

RESILIENCE AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MODULE B



CALIFORNIA *healthy kids* SURVEY

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B. INTRODUCTION

The Resilience & Youth Development questions are devoted entirely to assessing the external and internal assets associated with positive youth development. The Core Module A report provides a brief overview to the theoretical framework underlying the survey and explains the scales in which the survey items are grouped. The required Resilience & Youth Development sections in the Core (school and community assets) are discussed in Core Module A report. The optional sections, peer, home, and internal assets) are discussed in this report.

B1. HOME ENVIRONMENT

Resilience research has identified that feeling connected to one’s family and having positive family experiences is the most powerful protective factor in the lives of young people. While positive school experiences and feeling connected to school has been associated with overcoming much adversity in children’s lives, including a troubled home environment, schools that help support families can further weave a safety net of connection for students. Moreover, educational research has repeatedly documented that family involvement in the school is a major contributor to student achievement, regardless of family income. Thus, schools that both support and work in partnership with families create a powerful fabric of protection and achievement motivation.

The aim of family support and involvement programs in educational settings is to build on family strengths, not focus on family deficits. Just as successful schools relate to their students with caring relationships, high expectation messages, and opportunities to participate, they also reach out to students’ families with care and respect and invite them in as partners in educating all their children. Adults, like young people, are attracted to places that provide them the supports and opportunities for meeting their basic needs for belonging, respect, self-efficacy, and meaning.

As James Comer and his colleagues’ (1996) over 30-year effort, the School Development Project, has demonstrated, asking parents to just make cookies, go on field trips, etc., is wasting the valuable resources and gifts each family or community member possesses.¹ The Comer Model employed low-income parents in the active management and decision-making of the school, resulting in profound improvements in academic and social behavior among the students. The Families and Schools Together (FAST) program, also a strengths-based approach, uses the school to reach out to entire families and organizes multifamily groups for mutual support in promoting positive behaviors and academic success in their children.

CARING RELATIONSHIPS

HS/MS Questions B26, B28, B30: In my home, there is a parent or some other adult... who is interested in my school work; who talks with me about my problems; who listens to me when I have something to say.

The most powerful protective factor in the lives of children is the presence of a primary caregiver, especially during the first year of a child’s life.² School-based family support programs—such as California’s Healthy Start and other states’ Parents As Teachers programs—try to support families in their roles as primary caregivers. They provide parenting resources, support groups, referrals, and access to other social service providers. Other resilience research has identified that when single

parents—including teen moms—receive this support, the life outcomes for their children are positive and equivalent to youth growing up in two-parent families.

If a small percentage of students score in the *High* range in the asset of perceived caring from adults in their home, it becomes critically important that schools communicate and provide more supports and opportunities for families to increase their positive caregiving. It also signifies that the school will need to create prevention/early intervention support services for students so that youth get this very critical need for love and trust met.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

HS/MS Questions B25, B27, B29: In my home, there is a parent or some other adult... who expects me to follow the rules; who believes that I will be a success; who always wants me to do my best.

High parental expectations, backed up with family support and love, is repeatedly associated with academic and life success. The most commonly cited message promoting resilience is the caregiver's belief in a child's capacities—believing in the child when she doesn't even believe in herself. Part of these expectations include other family characteristics such as structure, fair and clear rules and expectations, empowering discipline, guidance, rituals, encouraging a youth's unique strengths and interests, and providing the freedom, within the context of safety, for a child to develop and grow. Especially critical is the parent's respect for the child's autonomy and encouragement of independence. The presence of this deep belief and structure in the home helps the young person meet his needs for safety, love, belonging, respect, and meaning.

MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

HS/MS Questions B31-33: At home... I do fun things or go fun places with my parents or other adults; I do things that make a difference; I help make decisions with my family.

A natural outgrowth of having high expectations for children is that they are acknowledged as valued participants in the life and work of their families. Research has borne out that the family background of resilient children and youth is usually characterized by many opportunities for the youth to participate in and contribute to the life of the family. For example, Werner and Smith found that assigned chores, domestic responsibilities (including care of siblings), and even part-time work to help support the family proved to be sources of strength and competence in children. Furthermore, when children and youth grow up in families where they have some decision-making power and responsibility, they learn that critical predictor of healthy outcomes: self-management and control (i.e., autonomy).³

An obvious but important strategy for encouraging meaningful participation in the home is advocating for family members to hold regular family meetings. Family meetings provide an opportunity for shared decision-making and responsibility. Schools themselves can create several different family involvement programs that model for families ways to make decisions and have fun together. Programs like those listed in Table 3 of *The Resilience & Youth Development Module Handbook* bring families into the school to do fun and engaging activities with their children, based on what their children are already doing in school.

Endnotes

¹ Comer et al. (1996).

² Werner and Smith. (1992).

³ Werner and Smith. (1992).

B2. PEER ENVIRONMENT

Peer influence is a powerful developmental force. Peer influence is most often interpreted negatively, such as in peer pressure to engage in health-risk behaviors. However, resilience research has documented the positive power of peers. This is seen through supportive friendships and positive peer role models—critical protective factors in the lives of children and youth. The challenge for schools is to engage this influence as a support and opportunity essential for healthy adolescent development. School shootings serve as a painful reminder of the dangerous combination of a society and community in which lethal weapons are readily available and of schools that don't build a sense of community among their students across differences.

Schools and youth-serving community organizations must create a sense of community rich in opportunities for caring relationships and high expectation messages. These two external assets enhance peer relations between children and youth in and outside of school and meet their developmental needs for love and belonging, respect, accomplishment, identity, power, and meaning in positive ways. The RYDM does not ask students about meaningful participation in the Peer Environment because there is no distinct Peer Environment. Youth interactions and participation take place in the School, Home and Community.

CARING RELATIONSHIPS

HS/MS Questions B19-21: I have a friend about my own age... who really cares about me; who talks with me about my problems; who helps me when I'm having a hard time.

This scale measures *how* students behave towards one another. A positive school climate depends to a great extent on creating caring, empathic student-to-student relationships. Resilience research on youth friendships and loneliness, alienation, and suicide clearly implicates the importance that friendships and peer social networks play in the positive development of young people. Moreover, given the decline in societal and adult support for children and youth, it is imperative that schools, homes, and community organizations provide youth with every opportunity to be a support and resource to each other. When provided opportunities to create friendship networks and positive peer relationships regardless of cultural, gender, class, and ability differences, youth develop that critical internal asset—empathy. Ultimately, children who care become compassionate adults who, in turn, create caring communities that provide supports and opportunities for all their members.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS: PRO-SOCIAL PEERS

HS/MS Questions B22-24: My friends... get into a lot of trouble; try to do what is right; do well in school.

This scale examines *what* a students' friends do and separates pro-social peers from their antisocial counterparts. Creating small groupings of students who share common interests, goals, activities, and/or concerns helps foster an environment that promotes caring peer relationships focused on pro-social activities. If a small percentage of students score *High* in the asset of perceived expectations from their peers, this signifies that youth need many opportunities to form positive, healthy peer relationships both during school hours as well as in afterschool programs. Studies of effective youth-serving programs and organizations that achieved these outcomes found them to be safe places where students can socialize with peers, develop inter- and intra-personal life skills, belong to a valued

group, contribute to their community, and feel competent (McLaughlin et al., 1994). They used activities that engaged young people with diverse positive role models; built confidence and self-esteem; taught communication skills in the context of relationships and activities; supported and showed genuine concern for the young people; helped youth realize their educational objectives; and allowed youth to be of service to the larger community. (See Table 5 in *The Resilience & Youth Development Module Handbook* for more strategies.)

B3. INTERNAL ASSETS

The RYDM measures six internal assets or resilience traits that are consistently described in the literature as being associated with positive development and successful learning: cooperation and communication, self-efficacy, empathy, problem solving, self-awareness, and goals and aspirations. External and internal resilience are clearly related. Analyses of CHKS data presented in *The Resilience & Youth Development Module Handbook* show a clear stepwise relationship across environments between the percent of students classified as being *High*, *Moderate*, or *Low* in total external assets and the percentage classified as *High* in total internal assets. For example, for the school environment, 94% of those in schools classified as *High* in total perceived school assets were also *High* in total internal assets, compared to 65% of those classified as *Moderate* in external assets and 37% of *Low*.

Although this only illustrates a correlation, not a causal relationship, the resilience or youth development approach focuses on the importance of increasing environmental assets in order to increase internal assets. The approach focuses on environmental change, on providing the “protective” developmental supports and opportunities (external assets) that, in turn, will engage students’ innate resilience and develop their capacities for positive developmental outcomes (internal assets)

A review of the research on successful human development clearly indicates the effectiveness of this environmental approach over that of individual skill-focused efforts, commonly referred to as deficit or “fix-the-kid” models. Consequently, most of the strategies recommended for improving the internal assets in *The Resilience & Youth Development Module Handbook* are also those recommended above for building the external assets. What is important, however, is the modeling and mirroring of the internal asset by the adults in the home, school, and community environments. This means adults must exhibit the desired behavior and attitude, intentionally discuss, and reflect back the desired behaviors and attitudes to young people.

Many social and life skills programs that attempt to change individual behavior by direct teaching approaches, without paying attention to the external assets (the quality of relationships, messages, and opportunities for participation), have difficulty finding positive long-term behavioral change outcomes. In contrast, environmental change approaches like cooperative and learning create opportunities in the context of relationships to learn these skills and attitudes through direct and ongoing experience.¹

The Internal Assets of the RYDM are not intended to measure whether a student is resilient or not since we earlier defined resilience as a capacity every person has for healthy development. Rather, internal assets should be seen as outcomes of the youth development process and as indicators of whether the necessary environmental supports and opportunities are in place. The Internal Assets are a second source of data (the first being the perceived External Assets) for determining whether a student's Home, School, Community, and Peer Environments are providing these important external assets.

Nevertheless, for schools that are using prevention and other curriculum designed to enhance these personal attributes, the Internal Asset scales and even the individual items do have an intrinsic value on their own in measuring change among students over time. These scales can be useful as part of evaluations of these programs.

COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION

*HS/MS Questions B8: I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine;
B13: I enjoy working together with other students my age;
B14: I stand up for myself without putting others down.*

This social competence asset refers to having flexibility in relationships, the ability to work effectively with others, to effectively exchange information and ideas, and to express feelings and needs to others. Clearly, the power of this attribute is that it facilitates the development of that powerful protective factor—caring relationships. Conversely, lack of this social skill is associated with adult criminality, mental illness, and drug abuse.

Keep in mind that the RYDM, as a self-report survey, can only ask students their perceptions of how well they cooperate and communicate. Research-based strategies to implement, if a large percentage of your students do not score *High* in cooperation and communication or in the following internal assets, are presented at the end of the Internal Assets section in Table 6 of *The Resilience & Youth Development Module Handbook*.

SELF-EFFICACY

*HS/MS Questions B6: I can work out my problems;
B7: I can do most things if I try;
B9: There are many things that I do well.*

Self-efficacy refers to the belief in one’s own competence and feeling one has the power to make a difference. It is related to task mastery, the sense of doing something well, and to self-agency, having the ability to act and exert one’s will. Self-efficacy is a critical component of developing one’s identity and sense of self—the major developmental task of the adolescent years. If a large percentage of students do not score *High* in the asset of self-efficacy, this may indicate the prevalence of low expectations in your school.

EMPATHY

*HS/MS Questions B10: I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt;
B11: I try to understand what other people go through;
B15: I try to understand how other people feel and think.*

Empathy, the understanding and caring about another’s experiences and feelings, is considered essential to healthy development and the root of morality and mutual respect. It is a commonly identified individual attribute in resilience and emotional intelligence research. According to Daniel Goleman (1995), “Empathy is the single human quality that leads individuals to override self-interest and act with compassion and altruism.”² Infancy researchers have identified that children as early as the age of two can realize that someone else’s feelings differ from their own. Lack of empathy is associated with many of the behaviors plaguing schools—bullying, harassment, teasing, and other forms of violence.

PROBLEM SOLVING

*HS/MS Questions B12: When I need help, I find someone to talk with;
B4: I know where to go for help with a problem;
B5: I try to work out problems by talking or writing about them.*

Problem solving includes the ability to plan, to be resourceful, to think critically and reflectively, and to creatively examine multiple perspectives before making a decision or taking action. Resilience research and other research on successful adults have consistently identified the presence of these skills. Students should be given the opportunity to directly problem-solve in an ongoing and authentic capacity.

SELF-AWARENESS

*HS/MS Questions B16: There is a purpose to my life;
B17: I understand my moods and feelings;
B18: I understand why I do what I do.*

Self-awareness is knowing and understanding one's self. It is a hallmark of successful and healthy human development. It includes developing an understanding of how one's thinking influences one's behavior, feelings, and moods as well as an understanding of one's strengths and challenges. Self-awareness often manifests as the stepping back from experience, being with what is happening instead of being lost in it. It is the fundamental internal asset upon which other assets (like insight and self-control) are built.

GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

*HS/MS Questions B1: I have goals and plans for the future;
B2: I plan to graduate from high school;
B3: I plan to go to college or some other school after high school.*

Having goals and aspirations refers to using one's dreams, visions, and plans to focus the future; in other words, to have high expectations and hope for one's self. Goals and aspirations are an expression of the intrinsic motivation that guides human development. They reflect the search for meaning at the heart of every human life. Ultimately, young people who have goals and aspirations develop a sense of deep connectedness. Resilience research, as well as the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (1999), has identified a sense of deep connectedness as the most powerful individual asset protecting against negative developmental outcomes. These negative outcomes include teen pregnancy and school failure, emotional distress and suicide, violence, and involvement with alcohol and other drugs.

Conclusion

Weaving a fabric of resilience for all of our children and youth requires building linkages and partnerships between schools, young people, families, and community groups. No single institution can do it alone. The Resilience & Youth Development Module provides a research-based, data-driven tool for bringing together all of these players vital to a young person's healthy development and academic success.

Your school or district RYDM data follows in Table B1: Summary of External/Internal Assets. If your school community is concerned about any of the data reported by your students or is not completely satisfied with it, please consult the Preface of this report for next steps and resources to help you further promote the resilience and positive youth development of all your students.

Endnotes

- ¹ Johnson and Johnson. (1989 and 1996). Slavin. (1990).
adventure learning Hattie et al. (1997).
peer helping Tobler. (1997; 1998).
mentoring Tierney et al. (1995).
the arts Catterall. (1997). Heath et al. (1998).
and service learning Melchior, (1996 and 1998); RPP International. (1998).
- ² Goleman, D. (1995).

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TABLES

RESILIENCE AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MODULE B

INDEX OF ITEM NUMBERS—CORE & MODULE B

Middle School Item	High School Item	Scale	Variable
A9	A10	SC	I feel close to people at this school.
A10	A11	SC	I am happy to be at this school.
A11	A12	SC	I feel like I am part of this school.
A12	A13	SC	The teachers at this school treat students fairly.
A13	A14	SC	I feel safe in my school.
A14	A15	S-CR	who really cares about me.
A15	A16	S-HE	who tells me when I do a good job.
A16	A17	S-CR	who notices when I'm not there.
A17	A18	S-HE	who always wants me to do my best.
A18	A19	S-CR	who listens to me when I have something to say.
A19	A20	S-HE	who believes that I will be a success.
A20	A21	S-MP	I do interesting activities.
A21	A22	S-MP	I help decide things like class activities or rules.
A22	A23	S-MP	I do things that make a difference.
A23	A24	C-CR	who really cares about me.
A24	A25	C-HE	who tells me when I do a good job.
A25	A26	C-CR	who notices when I am upset about something.
A26	A27	C-HE	who believes that I will be a success.
A27	A28	C-HE	who always wants me to do my best.
A28	A29	C-CR	whom I trust.
A29	A30	C-MP	I am part of clubs, sports teams, church/temple, or other group activities.
A30	A31	C-MP	I am involved in music, art, literature, sports or a hobby.
A31	A32	C-MP	I help other people.
B1	B1	GA	I have goals and plans for the future.
B2	B2	GA	I plan to graduate from high school.
B3	B3	GA	I plan to go to college or some other school after high school.
B4	B4	PS	I know where to go for help with a problem.
B5	B5	PS	I try to work out problems by talking or writing about them.
B6	B6	PS	I can work out my problems.
B7	B7	SE	I can do most things if I try.
B8	B8	CC	I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine.
B9	B9	SE	There are many things that I do well.
B10	B10	E	I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt.
B11	B11	E	I try to understand what other people go through.
B12	B12	PS	When I need help, I find someone to talk with.

Middle School Item	High School Item	Scale	Variable
B13	B13	CC	I enjoy working together with other students my age.
B14	B14	CC	I stand up for myself without putting others down.
B15	B15	E	I try to understand how other people feel and think.
B16	B16	SA	There is a purpose to my life.
B17	B17	SA	I understand my moods and feelings.
B18	B18	SA	I understand why I do what I do.
B19	B19	P-CR	who really cares about me.
B20	B20	P-PS	who talks with me about my problems.
B21	B21	P-CR	who helps me when I'm having a hard time.
B22	B22	P	get into a lot of trouble.
B23	B23	P-HE	try to do what is right.
B24	B24	P-HE	do well in school.
B25	B25	H-HE	who expects me to follow the rules.
B26	B26	H-CR	who is interested in my school work.
B27	B27	H-HE	who believes that I will be a success.
B28	B28	H-CR	who talks with me about my problems.
B29	B29	H-HE	who always wants me to do my best.
B30	B30	H-CR	who listens to me when I have something to say.
B31	B31	H-MP	I do fun things or go fun places with my parents or other adults.
B32	B32	H	I do things that make a difference.
B33	B33	H	I help make decisions with my family.

CC = Cooperation and Communication
 C-CR = Community Caring Relationships
 C-HE = Community High Expectations
 C-MP = Community Meaningful Participation
 E = Empathy
 GA = Goals and Aspirations
 H-CR = Home Caring Relationships
 H-HE = Home High Expectations
 H-MP = Home Meaningful Participation

P-CR = Peer Caring Relationships
 P-HE = Peer High Expectations
 PS = Problem Solving
 SA = Self-awareness
 S-CR = School Caring Relationships
 S-HE = School High Expectations
 S-MP = School Meaningful Participation
 SC = School Connectedness
 SE = Self-efficacy