

READY PICKS

Recommended Reading for Leaders Committed to Changing the Way they Do Business

BROADER PARTNERSHIPS **BIGGER GOALS** **BETTER DATA** **BOLDER STRATEGIES**



The Ready by 21 Partnership is committed to ensuring that all young people are ready for college, work and life.

Attaining this goal requires

coordinated supports from all sectors – education, business, government, non-profits and the community – as well as from families. These supports not only improve students flow through the education pipeline from pre-K through post-secondary completion, they insulate the pipeline with basic services and broader opportunities for learning and development.

Each issue of READY PICKS focuses on one or more of “the 4 Bs” – the capacities leaders need to strengthen to do

business differently, and offers our best picks of research, tools and examples selected from the work of Ready by 21 Partners, Ready by 21 places and others committed to big picture change.

In this issue, we explore child and adolescent health. We lead with important new research on promising programs that connect healthy eating and exercise to a broader set of physical, mental and social/emotional outcomes. It is an example of the broader strategies we need to adopt if young people are going to achieve overall well-being. We also explore how leaders can activate partnerships and bring stakeholders together around a common issue that has momentum.

THE FEATURED B

BOLDER STRATEGIES

Health and wellness was the dominant theme in this month’s round up of reports and recommendations, providing strategic support to the First Lady’s initiatives to combat childhood obesity and the President’s historic efforts to reform health care. A new Gallup Poll finds school principals ready for innovation in this area. An evaluation of a new Boys and Girls Clubs program shows that health outcomes can be improved. And tool kits from the National Governor’s Association, National League of Cities and National Conference of State Legislatures present a range of strategies that policy makers can use to support school and community organization efforts.

According to Ready by 21 Partner, the **Gallup Organization**, school principals recognize the crucial role they can play. In a new [survey](#), 96 percent of the nearly 2,000 principals surveyed are in favor of implementing strategies such as increased recess time because it promotes physical activity and has benefits for learning and social/emotional development.

Youth organizations are looking for ways to step up their game as well. Research from Ready by 21 technical partner **Child Trends**, that synthesized research from multiple random assignment evaluations of 50 programs, indicates that physical activity programs that focus on skill building and offer young people opportunities to track their progress can be effective in improving health outcomes. Child Trends found that programs that focused on one health improvement strategy (e.g. nutrition) were more successful than those that tried to implement multiple strategies.

The Boys and Girls Club program, however, demonstrates that it is possible to tackle these issues in a well designed package and impact outcomes across several areas. “Promoting Healthy Lifestyles: The Impact of Boys & Girls Clubs of America’s Triple Play Program on Healthy Eating, Exercise Patterns, and Developmental Outcomes” is a rigorous new study from Michelle Gambone and colleagues that shows a

developmental approach can in fact change youth's trajectories on critically important health behaviors and a host of important social/emotional outcomes.

Acknowledging the connection between health outcomes and overall well-being, the Boys & Girls Clubs of America designed a three-pronged program to address health and other developmental outcomes. The three components of the Triple Play program are:

- Mind: increases nutritional knowledge and healthy eating behavior;
- Body: promotes a healthy and active lifestyle by encouraging young people to participate in physical activity; and
- Soul: addresses social/emotional outcomes such as belonging, positive relationships, competence and influence.

The program was available to 6 to 18 year old Club members, and intentional opportunities were built in for leadership, skill building, and decision-making (e.g. older youth assisting younger children). By infusing Clubs with a range of supports and opportunities for positive peer influence, engaging physical activities, and healthy eating, the program succeeded in increasing nutritional knowledge, healthy eating behaviors and levels of physical activity. Compared to the control group, 51 percent of unhealthy eaters in the Triply Play program improved their eating habits. Also, youth that engaged in regular, vigorous physical activity increased by 10 percentage points. Triple Play had the strongest impact on increasing physical activity for sedentary youth, which increased by 44 percent.

Impact was not limited to the health domain, however. Club members improved their interactions with peers and adults, the quality of their relationships, and increased their sense of mastery and control. Prior studies have demonstrated that intentional, developmental programming can improve outcomes related to school success. This new report proves they are capable of influencing another set of important and policy-relevant outcomes in the health domain.

Over the past few months, several policy groups also issued resources helping policymakers identify and implement strategies to combat childhood obesity. These include a comprehensive [state policy guide](#) from the National Governors Association, which encourages policies to target policies early child care settings, schools, communities and health care settings. National League of Cities released an [action toolkit](#) that highlights policies that municipal leaders can implement across communities to make the most of out-of-school time settings and foster greater partnerships. Ready by 21 Partnership's lead policy partner, **National Conference of State Legislatures** also released a comprehensive state policy [resource guide](#) that spans from implementing nutritional programs in schools to redesigning communities that can foster greater physical activity.

While these recommendations focus on obesity, they also apply to other health outcomes discussed above. Given the interconnected factors that contribute to childhood obesity, the different reports published recently recognize that solutions require multiple sectors and coordinated policies and that young people need access to opportunities for a healthy lifestyle both inside and outside the school environment. The common themes that emerged are:

- School partnerships are essential. State legislatures, governors and state agencies can promote policies that help schools expand or protect time devoted to physical activity by helping districts develop physical education curricula, build in physical education graduation requirements, and offer statewide physical challenge programs that allows students to track their progress.
- Strengthen connections between communities and schools. In economically challenging times, these partnerships can expand access and options while reducing costs. School districts and municipalities can work together to share athletic fields and recreational facilities. States can also foster and support Farm-to-School programs and create purchasing cooperatives, where multiple schools and districts partner to purchase school meals, increase healthy food options and lower costs by 9 to 35 percent. In addition to lowering cost, they also ensure students have healthier food choices during school hours.
- Make the most of out-of-school time. OST programs not only expand access to space for physical activity but also by implementing quality standards that focus on nutrition. Programs can expand nutritional knowledge and instill healthy eating habits by offering nutritional snacks and meals. Policymakers can also facilitate coordination with schools and encourage participation in federally funded nutrition programs.
- Embed solutions in the community. Legislatures and leaders recognize that families need access to healthier food options throughout their community. Evidence indicates that expanding community based options for healthy foods is also a great way to [engage young people](#) as leaders in the process. Legislatures, state agencies and municipal leaders can help mitigate the higher costs of healthy food options for schools and community organizations by making use of public spaces for farmer's markets and community gardens.

OTHER READY PICKS

BETTER DATA

How Can Communities Measure Impact Across Multiple Agencies? Shared accountability and data-driven planning are central to the Ready by 21 approach. When multiple systems are working together toward common goals, measuring impact across organizations can be powerful. [“Breakthroughs in Shared Measurement and Social Impact”](#) by FSG Social Impact Advisors evaluates the efforts of 20 different communities to develop shared approaches to performance, outcomes and/or impact measurement across multiple agencies. It also highlights practices and recommendations that community leaders identified as crucial for these efforts to succeed.

BROADER PARTNERSHIPS

How Can Community Partnerships Strengthen Early Childhood Education and Expanded Learning Time Opportunities? Two new publications explore how community partnerships are important and effective across the developmental spectrum – for young children as well as older youth. [“Beyond the School Yard: Pre-K Collaborations with Community Based Programs”](#) highlights the benefits and challenges pre-k programs experience when they collaborate with community based organizations. It also provides strategies for developing successful partnerships and addressing challenges that might arise. In their new publication, [“Expanded](#)

[Time, Enriching Experiences: Expanded Learning Time Schools and Community Organization Partnerships](#),” the Center for American Progress reiterates the value of K-12 schools partnering with community organizations. It also features practical lessons learned and policy recommendations that can support future efforts.

BIGGER GOALS

What Skills Do Young People Need to Enter the 21st Century Workforce? This survey [“Raising The Bar: Employers’ Views On College Learning In The Wake Of The Economic Downturn”](#) focuses on employers views on skills needed for college graduates to succeed in the workplace. The survey found that employers want a broad set of skills and higher level of learning and knowledge from their workers than they are currently receiving. Only one in four employers think two/four year colleges are doing a good job in preparing their students, nevertheless the survey found that most employers will be hiring more college graduates in the future. In 2006, **Corporate Voices for Working Families**, the Conference Board and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills surveyed more than 400 employers on a broad range of workforce readiness issues, involving young adults. Like the Hart survey, they found that young people are not prepared for entry-level jobs and that employers expect young people to arrive with a core set of basic knowledge and the ability to apply their skills in the workplace. Both the Hart Research and the Corporate Voices research highlighted the ability to communicate orally and in writing and possess critical thinking and problem solving skills as key for college graduates entering the workplace. To read the 2006 Corporate Voices research, visit www.corporatevoices.org.