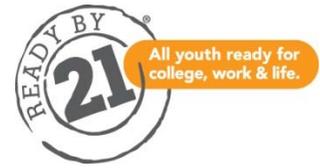


Tracking Child & Youth Well-being

Nalini Ravindranath and Karen Pittman



Introduction

Twelve years ago, the federal government released America's Children in Brief, the first official inter-agency government compilation of child and youth well-being indicators. The Forum had just been established, so it was a big deal to be invited to provide written and oral comments on this report. And it was an even bigger deal when Karen Pittman decided to comment not on the trends and findings, but on the structure of the report itself (<http://forumfyi.org/node/508>).

Pittman gave the report a barely passing grade – she wanted and expected more. The indicators were disproportionately negative and were skewed to provide only status information rather than information on services/expenditures, environments and behaviors. The comparison data was more predictable than compelling. Finally, the treatment of age groups was uneven.

The themes of my critique have become the major criteria for a “Ready by 21” data report or scorecard. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the federal government’s 2010 report card continues to reflect many of the same weaknesses, for very good reasons having to do with data quality and availability. But, new national polls and a growing number of states and localities are finding creative solutions to the inherent imbalances in this country’s data on children and youth.

Four Studies, Two Approaches, One Lens

Leaders must intentionally “steer a positive course” for children, youth and families if they are committed to ensuring all young people are ready for college, work and life. Annual child well-being indices have the potential to be very important tools because they provide valuable data that leaders can use to drive planning, decision-making and progress measurements. In this paper, we review four national well-being reports to see how they fare as useful tools for leaders working on behalf of children and youth. We will:

- Explain how a Ready by 21 dashboard can be used to look across the reports to assess their balance;
- Provide summary charts showing the individual indicators included in each of the traditional reports according to age group, outcomes and focus;
- Provide summaries of the key findings from each report.

Two of the reports in question are well established and review a broad swath of publicly available data:

- *America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2010* by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics
- *2010 Child and Youth Well-Being Index (CWI)* by the Foundation for Child Development

Two reports are new surveys that focus on documenting young people’s perceptions about their well-being:

- *Youth Readiness for the Future: A Report on Findings from a Representative Gallup Student Poll Sample* by the Gallup Student Poll and America’s Promise Alliance
- *Teen Voice 2010: Relationships that Matter to America’s Teens* by the Search Institute

We also reviewed a report, *Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries* by UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre because this report card contains the most comprehensive set of indicators.

While the report card contains traditional indicators of well-being, it also offers comparative data on children's relationships with peers and family. In addition, the index includes data on subjective well-being such as life satisfaction, belonging and feelings of loneliness. This report is not without limitations but it shows progress in the right direction and provides important international comparisons. These comparisons will likely help us understand our own data better and move action in the right direction.

Using Ready by 21 Dashboards to Analyze the Reports

Identifying broad goal or outcome areas is not enough. We also need a range of indicators that provide us with concise ways to assess well-being against baselines (trend data) or expectations of what should be (targets). The number of potential indicators of child well-being is huge, given the broad range of outcomes that researchers and policy makers consider relevant. The challenge faced by research teams that compile indicator sets, like those used in the studies under review, is to winnow down the list. In general, this selection process is guided by three rules, summed up by Mark Friedman, the developer of Results Based Accountability:*

- **Data power.** High quality data that is available on a timely basis for the particular population in question;
- **Communication power.** The extent to which an indicator speaks clearly to a broad range of audiences;
- **Proxy power.** The extent to which a given indicator conveys the most salient information about the phenomenon in question.

These criteria are essential. Frequently, the availability and quality of indicators is not evenly distributed across outcome areas or age groups so the final selections are biased in certain directions.

Ready by 21, a set of standards and strategies designed by the Forum for Youth Investment, encourages leaders to examine the indicator lists that result from the use of traditional selection criteria to identify gaps, assess their significance and take steps to either correct or acknowledge them. The Forum suggests that leaders define their goals for children and youth and review the indicators used to measure progress against these goals using a five by five matrix, or developmental dashboard, which maps outcomes by age groups.

The logic behind the Ready by 21 developmental dashboard is simple: First, if all young people are to be ready for college, work and life by the time they reach adulthood, they need consistent support across their developmental years. Second, they need consistent supports to develop across a range of outcome areas. As a starting point, the Forum provides leaders with a matrix that maps five age groups (from birth to young adulthood) by five outcome areas:

- **Learning:** children and youth succeeding in school
- **Working:** children introduced to the concepts of work, youth and young adults ready for work;
- **Thriving:** children and youth making healthy choices;
- **Connecting:** children and youth having positive relationships with peers and adults;
- **Leading:** children and youth contributing to their community.

An analysis of the developmental dashboard consists of three simple, but important steps:

- **Age/Outcome analysis.** Consider the gaps and discuss the relationships between the indicators and what they measure.
- **Asset/Deficit analysis.** Decide whether each indicator is an asset (to be increased) or a deficit (to be decreased). Consider the overall ratio of asset indicators to deficit indicators. It is usually difficult to reach

* Friedman, Mark. (2005). *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough: How to Produce Measurable Improvements for Customers and Communities*. United Kingdom: Trafford Publishing.

parity, but it is useful to try. Review how and where the deficit indicators cluster (the imbalance is usually worst in the adolescent years). Discuss ways to address the imbalances, perhaps by using data from smaller studies to fill gaps.

- **Population/Performance Measure analysis.** Determine whether an indicator is population focused (reflects the status, behaviors and attitudes of children, youth or their families) or performance focused (reflects the extent to which a service or support was provided well). For performance indicators, it may be a good idea to distinguish between child and youth outcomes and family, school or community outcomes.

In communities, this analysis can result in discussions about the gaps and imbalances – why do they occur, are they important, what can be done about them and what should be said about them, if they cannot be addressed. Communities and states, however, have more leeway for customizing their reports than researchers at the national or international level. Communities may have access to state and local data that may not be consistently available nationally and can justify the use of data that do not meet the highest standards because their goal is to spark discussion and action.

A Need for Balanced Indicators

Lists, by definition, are one-dimensional. When working on issues as complex as youth development, lists can encourage oversimplification. Dashboards help address this, allowing users to embed two principles – in this case, the importance of a broad range of developmental outcomes and the need to provide supports from “cradle to career”.

In the summary chart in Appendix A, we mapped all the indicators used in two traditional indices into the Ready by 21 developmental dashboard and categorized each indicator by age and outcome. Appendix B provides the mapping of the two new youth surveys. A cursory examination of these charts leads to five conclusions and shows the power of this exercise.

Conclusion #1. The traditional reports’ indices still lack balance. *The indicators do not cover the full age or outcomes spans.* The indicators are overwhelmingly focused on children 0-18. There are very few indicators of young adult well-being (19-24). This is, by and large a definitional problem. Data on the health, education and employment status of young adults is available. The indicators are strong in measuring physical, mental health and safety, but indicators measuring outcome areas of connecting and leading are non-existent. *Their indicators are deficit focused.* Only 11 out of 31 indicators are positive and the imbalance is exaggerated in the teen years. On the positive side, the indicators are all population level indicators. There is a heavy focus on individual outcome measures as would be expected given the imbalance that exists in large national surveys. But 4 of 31 indicators measure larger environmental factors such as poverty, air quality and housing issues. Again, it would be ideal if there were companion reports that documented the state of the formal and informal services and supports that are associated with these outcomes. But these reports are at least consistently focused on outcomes.

Conclusion #2. The new surveys’ indices fill some of the gaps. The indicators in these studies are predominantly positive. They cover the range of outcome areas. In fact, there is a plethora of indicators in the connecting and leading outcome areas, areas that severely lacked indicators in the traditional indices. These studies and other small studies like them that rely on self-report surveys often have a limited age range. The Gallup study is limited to a subgroup of the school-age population (those old enough to complete surveys) and the Search Institute study is even narrower – focusing only on 15 year olds. As noted, there are large, reliable national surveys in place in other countries that are used to measure subjective well-being. More could be done on this front in the U.S.

Conclusion #3. It is possible to achieve more balance. Small surveys can supplement the picture provided by the broad national reports, but is it possible to create a more balanced report while adhering to fairly stringent data quality rules? This is the question the Forum put to Child Trends, one of the leading national organizations on child and youth indicators. Working with the Ready by 21 Child and Youth Outcomes Dashboard, Child Trends’ researchers combed through their indicators database to identify indicators that meet the criteria and fill the

cells. The results of their work – both the catalogue of indicators and a joint paper on indicator selection, will be published in the fall of 2010 (*Tracking the Big Picture of Child & Youth Well-Being*). A chart showing a sample set of indicators selected from publicly available data and popular surveys to fill the Dashboard is provided in Appendix C.

Conclusion #4. It is possible to create a comprehensive set of environmental indicators. We noted above that the indicators used in the two large data-set reports included a few indicators of broader environmental factors associated with child outcomes. There is a new effort underway at the federal level to examine the impact of a more comprehensive set of indicators on child-well-being. The [National Children's Study](#), led by a consortium of federal partners[†], is currently examining environmental effects on child well-being. It will follow 100,000 children from across the United States from birth to age 21. The study defines environment broadly, collecting data on influences that include: natural and man-made environmental factors, biological and chemical factors, physical surroundings, social factors, behavioral influences and outcomes, genetic, cultural and family influences and differences, and geographic locations. The study is promoted as important to all Americans on the official Web Site:

“Data from the Study may inform research into many conditions such as, but not limited to, birth defects and pregnancy-related problems; injuries; asthma; obesity; diabetes; and behavior, learning, and mental health disorders, to establish links between children’s environments and children’s health. By taking a long-term view of children from birth to adulthood, the Study hopes to learn more about how children grow healthy and how this leads to healthy adults by determining the root causes of many childhood and adult diseases. The Study will examine how events and exposures early in life can lead to specific outcomes.”

Conclusion #5. States and localities can blend data sets to create more balanced reports. Each year, there are more states and localities that are recognizing the importance of creating shared statements of the results they want to achieve for children, youth and their families and selecting a powerful but parsimonious set of indicators to actively monitor change at the state, local and even neighborhood levels. State and local leaders are recognizing that good data – accurate, timely, and disaggregated – can help them work better, smarter and more efficiently on behalf of children and youth. They are blending data sources to create the tools they need to not only analyze trends but predict change.

Although there has been little change in national efforts to measure child and youth well-being in the twelve years since our review of *America’s Children in Brief*, there is hope that these measures will improve in the next twelve years. While there is a value in continuity, future indices need to go beyond reiterating information the public has heard before. We owe it to our youth to collect and communicate meaningful information in ways that inspire action. Hopefully, our next analyses can capture the progress we have made.

[†] The federal consortium includes the following: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Summary of Different Reports on Child Well-Being

America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2010

The overall summary shows good and bad news. On the positive side, indicators revealed:

- Higher rates of health insurance coverage for children;
- Percentage of preterm births declined two years in a row;
- Average 8th grade math scores reached an all time high;
- Teenage smoking was at its lowest since data collection began;
- Adolescent birth-rate declined after an increase for the last two years.

On the negative side, child and youth well-being declined in the following areas:

- Parents with secure employment was at its lowest since 1996;
- Percentage of children and youth living in poverty was the highest since 1998;
- Food insecure households also rose to the highest levels since monitoring began.

Each year since 1997, the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics has published a report on the well-being of children and families.

- This report compiles data about child well-being over time across 40 indicators divided into seven domains:
 - Family and social environment
 - Economic circumstances
 - Health care
 - Physical environment and safety
 - Behavior
 - Education and health
 - Health

www.childstats.gov/pdf/ac2010/ac_10.pdf

With the long recession, it is not surprising that well-being declined in several areas. But, because the index focuses solely on status change in each indicator, it does not provide a complete understanding of the economic downturn and its implications. For example, we noticed an increase in the rate at which young adults are “neither enrolled in school nor working” and other data sources, such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics, suggest the teen unemployment rate is dire. Better data in this area could provide information on teen and young adult well-being across outcome areas (i.e. learning and workforce development). Combining traditional indicators of youth well-being with data on the supports and services available to young people could better identify brewing problems and help leaders create more robust plans for action.

2010 Child and Youth Well-Being Index (CWI)

The major finding of this report is that after fluctuating since 2002, quality of life for children and youth in the United States declined in 2009. The greatest decline (6.8 percent) was in economic well-being; health also had significant declines, totaling 6.6 percent, and the CWI reported a decline of 2.2 percent in spiritual well-being, as well. As with other indices, the news was not all bad. There were improvements in safe/risky behaviors (+27.9%), social relationships (+13.3%) and community engagement (+11.1%).

Despite some good news, the focus of this year's report was the anticipated breadth and depth of the "Great Recession" on child and youth well-being. The CWI projects a decline in overall well-being for 2010. Specifically, it predicts:

- A continued deterioration of family economic well-being, which will wipe out all progress made in this domain since 1975.
- This deterioration includes a decline in specific indicators – children living in poverty is expected to peak at 21 percent, families with no secure parental employment will increase to 26 percent, and 2 out of 5 households will face cost burdens associated with housing.
- The CWI also projects a decline in health, particularly because of an increase in obesity, as more parents rely on low cost, but less nutritious food.
- It also projects that community engagement will decline as the recession limits participation in social institutions such as school and work.
- The CWI projects decline in the safe/risky behavior domain due to higher rates of violent crime.
- Emotional/spiritual well-being is also expected to continue its declining trend.

The Foundation for Child Development and the Child and Youth Well-Being Index Project at Duke University issue an annual measure of child well-being. Each year, the CWI measures trends over time in the quality of life of America's children from birth to age 18.

- The index compares the annual data to baseline data collected in 1975.
- The CWI includes 28 key indicators grouped into the following "quality of life/well-being" domains:
 - Economic well-being;
 - Safe/risky behavior;
 - Social relationships;
 - Emotional/spiritual well-being;
 - Community engagement;
 - Educational attainment;
 - Health.
- Unlike the previous report, the CWI tracks trends in each domain, includes data up to 2009 and projects for 2010 results, based on past trends.

www.fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/FINAL%202010%20CWI%20Annual%20Release.pdf

By focusing on shifts in domains, the CWI has moved away from simply reporting on the annual status of indicators to analyzing the data from an outcomes perspective. However, not all of the indicators are robust measures of the outcomes in question. For example, the CWI uses only three indicators to measure the emotional and spiritual well-being of young people. While these trend in the positive direction, they focus on weekly religious attendance, reporting religion as important and suicide rates. Comprehensive indicators within each outcome area will paint a more complete picture of readiness for young people and better understanding can result in greater progress for children and youth.

Youth Readiness for the Future: A Report on Findings from a Representative Gallup Student Poll Sample

The following are results of the Gallup Student Poll:

- Only one-third of students are “ready for the future,” meaning they scored high all three variables – hope, engagement and well-being. These students possess high levels of motivation, describe their life in positive terms and report conditions at school that promote involvement and enthusiasm.
- 53 percent of students are hopeful. Students are generally confident about the future, but lack strategies to reach their goals.
- 63 percent of students are engaged in school. Elementary students are highly engaged but engagement decreases as students get older.
- 70 percent of students reported thriving – they think of their present and future life in positive terms.

These data provide actionable information that leaders can use to craft better practices and policies. By measuring engagement in school, the survey explores the influence of the environment and quality of services young people receive. Gallup and America’s Promise Alliance have demonstrated the measures

are reliable, have meaningful relationships to important outcomes, and most importantly, are malleable. This kind of data is most useful when leaders can take action to change trajectories they don’t like. Information like this provides concrete opportunities for communities to move towards action and solutions.

In 2009, the Gallup Organization launched the Gallup Student Poll. The survey is an:

- Online, 20-item survey of students in grade 5 through 12.
- The survey measures three variables that link to future success:
 - hope for the future – ideas and energy they have for the future;
 - engagement with school – involvement in and enthusiasm in school;
 - well-being – how they think about and experience their lives.
- The 2010 survey included a representative sample of 450,000 students, ages 10-18.

www.gallupstudentpoll.com/141998/gallup-student-poll-report-august-2010.aspx

Teen Voice 2010: Relationships that Matter to America's Teens

The major findings of the 2010 survey were that one-third of 15-year olds surveyed did not score high on any of the indices and only 7 percent experienced high levels in all three. Other findings include:

- Only 19 percent of 15-year olds score high on the relationship index; only 1 in 5 has a web of positive, sustained and meaningful relationships with adults.
- Teens revealed that few adults in their lives ask for their opinions, have meaningful conversations with them, give them chances to help, spend time with them playing sports or doing artistic activities.
- 80 percent of teens surveyed said they had at least one “spark.” The most common sparks were creative arts (28%), sports (26%), and technology (18%).
- The index also measured whether young people found the spark important and whether they took initiative to develop it. Only 51 percent of young people scored high on these measures, suggesting a gap in the number of teens fully engaging in their passions.
- Just 22 percent of 15-year olds scored high on the voice index. Expressing and influencing what’s important to you is an important part of becoming active in community and civic life.

As the report indicates, the strengths measured in this survey are a guide to the healthy development of young people; for the second year in a row, high scores correlated with other important outcomes. Even those teens reporting only one strength area were better off than teens that scored low on all three. While not a comprehensive measure of child well-being, this survey helps broaden the discussion by introducing a range of positive indicators and tapping young people’s perceptions about themselves and their environment.

Teen Voice 2010 is the second annual online survey of 15 year-old United States residents. Best Buy and Search Institute published the first report in 2009.

- The nationally representative poll is based on the Developmental Assets developed by Search Institute.
- The survey measured well-being through three indices:
 - Relationships and opportunities – measures of dimensions of adult/youth relationship beyond the family;
 - Sparks – a young person’s passions and interests; things that give meaning, focus, energy and joy in life;
 - Voice – confidence, skills and opportunities to speak up and influence the things that matter in their lives.
- Teens that score high on all three areas are more likely to do better in academic, psychological, social-emotional and behavior outcomes.

https://www.at15.com/sites/all/themes/at15_v3/assets/pdf/TeenVoice2010.pdf

Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries

In 2007, UNICEF compiled a report on child well-being based on available data. Unfortunately, the report reveals that the United States ranked in the bottom third in most domains; the only exception was educational well-being. The report also compiled measures of subjective well-being. This data is the ranking young people give themselves in terms of behaviors, health, personal well-being and education. The United States was the only country that lacked data on personal well-being measures (e.g. percentage of students who agree “I feel like an outsider”).

Some highlights from this report include:

- While the United States has the highest rate of households with children in poverty (income less than 50 percent of the median), it had the lowest rate of households with an unemployed parent. This indicates that although children in poverty have parents that are working, their income is not enough to help them escape poverty.
- In the relationship domain, which measures the quality of family and peer relationships, the United States scored poorly. However, the US did fare well on a specific indicator, parents spending time “just talking” to children and youth. Although ranked near the bottom, two-thirds of children in the United States do regularly have one main meal a day with their families.
- The United States ranked low on the behaviors and risks dimension. Children in the US had the least healthy behaviors and the highest rate of teenage births.

Even in this report that was the most comprehensive of the ones that we reviewed, there are some important issues that are not addressed, such as the quality of available services. Overall, the index addresses a broad range of outcomes and includes a balance of negative and positive indicators. Because the age ranges differed significantly across countries, the report did not disaggregate data by age. In our previous analysis, we called for better comparison data to allow us to understand national data better and motivate action. While this report provides useful comparison opportunities, our national indices do not measure up to the UNICEF index which makes fine-tuned comparisons difficult. This report, like the student polls described above, suggest it is possible to bring together a broad range of information to create comprehensive measures of well-being.

This index ranked 21 countries in the industrialized world. It comprised of 28 indicators across seven domains:

- Material well-being;
- Health;
- Safety/behavior concerns;
- Productive activity;
- Place in the community;
- Social relationships;
- Emotional/spiritual well-being.

The report ranked countries individually and clustered them into the top third, middle third and bottom third for each domain.

http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc7_eng.pdf

Appendix A: Traditional Child Well-Being Indicators by Age Coverage & Outcomes

The following chart contains indicators used to measure child well-being in the United States by two prominent reports:

- America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2010 (Forum on Child and Family Statistics)
- 2010 Child and Youth Well-Being Index (Foundation for Child Development)

In the synthesis below, indicators repeat across the age spectrum. We did this because the reports we reviewed did not release subgroup data. Instead, the results were reported for ages 0-18. However, this data is available for each age range. We attempted to evaluate indicators measuring performance measures, such as environmental factors. Since they were sparse, we indicated them where applicable in the chart.

Negative Indicators
 Positive Indicators
 + Indicators pertaining to broader environmental factors
 * Indicator included only in "America's Children" Index.

		Pre-K (0-5)	School-Age (6-10)	Middle School (11-14)	High School (15-18)	Young Adults (19-21+)
Ready for College	Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-kindergarten enrollment • Reading to young children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test scores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test scores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test scores • Academic courses • High school graduation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received a high school diploma • College enrollment • Received a bachelor's degree • Not working or in school
	Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child poverty & secure parental employment • Families headed by a single parent • Housing problems/ moving within the last year+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child poverty & secure parental employment • Families headed by a single parent • Housing problems/ Moving within the last year+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child poverty & secure parental employment • Families headed by a single parent • Housing problems/ Moving within the last year+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child poverty & secure parental employment • Families headed by a single parent • Housing problems/ Moving within the last year+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not working or in school
Ready for Life	Thriving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low birth weight • Child maltreatment • Children with activity limitations • Injury & infant mortality • Lead in the blood of children*+ • Air quality & drinking water quality*+ • Pre-kindergarten enrollment/child care • Very good or excellent health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obesity/diet quality • Child maltreatment • Emotional & behavioral difficulties • Children with activity limitations • Injury & mortality • Asthma*+ • Air quality & drinking water quality*+ • Very good or excellent health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obesity/diet quality • Child maltreatment • Emotional & behavioral difficulties • Depression • Suicide • Sexual activity & teenage births • Violent crime victimization • Violent offender • Injury & mortality • Children with activity limitations • Asthma*+ • Air quality & drinking water quality*+ • Very good or excellent health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obesity/diet quality • Child maltreatment • Emotional & behavioral difficulties • Depression • Suicide • Cigarette smoking • Binge alcohol drinking • Illicit drug use • Sexual activity & teenage births • Violent crime victimization • Violent offender • Injury & mortality • Air quality & drinking water quality*+ • Very good or excellent health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violent crime victimization
	Connecting				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly religious attendance • Reporting religion as very important 	
	Leading					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting in presidential elections

Appendix B: Subjective Well-Being Indicators by Age Coverage & Outcomes

The following table contains indicators from two youth surveys that measured well-being:

- Youth Readiness for the Future: A Report on Findings from a Representative Gallup Student Poll Sample
- Teen Voice 2010: Relationships that Matter to America's Teens

Negative Indicators
 Positive Indicators
 + Indicators pertaining to performance measures

The data from the Youth Readiness poll is available by grade level. The teen voice survey was only conducted with 15 year-olds.

		Youth Readiness for the Future (Gallup Organization)	Teen Voice 2010 (Search Institute)
Ready for college	Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will graduate from high school • Many ways to get good grades • Opportunity to do what I do best everyday • School committed to building strengths of each student+ • School committed to building strengths+ • Recognition/praise for doing schoolwork • Feel safe in school • Teachers make me feel school work is important • Learn/do something interesting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will graduate from high school • Grade point average of 3.5 or better • Goals to master what is studied in school • Work up to ability • Participate in high-quality afterschool programs • Have not missed any days of school in the last month
		Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will find a good job after I graduate
Ready for Life	Thriving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find lots of ways around problems • Smile or laugh a lot yesterday • Enough energy to get things done yesterday • Health problems that prevent activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of purpose and hope for the future • Positive sense of ethnic identity • Are not arrested or worried about being treated unfairly by the police • Do not experience racial discrimination
	Connecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult in my life who cares about my future • Energetically pursue my goals • Best friend at school • Treated with respect all day • Family & friends to count on whenever you need them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult who “gets” youth or high-quality mentorship • Specific supportive adult actions/other adult relationships • Has the ability to make good things happen in his/her life • Do not engage in vandalism
	Leading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteered my time to help others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer 1hr/week or more • Plans to be, or has already been involved, in political civic life • Believes he/she can help solve community problems • Feels comfortable suggesting activities, sharing ideas, and organizing activities • Leadership role in the past year • Youth as resources+

Appendix C: Sample Indicators from *Tracking the Big Picture of Child & Youth Well-Being*[‡]

Ready by 21 Developmental Dashboard - Sample Indicators[§]

Stages/ Ages	Early Childhood 0 – 5 yrs	Elementary Age 6 – 10 yrs	Middle School 11 – 13 yrs	High School 14 – 18 yrs	Young Adults
Learning: Children and Youth Succeed in School					
	% children ages 0-5 read to by a family member 6 or 7 times in the past week	% third/fourth-graders with proficient reading	% of students with high levels of "school connectedness"	High school graduation rate	% 18-24-year-olds enrolled in college, or completed college
Working: Youth and Young Adults Are Ready for Work					
	% children (0-5) with at least one employed parent	% children given useful roles in family and community	% students who participate in career awareness activities	% students with job internship/apprenticeship experience	% 18-24-year-olds employed
Thriving: Children and Youth Make Healthy Choices					
	% low birth weight	% children with a medical home	% youth who drank alcohol before age 13	% youth who drank alcohol in the past 30 days	% young adults overweight or obese
Connecting: Children & Youth Have Positive Relationships with Peers and Adults					
	% of children whose parent describes the parent-child relationship as "very warm and close"	% of children who eat a meal with their family 6 or 7 days per week	% of children who "receive support from three or more nonparent adults"	% of students with high levels of "school connectedness"	% parents where parents are 20 or older, married, have at least 12 years' education, and at least one is employed
Leading: Youth Contribute to Their Community					
	% of children ages 0-5 taken by family members on outings in the community one or more times within the past week	% children ages 6-17 who participated in sports teams, clubs, organizations, or other organized after-school activities in the past 12 mos.	% of children who participate in school decision-making	% youth volunteering in their community	% of 18-24-year-olds who voted in the previous general election

[‡] *Tracking the Big Picture of Child & Youth Well-Being* is a forthcoming guide to help leaders' select balanced indicators. The guide is sponsored by the Forum for Youth Investment and co-authored by Child Trends and the Forum.

[§] The following indicators were identified based on the following three criteria of data power, communication power and proxy power. Definitions for these were included in the beginning of this report.