors did not perceive them as “college material” described their experiences as unhelpful and dispiriting. One in five

of these young people delayed going to college and nearly three-quarters said getting advice on a range of school and job training programs would have been extremely helpful.

The need for better counseling is echoed by former foster youth. In the latest findings from Chapin Hall's [Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth \(Ages 23 and 24\)](#), only one-quarter of study participants say they felt prepared to be self-sufficient when they exited the foster care system. These young people (now in their mid twenties), wish they had better access to training and assistance as they made their transition, particularly in developing life skills and assistance with employment and housing. For this population, lack of preparation can be particularly dramatic; at least half of the study population has been homeless at least once since leaving foster care. What is notable about these findings is that all youth – not just the most vulnerable – need access to basic supports and services in this phase.

Another [survey](#) by Public Agenda revealed that 6 in 10 young people surveyed dropped out of postsecondary education because they could not effectively balance school and work. Of those who dropped out, 54 percent said they needed to work to support themselves and their family. Although access to basic supports like housing and income are crucial, young people identify access to guidance and counseling as one of the top supports they need. Young people seek advice and help as they face complex and difficult choices. They also want training in skills to manage these choices. The importance of supportive adults is underscored in a recent [brief](#) by Ready by 21 Partner **Child Trends**. In their review of strategies that best support older youth, mentoring and case management stand out as particularly effective across a range of programs.

Leaders working in states and communities can strengthen supports for older youth by ensuring that child and youth agendas or master plans extend into young adulthood, and by implementing specific policies and programs that provide targeted supports for the most vulnerable young adults. The work of leaders who are trying to support older youth transitions spans the Ready by 21 capacity areas. Below, the Forum summarized recommendations proposed in several recent reports on this subject. While the majority of the recommended actions represent “bolder strategies,” many involve the other Bs. Several specific recommendations related to ensuring access to mentoring and counseling, which young people also identified as critical. Other featured recommendations that speak directly to leader capacity include cross-system collaboration, action agendas that focuses on multiple moving parts of a system rather than a single initiative, and the importance of identifying an effective administrative entity to work with multiple partners.

OTHER READY PICKS

BETTER DATA

How Can Communities Measure Impact Across Multiple Agencies? Data-driven planning is central to the Ready by 21 Approach. When leaders use accurate and comprehensive data, they are in a better position to develop powerful programs and policies for children and youth. A [new tool](#) by the Center for Law and Social Policy helps advocates and policymakers develop stronger agendas for infants and toddlers. The five sections of the tool are designed to help collect demographic information, participation rates, landscape of early care, and quality of care.

**BROADER
PARTNERSHIPS**

How can strong partnerships contribute to greater public will for effective citywide out-of-school time systems? Partnerships across multiple sectors are key to building quality out-of-school time (OST) programs. In [“Strengthening Partnerships and Public Will for Out-of-School Time Programs,”](#) a new publication by the National League of Cities explores strategies for building partnerships with various sectors such as business, higher education, local United Ways, municipal government, school districts, community based organization, and faith based organizations. It also highlights strategies for leveraging such partnerships to build public will for quality OST programs. The report also features examples from several cities, including several that have used the Ready by 21 strategy or tools: Nashville, Grand Rapids and Providence.

**BOLDER
STRATEGIES**

What can city leaders do to ensure that strong programs and policies exist to support young people? This month, the mayor of Denver unveiled [“Denver’s Youth Agenda: Advancing the Mayor’s Action Challenge,”](#) a master plan to promote the well-being of young people in the city. The mayor’s office chose three interconnected areas (education, health and safety) as their primary focus but designed an agenda that promotes a broad set of child well-being outcomes. The agenda also includes strategies for public systems in Denver to work together to develop a common vision, engage a broad set of partners and use common data points to advance the youth agenda.

Recommendations for Leaders Focused on Increasing Supports for Older Youth

| Broader Partnerships | Bigger Goals | Better Data & Information for Decision-making | Bolder Strategies |
|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build capacity for cross-system collaboration and alliance. • Engage multiple partners and a range of key decision makers.* • Establish convening entity to bring stakeholders together, build a shared vision, and maximize resources. • Identify an effective administrative entity to work with multiple partners, implement the vision, align policies, resources and practices. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build an agenda for action that focuses on multiple moving parts of a system rather than single initiatives. • Implement policies to ensure vulnerable youth have access to appropriate supports. • School reform efforts should increase college and career readiness while increasing high school graduation. • Specify measurable goals to increase the number of credentials. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembling data from various systems and developing common measures will help work across systems and increase collective accountability.* • Data should link student demographic and prior educational information to performance, track progress and connect to labor outcomes.* • Track transitions across transition programs/institutions.* • Measure and report on the achievement of accredited industry certification. • Track rates at which different groups (low-income, underprepared students, etc.) earn degrees. | <p>Overall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring and case management.* • Target youth early in the transition to adulthood.* • Develop service models that apply to multiple systems.* • Engage young people.* • Provide multiple pathways and transitional supports.* • Re-think and renovate social institutions that support transitions. <p>Vulnerable Youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce existing connections in the lives of young people. • Provide relationship education. • Extend age of foster care to 21.* • Develop better transitional plans. • Develop voucher programs for housing. • Increase second chance programs. <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support persistence and completion.* • Access to child care. <p>Workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic courses that align with vocational interests. • High quality work experience and career exposure components that connect to aspirations.* |

*Recommendation appeared in multiple reports, as cited in the following page.

The above recommendations, organized into the Ready by 21 Capacity Areas, were drawn from the following reports:

[Transition to Adulthood](#)

The Future of Children Princeton-Brookings; Spring 2010

[Connected by 25: Effective Policy Solutions for Vulnerable Youth](#)

Youth Transition Funders Group; Spring 2010

[Good Data. Strong Commitment. Better Policy. Improved Outcomes.](#)

Jobs for the Future; April 2010

[What Works for Older Youth During the Transition to Adulthood](#)

Child Trends; March 2010

[Assessing the Impact of Extending Care Beyond Age 18 on Homelessness: Emerging Findings from Midwest Study](#)

Chapin Hall; March 2010

[Relationships Matter: Strengthening Vulnerable Youth](#)

Innovation Center for Community & Youth Development; March 2010

[Recommendations for Incorporating Postsecondary and Workforce Data into Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems](#)

Center for Law and Social Policy; March 2010

[Building a Comprehensive Youth Employment Delivery System: Examples of Effective Practice](#)

Center for Law and Social Policy; February 2010

[Beyond the Classroom: Creating Pathways to College and Careers for Latino Youth](#)

National Council of La Raza; 2010