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School Crime Report May 2008

Learning to Connect Young people should grow up to be physically and mentally healthy; be good caregivers for their children; and have positive, dependable family and friendship networks. Further, they need to contribute, at some level, to their community, connecting with larger institutions such as religious or civic groups.

Learning to Navigate 16 Young people should aim to do more than simply be taxpayers and law abiders. They should have the ability to interact appropriately across diverse settings; to take responsibility for themselves and others; and to manage the lures of unhealthy or risky behaviors (e.g., premature sexual activity, substance abuse, and criminal activity) that may endanger their future. The community's effectiveness at producing these positive milestones in the lives of local youth is obtainable. There are two principles the Kansas City community must embrace to meet these needs of the youth, as well as reduce the barriers to young adulthood: bolster critical youth developmental building blocks, and utilize economics as a youth crime prevention tool.

Principle Number One: Bolstering Critical Youth Developmental

One of the primary keys to off-setting the negative effects of systemic poverty and acts of violence is providing supports and opportunity in all settings in which youth spend their time. Positive movement toward reaching the basic young adulthood developmental outcomes (e.g., productivity, connection, and navigation) is made possible by increasing the number and quality of available supports and opportunities for youth. Adequate Nutrition, Health and Shelter For youth to benefit from the others, this first developmental need stands alone among the supports and opportunities as a necessary precondition.

Multiple Supportive Relationships with Adults and Peers

Perhaps the most consistent and robust research finding on human development is that experiencing support from the people in one's environment, from infancy, positively impacts on later functioning. By the end of high school, young people with strong supportive relationships early on are twice as likely as the average youth to have optimal developmental outcomes, and 65% less likely to have poor developmental outcomes. In contrast, young teenagers with unsupportive relationships are nearly twice as likely as the average teen to have poor developmental outcomes by the end of high school.

Challenging and Engaging Activities and Learning Activities

Youth, especially adolescents, need to experience a sense of growth and progress in developing skills and abilities. Whether in school, sports, arts, or a job, young

people are engaged by, and benefit from, activities in which they experience an increasing sense of competence and productivity. Challenging, engaging, learning activities early in high school increase the probability of doing well by 62%, and decrease the probability of doing poorly by Commission on Violent Crime: Final Report Page 12 of 40 55%. In contrast, youth with few learning activities were 28% more likely on average to have poor developmental outcomes at the end of high school, and 48% less likely to have positive outcomes.

#### Meaningful Opportunities for Involvement and Membership

As young people progress into adolescence, they need ample opportunities to try on adult roles for which they are preparing. They need to make age-appropriate decisions for themselves and others: deciding in which activities to participate; choosing from alternatives; and taking part in classroom, team or organizational policy. Finally, youth need to experience themselves as individuals who belong and have something to contribute to their different communities. When healthy opportunities to belong are not found in their environments, young people will create less healthy versions, such as cliques or gangs.

Safety Young people need to feel physically and emotionally safe in their daily lives. There are several methods to ensure the safety of the community's youth. One method to promote safety would be for the city to create a centralized venue for dissemination of youth-oriented information.

This information would promote positive activities occurring in New York City, New York for young people. Further, this same venue could be utilized to assist young people in generating constructive ideas effecting the development of the city.

Associate Professor SCOTT STECKLER

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