

# Beyond Learning...Thriving



American Institutes for Research colleagues  
David Osher and Jill Young led the development of a  
research synthesis paper for the Readiness Projects.

## THE ESSENTIALS:

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### **Thriving should be the goal for all youth.**

Research confirms that thriving is more than a status or a state of well-being in a single area (e.g., health). Thriving reflects a significant sense of growth or success in and across any number of domains (e.g., academic, social, emotional). Within the context of their cultural references, thriving youth are doing well in multiple domains and struggling in few if any.

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### **Thriving is influenced by internal characteristics and attributes and external conditions.**

Young people with access to more and better resources (opportunities/advantages) are more likely to thrive than their peers with similar adaptive skills. Concomitantly, young people who have developed resiliency are better equipped to overcome adversity and take advantage of scarce opportunities than their peers with less developed skills.

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### **Characteristics and conditions interrelate – each influences the other through the common door of experiences.**

Bronfenbrenner's seminal research describes how a young person's characteristics are not only influenced by their experiences but also influence the adults who shaped the experiences.

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### **These characteristics and conditions can be improved independently with intentional investments.**

Individual characteristics and external conditions naturally change over time. They can also be improved by design. Young people, especially in their adolescent years, can use the foundations laid for them with adults to make intentional choices and undertake efforts to build skills and competencies needed to experience agency even in the face of adversity. Systems and communities can make intentional efforts to address social and economic inequities.

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### **These intentional investments must be designed to fundamentally enhance the everyday relationships and experiences of all youth.**

It is the intentionality of these experiences and the relationships with adults and peers within them that multiplies their impact to transform the learning and create the equity that leads to youth thriving.

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