Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework

Developmental Experiences Can Happen in All Settings

Children are shaped by their interactions with the world, the adults around them, and how they make meaning of their experiences no matter where they are.

Developmental Experiences Require Action and Reflection

Children learn through developmental experiences that combine Action and Reflection, ideally within the context of trusting relationships with adults.

Developmental Experiences Build Components and Key Factors of Success

Over time, through developmental experiences, children build four foundational components, which underlie three “key factors” to success.

Foundational Components

Self-Regulation includes awareness of oneself and one’s surroundings, and managing one’s attention, emotions, and behaviors in goal-directed ways.

Knowledge is sets of facts, information, or understanding about self, others, and the world. Skills are the learned ability to carry out a task with intended results or goals, and can be either general or domain-specific.

Mindsets are beliefs and attitudes about oneself, the world, and the interaction between the two. They are the lenses we use to process everyday experience.

Values are enduring, often culturally-defined, beliefs about what is good or bad and what is important in life. Values serve as broad guidelines for living and provide an orientation for one’s desired future.

Key Factors

Being successful means having the Agency to make active choices about one’s life path, possessing the Competencies to adapt to the demands of different contexts, and incorporating different aspects of oneself into an Integrated Identity.

Continued on reverse.
Focus of Development Changes as Children Grow Older

Providing the right experiences for growth requires knowledge of child and youth development. The development of the four foundational components, along with agency, integrated identity, and competencies, occurs at different stages throughout childhood and adolescence. Development into a successful young adult entails growth of the self and one’s abilities to interact with others and navigate the broader world. We define success beyond education and employment to include healthy relationships, a meaningful place within a community, and contributing to a larger good.

Developmental Focus During this Stage
Ongoing Development
Emergence of Key Factors

Early Childhood
(Preschool, Ages 3-5)

Middle Childhood
(Elementary School, Ages 6-10)

Early Adolescence
(Middle Grades, Ages 11-14)

Middle Adolescence
(High School, Ages 15-18)

Young Adulthood
(Postsecondary, Ages 19-22)