



The Readiness Project

Readiness matters. Readiness is defined not just by the ability to read, write and compute, but by a broader set of skillsets and mindsets that young people combine to express broader abilities, like feeling and expressing emotion or getting and staying healthy. Whatever terms and frames are used, there is a growing recognition that these abilities are malleable (i.e., they can be taught and strengthened, even into late adolescence and early adulthood), measurable (practically and through observation) and, most importantly, that they matter. Whether a system's or setting's official outcomes are academic success or reduced recidivism, evidence shows these readiness abilities help young people to achieve them. The question is how systems, settings and adults can nurture those abilities in every young person, at every stage and age.

Equity matters too. Every young person has the potential and therefore, we would argue, the right to be ready. The gaps we see in youth readiness are directly connected to systemic traps in the systems and settings where they spend their time, like differences in the opportunities available in schools, community programs, or neighborhoods, or differences in the risk or likelihood of participation in second-chance systems (e.g., child welfare, juvenile justice).

The Readiness Project's Origins

The Readiness Project was launched in 2014 with funding from the Ford Foundation. Our goal: To update the research base behind the Ready by 21 ideas to better reflect the explosion of research on the science of learning, the development of social and emotional competencies, and the importance of good developmental practice in all of the settings where youth spend time and translate it into guidance for policymakers and practitioners. The research report, *Readiness by Design*, was completed in March 2016 under the guidance of Stephanie Krauss, a leader in designing competency-based education settings that integrate social, emotional and academic development. The full report and multiple "takeaway formats" are available online (see sidebar to right).

The research phase of the project is over. The thought leadership and advocacy phase is now underway. Exploring the intersection of readiness and equity has not only been the theme of our Ready By 21 National Meeting since 2015, it has become the focus of our thought leadership and is integrated into the work of all of our divisions.

Readiness Project Resources & Services

- **Ready by 21 Thought Leader Series:** Karen Pittman, the Forum's President and CEO, interviews thought leaders from research, policy and practice whose work is at the intersection of readiness and equity. Past interviews have focused on job skills for minority youth, the science of learning, creating lasting change in the juvenile justice system, youth engagement in systems reform, and embedding youth development in high schools for disadvantaged youth. Future interviews focus on the role of local business leaders in addressing readiness and equity and the challenges of building statewide quality standards for school and out-of-school programs designed to close the gaps in youth readiness.
- **"Change the Odds" Strategic Plan Reviews:** Focused facilitation of a series of retreats with the boards and staff of youth-serving organizations and systems that believe that their current approach to selecting outcomes, strategies, partners and success metrics are not sufficient to achieve the goal they have set: to change the odds for youth in disadvantaged circumstances.
- **Ready by Design "Dinner and a Day" Symposia:** Opportunities for community leaders to co-create one-day symposia based on Readiness by Design research. These sessions are designed to spark discussion among up to 20 local youth and adult leaders who are positioned to develop plans to implement and manage projects focused on assessing and improving the quality of the environments in which youth spend their time – voluntarily or involuntarily.
- **Readiness Project Website:**
<http://sparkaction.org/readiness>



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