YOUTH-NEX

The University of Virginia Center to Promote Effective Youth Development

Visit us at: curry.virginia.edu/youth-nex
Letter from the Director

More so than ever before, numerous and evolving challenges affect our nation’s youth. It is our obligation and our privilege to address these concerns, helping ensure our youth a promising and healthy life. In doing so, we not only support the well-being of our youth, but we secure the success of our society.

Inherent in the founding of the University of Virginia, was Thomas Jefferson’s conviction that our youth’s education is critical to sustaining our democratic nation. It is our mission to harness the opportunities in schools and communities to fulfill the potential of our youth to become healthy, productive citizens.

Through science, Youth-Nex enhances the strengths of children and adolescents and prevents developmental risk. Our vision is that our nation’s youth, a rich, often untapped resource, may flourish.

Sincerely,

PATRICK TOLAN
Director, YOUTH-NEX
Professor Curry School of Education and Department of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences

“We cannot always build the future of our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.”
- FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Mission

Youth-Nex promotes healthy youth development, educational attainment, and learning through research, training and service. The center focuses on the assets of young people, their schools, communities and relationships.

Youth-Nex:

- Applies a holistic and scientific approach to enhance development of healthy, productive young citizens.
- Works across the University to engage multi-disciplinary faculty with diverse expertise in youth development.
- Emphasizes promoting effective positive change including prevention of physical and mental illness, violence, substance abuse, and school failure.
- Bridges gaps between practice and policy; between disciplines; and between service sectors.
- Trains students and other professionals in the science and practice of positive youth development.
- Collaborates with local, state, and federal partners on action to promote youth development.
- Seeks to improve learning environments by focusing on the diverse factors that effect academic achievement.
Youth-Nex focuses research in four main areas.  

**Healthy Lifestyles and Decisions**

Mental and physical health impacts well being, academic learning, and relationships. Sedate lifestyles and easy access to unhealthy food and conditions such as obesity threaten to undermine our young people’s ability to thrive. Youth-Nex works within multiple areas of health promotion, including exercise and nutrition to foster overall adolescent well-being.

**Engaged Citizens**

Today’s teenagers are tomorrow’s voters, school board members, CEOs, and community leaders. Youth-Nex views teens as an often untapped resource, who can lead, create, and contribute to our nation in countless ways. The center supports opportunities for youth to connect to their schools and communities as competent citizens and future leaders. Youth-Nex works with educators and organizations to develop, foster and activate this vast potential.

**Avoiding Risk**

Adolescents are bombarded with choices—many are risky. Youth-Nex resources help youth, schools, and parents avoid problem behaviors such as violence, bullying, smoking, alcohol, and other drug use. The center collaborates with partners in the assessment and evaluation of programs, policies, and practices addressing these areas.

**Supportive Relationships**

Adolescents lives rise and fall with the relationships they forge. Social media, peer groups, teachers and schools, coaches, parents, and friends are all powerful forces in their lives. Relationships are the engine that make teens “go” and the support they get from these bonds shapes their future. Youth-Nex programs and research work to better understand and strengthen these relationships helping shape decision-making, academic learning, and to engage young citizens.

"We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends.”

- Mary McLeod Bethune
Educator and Civil Rights Leader

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