

Annotated Bibliography

**POSITIVE YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT**

JANUARY 2018

About Pathways to Education Canada

Pathways to Education is a national, charitable organization breaking the cycle of poverty through education. Its award-winning program is creating positive social change by supporting youth living in low-income communities to overcome barriers to education, graduate from high school, and build the foundation for a successful future. Through the collective power of partnerships, Pathways to Education's innovative program is preparing youth for tomorrow.

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Positive Youth Development

This annotated bibliography presents a plain language overview of evidence-based knowledge in the field of positive youth development.

The aim of this annotated bibliography is not to offer an exhaustive and comprehensive collection of all relevant studies. Instead, we present a modest introduction, designed for those seeking an overview of this complex topic, a refresher, or a resource upon which to build more detailed and nuanced knowledge.

It was developed for professionals who contribute to the well-being and development of youth. This includes those who work directly with youth, such as mentors, educators, child and youth workers, social workers, and front-line staff in school-based and out-of-school youth programs. This resource will also be of interest to those who work indirectly with or for youth: youth mentoring program managers, school administrators, or youth researchers.

This annotated bibliography emerged from our own internal research on positive youth development, conducted in the context of program measurement, improvement, and impact assessment efforts. It has helped Pathways to Education Canada better understand this complex field and translate our knowledge into effective programming for youth furthest from opportunities. We share it here in the hopes that it will have similar impact in other youth-serving programs.

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Bird, J. M., & Markle, R. S. (2012). Subjective well-being in school environments: promoting positive youth development through evidence-based assessment and intervention. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 82(1), 61-66.

This article focuses on five target areas for improving psychological and subjective well-being. First, it discusses relevant research findings on the five critical factors that contribute to well-being and lead to positive youth development: personal goal setting, structured mentoring or life coaching, increasing gratitude, problem solving, and interpersonal skills. Next, the authors propose a curriculum that incorporates those components. The proposed interventions are: personal homework, study time, and executive skills building, group discussions and journaling on professional goals and standards, problem-solving scenarios focused on enhancing students' school- and career-related interpersonal skills, weekly structured mentoring from college students trained in goal setting, and positive thinking and gratitude journaling.

Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2002). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *Prevention & Treatment*, 5(1), 98-124.

The Positive Youth Development Evaluation project was initiated by the United States government to ascertain how youth development programs have been defined in the literature, to carry out a structured search for quality evaluations of these programs, and to summarize their outcomes. Based on this project, this article explains why the prevention of youth issues has morphed from a single problem focus to focusing on factors that affect both positive and negative youth development. It then explores the definition of Positive Youth Development (PYD) and summarizes what is known about PYD program effectiveness. 161 programs were considered for inclusion in the review and, ultimately, 25 were selected. Characteristics of effective PYD programs are discussed in terms of youth development constructs, measurement of positive and problem outcomes, structured curriculum, program

frequency and duration, program implementation and assurance of implementation quality, and populations served.

Gestsdottir, S., & Lerner, R. M. (2007). Intentional self-regulation and positive youth development in early adolescence: Findings from the 4-H study of positive youth development. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(2), 508 -521.

This paper examines the development of intentional self-regulation in early adolescence. The aims of this study were as follows: a) Describe the psychometric properties of the Freund and Baltes (2002) measure of Selection, Optimization, and Compensation (SOC) for use with 5th and 6th graders, and b) Explore whether, across a 2-year period in early adolescence, a relation exists between intentional self-regulation and positive as well as negative youth development. Results suggest that a global 9-item version of the SOC model is a valid measure of SOC in early adolescence. High scores on this measure were associated with promoting positive youth development. Positive Youth Development (PYD) is conceptualized in this study using the five Cs of PYD (Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring), along with the sixth C (Contribution), as well as the decrease of problem and risk behaviours (operationalized with scales for depression, risk behaviours associated with substance use, and delinquent behaviour).

Lerner, R. M., & Lerner, J. V. (2013). *The positive development of youth: Comprehensive findings from the 4-H study of positive youth development*. Institution for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University.

The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development (PYD) began in 2002 and surveyed over 7,000 diverse American adolescents annually for eight years. 4-H is a network of youth organizations that offer programming focused on providing youth with a long-term relationship with a caring adult, life skill building activities, and opportunities to use these skills as leaders in community activities. This study explored whether 4-H programming led to PYD (operationalized by the 5 Cs model: Competence, Confidence,

Connection, Character, and Caring), which in turn had the impact of youth contributing to their communities and reduced risk behaviour. This report presents an overview of the study and the key findings of the two main areas of inquiry: a) Models for the long-term developmental trajectories of PYD, contribution, depressive characteristics, and risk behaviours, and b) Findings regarding a variety of 4-H outcomes. The findings show that, compared to their peers, youth involved in 4-H programs excel in several areas such as contribution/civic engagement, academic achievement, and healthy living.

Lerner, R. M., Almerigi, J. B., Theokas, C., & Lerner, J. V. (2005). Positive Youth Development: A view of the issues. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25(1), 10-16.

This report introduces a special issue of the *Journal of Early Adolescence*, focused on Positive Youth Development (PYD). It begins by describing the PYD perspective and its various sociological and theoretical roots. Next, it discusses four articles published in that issue. Finally, it concludes that the research reported in the special issue documents a) the utility of applying the PYD perspective within diverse youth and communities, b) the adequacy of conceptualizing PYD via the five Cs model, c) the individual and ecological developmental assets associated with PYD, and d) implications for programs and policies.

Mueller, M. K., Phelps, E., Bowers, E. P., Agans, J. P., Urban, J. B., & Lerner, R. M. (2011). Youth development program participation and intentional self-regulation skills: contextual and individual bases of pathways to positive youth development. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34(6), 1115-1125.

This study examines how the combination of youth strengths and the contextual asset of participation in youth development programs in grades 8 and 9 promote mutually-beneficial relations that may lead to thriving in grade 10. The study uses data from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development (PYD). As expected, Selection, Optimization, and Compensation skills (SOC) predicted

PYD. Additionally, self-regulation and youth development program participation both predicted contribution. Also, participating in youth development programs in grade 8 positively predicted grade 9 self-regulation, which then predicted PYD and contribution in grade 10. These results suggest that participation in high-quality youth programs may be especially important for youth to develop individual strengths, and that the combination of youth strengths and program resources may be critical in PYD.

Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., Oesterle, S., Hill, K. G., Hawkins, J. D., & Pashak, T. J. (2016). The dimensions of successful young adult development: A conceptual and measurement framework. *Applied Developmental Science, 20*(3), 150-174.

The authors review youth development literature to offer a framework of eight core dimensions of successful young adulthood, which is defined as approximately ages 18-25. The dimensions are: physical health, psychological and emotional well-being, life skills, ethical behaviour, healthy family and social relationships, educational attainment, constructive educational and occupational engagement, and civic engagement. The authors describe what success looks like in each domain. These dimensions are likely all interconnected (i.e. they are both causes and outcomes of each other). The authors argue that institutions like youth organizations and schools are not preparing youth well enough to succeed after high school, and only a small fraction of youth (usually from higher socioeconomic backgrounds) have adequate supports and developmental relationships to transition successfully to young adulthood. The article also discusses opportunities that youth require during adolescence in order to ensure ongoing well-being.

Schmid, K. L., Phelps, E., & Lerner, R. M. (2011). Constructing positive futures: Modeling the relationship between adolescents' hopeful future expectations and intentional self regulation in predicting positive youth development. *Journal of Adolescence, 34*(6), 1127-1135.

Using data from 7th, 8th, and 9th graders in the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, this study examines the relationship between intentional self-regulation (ISR) and hopeful expectations for the future in predicting Positive Youth Development (PYD). As expected, both ISR skills and having hopeful expectations about the future strongly predicted PYD. Additionally, having hope

about the future may be an initial factor which influences later ISR abilities. The findings suggest that the level of hope young people have about their future may be essential to thriving during adolescence.

The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (UCCCSR). (2015). *Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework*.

This report presents the outcomes of a project undertaken by the University of Chicago's Consortium on Chicago School Research to build a conceptual framework which articulates what is needed to guide children and youth to become successful young adults. The authors drew upon published research, theory, expert opinion, and program practice. The framework identifies three key factors of young adult success (agency, an integrated identity, and competencies) and four foundational components that underlie them (self-regulation, knowledge and skills, mindsets, and values). Young people develop these factors and components through developmental experiences, which ideally are developmental relationships with adults and peers that facilitate youth engagement in cycles of action and reflection. The framework is inclusive of early childhood (ages 3 to 5), middle childhood (ages 6 to 10), early adolescence (ages 11 to 14), middle adolescence (ages 15 to 18), and young adulthood (ages 19 to 22). Implications for research, practice (for educators, youth practitioners, and parents and families), and policy (in the domains of education and youth) are also discussed.

Zaff, J. F., Aasland, K., McDermott, E., Carvalho, A., Joseph, P., & Pufall Jones, E. (2016). Exploring positive youth development among young people who leave school without graduating high school: A focus on social and emotional competencies. *Qualitative Psychology*, 3(1), 26-45.

This study applies a Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspective (focused on social and emotional competencies) to youth who left school without graduating. Typically, research about this population focuses on risk factors rather than strengths. The



experiences of 203 youth (ages 18 to 25) were examined via 27 group interviews. Then, 27 personal narratives were selected for final analysis. All of the narratives showed evidence of self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making skills, while nearly all the narratives also demonstrated social awareness, relationship, and goal-setting skills. Even though the youth did not use these skills in pursuit of academic goals, they utilized them to navigate their challenging contexts to achieve important personal goals. Therefore, this study concludes that youth who leave school without graduating exhibit competencies associated with PYD.

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