



CALIFORNIA SCHOOL DISTRICT
SECONDARY SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS
FALL 2007 /SPRING 2008

RESILIENCE & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
REQUIRED QUESTIONS
CORE MODULE A



CALIFORNIA
Safe and Healthy Kids
PROGRAM OFFICE



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- Sally Champlin, MPH, CHES, California State University, Long Beach.

For more information about the survey or your results, call the toll-free helpline at 888.841.7536, or visit the CHKS website at <http://www.wested.org/hks>.

Meredith Rolfe, Administrator
Safe and Healthy Kids Program Office
California Department of Education
Sacramento, CA

Gregory Austin, Ph.D.
CHKS Director
WestEd
Los Alamitos, CA

Mark Duerr, M.P.A.
CHKS Partner
Duerr Evaluation Resources
Chico, CA



C A L I F O R N I A healthy kids S U R V E Y

A3. RESILIENCE & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Resilience & Youth Development questions are devoted entirely to assessing the external and internal assets associated with positive youth development. This section of the report provides a brief overview to the theoretical framework underlying the survey and explains the scales in which the survey items are grouped. The required Resilience & Youth Development sections in the Core (school and community assets) are discussed in this report. The optional sections (Module B includes peer, home, and internal assets) are discussed in the Module B report.

WHY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MATTERS: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure B1 illustrates the conceptual framework or hypothesis on which the RYDM is based. This approach is based not only on studies of human development but also on research in school effectiveness, healthy families, competent communities, and successful youth-serving programs. Youth development is the process of promoting the social, emotional, physical, moral, cognitive, and spiritual development of young people through meeting their fundamental needs for safety, love, belonging, respect, identity, power, challenge, mastery, and meaning. Resilience refers to positive youth development in the face of environmental threat, stress, and risk. Broadly, it is not only the ability to rebound from adversity but also the ability to achieve healthy development and successful learning in any circumstance. In this sense, the terms “youth development” and “resilience” are used interchangeably.

The major tenet of the youth development approach is that resilience is a capacity for healthy development innate to *all* people. Resilience is an inborn wisdom that naturally motivates individuals to meet their fundamental human needs. When young people experience home, peer, school, and community environments rich in *external assets*, their needs are met. In turn, youth develop the individual characteristics—or *internal assets*—that are associated with healthy development and successful learning, and with lower involvement in health-risk behaviors such as substance abuse and violence. As such, youth development is an essential part of any comprehensive prevention program.

THE THREE PRINCIPLE EXTERNAL ASSETS

Studies across multiple disciplines have clearly identified three principle external assets or *protective factors* that promote youth development and resilience to guide education and prevention practice. These principles are caring relationships, high expectation messages, and opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution. These supports and opportunities should be available in all environments in a young person’s world: home, school, community, and peer groups.

Caring Relationships

Caring relationships are defined as supportive connections to others in the student’s life who model and support healthy development and well-being. Longitudinal studies of human development, program evaluation research, the recent National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, and qualitative studies have identified caring relationships as the most critical factor promoting healthy and successful development even in the face of much environmental stress,

challenge, and risk. These relationships convey that someone is “there” for a youth. This is demonstrated by an adult or peer having an interest in who a young person is, and in actively listening to, and talking with, the youth.

High Expectations

High expectation messages are defined as the consistent communication of direct and indirect messages that the student can succeed. They are at the core of caring relationships and communicate belief in the youth’s innate resilience and ability to learn. The message is “*You can make it; you have everything it takes to achieve your dreams; I’ll be there to support you.*” Research has shown this to be a pivotal factor in the environments of youth who have overcome the odds.

In addition to this "challenge + support" message, a high-expectation approach conveys firm guidance—clear boundaries and the structure necessary for creating a sense of safety and predictability. The aim is not to enforce compliance and control but to allow for the freedom and exploration necessary to develop autonomy, identity, and self-control. A high-expectation approach is individually-based and strengths-focused. This means identifying each youth’s unique strengths and gifts, nurturing them, and using them to work on needs or concerns. Having high expectations assumes that one size *never* fits all.

Meaningful Participation

Meaningful participation is defined as the involvement of the student in relevant, engaging, and interesting activities with opportunities for responsibility and contribution. Providing young people with opportunities for meaningful participation is a natural outcome of environments that convey high expectations. Participation, like caring and support, meets a fundamental human need: to have some control and ownership over one’s life. Resilience research has documented that positive developmental outcomes—including reductions in health-risk behaviors and increases in academic factors—are associated with youth being given valued responsibilities, planning and decision-making opportunities, and chances to contribute and help others in their home, school, and community environments.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF RISK AND RESILIENCE

The three principle external assets are also referred to as “protective factors” because they have been found to mediate against involvement in risk behaviors such as substance use and violence. Analyses of aggregated CHKS data summarized in *The RYDM Handbook* have consistently shown that high levels of perceived assets are inversely associated with lower levels of involvement in risk behaviors, suggesting a “protective” influence. Conversely, when students report lower levels of external assets they report higher levels of risk behaviors. This is true across such diverse high-risk behaviors as binge alcohol drinking, regular cigarette smoking, marijuana use at school, and carrying weapons at school. For example, 31% of the 11th graders taking the CHKS in 2002-03 classified as *Low* in external assets also reported binge drinking in the last 30 days compared to only 19% of those scoring *High* in external assets. In addition, students who reported higher levels of these external assets in their schools and communities were also more likely to perceive their schools and communities as safe places.

Similar results have been reported recently by the important National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) based on their survey of 90,000 youth in grades 7-12. This survey found that youth who felt “connected” to either their parents or school were unlikely to engage in problem behaviors ranging from alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use to emotional distress, unsafe sexual practices, and acts of violence towards others.

These findings are correlational, not causal. They do not explain how the relationship between risk and resilience develops over time. But they do strongly suggest that efforts to promote positive youth development early in a child's life, before the critical years for the onset of risk behaviors (generally beginning in the 7th grade), is absolutely critical to any comprehensive prevention approach. Efforts in later years may help reduce involvement or "turn around" youth. As discussed further below, this approach to prevention has benefits for schools in that improvement in academic performance is another demonstrated outcome.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Longitudinal analysis of the relationships of CHKS risk and resilience indicators to changes in annual California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) test scores over time further underscore the importance of school-based youth development efforts.¹ The analysis revealed the extent to which student exposure to low levels of developmental supports are an impediment to raising test scores. Test scores increased more in schools where students reported high levels of caring relationships at school, high expectations at school, and meaningful participation in the community. These results suggest that attention to external resilience assets in school settings—which can help youth navigate adolescence in healthy ways—holds great promise for comprehensive programs addressing both the developmental and academic needs of children. Working to enhance school connectedness by creating a network of caring relationships between staff and students, and by communicating and supporting high expectations, must be an essential part of any school improvement effort.

To the extent that higher levels of perceived external assets are associated with lower levels of risk behaviors, these findings suggest that implementation of youth development strategies in the school will also serve to improve test scores by reducing key behavioral barriers to achievement. The value of youth development approaches to schools is thus twofold: it contributes both to the primary mission of educating students and to the requirements set forth in No Child Left Behind, Title IV to reduce substance abuse and violence. Too often, schools have come to view prevention as a task "imposed" on schools not only apart from its academic purpose but also a detraction from it, by draining time and resources that could be devoted to instruction. The relevance of the youth-development approach is that it promotes both positive academic and behavioral outcomes. Prevention is achieved not by taking time away from the essential educational functions of schools but by permeating school activities with an orientation to creating and supporting positive behavior and development.

SURVEY STRUCTURE

Based on the conceptual model in Figure B1, the RYDM assesses 17 external and internal assets that research indicates protect a young person from involvement in health-risk behaviors and contribute to improved health, social, and academic outcomes. Unlike the CHKS module reports, RYDM results are not presented for each item but rather as scores for asset *scales* or clusters derived from multiple items, because the results from scales are more reliable than those from individual items (see Table B1). The actual items used to create each scale, and how the results are scored and reported, are shown below.

EXTERNAL ASSETS

The RYDM measures 11 External Assets, also known as developmental supports and opportunities or protective factors. It asks students their perceptions of each of the three key protective factors—**Caring Relationships, High Expectations, and Opportunities for Meaningful Participation**—in each of the four key environments of school, home, community, and peer group.

- **Caring Relationships.** The RYDM asks students how they perceive caring relationships by asking about the extent to which adults or peers in their lives engage in the following activities: taking interest in, talking with, listening to, helping, noticing, and trusting. Resilience research has documented that these transformative caring relationships can be with a family or extended family member, a teacher, a neighbor, a clergy member, or a friend. No matter which environment is examined, however, the characteristics of caring relationships remain fairly consistent. Therefore, the items in each environment are similar with only slight contextual adaptations.
- **High Expectations.** The RYDM asks youth their perceptions of the messages they receive from adults and peers around their ability to follow rules, be a success, do their best, try to do what is right, and do well in school.
- **Meaningful Participation.** The RYDM asks youth about their opportunities to make decisions in their families and schools, to do fun and interesting things, and to participate in a way that makes a difference in their families, schools, and communities.

SCORING AND REPORTING SYSTEM

For all the items in these scales, students had a choice in indicating how true each statement was for them or how much it applied to them, as follows:

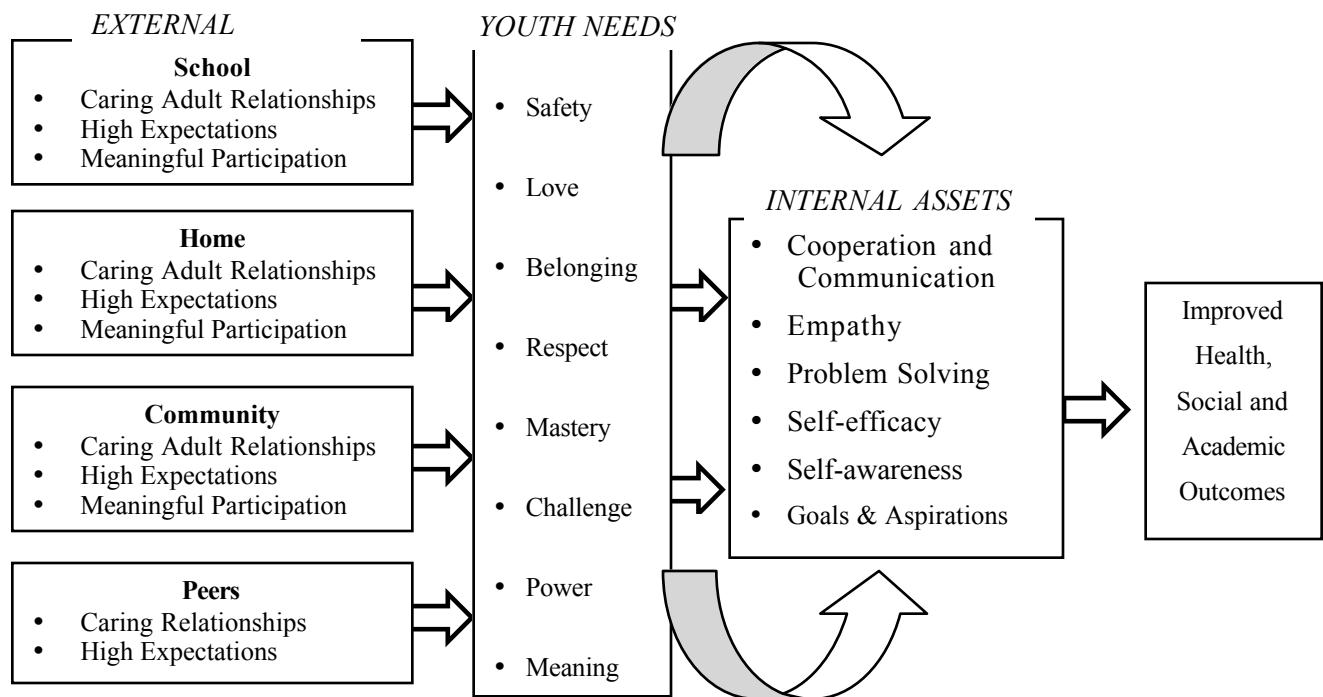
- 4: *Very much true*
- 3: *Pretty much true*
- 2: *A little true*
- 1: *Not at all true*

The values (4, 3, 2, 1) attached to each response option were averaged across all participants for all the items in each scale, and then students were classified as being *High*, *Moderate*, or *Low* in assets. These scale categories were derived as follows:

- **High** percent of students with average item response above 3;
- **Moderate** percent of students with average item response of at least 2 and no more than 3; and
- **Low** percent of students with average item response below 2.

In addition, we aggregated all the scores across the scales to report **total assets** in each of the four environments (total school assets, total community assets, etc.) and then again across all four environments (total external assets) and all the resilience traits (total internal assets). These scores are in Table B1: Summary of External (and Internal, if applicable) Assets.

Figure B1. Youth Development Conceptual Model



INDEX OF ITEM NUMBERS

| Middle School Item | High School Item | Scale | Variable |
|--------------------|------------------|-------|---|
| A9 | A10 | SC | I feel close to people at this school. |
| A10 | A11 | SC | I am happy to be at this school. |
| A11 | A12 | SC | I feel like I am part of this school. |
| A12 | A13 | SC | The teachers at this school treat students fairly. |
| A13 | A14 | SC | I feel safe in my school. |
| A14 | A15 | S-CR | who really cares about me. |
| A15 | A16 | S-HE | who tells me when I do a good job. |
| A16 | A17 | S-CR | who notices when I'm not there. |
| A17 | A18 | S-HE | who always wants me to do my best. |
| A18 | A19 | S-CR | who listens to me when I have something to say. |
| A19 | A20 | S-HE | who believes that I will be a success. |
| A20 | A21 | S-MP | I do interesting activities. |
| A21 | A22 | S-MP | I help decide things like class activities or rules. |
| A22 | A23 | S-MP | I do things that make a difference. |
| A23 | A24 | C-CR | who really cares about me. |
| A24 | A25 | C-HE | who tells me when I do a good job. |
| A25 | A26 | C-CR | who notices when I am upset about something. |
| A26 | A27 | C-HE | who believes that I will be a success. |
| A27 | A28 | C-HE | who always wants me to do my best. |
| A28 | A29 | C-CR | whom I trust. |
| A29 | A30 | C-MP | I am part of clubs, sports teams, church/temple, or other group activities. |
| A30 | A31 | C-MP | I am involved in music, art, literature, sports or a hobby. |
| A31 | A32 | C-MP | I help other people. |

CURRENT SCALES

C-CR = Community Caring Relationships

C-HE = Community High Expectations

C-MP = Community Meaningful Participation

S-CR = School Caring Relationships

S-HE = School High Expectations

S-MP = School Meaningful Participation

SC = School Connectedness

ENDNOTES

- ¹ (see Student Health Risks, Resilience, and Academic Performance in California: Year 2 Report, Longitudinal Analyses by T. Hanson and G. Austin, 2003 on the CHKS website at www.wested.org/chks/pdf/api2f.pdf).

B2. SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Resilience research clearly documents the power of teachers and schools to tip the scale from risk to resilience for children and youth. James Garbarino (1992) and his colleagues found that “75-80 percent of the children can use school activities as a support for healthy adjustment and achievement when schools are sensitive to them and their burdens.”¹ Werner & Smith’s (1992) classic study says the following about turnaround teachers:

*Among the most frequently encountered positive role model in the lives of the children... outside of the family circle, was a favorite teacher. For the resilient youngster a special teacher was not just an instructor for academic skills, but also a confidant and positive model for personal identification.*²

Repeatedly, these turnaround teachers are described as providing, in their own personal styles and ways, the three protective factors. Most importantly, these teachers “looked beyond [students’] outward experience and behavior and saw the promise.” Similarly, Michael Rutter’s classic research into effective schools in high poverty communities found that turnaround schools created a climate, an “ethos,” grounded in the three RYDM protective factors.³ A positive school climate was the critical variable differentiating between schools with high and low rates of delinquency, behavioral disturbance, attendance, and academic attainment. According to Rutter and his colleagues, schools that, “Provide students with opportunities for participation and with responsibilities provide one of the most effective protective factors for children under stress: a sense of success at a meaningful task.”⁴ These positive people and places created an inviting asset-rich environment that met students’ developmental needs for love and belonging, respect, accomplishment, challenge, identity, power, and meaning.

CARING RELATIONSHIPS

HS Questions A15, 17, 19/MS Questions A14, 16, 18: At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult... who really cares about me; who notices when I'm not there; who listens to me when I have something to say.

A caring relationship with a teacher is perhaps the most powerful motivator for academic success. Meeting academic standards, therefore, requires that schools put relationships at the heart of schooling. As Nel Noddings (1988) articulates:

At a time when the traditional structures of caring have deteriorated, schools must be places where teachers and students live together, talk with each other, take delight in each other's company. My guess is that when schools focus on what really matters in life, the cognitive ends we now pursue so painfully and artificially will be achieved somewhat more naturally...It is obvious that children will work harder and do things—even odd things like adding fractions—for people they love and trust.

In longitudinal and ethnographic studies, youth of all ages continually state that what they want is a teacher who cares. Patricia Phelan and her colleagues (1992) and other researchers at Stanford University’s Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching found in a study of adolescents that, “The number of student references to wanting caring teachers is so great that we believe it speaks to the quiet desperation and loneliness of many adolescents in today’s society.”⁵

The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found that students who felt cared for by their teachers and connected to their school were far less likely to be involved in all health risk behaviors, including alcohol, tobacco, and drug use, and violence. Compelled by these results, former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley has stated that, “The number one priority of schools should be making sure that every student is connected to a caring adult in the school.”

If a small percentage of students scored *High* in this asset, then schools need to take a deeper look at their culture and climate. This may mean that teachers and other adults in the school are not receiving care and support themselves. School staff naturally care for others when they feel cared for themselves. Supporting teachers and school personnel who have frequent contact with students is instrumental in fostering caring teacher-student relationships. *Note: Caring Relationships in the School is a CDE-required Title IV Performance Indicator.*

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

HS Questions A16, 18, 20/MS Questions A15, 17, 19: At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult... who tells me when I do a good job; who always wants me to do my best; who believes that I will be a success.

Perhaps more than any other variable, low expectations on the part of school staff have been correlated with poor student academic outcomes. Vice versa, research has indicated that schools that establish high expectations for all youth—and give them the support necessary to achieve them—have high rates of academic success. These schools also have lower rates of problem behaviors such as dropping out, alcohol and other drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and delinquency than other schools.

Conveying positive and high expectations in a classroom and school environment occurs at several levels. The most obvious and powerful is at the *belief* level (which the RYDM measures), where the teacher and other school staff communicate the message that the student has everything he or she needs to be successful. Through relationships that convey this deep belief, students can learn to believe in themselves and in their futures. They develop the critical internal assets (resilience strengths) of self-efficacy, self-awareness, and goals and aspirations.

Schools also communicate expectations in the way they are structured and organized. For example:

- **Curriculum** that is developmental, that is, supports resilience and encourages positive youth development, respects the way humans learn. Such a curriculum is thematic, experiential, challenging, comprehensive, and inclusive of multiple intelligences and multiple perspectives—especially those of silenced groups.
- **Instruction** that is developmental focuses on a broad range of learning styles; builds from perceptions of student strengths, interests, and experience; and, is participatory and facilitative, creating ongoing opportunities for self-reflection, critical inquiry problem solving, and dialogue.
- **Grouping practices** that are developmental promote heterogeneity and inclusion, cooperation, shared responsibility, and a sense of belonging.
- **Assessment** that is developmental focuses on multiple intelligences, utilizes authentic assessments, and fosters self-reflection.

Through these organizational structures and practices, students can learn the other critical internal assets of cooperation and communication, empathy, and problem solving. *Note: High Expectations in the School is a CDE-required Title IV Performance Indicator.*

MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

*HS Questions A21, 22, 23/MS Questions A20, 21, 22: At school... I do interesting activities; I help decide things like class activities or rules;
I do things that make a difference.*

Perhaps the most challenging area for schools is increasing the opportunities for students to be contributing members of the school community. Michael Rutter's seminal school effectiveness research identified that in schools with low levels of delinquency and school failure, "Students were given a lot of responsibility. They participated very actively in all sorts of things that went on in the school; they were treated as responsible people and they reacted accordingly." Similarly, student-driven learning (having the power to plan their own activities)—even at age 3 and 4—was identified by David Weikart and Lawrence Schweinhart of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation as the critical factor discriminating 20 years later between adults who had avoided poverty, teen pregnancy, and drug abuse, had graduated from high school, were more likely to own their home, and were more likely to volunteer.⁶

Giving youth opportunities to participate in meaningful activities and roles in the classroom and school community helps engage their intrinsic motivation and innate ability to learn. This process does not require yet another program. It does require teachers to relinquish their role as "sage on the stage" and become a "guide on the side." Teachers and school staff must willingly share power with students and base their activities on reciprocity and collaboration instead of control and competition. In other words, the classroom and school must become a democratic community.

Ignoring students' needs to have some power, control, and a sense of belonging usually results in students disconnecting from the school—a disconnection that the California Healthy Kids Survey and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health have found to play a significant role in students' involvement in problem behaviors. *Note: Meaningful Participation in the School is a CDE-required Title IV Performance Indicator.*

TOTAL SCHOOL ASSETS AND SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

The Total School Assets scores in Table A3.1 (Summary of External Assets) are comprised of the averages across all of the three School External Assets scales. As discussed further below, these percentages reflect perceived assets at school that can be taken as an indirect indication of the overall degree (*High, Moderate, Low*) to which students feel connected to school.

Increasingly, research is revealing the critical importance of strong school connectedness as a factor in promoting academic achievement and in mitigating involvement in risk behaviors such as substance abuse, delinquency, and dropping out of school.⁷ Despite this, there is no consensus on how to define "school connectedness" and related constructs such as school bonding, attachment, and engagement. The lists of items or measurements that are used to measure it vary considerably. However, in most surveys the measures that are used to gauge school connectedness include one or more of the three dimensions of caring relationships, high expectations, and meaningful participation. They incorporate the degree of closeness or attachment to teachers, trust in them, and commitment to conventional school goals, as well as involvement in extracurricular activities. Other dimensions are their perceptions of teachers' respect and interest

in them as individuals, competence and self-efficacy, which are captured by the RYDM high expectations and meaningful participation scales.⁸

One of the most important recent studies in this regard is the Congressionally-mandated National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health (Add Health).⁹ The most critical finding of the study for those concerned with adolescent health is that students who felt "connected" to either their family or school were less involved in health-risk behaviors across the board. School connectedness, "influenced in good measure by perceived caring from teachers and high expectations for student performance" (two measures included in the RYDM scale), was found to make a critical difference.

The Add Health school connectedness scale consists of five items:

HS Questions 10, 11, 12, 13, 14/MS Questions A9, 10, 11, 12, 13 : At school... I feel close to people at this school; I am happy to be at this school; I feel like I am part of this school; The teachers at this school treat students fairly; and I feel safe in my school.

This five-item scale was added to the RYDM in 2002 in order to compare the results with those obtained from the Total School Assets scales in the RYDM and also to enhance the comparability of the RYDM results to a nationally-important survey. Several of the items in the scale are similar to those in the RYDM, but they ask students directly how they feel about the school rather than ascertain their perceptions of the school environment. Comparison of the data from the two scales suggest they are measuring different factors, but also that they are strongly related. This scale both supports the RYDM Total School Assets scores as a surrogate measure for school connectedness and provides a confirmatory measure based on individual psychological dimensions rather than environmental supports. As would be expected, the higher the perceived Total School Assets in the RYDM, the higher the score on the Add Health school connectedness scale. As such it was selected as a surrogate for school connectedness for the state SDFSC Performance Indicators. *Note: The Add Health school connected scale is the CDE-required Title IV Performance Indicator for school connectedness.*

ENDNOTES

¹ Garbarino, J., Dubrow, N., Kostelny, K., & Pardo, C. (1992).

² Werner, E. and Smith, R. (1992).

³ Michael Rutter. (1979).

⁴ Rutter et al. (1979).

⁵ Phelan, et al. (1992).

⁶ Weikart & Schweinhart. (1997).

⁷ Dornbusch et al. (2001); Ryan (1999); Wentzel (1999); Goodenow (1993).

⁸ Ryan & Patrick (2001); Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan. (1996).

⁹ Resnick et al. (1997).

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

Evidence is accumulating that transforming schools and creating a resilience safety net for *all* children depends not only on the involvement of families but of community members. This means that schools must also form respectful, strengths-based, and reciprocal relationships with community-based organizations (CBOs) and social service agencies, as well as with businesses and community volunteers.

As the recent National Academy of Science/Institute of Medicine's report, *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* found, youth-serving community-based organizations are now playing critical roles in promoting ongoing learning and healthy developmental outcomes in students.¹ Both schools and CBOs have unique and complementary strengths that can be drawn on to encourage healthy and successful development if they form a partnership that draws on each of their strengths. At an even deeper level of partnership, schools must be seen as resource centers for communities. According to one resilience researcher, Patricia Gandara (1989):

If the terms 'school' and 'community' began to merge in citizens' minds, then a family member might spend some part of the day in the back of the classroom not only monitoring the progress of the students and the quality of the education, but also making an unspoken statement that education is crucial and that the people providing that education deserve the respect of the students and the community. Businesses might provide release time for parents—maybe even other community members—to spend a few hours a month in the schools. Their presence would convey a basic message: school is serious business, and communities are partners in that business. The schools might enjoy the support of all sectors of the community. No longer would they be the special interest of that one-quarter of the voting public with children in school.

CARING RELATIONSHIPS

HS Questions A24, 26, 29/MS Questions A23, 25, 28: Outside of my home and school, there is an adult... who really cares about me; who notices when I am upset about something; whom I trust.

One caring person—often a youth worker, social worker, neighbor, grandparent, older friend, clergy member—has the power to change the life trajectory of a child from “at risk” to “at promise”, as resilience research documents. Social, economic, and technological changes over the last 40 years have created a fragmentation of community life, resulting in breaks in the naturally occurring networks and relationships between individuals, families, schools, and other social systems within a community. The loss of intergenerational relationships, and the increasing isolation of youth, has been especially challenging to healthy youth development.

Fortunately, two forces of planned community change are countering this segregation and isolation of youth. First, the concept of *mentoring*, the intentional creation of caring intergenerational relationships, is capturing the hearts and minds of communities and schools across the country. The phenomenal growth in adult community volunteers forming caring relationships with young people is due in large part to the positive health behavior and academic outcomes found in the powerful national evaluation of Big Brothers/Big Sisters by Joseph Tierney and other Public/Private Ventures researchers.² This evaluation left no doubt that caring

relationships in the community that convey positive expectations and invite the active participation of youth are the catalysts for positive youth development and successful learning.

Second, *neighborhood-based youth organizations* are creating surrogate families and homes for youth. Here, the youth workers essentially become the mentor to a small group of young people. Both of these efforts offer schools powerful potential partnerships in improving the health and well-being of their students. Schools must reach out to their community partners to weave a safety net of relationships for young people outside of school hours. Not only do outside-of-school programs promote internal assets in young people, but a recent meta-analysis found that these programs have a statistically significant positive impact on student achievement in reading and mathematics.³

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

HS Questions A25, 27, 28/MS Questions A24, 26, 27: Outside of my home and school, there is an adult... who tells me when I do a good job; who believes that I will be a success; who always wants me to do my best.

This cluster of items on the RYDM informs the school as to how young people believe they are perceived in the community. The growing perception that adults have low expectations of youth and express little belief in young people's capacity has become evident in communities across the nation. Public opinion has increasingly regarded youth as problems instead of seeing them as social resources with the potential to make powerful contributions to society. Social policies are increasingly blaming youth for reacting to the world adults have created—a world with decreasing levels of the developmental supports and opportunities necessary for healthy development and successful learning. Surveys conducted by the Public Agenda Foundation over the last five years have consistently documented that about 2/3 of more than 2,000 adults interviewed have only negative opinions of teenagers. Similarly, almost half of these adults share negative opinions of even younger children. Moreover, we are now locking up an unprecedented number of young people and simultaneously passing legislation and initiatives that are tearing apart the juvenile justice safety net that provides alternatives for incarcerated youth.

Schools alone cannot create the safety net of supports and opportunities vital to the healthy development of children and youth. Schools must work in partnership with students, families and their communities—local community-based organizations, city government, health and human service agencies, businesses, the media, and community volunteers. Through these partnerships, students must be given opportunities to do service in their communities and to form relationships with adults in these different community sectors. Community service learning and mentoring are two proven approaches for promoting healthy development and learning in students, as well as for developing positive community attitudes toward children and youth.

MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

HS Questions A30, 31, 32/MS Questions A29, 30, 31: Outside of my home and school, I do these things... I am part of clubs, sports teams, church/temple, or other group activities; I am involved in music, art, literature, sports, or a hobby; I help other people.

The natural result of having high expectations for youth, for viewing youth as resources and not problems, is the creation of opportunities for them to be contributing members and leaders of their community. Just as occurs in the family and school environments, meaningful opportunities to participate in and contribute to community life, can help develop a sense of belonging and connection to one's community.

Schools and community-based youth-serving organizations must build partnerships to create programs that provide a wide range of opportunities for youth to develop competencies based on their own interests, life goals, and dreams. Also, through school-linked community service learning, youth can be given opportunities to engage in meaningful work that meets real human needs and compelling social and community concerns. Giving youth leadership roles and actively involving them in the planning and implementation of these efforts can help build a strong sense of ownership and connection. By engaging in leadership roles, youth make personal investments and commitments to adults and other peers involved in the organization and to the larger community. Linking the school and community is how a safety net for children and youth is woven. This linkage is even more important if a large percentage of students do not score *High* in the opportunities for meaningful participation in the community (see Table 4 of the *Resilience & Youth Development Module Handbook*).

Endnote

¹ Eccles, J. & Gootman, J. (2002).

² Tierney, et al. (1995).

³ Lauer et al. (2003)

RESILIENCE AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
NON-REQUIRED QUESTIONS
MODULE B



WestEd

C A L I F O R N I A healthy kids S U R V E Y

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B. INTRODUCTION

The Resilience & Youth Development questions are devoted entirely to assessing the external and internal assets associated with positive youth development. The Core Module A report provides a brief overview to the theoretical framework underlying the survey and explains the scales in which the survey items are grouped. The required Resilience & Youth Development sections in the Core (school and community assets) are discussed in Core Module A report. The optional sections, peer, home, and internal assets) are discussed in this report.

B1. HOME ENVIRONMENT

Resilience research has identified that feeling connected to one's family and having positive family experiences is the most powerful protective factor in the lives of young people. While positive school experiences and feeling connected to school has been associated with overcoming much adversity in children's lives, including a troubled home environment, schools that help support families can further weave a safety net of connection for students. Moreover, educational research has repeatedly documented that family involvement in the school is a major contributor to student achievement, regardless of family income. Thus, schools that both support and work in partnership with families create a powerful fabric of protection and achievement motivation.

The aim of family support and involvement programs in educational settings is to build on family strengths, not focus on family deficits. Just as successful schools relate to their students with caring relationships, high expectation messages, and opportunities to participate, they also reach out to students' families with care and respect and invite them in as partners in educating all their children. Adults, like young people, are attracted to places that provide them the supports and opportunities for meeting their basic needs for belonging, respect, self-efficacy, and meaning.

As James Comer and his colleagues' (1996) over 30-year effort, the School Development Project, has demonstrated, asking parents to just make cookies, go on field trips, etc., is wasting the valuable resources and gifts each family or community member possesses.¹ The Comer Model employed low-income parents in the active management and decision-making of the school, resulting in profound improvements in academic and social behavior among the students. The Families and Schools Together (FAST) program, also a strengths-based approach, uses the school to reach out to entire families and organizes multifamily groups for mutual support in promoting positive behaviors and academic success in their children.

CARING RELATIONSHIPS

HS/MS Questions B26, B28, B30: In my home, there is a parent or some other adult... who is interested in my school work; who talks with me about my problems; who listens to me when I have something to say.

The most powerful protective factor in the lives of children is the presence of a primary caregiver, especially during the first year of a child's life.² School-based family support programs—such as California's Healthy Start and other states' Parents As Teachers programs—try to support families in their roles as primary caregivers. They provide parenting resources, support groups, referrals, and access to other social service providers. Other resilience research has identified that when single

parents—including teen moms—receive this support, the life outcomes for their children are positive and equivalent to youth growing up in two-parent families.

If a small percentage of students score in the *High* range in the asset of perceived caring from adults in their home, it becomes critically important that schools communicate and provide more supports and opportunities for families to increase their positive caregiving. It also signifies that the school will need to create prevention/early intervention support services for students so that youth get this very critical need for love and trust met.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

HS/MS Questions B25, B27, B29: In my home, there is a parent or some other adult... who expects me to follow the rules; who believes that I will be a success; who always wants me to do my best.

High parental expectations, backed up with family support and love, is repeatedly associated with academic and life success. The most commonly cited message promoting resilience is the caregiver's belief in a child's capacities—believing in the child when she doesn't even believe in herself. Part of these expectations include other family characteristics such as structure, fair and clear rules and expectations, empowering discipline, guidance, rituals, encouraging a youth's unique strengths and interests, and providing the freedom, within the context of safety, for a child to develop and grow. Especially critical is the parent's respect for the child's autonomy and encouragement of independence. The presence of this deep belief and structure in the home helps the young person meet his needs for safety, love, belonging, respect, and meaning.

MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

HS/MS Questions B31-33: At home... I do fun things or go fun places with my parents or other adults; I do things that make a difference; I help make decisions with my family.

A natural outgrowth of having high expectations for children is that they are acknowledged as valued participants in the life and work of their families. Research has borne out that the family background of resilient children and youth is usually characterized by many opportunities for the youth to participate in and contribute to the life of the family. For example, Werner and Smith found that assigned chores, domestic responsibilities (including care of siblings), and even part-time work to help support the family proved to be sources of strength and competence in children. Furthermore, when children and youth grow up in families where they have some decision-making power and responsibility, they learn that critical predictor of healthy outcomes: self-management and control (i.e., autonomy).³

An obvious but important strategy for encouraging meaningful participation in the home is advocating for family members to hold regular family meetings. Family meetings provide an opportunity for shared decision-making and responsibility. Schools themselves can create several different family involvement programs that model for families ways to make decisions and have fun together. Programs like those listed in Table 3 of *The Resilience & Youth Development Module Handbook* bring families into the school to do fun and engaging activities with their children, based on what their children are already doing in school.

Endnotes

¹ Comer et al. (1996).

² Werner and Smith. (1992).

³ Werner and Smith. (1992).

B2. PEER ENVIRONMENT

Peer influence is a powerful developmental force. Peer influence is most often interpreted negatively, such as in peer pressure to engage in health-risk behaviors. However, resilience research has documented the positive power of peers. This is seen through supportive friendships and positive peer role models—critical protective factors in the lives of children and youth. The challenge for schools is to engage this influence as a support and opportunity essential for healthy adolescent development. School shootings serve as a painful reminder of the dangerous combination of a society and community in which lethal weapons are readily available and of schools that don't build a sense of community among their students across differences.

Schools and youth-serving community organizations must create a sense of community rich in opportunities for caring relationships and high expectation messages. These two external assets enhance peer relations between children and youth in and outside of school and meet their developmental needs for love and belonging, respect, accomplishment, identity, power, and meaning in positive ways. The RYDM does not ask students about meaningful participation in the Peer Environment because there is no distinct Peer Environment. Youth interactions and participation take place in the School, Home and Community.

CARING RELATIONSHIPS

HS/MS Questions B19-21: I have a friend about my own age... who really cares about me; who talks with me about my problems; who helps me when I'm having a hard time.

This scale measures *how* students behave towards one another. A positive school climate depends to a great extent on creating caring, empathetic student-to-student relationships. Resilience research on youth friendships and loneliness, alienation, and suicide clearly implicates the importance that friendships and peer social networks play in the positive development of young people. Moreover, given the decline in societal and adult support for children and youth, it is imperative that schools, homes, and community organizations provide youth with every opportunity to be a support and resource to each other. When provided opportunities to create friendship networks and positive peer relationships regardless of cultural, gender, class, and ability differences, youth develop that critical internal asset—empathy. Ultimately, children who care become compassionate adults who, in turn, create caring communities that provide supports and opportunities for all their members.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS: PRO-SOCIAL PEERS

HS/MS Questions B22-24: My friends... get into a lot of trouble; try to do what is right; do well in school.

This scale examines *what* a students' friends do and separates pro-social peers from their antisocial counterparts. Creating small groupings of students who share common interests, goals, activities, and/or concerns helps foster an environment that promotes caring peer relationships focused on pro-social activities. If a small percentage of students score *High* in the asset of perceived expectations from their peers, this signifies that youth need many opportunities to form positive, healthy peer relationships both during school hours as well as in afterschool programs. Studies of effective youth-serving programs and organizations that achieved these outcomes found them to be safe places where students can socialize with peers, develop inter- and intra-personal life skills, belong to a valued

group, contribute to their community, and feel competent (McLaughlin et al., 1994). They used activities that engaged young people with diverse positive role models; built confidence and self-esteem; taught communication skills in the context of relationships and activities; supported and showed genuine concern for the young people; helped youth realize their educational objectives; and allowed youth to be of service to the larger community. (See Table 5 in *The Resilience & Youth Development Module Handbook* for more strategies.)

B3. INTERNAL ASSETS

The RYDM measures six internal assets or resilience traits that are consistently described in the literature as being associated with positive development and successful learning: cooperation and communication, self-efficacy, empathy, problem solving, self-awareness, and goals and aspirations. External and internal resilience are clearly related. Analyses of CHKS data presented in *The Resilience & Youth Development Module Handbook* show a clear stepwise relationship across environments between the percent of students classified as being *High*, *Moderate*, or *Low* in total external assets and the percentage classified as *High* in total internal assets. For example, for the school environment, 94% of those in schools classified as *High* in total perceived school assets were also *High* in total internal assets, compared to 65% of those classified as *Moderate* in external assets and 37% of *Low*.

Although this only illustrates a correlation, not a causal relationship, the resilience or youth development approach focuses on the importance of increasing environmental assets in order to increase internal assets. The approach focuses on environmental change, on providing the “protective” developmental supports and opportunities (external assets) that, in turn, will engage students’ innate resilience and develop their capacities for positive developmental outcomes (internal assets)

A review of the research on successful human development clearly indicates the effectiveness of this environmental approach over that of individual skill-focused efforts, commonly referred to as deficit or “fix-the-kid” models. Consequently, most of the strategies recommended for improving the internal assets in *The Resilience & Youth Development Module Handbook* are also those recommended above for building the external assets. What is important, however, is the modeling and mirroring of the internal asset by the adults in the home, school, and community environments. This means adults must exhibit the desired behavior and attitude, intentionally discuss, and reflect back the desired behaviors and attitudes to young people.

Many social and life skills programs that attempt to change individual behavior by direct teaching approaches, without paying attention to the external assets (the quality of relationships, messages, and opportunities for participation), have difficulty finding positive long-term behavioral change outcomes. In contrast, environmental change approaches like cooperative and learning create opportunities in the context of relationships to learn these skills and attitudes through direct and ongoing experience.¹

The Internal Assets of the RYDM are not intended to measure whether a student is resilient or not since we earlier defined resilience as a capacity every person has for healthy development. Rather, internal assets should be seen as outcomes of the youth development process and as indicators of whether the necessary environmental supports and opportunities are in place. The Internal Assets are a second source of data (the first being the perceived External Assets) for determining whether a student's Home, School, Community, and Peer Environments are providing these important external assets.

Nevertheless, for schools that are using prevention and other curriculum designed to enhance these personal attributes, the Internal Asset scales and even the individual items do have an intrinsic value on their own in measuring change among students over time. These scales can be useful as part of evaluations of these programs.

COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION

*HS/MS Questions B8: I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine;
 B13: I enjoy working together with other students my age;
 B14: I stand up for myself without putting others down.*

This social competence asset refers to having flexibility in relationships, the ability to work effectively with others, to effectively exchange information and ideas, and to express feelings and needs to others. Clearly, the power of this attribute is that it facilitates the development of that powerful protective factor—caring relationships. Conversely, lack of this social skill is associated with adult criminality, mental illness, and drug abuse.

Keep in mind that the RYDM, as a self-report survey, can only ask students their perceptions of how well they cooperate and communicate. Research-based strategies to implement, if a large percentage of your students do not score *High* in cooperation and communication or in the following internal assets, are presented at the end of the Internal Assets section in Table 6 of *The Resilience & Youth Development Module Handbook*.

SELF-EFFICACY

*HS/MS Questions B6: I can work out my problems;
 B7: I can do most things if I try;
 B9: There are many things that I do well.*

Self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's own competence and feeling one has the power to make a difference. It is related to task mastery, the sense of doing something well, and to self-agency, having the ability to act and exert one's will. Self-efficacy is a critical component of developing one's identity and sense of self—the major developmental task of the adolescent years. If a large percentage of students do not score *High* in the asset of self-efficacy, this may indicate the prevalence of low expectations in your school.

EMPATHY

*HS/MS Questions B10: I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt;
 B11: I try to understand what other people go through;
 B15: I try to understand how other people feel and think.*

Empathy, the understanding and caring about another's experiences and feelings, is considered essential to healthy development and the root of morality and mutual respect. It is a commonly identified individual attribute in resilience and emotional intelligence research. According to Daniel Goleman (1995), “Empathy is the single human quality that leads individuals to override self-interest and act with compassion and altruism.”² Infancy researchers have identified that children as early as the age of two can realize that someone else's feelings differ from their own. Lack of empathy is associated with many of the behaviors plaguing schools—bullying, harassment, teasing, and other forms of violence.

PROBLEM SOLVING

*HS/MS Questions B12: When I need help, I find someone to talk with;
 B4: I know where to go for help with a problem;
 B5: I try to work out problems by talking or writing about them.*

Problem solving includes the ability to plan, to be resourceful, to think critically and reflectively, and to creatively examine multiple perspectives before making a decision or taking action. Resilience research and other research on successful adults have consistently identified the presence of these skills. Students should be given the opportunity to directly problem-solve in an ongoing and authentic capacity.

SELF-AWARENESS

*HS/MS Questions B16: There is a purpose to my life;
 B17: I understand my moods and feelings;
 B18: I understand why I do what I do.*

Self-awareness is knowing and understanding one's self. It is a hallmark of successful and healthy human development. It includes developing an understanding of how one's thinking influences one's behavior, feelings, and moods as well as an understanding of one's strengths and challenges. Self-awareness often manifests as the stepping back from experience, being with what is happening instead of being lost in it. It is the fundamental internal asset upon which other assets (like insight and self-control) are built.

GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

*HS/MS Questions B1: I have goals and plans for the future;
 B2: I plan to graduate from high school;
 B3: I plan to go to college or some other school after high school.*

Having goals and aspirations refers to using one's dreams, visions, and plans to focus the future; in other words, to have high expectations and hope for one's self. Goals and aspirations are an expression of the intrinsic motivation that guides human development. They reflect the search for meaning at the heart of every human life. Ultimately, young people who have goals and aspirations develop a sense of deep connectedness. Resilience research, as well as the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (1999), has identified a sense of deep connectedness as the most powerful individual asset protecting against negative developmental outcomes. These negative outcomes include teen pregnancy and school failure, emotional distress and suicide, violence, and involvement with alcohol and other drugs.

Conclusion

Weaving a fabric of resilience for all of our children and youth requires building linkages and partnerships between schools, young people, families, and community groups. No single institution can do it alone. The Resilience & Youth Development Module provides a research-based, data-driven tool for bringing together all of these players vital to a young person's healthy development and academic success.

Your school or district RYDM data follows in Table B1: Summary of External/Internal Assets. If your school community is concerned about any of the data reported by your students or is not completely satisfied with it, please consult the Preface of this report for next steps and resources to help you further promote the resilience and positive youth development of all your students.

Endnotes

- ¹ Johnson and Johnson. (1989 and 1996). Slavin. (1990).
adventure learning Hattie et al. (1997).
peer helping Tobler. (1997; 1998).
mentoring Tierney et al. (1995).
the arts Catterall. (1997). Heath et al. (1998).
and service learning Melchior, (1996 and 1998); RPP International. (1998).
- ² Goleman, D. (1995).

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TABLES

RESILIENCE AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MODULE B

INDEX OF ITEM NUMBERS—CORE & MODULE B

| Middle School Item | High School Item | Scale | Variable |
|--------------------|------------------|-------|---|
| A9 | A10 | SC | I feel close to people at this school. |
| A10 | A11 | SC | I am happy to be at this school. |
| A11 | A12 | SC | I feel like I am part of this school. |
| A12 | A13 | SC | The teachers at this school treat students fairly. |
| A13 | A14 | SC | I feel safe in my school. |
| A14 | A15 | S-CR | who really cares about me. |
| A15 | A16 | S-HE | who tells me when I do a good job. |
| A16 | A17 | S-CR | who notices when I'm not there. |
| A17 | A18 | S-HE | who always wants me to do my best. |
| A18 | A19 | S-CR | who listens to me when I have something to say. |
| A19 | A20 | S-HE | who believes that I will be a success. |
| A20 | A21 | S-MP | I do interesting activities. |
| A21 | A22 | S-MP | I help decide things like class activities or rules. |
| A22 | A23 | S-MP | I do things that make a difference. |
| A23 | A24 | C-CR | who really cares about me. |
| A24 | A25 | C-HE | who tells me when I do a good job. |
| A25 | A26 | C-CR | who notices when I am upset about something. |
| A26 | A27 | C-HE | who believes that I will be a success. |
| A27 | A28 | C-HE | who always wants me to do my best. |
| A28 | A29 | C-CR | whom I trust. |
| A29 | A30 | C-MP | I am part of clubs, sports teams, church/temple, or other group activities. |
| A30 | A31 | C-MP | I am involved in music, art, literature, sports or a hobby. |
| A31 | A32 | C-MP | I help other people. |
| B1 | B1 | GA | I have goals and plans for the future. |
| B2 | B2 | GA | I plan to graduate from high school. |
| B3 | B3 | GA | I plan to go to college or some other school after high school. |
| B4 | B4 | PS | I know where to go for help with a problem. |
| B5 | B5 | PS | I try to work out problems by talking or writing about them. |
| B6 | B6 | PS | I can work out my problems. |
| B7 | B7 | SE | I can do most things if I try. |
| B8 | B8 | CC | I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine. |
| B9 | B9 | SE | There are many things that I do well. |
| B10 | B10 | E | I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt. |
| B11 | B11 | E | I try to understand what other people go through. |
| B12 | B12 | PS | When I need help, I find someone to talk with. |

| Middle School Item | High School Item | Scale | Variable |
|--------------------|------------------|-------|---|
| B13 | B13 | CC | I enjoy working together with other students my age. |
| B14 | B14 | CC | I stand up for myself without putting others down. |
| B15 | B15 | E | I try to understand how other people feel and think. |
| B16 | B16 | SA | There is a purpose to my life. |
| B17 | B17 | SA | I understand my moods and feelings. |
| B18 | B18 | SA | I understand why I do what I do. |
| B19 | B19 | P-CR | who really cares about me. |
| B20 | B20 | P-PS | who talks with me about my problems. |
| B21 | B21 | P-CR | who helps me when I'm having a hard time. |
| B22 | B22 | P | get into a lot of trouble. |
| B23 | B23 | P-HE | try to do what is right. |
| B24 | B24 | P-HE | do well in school. |
| B25 | B25 | H-HE | who expects me to follow the rules. |
| B26 | B26 | H-CR | who is interested in my school work. |
| B27 | B27 | H-HE | who believes that I will be a success. |
| B28 | B28 | H-CR | who talks with me about my problems. |
| B29 | B29 | H-HE | who always wants me to do my best. |
| B30 | B30 | H-CR | who listens to me when I have something to say. |
| B31 | B31 | H-MP | I do fun things or go fun places with my parents or other adults. |
| B32 | B32 | H | I do things that make a difference. |
| B33 | B33 | H | I help make decisions with my family. |

CC = Cooperation and Communication
 C-CR = Community Caring Relationships
 C-HE = Community High Expectations
 C-MP = Community Meaningful Participation
 E = Empathy
 GA = Goals and Aspirations
 H-CR = Home Caring Relationships
 H-HE = Home High Expectations
 H-MP = Home Meaningful Participation

P-CR = Peer Caring Relationships
 P-HE = Peer High Expectations
 PS = Problem Solving
 SA = Self-awareness
 S-CR = School Caring Relationships
 S-HE = School High Expectations
 S-MP = School Meaningful Participation
 SC = School Connectedness
 SE = Self-efficacy