

FrameWorks Adolescence/Youth Development

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Adolescence: The Pictures in our Heads: What First Comes to Mind?



Situation Analysis: Americans:

1. Believe youth today are different than they were in the past; have different values.
2. Are not persuaded by factual rebuttals.
3. Focus on safety as a key concern.
4. Children are the responsibility of their parents and no one else.
5. Suspect parents are to blame.
6. Focus on the subjective moral and intellectual growth, and have little concrete grasp of complete developmental process – brains, hormones, mental and emotional health, etc.
7. Toggle between teens as the Other, and adolescence as a Process we all go through.

Prevention

Concept is compelling
and builds public
support for policies

Language gets in the
way; triggers
problematic patterns
of thinking that
undermine support
for policies

Prevention language triggers problematic patterns of thinking.

In the Picture

- Safety – drugs, alcohol, sex, etc.
- Parental role
- Lack of discipline
- Solution = Information

• Out of the Picture

- Learning disabilities, mental health, etc.
- Government role
- Development
- Solution = Policies

Problems with Prevention Frame

- Safety and fear are highlighted.
- Parents are solely responsible.
- When parents are the problem, government's role is dismissed.

Frame Elements

- Values: prevention, future, nurturance, responsibility, prosperity, reciprocity.
- Goal of child-rearing: good, solid adults.
- Responsibility: collective, community.

Explaining Development

- Brains are built over time.
- Nature + Nurture: Genes establish the basic architectural blueprint; relationships supply the conditions that guide how brain architecture gets built.
- Brain plasticity and the ability to change behavior decrease over time.
- Cognitive, emotional, and social competence are inextricably intertwined.
- Getting it right early is less costly, to society and to individuals, than trying to fix it later.
- Child development is a foundation for community development and economic development; the building blocks of society.
- Toxic stress damages the developing brain.

The Development Frame dramatically influences public understanding of prevention policies.

- It includes parents while expanding the definition of important relationships.
- It explains why relationships matter to development.
- People come to understand the importance of prevention.
- Social and emotional development begin to have the same priority as academic achievement.
- People begin to include developmental criteria in thinking about programs and policies.
- Government has an obvious role.

Benefits of the Development Frame

- It includes parents while expanding the definition of important relationships.
- It explains why relationships matter to development.
- They come to understand the importance of prevention.
- Social and emotional development begin to have the same priority as academic achievement.
- Government has an obvious role.

Reframing Clues

- Youth shown in athletics, volunteering, and performance arts are described with positive values: responsible, focused, disciplined, committed, goal-oriented, leaders, team players, confident.
 - These activities are valued in part because they assist development and positive self-esteem.
 - The good parent is inferred.
 - Coaches, volunteer leaders, teachers are highly credible spokespersons and mentors.

Adolescence Summary

Typical Prevention Story

- Parents
- Character
- Discipline
- Judgmental
- Ideological
- “Those” children
- Strong families
- Development = intellectual, character
- Government irrelevant or interfering

Development Story

- Relationships
- Development
- Opportunities
- Understanding
- Practical
- “Our” children
- Strong communities
- Development includes social and emotional
- Government necessary, if effective/efficient

Tested Frames

- Crime Prevention
- Economic Development
- Stewardship
- Environment of Relationships
- Brain Architecture
- Developmental Experiences

Crime Prevention Frame

America's After-School Choice: Juvenile Crime or Safe Learning Time

America's anti-crime arsenal contains no weapons more powerful than the proven programs that help kids get the right start in life – programs like...

When the school bell rings, turning millions of children and teens out on the street with neither constructive activities nor adult supervision, violent juvenile crime soars...

Quality youth development programs can cut crime immediately and transform this prime time for juvenile crime into hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun and community service. For example...

Gang violence in America is once again on the rise...in order to curb gang violence we must find ways to intervene and offer alternatives to the gang lifestyle in order to save at-risk children before it's too late. Quality after-school programs cut crime and save money.

Crime Prevention Frame

- Goal of frame: state that programs keep kids safe and out of trouble.
- Frame heightens priority of programs but reinforces damaging perceptions:
 - Triggers image of scary teens;
 - Believe the only value for youth programs is to keep kids busy until parents return;
 - Blame materialistic parents for troubled kids
 - See the solution as returning mom to home.

Economic Development Frame:

Youth Development is Economic Development

In America, we have a long history of valuing public education for every child. A good education is fundamental to democracy and to individual opportunity. Education is also central to a strong economy. Minnesota has one of the strongest economies in the country because it has traditionally invested in one of the most educated workforces. Minnesota's future workforce will need multiple skills to be successful – the ability to communicate well, the self-discipline and focus to see a problem through to its solution, and the ability to work effectively with lots of different kinds of people, to name a few. As we look for ways to ensure future prosperity, we need to think of education as economic development. One's quality of life and contributions to society can be traced back to patterns and opportunities established in childhood and adolescence. The return on investment of quality early childhood and youth development programs far exceeds the return on most projects that are currently funded as economic development. To ensure the future success of the state's economy, we must continue to invest in youth.

Economic Development Frame

- Goal of frame: invest in kids to ensure future economic success for the state.
- Requires two associations:
 - Economic prosperity relies upon a successful education system;
 - Youth development programs are necessary for quality education.
- Education dominates concern; youth programs are virtually ignored.

Brain Architecture Frame

Adolescent Brain Architecture

Research is revolutionizing our view of the adolescent brain and providing new insight into how to make adolescence go well as a stage of development. A host of structural changes occur in the architecture of the human brain during these critical years. In fact, the last area of the brain to mature is the part capable of deciding, I'll finish my homework, take out the garbage, and then I'll email my friends... "The parts of the brain responsible for things like sensation seeking are getting turned on in big ways around the time of puberty," says Temple University psychologist Laurence Smith. "But the parts for exercising judgment are still maturing throughout the course of adolescence...At the same time that they are becoming independent from their parents, they need role models and other adults to guide their choices. That's the real value of programs such as 4H, Big Brothers, Big Sisters and intramural sports. As a society we need to pay attention to the unique needs that kids have at different ages, provide the right opportunities and structures, and set our expectations appropriately.

Brain Architecture Frame

- Goal of frame: communicate adolescent development using a simplifying model.
- Frame achieves several objectives:
 - Provides new understanding of development;
 - Creates a range of objectives for youth programs (self esteem, training ground);
 - Causes people to rethink other children's issues (education and juvenile justice);
 - Engages community without threatening parental role.

Developmental Experiences Frame

The Power of Experience

Experiences shape the kind of people we will become. Sports teach teamwork and discipline. Volunteerism provides experience in caring for others, which in turn makes one a good citizen in society. Performance arts promote determination, confidence and positive self-esteem. These are the experiences that shape adolescents now and into adulthood. But too many youth don't have an opportunity for these enriching experiences. In fact, in recent years Minnesota has substantially cut the funding for out of school programs. It's important that our schools and communities provide them with these opportunities as they go through this stage of life where they practice the roles and values they will take on as adults. And it's up to us as adults to do all we can to control the environments that affect young people's lives, especially those that would derail their healthy development.

Developmental Experiences Frame

- Goal of frame: inform people of the developmental benefits of youth programs.
- This frame is a critical component:
 - Reframes programs as centrally important for development;
 - Reminds adults of their own beneficial experiences during youth;
 - Increases support for societal role, but parents continue to feel pushed to sidelines.

Recommendations

- Development is an effective frame for youth.
- Promote Developmental and Community-based Benefits.
- Unify Developmental and Social perspectives; community connection reinforces healthy development.
- Communicate development on 3 levels:
 - Adolescent development;
 - Developmental benefits of programs;
 - Role for community in development.
- Establish goal as producing “decent” and “solid” kids.

Talking Points for Youth Development Programs

- **Youth development is community development.** Repeated studies have established that young people who participate in quality youth development programs are more likely to be active voting citizens, settled in stable personal relationships, employed and economically self-sufficient, and happy with their lives as young adults. These are important, measurable benefits to the community. Investment in youth is investment in healthy communities.
- Learning how to make the transition into community is a big part of what adolescence is all about. **Youth development programs are about making this transition more productive, focused and successful for all parts of the community.**

Talking Points for Youth Development Programs

- **Quality youth programs support parents** in guiding their children toward their roles as adults in the community.
- Quality youth development programs give young people a **chance to put into practice the values they learn at home** -- values of persistence, of helping others, taking responsibility for their actions, and working as part of a team. Consistent practice over time in a variety of settings is optimal.

Talking Points for Youth Development Programs

- **Scientists tell us that adolescence is one of the critical building moments in the development of the brain's architecture.** Recent research reveals that during adolescence, different parts of the brain are actually being formed and used for the first time. The experiences young people have contribute to their brain structure and development. The opportunity to lead a discussion, plan a food drive, perform in a play, commit and carry out a community assignment – these experiences literally build a foundation in a young person's brain that transforms that person into a mature and engaged member of the community. Each experience builds on the others. That's why it's so important that youth have the opportunity for sustained and meaningful interaction with adults through quality developmental experiences.

Talking Points for Youth Development Programs

- Let's be clear about what's at stake. This is about the future of our communities. Young people learn and develop at home, in school, and within the community. **The community invests** in its young people so that they will be able to contribute to community life as engaged adult citizens. **The community needs to do its homework now**, investigating how to reverse this situation in which more and more programs are being eliminated or becoming too costly for even middle class parents.

Summary:

What We're Up Against

- The exclusive role of parents.
- The definition of good parenting as protection from physical harm.
- The weak role of community.
- Inability to “think development.”
- Youth’s disconnect from work and its perceived values.
- Difficulty in contesting the negative stereotypes of youth.

Summary – Youth Programs

Old Frame

- Teens as victims, perps
- Parents are responsible
- Outcome is autonomy
- Teens as “done”
- Development is learning, making choices
- Activities fill time, safety
- Responsible for my child

New Frame

- Adolescents as engaged
- Parents & community resp.
- Outcome is decent, solid adult
- Adolescents as developing
- Development is brain growth, capacity to make choices
- Activities assist development
- Responsible for our children



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