How Youth Surveys Guide Collective Community Investment and Planning: Benefits of Using Youth Data

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By using a survey to ask youth about their experiences – and listening to what they tell you about their challenges – you will take an important step toward implementing appropriate programs focused on preventing the most concerning issues youth face today.

This learning brief draws from many years of experience with collecting survey data from youth in local public schools during the implementation of the Evidence2Success® framework. Based on that experience, we share the following:

- key benefits experienced by communities using the framework, including its feasibility and usefulness, growth community-wide in using data to make decisions, and cross-sector collaboration;
- candid lessons learned about how others can approach similar work in their own community; and
- a challenge to think about integrating this work system-wide.

How will your community respond?

PennState College of Health and Human Development

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A FIVE PART LEARNING SERIES 1

This is the first of five briefs in a learning series based on the experiences of communities implementing Evidence2Success, a framework for engaging communities and public systems in improving the well-being of children and youth supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Each brief takes a close look at a prevention practice used by communities to shift the way decisions are made about programs, resources, and strategies that impact outcomes for youth and family well-being.

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Introduction

Imagine this: You are a public system director, a school principal or guidance counselor, or a youth-oriented community organization lead. You see the needs of the youth and families you serve every day. You also see their strengths, and the strengths of the community. Some days, however, the needs seem to pile up, and you don't know where to start addressing them. How do you identify what to prioritize or which programs will best serve the youth and families of your community? Strategically collecting information from your community's youth can fortify efforts to accurately identify the strengths and challenges among local youth, focus your area's prevention work, and justify funding requests that meet your locality's needs.

This learning brief examines how collecting youth input using a risk and protective factor survey, like the Youth Experience Survey (YES), can add value to your community's and systems' existing ways of knowing about youth issues. Specifically, the YES asks students in middle school and high school about relevant issues concerning health, safety, and well-being. Questions are designed to elicit from the youth what risks they face and what factors protect them. To that end, this brief then delves into what can happen in a community when those data are strategically and systematically used by community leaders, residents, educators, and program providers to make decisions about implementing youth and family programs, especially those that prevent problems before they start.

The brief draws from experience rooted in data collection from youth in local public schools, though many of these lessons can apply to other settings where data collection from youth may occur. Definitions of key prevention science terms used in the brief are hyperlinked to a glossary at the end of the brief.

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Collecting data from local youth provides communities with valuable insight into issues faced by young people.

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What Currently Exists? What Is Still Needed?

Governmental, nonprofit, and community-based organizations, and even for-profit corporations, have long recognized the importance and utility of gathering information from youth[1][2]. To this end, national, state, and local efforts exist. Two national monitoring systems, operational for many years, keep track of the aggregate health and wellness of America's youth: The Youth Risk Behavior survey (YRBS)[3] and the Monitoring the Future survey[4]. We share specific information about these and other common surveys in Table 1 (in Appendix). Both surveys can help decision-makers and community leaders understand, at a broad level, the needs of youth in the United States. Both surveys use a *national* sampling method to collect data rather than collecting data from only the youth of a *localized* area. Because the results do not include responses from all the youth from a specific area, these surveys are best suited to planning initiatives at state and federal levels. Though they can prepare stakeholders for future, more locally focused surveys, they are less suited to help the parents, youth, educators, providers, and public systems in local communities make decisions that directly address current issues specific to their communities' young people. To this end, it is notable that a few states have recently opted out of the YRBS to focus on building state-specific surveys that will better meet the needs of their youth.[5][6]

As of 2022, 27 states had their own youth survey modeled after the Communities That Care youth survey, which measures behavioral outcomes, risk and protective factors, and school climate, with an emphasis on risk [7][8][9]. Most of the state- and community-level youth surveys collect data on drug and alcohol use and perceived norms about usage; mental health, suicidality, depressive symptoms; bullying, violence, and other aggressive behaviors; and some driving practices. See Table 2 for a snapshot of the contents of each state youth survey. These surveys, however, frequently do not include assessments of social and emotional health, prosocial behavior, or specific information on participation in youth programs. See Table 3 for the name of the youth survey used in your state.

Despite these limitations, surveys can be a cost-effective and valid tool to collect information from youth[10][11][12].

Introducing the Youth Experience Survey (YES): A Useful Tool for Local Decision-Making

Given the importance of using local data to make local decisions, developers of the Evidence2Success® framework (the Framework) suggest that communities use a broad risk/protective factor and outcome survey to collect data about youth in sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth grades that is part of a plan of action based on survey findings. Evidence2Success provides communities and public systems with a framework to help improve the health and well-being of youth through identifying and supporting evidence-based programs and other activities according to community priorities.

The developers adapted the Communities That Care youth survey to create the YES.[13] The YES collects data on a broader set of information, asking more questions about protective factors and a wider variety of outcomes such as healthy relationships, school climate, sexual activity, and prosocial behavior, compared to most other surveys. In the Evidence2Success process, communities may use the YES or a similar risk/protective and outcome behavior survey to make local decisions, whether it be at the level of a school district, neighborhood, set of neighborhoods, or school catchment area.

Accordingly, this learning brief examines the practice of collecting youth survey data and reviews what can happen in a community when these data are used in a systematic way to make decisions about youth and family programs, especially those oriented toward prevention. This report begins by describing three key benefits experienced when using youth surveys to make collective decisions during implementation of the Evidence2Success effort. Then, we offer practical suggestions about what to look out for when approaching this work. Last, we look more broadly at how to integrate these practices in a systematic way in your community.

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Sharing key data collected from surveys is a useful tool for decision-making.

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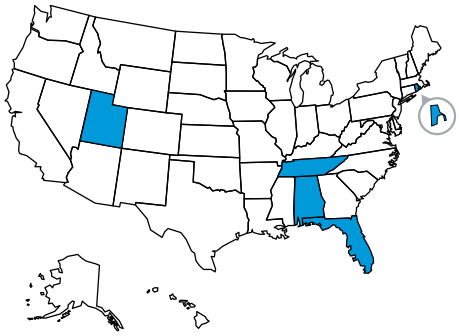
What Are Key Benefits of Using a Youth Survey to Make Collective Decisions?

Since 2012, the Framework has been implemented in six communities across the country: Providence, Rhode Island; Dallas County, Alabama; Mobile, Alabama; Salt Lake County, Utah; Memphis, Tennessee; and Miami, Florida. See Table 4 (in Appendix) to view demographic information about these communities. Each community operated within an existing or newly formed coalition structure and was helmed by a Site Coordinator and Community Board that moved activities and decision-making forward. Though the communities that adopted the Framework varied in population, density, and demographic characteristics, all shared a ***low-income, racially and ethnically diverse*** context.



Each community built a Community Board composed of public-system leaders, community representatives, and residents[1] of the neighborhood(s) that was/were initially selected to receive evidence-based programming. In Evidence2Success communities, the Community Board, in coordination with the school district or specific schools and often a data partner,[2] used the YES or a similar youth risk/protective factor survey to collect data from a census sample of youth in sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth grades. Most of these communities collected youth survey data in their local public schools for the first time. The vision for implementing the youth survey varied by community, from community-based organizations to non-school public systems to local foundations to data and evaluation specialists. The results were used to make ***local*** decisions about priorities and programming in all these settings.

Key benefits of using a youth survey to make collective decisions were compiled through a review of the process evaluation conducted by a research team from Penn State that documented each community's implementation of the Evidence2Success framework as it occurred.[3] The body of data came from interviews at three time points and evaluation surveys after orientations and workshops. Information was collected from Community Board members, who were involved in the day-to-day operations of the work, and leaders of public systems and community institutions with less regular direct involvement who were not directly involved in the work. For details about the measures and individuals involved in these data collections, see Table 5 (in Appendix). Taking this bird's-eye, post-hoc view yielded lessons about what worked and what didn't; how to avoid the pitfalls; and ways to successfully adjust to make the most of data collection—ultimately, how to better meet the needs of youth and families in individual communities.

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1 In Cohort 3, youth were recruited and engaged for participation in the Community Board.

2 The role of the local data partner was introduced to communities in the second cohort of Evidence2Success, and continued to evolve in responsibilities and ways of supporting through the communities in the third cohort.

3 More information about Penn State's process evaluation work can be found at this link: https://prevention.psu.edu/flagship_intitiative/evaluation-of-the-evidence2success-framework-for-the-annie-e-casey-foundation/

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Key Benefit #1. Collecting youth survey data is a feasible, efficient, and effective strategy for learning about the experiences of youth.

Four key bodies of evidence support this statement:

First, using process evaluation measures, each community tracked their own progress in accomplishing the tasks related to collecting, analyzing, and reporting the information learned from the youth survey. We found that, on average, communities reported high completion percentages of all tasks related to collecting, reporting, and using youth survey data to make local decisions (see Appendix, Table 6). As one community leader noted, gathering the data, then creating and delivering the reports to schools, enabled them to "use the data and connect those dots." Consequently, these data suggest that ***using youth survey data for collecting, analyzing, reporting, and making decisions by community groups is feasible.***

> "The data helped us establish emotional well-being as an outcome of concern. One of the most reassuring things to come out of the data collection process was that kids do need help and some of the best support we can offer them is giving them the opportunity to voice their issues, struggles, challenges, [and] fears and help begin to pick those apart so they can live a life with less fear."

Second, after collecting and reporting youth data, all communities went through a series of meetings to review the data and to make decisions based on the results. At the end of these meetings:

- Meeting attendees indicated that an ***easy-to-use*** survey was very important and highly rated their ability both to understand and summarize the data provided by the YES.
- Meeting attendees reported ***confidence that the youth survey provided high-quality information*** (see Appendix, Figure 7).

One site coordinator described the process and impact of using the survey in her community: "...(T)he survey started the process of resident engagement and decision-making [and] gave them the opportunity to have conversations with residents and community members. [It was] such a strong and robust administration that people couldn't argue that it was not representative."

Third, qualitative interviews with those involved also speak to the feasibility, usability, and efficiency of youth survey collections and the high quality of the information collected by the YES. Overall, individuals described the youth survey as a tool for ***learning from the youth themselves***. At times, the data helped *clarify or expand understanding* of already-identified issues of concern; in other cases, the data *revealed an unsuspected area of risk*. Sharing results can help deepen understanding of youth among community members, including those working directly with the youth.

A participant on one community's survey team commented that "the questions are so interesting, especially for community folks and general practitioners."

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What was "interesting" was further illuminated in an example showing how data could yield takeaways pertinent to a practitioner's experience: "When they read [the responses] to, 'I am fearful every day,' a teacher says, 'Oh, my kids aren't going to take risks.' Those sub questions get into the context in your community."

> "Elevating the voices of the young people themselves in determining what actions should be taken is…positive… surveying the middle and high school students in order to identify what the priorities are for [this community]."

Fourth, using a risk/protective factor survey like the YES can be an ***effective strategy*** for collective learning about the experiences of local youth.

Members of several communities described the use of YES data as a way for varied community partners and public agencies to ***consolidate behind a shared data collection tool*** that focused on youth mental and behavioral health. Ways that communities promoted shared ownership included:

- emphasizing that the YES was an additional data source not intended nor used to supplant other data sources;
- encouraging the use of publicly available data as well to yield a robust portrait of youth health and well-being;
- adding questions to the survey to meet organizational needs or to respond to a circumstance (e.g., pandemic).

When a survey like the YES has broad support from many community partners, the dynamics of decision-making can shift for the benefit of the youth and families in the community.

In summary, our evaluation data illustrates that youth surveys were easy to understand and summarize and are a useful decision-making tool. Coalition members had a high degree of confidence in the collected information, and the data were fundamental to understanding the most pressing needs of local youth.

Key Benefit #2. Collecting youth survey data in schools increased data use for decision-making community-wide.

We drew from interviews with community stakeholders to learn about how communities' use of data changed from baseline to two years after the start of activities when they integrated youth survey data to make decisions. Overall, the evidence shows that Evidence2Success communities' ***use of data to make decisions about youth programming improved remarkably over that time***. Note that collecting youth survey data in and of itself is not sufficient. As described in Key Benefit #1, the data must then be processed, analyzed, and presented in a user-friendly written report that serves as a springboard for making decisions such as determining priorities and deciding actions to address those priorities. ***The data must be used***.

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▲56%

The amount of improvement among Evidence2Success communities in using youth survey data to make decisions.

First, collected information from key leaders and involved individuals showed that ***across all communities***, the ***use of data to make decisions about youth and family programs improved*** steadily; in fact, ratings increased ***over 50%*** from their baseline levels before they collected youth survey data (see Appendix, Figure 8).

Second, another measure collected from involved individuals noted that in two consecutive years, across all communities, coalition members reported a little improvement in using and sharing data to make decisions due to Evidence2Success work (see Appendix, Figure 9).

> "They took the time to build a shared vision and shared goals through the meetings, and looking at data, and by letting the data drive the decision; and by doing that, I think that people feel ownership and a sense of responsibility toward those goals."

In summary, our evaluation suggests that the use and sharing of data to make decisions about youth programs *improved* while communities were engaged in an intentional data-collection and decision-making process. Some community members even described the process as "essential" for communities who seek to prevent health and behavioral problems and promote healthy behaviors among youth. According to one leader, the survey helps give adults insights into young people's point of view: "...It's essential that that [survey] information is used...It gets the parents and families informed about how the youth feel about these certain topics."

How They Did It

Miami-Dade County, Florida

Leaders in Miami compared youth survey data to focus groups they conducted with teens in the neighborhood initially selected for programming and concluded that the data all pointed in the same direction: "they mirrored each other." Consequently, with their data, the coalition confidently selected two priorities to further strengthen the family bond and the emotional well-being of youth. Sharing the data and their selected priorities with the community enabled them to bring important community activists into the work who saw the data, agreed with the data, and joined the workgroup at a crucial point. Their input made an impact on which programs were selected, including the Strong African American Families program, to address priorities.

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Comparing different data sources, including data from focus groups with local teens, helped leaders determine priorities with confidence.

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Key Benefit #3. Using a youth data-driven approach and an intentional collaborative decision-making process such as in Evidence2Success can promote collaboration between and among youth-serving community organizations, public systems, and the community.

We drew from interviews with community stakeholders to learn how collecting and using youth survey data to make decisions can promote community collaboration. Overall, the evidence shows that ***collecting youth survey data and using it to make decisions can promote and strengthen cross-agency and community resident collaboration*** in ways that had not previously occurred.

> Child welfare, schools, etc., we all looked at it together—community conversations too, parents, teachers, everyone dug in, decided what was important and not important, what they were skeptical about. When it was time to make decisions, they had a very robust rationale as to why they had shared priorities, and those priorities have withstood the test of time.

First, we asked coalition members to report their observations of changes that occurred in the previous year regarding how individuals and organizations worked together due to the Evidence2Success effort. Across all communities, coalition members reported that ***cross-agency collaboration*** and the ***community's preparedness to work collectively*** were both "a little better" after using data with a collaborative group to select priority issues. These results were replicated one year later after working collaboratively to select appropriate programs with youth survey data (see Appendix, Figure 10).

Second, evaluation data shows that ***across all communities***, levels of ***networking*** and ***active collaboration*** improved steadily over time. Specifically, networking includes behaviors such as attending meetings and communicating regularly. Active collaboration includes behaviors such as writing grants and cooperatively planning events and activities (see Appendix, Figure 11). According to one coalition leader, specific relationships were strengthened, both between the coalition and departments and personnel within the school district and between the coalition and leaders within individual schools. The work on the YES "...gave us a chance and opportunity for increased collaboration with the district, especially the mental health office and the research and performance management office. It helped us deepen relationships with the district, work with the district more closely, learn about their skills, and develop that relationship."

In summary, collaboration across agencies, and between community members and public systems, improved steadily when communities utilized youth survey data in an intentional way to make decisions. Change did not happen overnight; rather, things changed gradually over years of attending to the work.

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The implementation of the YES in two local school districts gave the Juvenile Courts access to what local youth were saying.

How They Did It

Selma City and Dallas County, Alabama

When the Dallas County Juvenile Courts began to look for data to support prevention work, there was very little access to what local youth were actually saying about the issues that concerned them.

"Introducing the YES in the two public school systems in the county was a game changer," said Astrid Craig, who worked on the YES as part of a broader coalition originally based out of the juvenile court system. First, they had to navigate who would participate. Historically, many initiatives began in one school district but did not extend to the other. Countywide public systems, led by the Juvenile Courts, saw the benefit of extending the survey to youth across the entire county rather than limiting it to just one school district. The district not originally included in planning saw the benefit as well. In the end, the YES was implemented in middle and high school grades in both districts.

The data has now been collected from both districts for over five years. The results give this small rural community a picture of youth concerns from the responses of the kids who actually live there. As Ms. Craig described it, "We wanted to come together, one voice, working collaboratively as a whole. The YES was such a pivotal piece for making sure we didn't leave anybody out."

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An Insider's View: Getting the Youth Survey to Work in Your Community's Schools

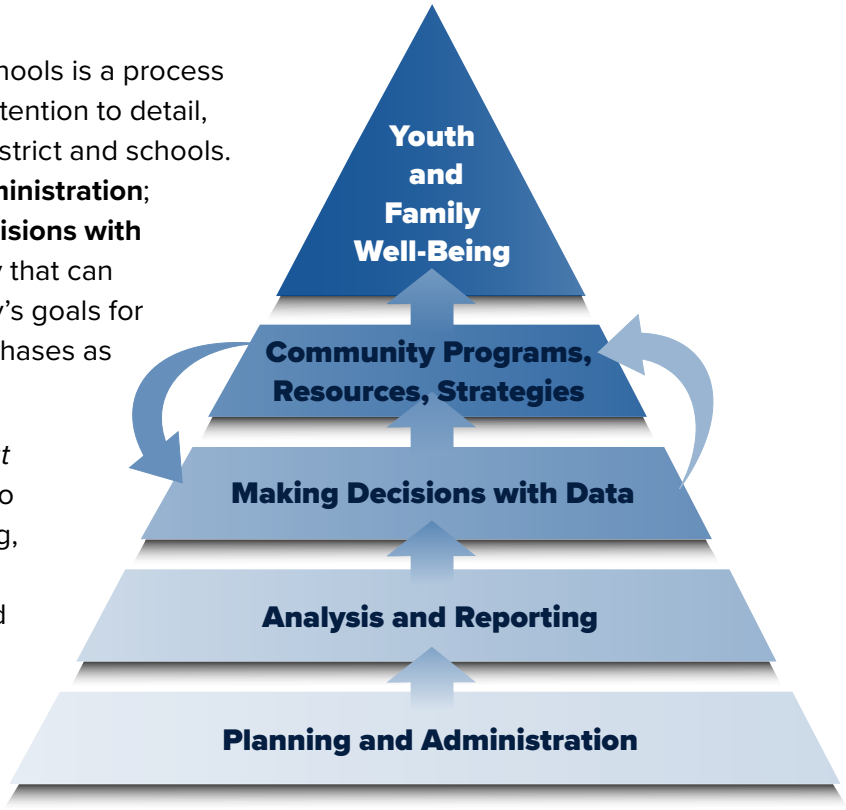
Note to the Reader:

This section is a supplement to and not a replacement for the YES protocol guide.[3]

This supplement is based on lessons from the user experiences over time of communities involved in the process evaluation of Evidence2Success.

By now, you may be thinking, "This sounds good, but how do we move from *thinking* about data collection to *doing* it?" Where to begin? What are the must-dos and cautionary tales that will help navigate potential pitfalls and challenges in the process? This section again draws on the experiences of the six communities who implemented the youth surveys in schools for the first time while using the Evidence2Success framework. Many of these lessons may be generalizable to out-of-school settings; however, because our evaluation focused on the experience of collecting data from youth in schools, we focus there.

Conducting a youth survey in the local schools is a process that requires considerable time, careful attention to detail, and close collaboration with the school district and schools. Three phases of work—**Planning and Administration**; **Analysis and Reporting**; and **Making Decisions with Data**—are foundational to a strong survey that can yield results in support of your community's goals for youth well-being. You might think of the phases as illustrated by the figure at the right.



You should expect an overall timeline of *at least one year* from the start of planning to the completion of data collection, cleaning, analyzing, and reporting. All of these activities happen before data can be used for selecting priorities and programs.[5] Our evaluation shows that delays can occur for a variety of reasons throughout this process. You'll need to be strategic and nimble. Use the lessons shared in this report to help you anticipate identified challenges and successfully navigate them. In addition, the Foundation has developed a Tool Kit to help assess your readiness and navigate this process (see Appendix). After all, the first key benefit from the evaluation was that ***this work is feasible and worthwhile!*** Below is a suggested timeline.

4 The YES Protocol guide is the developer's handbook that includes step-by-step instructions for survey planning, administration, analysis, and reporting.

5 The degree to which a community has the capacity to carry out the YES with success may be gauged using the Youth Experience Survey Readiness Assessment. An organization that is considering moving forward with the YES should start with this assessment.

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Planning and Administration (6 to 9 months)

First, build the survey task force that will lead the survey work. Essential questions to ask during this process include:

- ❑ Who in the group will lead the survey work?
- ❑ Does the planning group for the survey include staff who can move the work forward?
- ❑ Is there experienced data expertise aboard?
- ❑ How is the school district involved? Have they identified and connected you to a contact within the district who will serve as the survey point person?

In Evidence2Success communities, survey work was led by a small survey team, referred to as the survey task force or lead in the YES protocol.[6] Members of this team may include data/evaluation experts, local school district or school-level representatives, and representatives from community organizations. A designated lead with survey expertise was essential for managing the work and serving as a point of contact. This survey team was connected to a broader collaborative group called a Community Board.

In Providence, at the beginning, data partners coordinated closely with the director of research and evaluation of the school district. Later, this work was housed within the school district and later transferred to the Community Board, which closely coordinates with the school district.

In Memphis, multiple avenues facilitated buy-in for the survey. A community-based "partnership organization that uses data to inform systems-level change" led the entire process, leveraging its deeply rooted relationship with the school district to coordinate survey administration. A local school board member holding a prominent role in the Evidence2Success work also facilitated collaborative connections.

Prioritize partnership with school district representatives and leaders from the start. The complex logistics of conducting a district-wide survey require a close working relationship between the lead organization and the school district. If the lead organization does not have a direct connection to the school district within its board, it should establish a relationship—ideally with the superintendent, and/or with school principals—as soon as possible. Learn the process by asking questions, such as:

6 **Survey task force or lead** may be one person or a team. When the YES is administered district-wide, the survey task force coordinates the process for the entire district. When the YES is administered in just one school, the survey task force or lead and a local school survey coordinator will usually be the same person.

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- ❑ Does the district already conduct a youth survey? If so, how does it compare to the YES? Is there a statewide survey, which can greatly expedite data collection, analysis, and reporting? (See Tables 1, 2, 3 in Appendix.)
- ❑ Is there a data or evaluation department or a research and performance office within the district?
- ❑ What are the district's policies regarding consent? (See below.)
- ❑ Is there capacity for a computer-based administration of the survey? Or will paper and pencil be necessary the first time?
- ❑ How early can we get the survey on the calendar? If spring administration is preferred, what are the major district commitments and dates—e.g., spring break, graduation activities, testing—that survey administration and make-up survey dates will have to work around?
- ❑ Who is the district's primary point of contact for data collection?
- ❑ How is communication preferred with principals? With parents/guardians?

Notably, communities with strong existing relationships with the school district(s) and principals where the YES was implemented led to a smoother process, whether the survey is implemented online using computers or with paper and pencil. In Evidence2Success communities, relationships among organizations and the district(s) were often solidified with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

In very small districts, like Selma City and Dallas County public schools, the superintendents assigned points of contact to connect the survey task force lead with the schools.

In the small to moderately sized Providence public schools, the director of research and evaluation was the survey task force lead.

Memphis-Shelby County Schools (aka "Big Shelby") comprise the largest school district in Tennessee. The survey task force lead at the district level was the director of the mental health services department.

Miami-Dade County Public School District is one of the largest public school districts in the nation[14]. District policy required review by the Institutional Review Board, who required changes prior to survey implementation, and active consent for student survey participation. Survey administration was restricted to noninstructional time. Superintendent support emerged as a critical factor, compounded by a midyear departure and turnover.

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Align the survey sample with your area of interest. The representativeness of the youth who complete the survey, meaning the percentage of the population and its race, ethnicity, gender, age, grade demographics, determines how confident you can be in the results and what kinds of decisions can be made from them. For example, a group may want to know more about the priority risks and protective factors of the youth in a particular lower socio-economic neighborhood; including the schools that serve that particular neighborhood consequently will provide information about neighborhood youth. Researchers commonly suggest that surveys capturing 80% of the intended student body provide accurate information[15]. Important questions to consider include:

- ❑ From whom do we want to collect information, and why?
  - ❍ *Are there certain neighborhoods, specific schools, or grade levels that are of special concern or interest? What are the reasons?*
  - ❍ *Do youth attend schools in their neighborhood, or does the district use an open-enrollment strategy?*
  - ❍ *Are there private, charter, or magnet schools that affect where youth attend school? How will that affect our interpretation and use of the results for decision-making?*
- ❑ What kinds of decisions are going to be made based on the data collected?

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Assuring a diverse and representative student sample from within the school district allows for a more comprehensive assessment of and use for what youth have to say.

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Decision-makers typically make decisions based on predetermined political boundaries, yet youth often attend schools that are outside of the area in which they live. Thus, youth survey data used for decision-making are most useful for a variety of audiences and purposes when surveys are given to ***every student in sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth grades district-wide***;[7] it is even more useful when the survey is collected ***statewide***. A comprehensive collection like this allows for versatile use of the data by different audiences for different purposes. This supports the ***high quality*** and ***efficiency*** mentioned in Key Benefit #1.

In one school district, unexpected sampling changes led to dropping one initially identified school and adding another. The changes meant the sample less accurately reflected the originally intended population for decision-making, presenting a challenge to using the results for selecting priorities and programs.

Consider school district size. District size may be a factor that determines how broadly surveys can be collected from youth. Important questions to consider include:

- ❑ How big is my community's school district?
- ❑ Which schools or principals are likely to be "early adopters," i.e., displaying an active willingness to participate from the beginning?
- ❑ With whom does the survey task force already have established relationships?
- ❑ Which schools or principals already have some experience with collecting or using data to make decisions for their youth?

Our evaluation looked at the size of each district and the breadth of survey administration in the first year (Figure 12). Size categories were based on the relative distribution within the six-community sample: three were smaller, two were medium, and one was larger. Results suggest that districts with fewer than 25,000 enrolled students are more likely to be able to manage a district-wide survey in their first year, with the appropriate school district support and community buy-in. Significantly, over 95% of school districts in the United States fit this category of 25,000 students or fewer [16][17].

For ***medium-sized*** and ***larger*** school districts, piloting the survey in a few schools may be more feasible at first administration. After a successful administration, the survey can be extended to additional schools for future collections. Take lots of notes on what you did and how you did it. A well-documented process promotes transparency and trust and will likely assist with future work.

7 Surveying an entire district in a large metropolitan area, such as Miami-Dade County Public Schools, may not be feasible early on due to substantial logistical and resource challenges. Sampling is one method that may allow for district-wide results but sacrifices school-specific summaries.

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- The ***smaller-sized*** Dallas County Schools and Selma City Schools in Alabama and the Providence Public School District in Rhode Island[8] surveyed *district-wide* their first year.

Smaller-sized districts—under 25,000 students—surveyed district-wide from the start.

95%

of all U.S. school districts fit this size category.

- The ***medium-sized*** district, Mobile County School District in Alabama, and the Memphis-Shelby County Schools District in Tennessee,[9] limited their first-year surveys to a *subset of schools*—10 in Mobile and six in Memphis—in areas preparing for new youth development programming.
- The ***largest district*** among the communities using the YES, Miami-Dade Public Schools in Florida,[10] successfully *piloted* the survey in two schools during the COVID-19 pandemic after three years of planning and community outreach.

Generate broad community buy-in. Often, people unfamiliar with youth surveys become uncomfortable with the idea of asking youth questions regarding their time management, experiences in school, interactions with their families, and feelings and opinions about various teenage-relevant topics. It is true that most of the questions asked on youth surveys are not typical dinner-table conversation, but the topics are relevant for today's youth. Asking about them and preparing a plan to respond to young people's answers can significantly impact their quality of life, health, and future.

Because of this sensitivity, it is important to generate broad community buy-in regarding the importance of asking these questions in a survey to make informed decisions. In addition to the steps described earlier, we have two additional recommendations that will help you successfully develop broad community support: (1) learn about and follow school district policies and procedures regarding giving surveys to youth, and (2) share information about the survey with key community groups (this includes making the survey available for parents to view if they have questions about it).

Learn about and follow school district policies and procedures to give surveys to youth. School district policies and procedures regarding youth surveys vary. Important questions to consider include:

8 The total student enrollment in Dallas County and Selma City Schools was 5,500 across 21 schools. The total student enrollment in Providence School District was 25,000 across 40 schools.

9 The total enrollment in Mobile County Public Schools, Alabama, was 52,500. The total enrollment in Memphis-Shelby County Schools was 110,800.

10 The total student enrollment in Miami-Dade Public Schools was over 334,300 students in 522 schools.

- ❑ Does my district require active or passive consent?
- ❑ Does my district provide and require a review by an institutional review board? If yes, what is the application and review process and associated timeline?
- ❑ Do we have the right people on the survey team to help us through this process, with tasks that include completing research review applications or collecting consent forms?

It is vital that all parents of eligible survey participants be informed of the survey collection and given the opportunity to respond. The two types of consent are active or passive consent. Both processes are acceptable and ethical; the selected strategy depends on circumstances. Securing active consent can require far more resources and carries the potential for much lower participation rates. Alternatively, an "opt-out" consent process typically leads to much greater participation and consequently greater confidence in the results. An active consent process can also lead to disproportionate participation across different groups, which hinders your ability to make the right decisions.

Of seven school districts surveying youth through Evidence2Success, six utilized passive consent. Their participation rates far exceeded the participation rate in the district requiring active consent.

Many districts require a review of the survey by a research review committee, such as an ***Institutional Review Board*** or a ***Research Review Board***. This process can help communicate rationale and gain the support of key district stakeholders. If a district requires review and approval, begin the process as soon as possible, as it may take a long time; this job is best handled by someone with survey expertise.

In one community, a community-based evaluation organization prepared the survey for institutional review and spearheaded the data analysis and report creation. This was an important factor in keeping the momentum going in a process that was difficult to navigate, had a lengthy duration, and included turnover at the superintendent level.

Share information about the survey with key community groups. Outreach to key community groups and stakeholders is one way to generate community buy-in. Important questions to consider include:

- ❑ How well does the survey task force understand the benefits of this data-collection and decision-making process?
- ❑ How well does local school district leadership, including the superintendent and relevant principals, understand the benefits of this data collection?
- ❑ What community or parent groups exist that are likely to support, or hinder, this process? What questions or concerns might parents and/or youth have about the survey? How can we prepare to respond in ways that acknowledge their concerns and increase their comfort with the survey?
- ❑ What communication strategies are likely to be effective? Should we employ personal meetings, newsletters, announcements, presentations, or something else?
- ❑ Who is the best messenger to approach each contact or group?

Our evaluation demonstrates that, at times, generating broad community buy-in includes entering discussions about specific survey questions that some perceive as "sensitive" and entertaining the possibility of dropping (or adding) some items. During these conversations, it is important to emphasize that these items are relevant to the daily lives, successes, and struggles of today's teenagers and that having the most complete information possible will help you make the best decisions possible. That said, it is also okay to agree to drop some items from the survey for now and revisit certain topics before the next survey administration. Finding a good compromise can promote a strong long-term collaborative relationship.

Two out of the seven school districts involved in Evidence2Success dropped some items from the survey; at least three school districts added items. These conversations helped those involved to find common ground.

Plan for results, then carry out that plan. Surveying without a basic plan of action for what to do with survey findings can do more harm to youth than good, especially with high-stakes issues. For example, some questions for high schoolers relate to suicide risk. What will you do with those results? How will follow-up proceed in that grade, in that school, or in that district? Developing a response plan before the survey is even administered will allow time to consider what issues may arise and what responses are reasonable and doable while also meeting student and community needs.

Potential harm to communities—especially communities of color and under-resourced communities—should also be acknowledged and planned for. Some data may appear to confirm or reinforce existing biases about a community. Sharing results in context with key stakeholders, including youth themselves, can effectively diffuse, rather than fortify, stereotypes.

In Mobile, Alabama, leaders carefully considered how communities might react when looking at graduation data in a later project. A big concern was that data collection would be perceived to confirm an old, entrenched story of failings. So, the

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When looking at youth survey data, many groups and agencies need to be responsible for the results to show collective community support.

backbone organization planned for it. First, they included many partners and leaders in the planning and collection process; this meant that responsibility for the result was shared among many rather than being placed on a single entity. Then, when the results appeared to confirm a negative bias, Mobile leadership proactively framed them as a springboard for further action. The data became the baseline from which improvement goals—owned by and tied to a collective of community support—were created.

When the unexpected occurs, be prepared to pivot. Our schools are affected by broader community and societal events. This means that your survey plans are likely to encounter some changes and will likely hit some bumps in the road. Important questions to consider include:

- ❑ How will we track changes in school and district leadership? How will we successfully navigate those transitions?
- ❑ How will we become informed about last-minute changes to the school-day schedule? How should we handle changes that affect our ability to conduct the planned survey activities?
- ❑ Will events in the community that have occurred or are occurring affect our ability to conduct the survey and related activities? These could be positive or negative events, within the school or in the wider community, like an assembly to celebrate a state title, or the sudden death of a school member; a local area weather event, or a religious holiday not observed on the school calendar.

Our evaluation suggests that shared documentation of events and activities and regular communication with key stakeholders can help the survey task force successfully navigate challenges. It is helpful to prepare a few back-up scenarios to help you be ready in case something unexpected happens.

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In one community, the delay in reaching out to a new superintendent threatened to postpone survey administration from spring of one school year to the following fall.

Six of the seven Evidence2Success-involved school districts' youth survey administration plans were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Three districts were in the middle of collecting the data; the other three were finalizing plans to collect youth surveys later in the spring or fall of 2020. All districts immediately stopped data collection and kept in communication with district and school contacts. After much discussion, data collection plans resumed successfully by spring 2022.

In Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the survey was administered using paper and pencil; school policies requiring active consent for student survey participation and restricting survey administration to non-instructional time created challenges. The process also slowed with the midyear turnover in the superintendent. Additional outreach and planning occurs for the next administration, engaging community members and the principals, and an online data collection is being explored.

Analysis and Reporting (2 to 6 months)

Data collected from youth needs to be carefully checked and reviewed to ensure accuracy before it is transferred into a useable form of information. The recommendations that follow suggest how to prepare the data and the reports that will be shared with schools and the community, and come from our Evidence2Success evaluation.

Prepare the data. Once the survey has been administered, the data needs to be checked for quality and prepared for analysis. The YES Protocol guide is a key reference for conducting analysis and preparing reports. As you move into this work, relevant questions will include:

- ❑ What statistical software program do we need to process the data?
- ❑ How are we going to access it?
- ❑ What statistical software program do you need to process the data? How are you going to access it? And, who has the skills needed for this work?

Our evaluation suggests that certain skills are required for preparing reports, especially when an existing data collection platform is not available for use. These include being able to conduct statistical analyses and process data. Access to statistical software or an analysis program are required for preparing the reports. Confidence in the sample and data quality is foundational and cannot be rushed if the reports are to successfully communicate youth experiences of risk, protection, and outcomes. Technical assistance or collaborating with peer communities who have already administered the YES or other similar surveys can be helpful for moving the process forward.

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Two communities' analysis and reporting timelines were extended due to the capacity development that occurred during the data processing and report-creating process. This pushed back the timeline for downstream activities that depend on data, including selection of priorities and programs.

In contrast, the majority of the involved Evidence2Success communities had the needed expertise as a part of their survey task force at the beginning of the youth survey work, and reports, though still an intensive process, were completed closer to when they were expected.

Plan the process of sharing data and prepare the reports. Prepping and sharing reports takes time and should be done with intentionality. The kind of reports that are put together should match their purpose and audience. Essential questions for planning the data-sharing process and preparing reports include:

- ❑ How will decisions about data sharing be made?
- ❑ How will we assure that data is shared with those directly involved in decision-making impacting youth, including the youth themselves, their families, and front-line staff?
- ❑ What data will be shared, with whom, and when?
- ❑ Do we want to include some sort of comparison data when we share the data?
- ❑ How will the data be shared? Options could include a traditional paper report, a presentation with slides or handouts, with big posters on the wall, or other ways.
- ❑ What is the purpose of sharing the data? What is the ask, or the desired end result of sharing the data?

Our evaluation results suggest that the many stakeholders who have assisted in the survey process will welcome a review of the data—including youth and parents. As a result, you should make sure to build sharing results into your survey planning schedule. Additionally, our evaluation results suggest that no data, even aggregated and summarized anonymous data, should be shared with anyone without permission of the school or district involved in its collection. Thus, we recommend that you include guidelines regarding data use and sharing in the MOU or communicate these in other ways. It is essential to involve trusted individuals and organizations in this process. The data, when misused or handled inappropriately, can lead to distrust, embarrassment, and misinterpretation, rather than reinforcing trust and collaborative relationships. This can significantly delay or even halt the work altogether.

To this end, share data that meets the purpose articulated by or aligned with the recipient rather than disseminating all data to all parties. Routine, consistent sharing

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of the youth data among and across stakeholders can foster engagement, energize future survey participation, and bring a new level of understanding to the data. The reports can be shared as part of a conversation that allows recipients to comment and bring their insights, thereby deepening understanding and also potentially leading to future revisions of reports and reporting styles.

In all communities, results were shared with the school district and schools before other stakeholders. In some communities, detailed school-specific reports were prepared and shared with the participating school's administration.

In all communities, the core survey team brought the data to a Community Board meeting or smaller workgroup of the Community Board, which created momentum and energy among members during a long planning process.

In Providence, the Community Board engaged community members in data-sharing conversations. Sharing the data broadly, with permission from the school district, is one activity that likely led to increased community buy-in and successful repeated administrations of the YES.

Making Decisions with Data (1 to 2 months of initial work leads to an ongoing process)

Engage community members along with traditional decision-makers. Essential questions include:

- ❑ Who will be involved in the decision-making process?
  - ❍ *Who will lead or facilitate the process?*
  - ❍ *What will we do to ensure that community members and youth have input in the process?*
  - ❍ *To what extent will traditional leaders such as elected officials, directors of public systems, and executive directors of community organizations be involved?*
- ❑ How will we create an inclusive atmosphere of safety, mutual respect, and trust that gives equitable space for everyone's contributions?
- ❑ Who will make final decisions about priorities to focus on, and select programs?
- ❑ What process will the involved participants use to make decisions?

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Evaluation results suggest that the data become more meaningful when reviewed by those who work with youth in the community and when those who will be impacted by the programs (e.g., youth, parents) are involved in the decision-making process.

Reaching out and listening to the youth interpret the data may better explain certain data points and help the decision-making group come to decisions. Additionally, the partnership that can happen when you combine community members and traditional decision-makers, such as public system leaders and managers and social/human service providers, can reinforce commitment to the decisions after they are made and help distribute power more equitably.

> No one questions the validity of the work because it has had so much community input over the years—we did not pick behavioral health, the community did—there were so many people at those decision-making meetings and other community outreach[es].

- ***Providence engaged youth*** when interpreting the YES results, which led to a more nuanced understanding of the youth experience and the root causes of their selected priorities. According to Rebecca Boxx of Providence, "Ask 5,000 kids about what's going on for them and it's significant. Plus, we learned a lot from focus groups. Why aren't they seeing a lot of blight in their neighborhood? Because they're not out. Parents are keeping their kids inside."
- ***Memphis and Miami engaged youth*** when reviewing and/or making decisions with the data.

All Evidence2Success communities engaged a variety of stakeholders in decision-making, about priority focus areas and appropriate programs to address those focus areas. Though each community did things a little differently, involved stakeholders included community members, leaders in nonprofit social services or youth organizations, and leaders in public systems.

- ***One community reached out*** to practitioners at the local federally qualified health center who corroborated the findings with their experience on the ground, which led to increased credibility of the survey and their work.

The process—from data collection to decision-making—was described by a local data partner in this way: "The survey provides the evidence needed to prioritize what factors and substances we will address. We then work through a process of aligning our selected targets to programs and activities that have been shown to be effective in addressing those targets. Having data directly from youth is vital in being able to select programs that meet their needs."

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It is important to carefully and thoroughly listen to youth about what directly impacts them to get a deeper understanding about what the data is showing.

Don't rush. Whether you are observing or involved in the process, it is common to experience a sense of urgency and feel like the decisions are not being made fast enough. That is okay! It is important to take your time through this process.

Questions to ask yourself include:

- ❑ What is our timeline? How flexible is it?
- ❑ How much time is needed for decisions to be made and shared? Have we considered the time needs of community members and public system leaders alike?
- ❑ How achievable is the timeline? What will it take to adhere to the timeline? What are the benefits and costs of adhering to the timeline?
- ❑ How will we address obstacles and barriers?
- ❑ Are we prepared to deal with and adapt to the unexpected?
- ❑ Are we prepared to take the long view?
- ❑ How do we know when it's time to move on? (Sometimes, you need to move forward!)

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All of the activities surrounding data collection and reporting are foundational to the decision-making that will result from the process. Evaluation results suggest that mistakes made due to rushing through the process can end up costing more time, effort, and resources.

Use data for decisions and dollars. A rigorous process that carefully undergirds priority and program selection with data from the youth survey sets up the community to seek funding for those priorities. As one leader described, "For a lot of folks who use the YES, it's a way to guide investment to what the community *really* needs, not what people *think* they need."

Grant dollars—whether public or private, whether local, state or federal—are almost always tied to data to show need. With later collections, communities can show progress in priority indicators and outcomes.

One community engaged a municipal granting partner who committed Community Development Block Grant funds to their program, with a pledge to consider longer-term funding pending data from initial program implementation.

Several communities submitted federal grant applications using youth survey data to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); some of these requests were funded.

Youth survey data provides evidence that supports financing efforts:

"We look at data to inform fundraising and grantmaking investments. Data validates the need and builds the case for support."

—A foundation's director of grants and programs

"All of our initial funding was tied to the Youth Experience [Survey] data—since then we have gotten additional funding due to other data collections—but all the original funding was tied to the YES data."

—Director of a community-based nonprofit

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What's Next? Let's Think About Systems Integration

You are probably familiar with the phrase "the best time to start thinking about and planning for sustaining an activity is when it begins." Our experience echoes that sentiment. We can learn from the diverse sample of Evidence2Success communities about how to strategically think about and start planning for sustainability.

Sustaining the youth survey, initially, may be limited to replicating all the same activities a second time. However, further and deeper sustainability can extend to integrating youth survey process into the regular operations of the school or school district. Even further, a sustainability goal could be for the school or school district to see the youth survey as an important core activity needed to fulfill their vision and mission of serving their students. Even further integration is possible, when the state Education Department, Public Health, Health and Human Services, or Juvenile Justice departments begin setting aside resources and publishing support materials to help local communities undertake this work. Integration at all these levels is possible, but it may take time. Major benefits can be experienced when school districts and state agencies consider youth experience surveys part of their core mission.

> "Having a pre-existing survey was crucial. It saves months' if not years' worth of time in the process of gathering data, analyzing, and prioritizing, and then selecting strategies to address the needs in the community."

Youth survey data collection and support range broadly within the United States. In some areas, school district-wide data collection is state-wide, as in Pennsylvania and Utah. Evidence2Success partners in Salt Lake County and Kearns deemed it "crucial" and described benefits. In other areas, data collection is especially challenging; reasons may include a lack of resources, support, or infrastructure. Information about the activities that occur in your state are in Tables 1, 2, 3 in the Appendix.

Be Strategic

It may be advisable for you to start small with administering the survey in a small number of schools or with a small number of grade levels before expanding. Doing this allows you to learn process and gives you more control, fewer variables to juggle, fewer activities to track, and more benefits. Even more, starting small allows you to create and demonstrate success, which can go a long way toward gaining additional future support.

With this strategy, it may be helpful to start with individuals who are known to be strong visionary leaders who can quickly understand the connection between collecting youth survey data and improving outcomes for youth and families in their communities. Typically, these leaders handle the daily emergencies that are common within an educational setting while still putting effort toward long-term planning and activities that will reap rewards in the future.

When starting small, use your core survey group to discuss and plan ***strategic growth goals*** from one survey administration to the next survey administration. Keep higher-level decision-makers, such as the superintendent, updated on your progress. Consider carefully with partners the benefits of moving the data beyond the schools—for example, sharing with the city council or mayor's office. This can prove to be advantageous when youth priorities identified by the survey connect with policy or budgetary priorities among local legislative and executive leadership.

Be Systematic

Even when planning the first administration, planners need to think ahead to the next survey, with the idea and question in mind: ***"How can we more firmly integrate these activities into this school's/district's normal operations?"*** To do this, first and foremost, your team *must* prioritize *routine and thorough documentation* of the planning, administration, data analysis and report creation, and data sharing processes. Suggested documentation includes but is not limited to timelines of

How They Did It

Mobile County, Alabama

Leaders in Mobile initially limited survey implementation to a smaller subset of schools in a larger district, aligning data collection with particular neighborhoods. While the effort was successful, the participating district leadership decided to maintain a strict focus on core academic priorities, which made it a challenge to sustain programs focused on other priorities.

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Buy-in from school districts to implement youth surveys can sometimes translate into federal and state grant money.

However, when a smaller district with some of the highest poverty rates and lowest test scores in the area expressed interest in surveying its youth, the lead organization extended its reach to assist. The buy-in from this district led to planning to use the YES. This plan, with the YES at its core, recently translated into a federal Community Schools grant that brought $15 million to the area. Meanwhile, the emergence of pandemic-related social-emotional challenges has renewed the interest of the original district's leadership in taking a second look at the YES. It's a reminder that circumstances and priorities do shift. For school districts navigating the post-pandemic school setting, interest in and viability of conducting and using data from youth surveys can become a key tool for understanding the evolving needs of their students.

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activities—planned and accomplished—including who connected with whom, what topics were covered, and what objectives were achieved during each step along the way. Keep note of individuals who were supportive and keep notes of those who were not as helpful. Make sure to track names and roles, as transitions are likely to occur between data collections as they did in every Evidence2Success community.

Specific to transitions, changes in key positions within the school district can disrupt the timeline; a plan to address them is part of planning for longer-term sustainability. When a transition occurs, reach out to the replacement to bring them up to speed on the details of the plan as soon as possible. Reference and provide copies of the MOU and other documentation to help smooth any transitions. When possible, bring in other district contacts to show internal support. This work is part of building survey infrastructure into the system.

In this process, pay special attention to connecting with organizations that align with your mission or with whom the data resonate or inform their mission to sustain the work over the long term. Connect your work, the work of the youth survey, and the possible results of the youth survey to the mission of the organizations and the values of the individuals to whom you reach out and with whom you collaborate.

As mentioned previously, youth survey data can be useful to a variety of audiences, ranging from public systems to community and neighborhood organizations. With proper communication and planning, the collected information can be shared systematically to further promote the work to current and prospective stakeholders, including priority-aligned funders and community-level providers. Share appropriate data with your school/school district, public systems, and, most important, your community/neighborhood youth and adults. You know your community best, so you will know the best place to start. Consider the local political landscape as you create the dissemination plan. Be intentional and thoughtful in creating your outreach strategy.

Conclusion

Youth survey data are one foundation for selecting appropriate programs that focus on preventing the most concerning issues youth face today. The information—if carefully and appropriately collected, analyzed, reported, and shared with key individuals in a structured decision-making process—sets the stage to implement programs that will have the greatest impact for youth. A survey that collects a broad range of risk and protective factors, and outcomes, can provide information on what leads to youth issues in your community. Addressing those indicators is likely to have positive impacts on multiple outcomes. Remember, in the end, these data represent real kids, real youth in real communities, experiencing daily highs and lows. Using a youth survey to ask youth about their experiences, and listening to what they tell you about their challenges, takes a step toward significantly improving your understanding of the youth living in your community, and the ways you can support their growth and well-being. *How will your community respond?*

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Glossary

ACTIVE CONSENT

With **active consent**, the parent must submit permission for the child to participate; if they do not, refusal is assumed.[18]

COALITION

A **coalition** is a voluntary, formal arrangement between groups or sectors of a community in which each group retains its identity but all agree to work together toward a common goal with the coalition serving as a catalyst for change (e.g., building a safe, healthy, and drug-free community).[19] In prevention, community coalitions are citizen-driven and involve citizens at every step of the problem-solving process.[20]

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

The **Institutional Review Board** (IRB) is a committee, usually at the university level, that has the task to review all potential research studies with human subjects to ensure the studies protect the rights, privacy, and welfare of all the participants.

Principal investigators submit their study proposals to the IRB, and the board reviews these to ensure that the studies are ethical; it also ensures respect for the participants, beneficence, and justice. With this in mind, the IRB decides if the proposed study is approved to continue, requires modifications, or is entirely disapproved. If a study requires modifications, the principal investigator makes the appropriate edits and sends back the proposal to be reviewed again.

PASSIVE CONSENT

With **passive consent**, the parent is informed about the survey with a letter or flyer; their permission is assumed unless they "opt out" (i.e., withdraw consent).

PREVENTION SCIENCE

Prevention science focuses on the development of evidence-based strategies that reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors to improve the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Prevention science draws from a diverse range of disciplines…to understand the determinants of societal, community, and individual-level problems (e.g., trauma, poverty, maltreatment). The promotion of health equity and reduction of disparities are a central tenet. It has yielded practices and policies that improved countless lives throughout the lifespan by avoiding negative health and social outcomes (e.g., substance use disorder, academic failure, violence, mental illness) and strengthening conditions that enable individuals, families, and communities to thrive.[21]

PROCESS EVALUATION

A **process evaluation** documents and assesses the implementation of a program, framework, or model. It is often used to track not only what actually occurs, but also to track progress against what is expected or prescribed to occur. It may be accompanied by a logic model that describes the intended progression of a program, model or framework. Its results may be used to inform concurrent and future use, and also to update the underlying theory of change, which is the hypothesized understanding of how the activities work together to produce the intended effect.

PROTECTIVE FACTOR

A **protective factor** can be defined as "a characteristic at the biological, psychological, family, or community (including peers and culture) level that is associated with a lower likelihood of problem outcomes or that reduces the negative impact of a risk factor on problem outcomes."[22]

RISK FACTOR

A **risk factor** can be defined as "a characteristic at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precedes and is associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes."[23]

Appendix

Table 1: Listing of Common Youth Surveys and Their Content Categories*

Survey	D/A	V/D	HW/O	Rel.	School	Family	Sex	ProSoc	ExCurr	Bully	Internet	Program	MH	SEL
Youth Experience Survey (YES)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Communities That Care (CTC)	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓						
Global Tobacco Survey (CDC)	✓													
Monitoring the Future	✓													
National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being		✓				✓	✓						✓	
Pride Survey	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	
Well-Being Survey for Children and Young People				✓	✓	✓							✓	
Youth and Program Strengths Survey	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Youth Tobacco Survey	✓													

Note: Column headings are defined below.

D/A: Drug and Alcohol
V/D: Violence and Delinquency
H/W/O: Height/Weight/Obesity
Rel.: Healthy Relationships
School: School Climate
Family: Family Characteristics
Sex: Sexual Activity
ProSoc: Prosocial
ExCurr: Extracurricular
Bully: Bullying
Internet: Internet/Social Media/Phone Use
Program: Program Participation
MH: Mental Health
SEL: Social Emotional Learning

*Methodology: The surveys included in Table 1's *listing of common youth surveys* were determined (1) by consulting with researchers knowledgeable in the field, and (2) by conducting a series of Google searches that started with the search term "youth survey." The *content categories* were determined (1) by referencing the YES construct dictionary, (2) by reviewing materials that described domains addressed in the other common youth surveys, and (3) by using a cross-walking method to distinguish overlapping themes from unique ones, which yielded stand-alone categories.

Note: This table does not convey the methodological rigor to which a survey has been developed and how the information can be used to make decisions.

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Table 2: Youth Survey Contents by State Compared to Contents of the Youth Experience Survey (YES)*

State	D/A	V/D	HW/O	Rel.	School	Family	Sex	ProSoc	ExCurr	Bully	Internet	Program	MH	SEL
YES	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Alabama	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Alaska	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Arizona	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Arkansas	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	
California	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓
Colorado	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	
Connecticut	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	
Delaware	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Florida	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	
Georgia	✓				✓					✓	✓		✓	✓
Hawaii	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Idaho	✓				✓	✓				✓			✓	
Illinois	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	
Indiana	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓				✓	
Iowa	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Kansas	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Kentucky	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Louisiana	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	
Maine	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	
Maryland	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Massachusetts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Michigan	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	
Minnesota	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Mississippi	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Missouri	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	
Montana	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Nebraska	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Nevada	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	

State	D/A	V/D	HW/O	Rel.	School	Family	Sex	ProSoc	ExCurr	Bully	Internet	Program	MH	SEL
YES	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
New Hampshire	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
New Jersey	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
New Mexico	✓	✓	✓				✓						✓	
New York	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
North Carolina	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
North Dakota	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Ohio	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Oklahoma	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Oregon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Pennsylvania	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Rhode Island	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
South Carolina	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
South Dakota	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Tennessee	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Texas	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Utah	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Vermont	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Virginia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Washington	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
West Virginia	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Wisconsin	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Wyoming	✓			✓	✓	✓				✓			✓	

Note: Column headings are defined below.

D/A: Drug and Alcohol
V/D: Violence and Delinquency
H/W/O: Height/Weight/Obesity
Rel.: Healthy Relationships
School: School Climate
Family: Family Characteristics
Sex: Sexual Activity
ProSoc: Prosocial
ExCurr: Extracurricular
Bully: Bullying
Internet: Internet/Social Media/Phone Use
Program: Program Participation
MH: Mental Health
SEL: Social Emotional Learning

*Methodology: The data in Table 2 were determined using a Google search of "youth survey" and "[U.S. State name]." The survey was determined to cover a *content category* if it had items that matched or were similar to those previously identified and developed for Table 1.

Contents

Table 3: Youth Survey Utilization by State^

	YRBSS	CTC	Tobacco Survey	State-Specific
Alabama	✓			
Alaska	✓			
Arizona	✓	✓		Arizona Youth Survey
Arkansas	✓			
California	✓		✓	California Healthy Kids Survey
Colorado		✓	✓	Healthy Kids Colorado Module A; Module B*
Connecticut	✓			Connecticut School Health Survey
Delaware	✓			
Florida			✓	Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey
Georgia	✓			Georgia Student Health Survey
Hawaii	✓			
Idaho			✓	Idaho Healthy Youth Survey
Illinois	✓			Illinois Youth Survey
Indiana	✓	✓		Indiana Youth Survey
Iowa				Iowa Youth Survey
Kansas	✓	✓		Kansas Communities That Care Survey
Kentucky	✓			
Louisiana	✓	✓		Louisiana Caring Communities Youth Survey
Maine	✓			Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey
Maryland	✓		✓	
Massachusetts	✓			Massachusetts Youth Health Survey
Michigan	✓			Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth*
Minnesota				Minnesota Student Survey*
Mississippi	✓		✓	
Missouri	✓			Missouri Student Survey
Montana	✓			
Nebraska	✓	✓	✓	Student Health And Risk Prevention (SHARP) Surveillance System*
Nevada	✓			
New Hampshire	✓			
New Jersey	✓			New Jersey Student Health Survey*
New Mexico	✓			New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey
New York	✓			
North Carolina	✓		✓	
North Dakota	✓			
Ohio	✓			Ohio Healthy Youth Environments Survey*

	YRBSS	CTC	Tobacco Survey	State-Specific
Oklahoma	✓			
Oregon				Oregon Healthy Teens Survey
Pennsylvania	✓	✓		Pennsylvania Youth Survey
Rhode Island	✓			
South Carolina	✓		✓	
South Dakota	✓			
Tennessee	✓			Tennessee Together Student Survey*
Texas	✓			
Utah	✓	✓	✓	Student Health and Risk Prevention Survey
Vermont	✓			Vermont Youth Project Survey*
Virginia	✓			Virginia High School Youth Survey*
Washington		✓	✓	Washington State Healthy Youth Survey
West Virginia	✓		✓	
Wisconsin	✓			
Wyoming				Wyoming Prevention Needs Assessment

^Methodology: The data in Table 3 was collected in a series of state-specific web searches regarding youth student surveys and the common youth surveys listed in Table 1. Of note:

- As of 8/14/2023, forty-two states indicated participation in some way in the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System Survey (YRBSS), as recently as 2019. At times the YRBSS is collected as an independent effort; at other times it is integrated into the state's own data-collection strategies.
- When publicly available and dated no earlier than 2019, the item-level questionnaire is linked in the "State-Specific" column.
- An asterisk (*) indicates that no item-level questionnaire was found for the state-specific survey; instead, the state survey's homepage is linked.

Table 4: Demographics of the Involved Evidence2Success Communities and the Neighborhoods Initially Involved in Evidence-Based Programming

*Note: The community information is presented in size order, from **smallest** community population (left-most column) to **largest** (right-most column).*	***Smallest***	***Medium***		***Large***		***Largest***
	Dallas County, Selma City, AL	**Providence, Four-cluster,* RI**	**Mobile, Three-cluster,* AL**	**Shelby County and Memphis, South City, TN**	**Salt Lake County, Kearns, UT**	**Miami-Dade County, Liberty City, FL**
Population						
Community	**37,196**	**179,883**	**188,720**	**937,166**	**1,160,437**	**2,716,940**
Focus Neighborhood	**17,231**	**37,978**	**27,300**	**5,865**	**36,330**	**136,293**
Primary Racial/Ethnic Groups						
Community (Percent)						
White	27.6	54.2	44.8	40.9	87.1	79.0
Black, African American, or African	70.7	16.0	50.6	54.3	2.2	17.1
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	1.2	43.0	2.6	6.6	18.8	69.4
Focus Neighborhood (Percent)						
White	17.0	11.3	n/a	12.5	66.6	23.6
Black, African American, or African	81.5	18.9	81.0	84.0	1.0	72.7
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	1.0	60.5	n/a	n/a	35.3	27.6
Financial Indicators						
Community						
Median family income	$31,602	$42,158	$40,588	$49,782	$71,230	$48,982
Poverty	31.4%	26.0%	22.0%	21.7%	9.0%	16.0%
Focus Neighborhood						
Median family income	$24,820	$31,231	n/a	$11,350	$61,924	$21,539
Poverty	41.0%	35.5%	37.3%	64.6%	9.9%	22.8%

^ These data are reported from 2020, when the third cohort of two communities was under way and two other cohorts of a total of four communities had completed the start-up period with Foundation support.

** Providence and Mobile designated clusters of three to four neighborhoods as their areas of focus.*
- n/a=Data not available; the geographic area is not a census-designated area, or the boundaries are not well defined such that archival data from the census, American Community Survey, or other city or county websites does not exist to the best of our knowledge.

Data was sourced from (for focus neighborhoods) site applications to Evidence2Success, http://www.city-data.com/nbmaps.html, and the U.S. Census Bureau, including (for communities): https://www.census.gov/quickfacts (accessed July, 2020).

Contents

Table 5: Data Used in the Analysis*

*Intvw. is the abbreviation used to indicate "Interview" in this table.

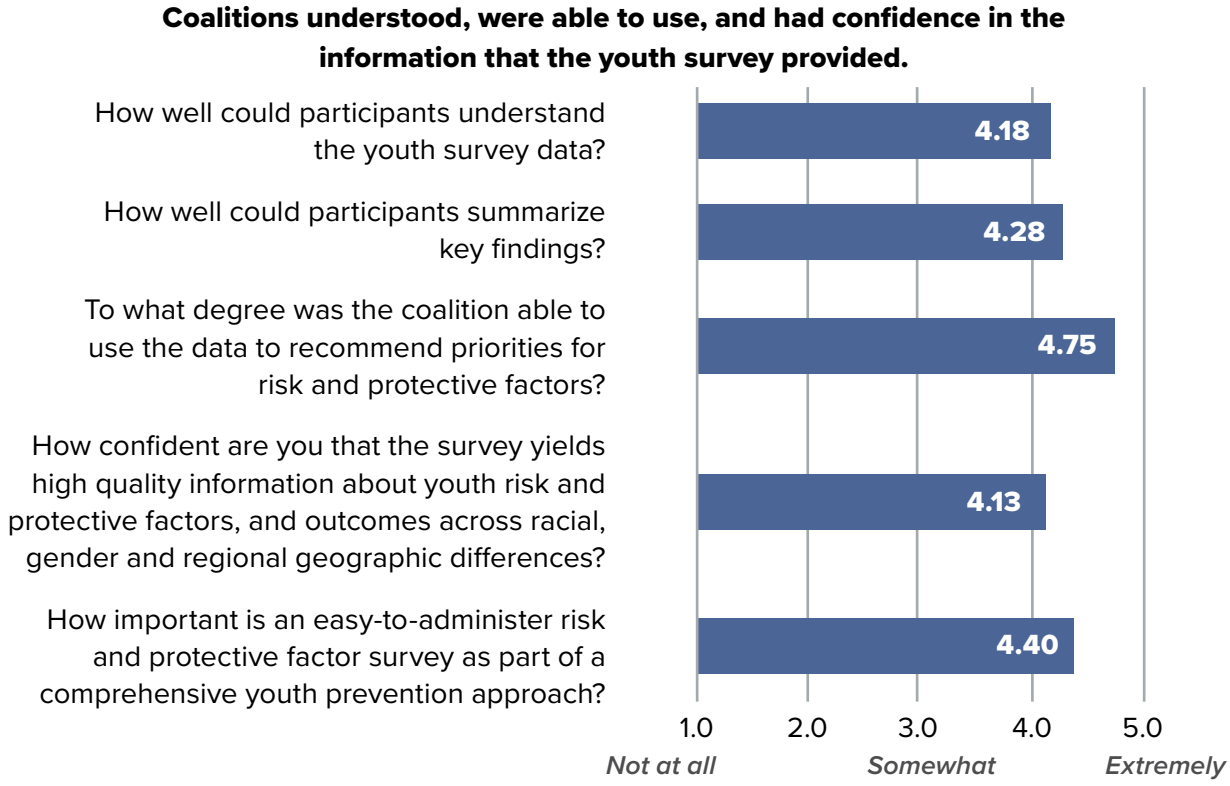
Method	Sample	Time Period
Implementation Progress Interviews / Surveys		
WAVE 1		
In-person Interview	Providence – Citywide Community Board members and Key Leaders	Sep – Dec 2012
Paper Survey	Providence – Local Community Board members	Jun – Jul 2013
In-person Interview	Dallas County - Community Board members and Key Leaders	May – Jun 2016
In-person Interview	Salt Lake County – Community Board members and Key Leaders	Jun – Jul 2016
In-person Interview	Mobile – Community Board members and Key Leaders	Sep – Nov 2016
In-person Interview	Memphis – Community Board members and Key Leaders	Nov – Jan 2019
Phone and web intvw.	Miami Dade County – Community Board members and Key Leaders	Dec – Jan 2021
WAVE 2		
In-person Interview	Providence – Local Community and Regional Community Board members and Key Leaders	Mar – Jun 2014
In-person Interview	Dallas County - Community Board members	May – Jun 2017
In-person Interview	Salt Lake County – Community Board members	Jun – Jul 2017
In-person Interview	Mobile – Community Board members	Sep – Oct 2017
In-person Interview	Memphis – Community Board members	Jan – Feb 2020
Phone and web intvw.	Miami Dade County – Community Board members	Feb – Mar 2022
WAVE 3		
In-person Interview	Providence – Local Community and Regional Community Board members	May – Jun 2015
In-person Interview	Dallas County - Community Board members and Key Leaders	May – Jun 2018
In-person Interview	Salt Lake County – Community Board members and Key Leaders	Jun – Aug 2018
In-person Interview	Mobile – Community Board members and Key Leaders	Sep – Nov 2018
In-person Interview	Memphis – Community Board members and Key Leaders	May – Jul 2021
Technical Assistance Record / Coaching Notes		
Online Survey	Technical Assistance Providers	Jul 2012 – Dec 2022
Key Meeting Evaluations		
KNOW THE DATA		
Paper Survey	Providence – Data Workgroup members	Jun 2013
JOINT PRIORITY SETTING		
Paper Survey	Providence – Data Workgroup members	Sep 2013
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP		
Online Survey	Salt Lake County – Data Workgroup members	Jun 2016
Online Survey	Dallas County – Data Workgroup members	Aug 2016
Online Survey	Mobile – Data Workgroup members	Nov 2016
Online Survey	Memphis – Data Workgroup members	Feb 2019
Online Survey	Miami – Data Workgroup members	May 2022
Milestones and Benchmarks, Other		
Excel Spreadsheet	Minimum of twice-annually by leadership from each community	Jun 2013 – Dec 2018
Online Reporting Tool	Twice-annually by leadership from each community	Jun 2019 – Dec 2022
Zoom Interview	Structured conversations with Evidence2Success community leaders	Nov – Dec 2022

KEY BENEFIT #1

Table 6: Completion Rates of Milestones and Benchmarks

Specific Work Related to Collecting, Reporting, and Using Youth Survey Data	How much of this work was completed?	Min	Max	SD
Identify questions for data workgroup and data partner(s) to answer through analysis of disaggregated community data and administrative data.	100.0% N=6	100%	100%	0.00
Have the data workgroup and data partner(s) prepare YES data and administrative data, including asset-based data and data on disparities, for prioritization.	98.7% N=6	92%	100%	3.27
Ask the data workgroup to make initial recommendations about priority outcomes and risk and protective factors (based on disaggregation).	100.0% N=6	100%	100%	0.00

Figure 7: Post-Test Data Following Community Assessment Workshop (Orientation to Youth Surveys)

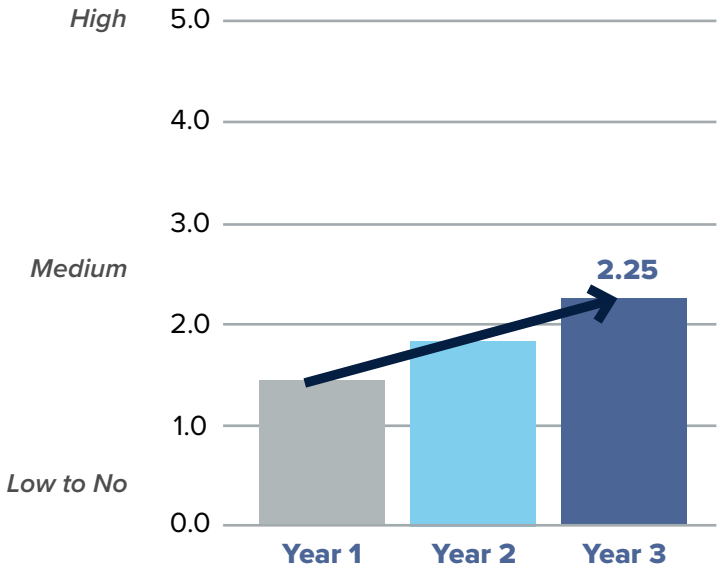


Note: The evaluation survey was shortened across time, consequently, the first three questions were asked in five communities while the latter two questions were asked in four.

KEY BENEFIT #2

Figure 8: Adoption of a Prevention Science Framework for Decision-Making, Based on Evidence2Success Interview Data (Three Timepoints)

Communities* using a youth survey averaged a 56% increase using data for decision making by Year 3.



Levels of data use for decision-making

High 4.0 – 5.0

Continuing to collect real time data as programs are implemented and using that data to adjust

Medium 2.0 – 3.0

Beginning to use youth survey data to make decisions about priorities and programs

No to Low 0.0 – 1.0

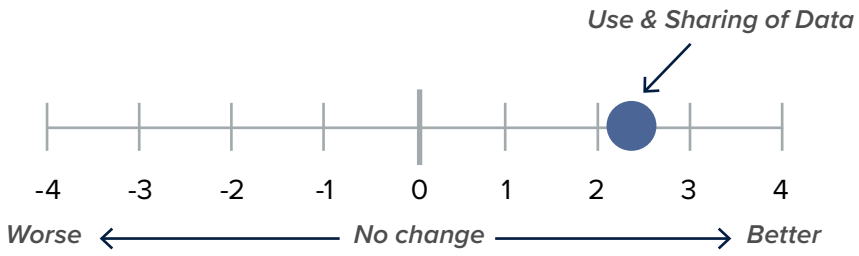
Lacking in any or having only limited awareness of the possibility of using data to make decisions

Figure 9: Use and Sharing of Data for Decisions, Post-Test Data from Interviews (Two Timepoints)

Participants were asked:

As a result of the Evidence2Success efforts, please tell me how the use and sharing of data to make decisions about youth programming changed in [your community]?

Participants report consistently better use and sharing of data by Year 3.

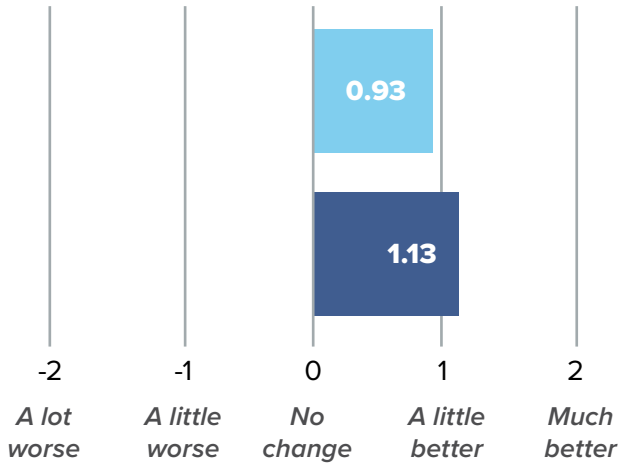


Note: Data reflect the mean of five communities when data was collected at Years 2 and 3; however, one community did not have data for Year 2, another community did not have data for Year 3.

KEY BENEFIT #3

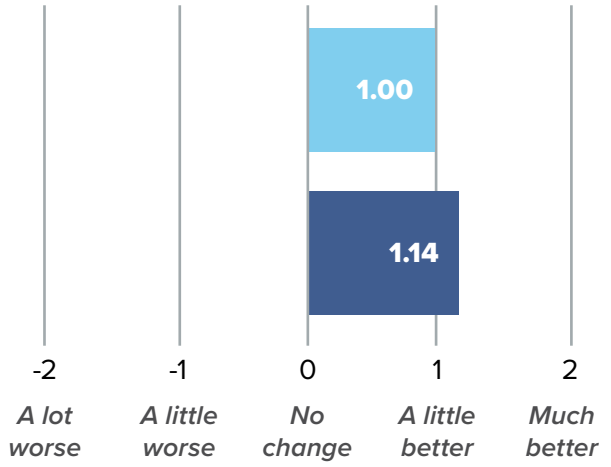
Figure 10: Measures for Collaboration Across Agencies and Collective Work with Other Organizations, Post-test Data from Interviews (Two Timepoints)

Communities reported a little improvement in cross-agency collaboration by Year 2 and again by Year 3.



Note: Data reflect the mean of five communities at each timepoint; however, one community did not have data for Year 2, another community did not have data for Year 3.

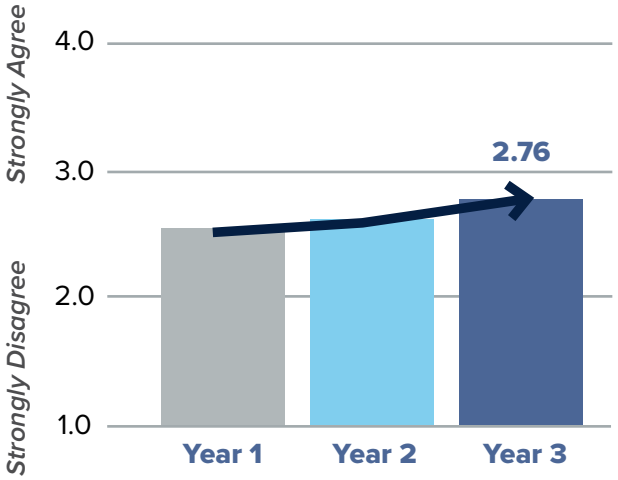
Communities reported that efforts to work collectively on community issues improved a little both at Year 2 and at Year 3.



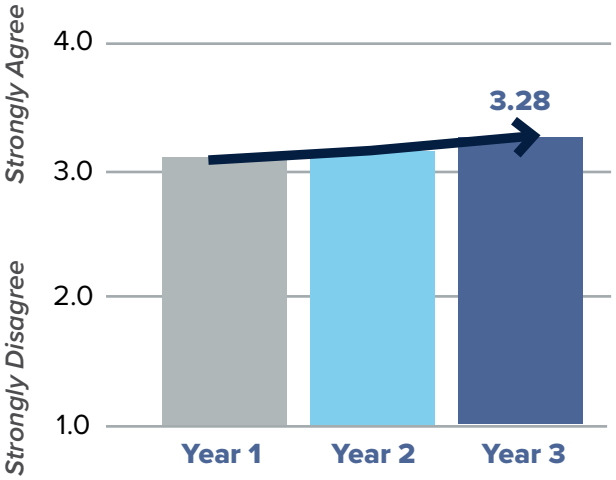
Note: Data reflect the mean of five communities at each timepoint; however, one community did not have data for Year 2, another community did not have data for Year 3.

Figure 11: Two Types of Collaboration, Based on Evidence2Success Interview Data (Three Timepoints)

By Year 3, communities agreed 15% more than at baseline that active collaboration occurred in issues related to youth health, development and well-being.

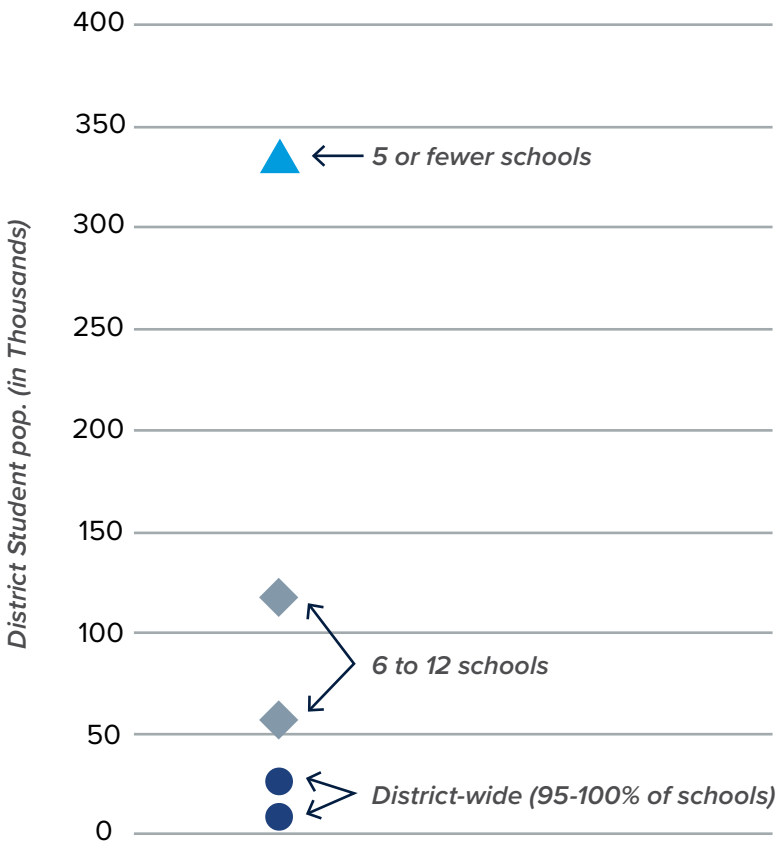


By Year 3, communities agreed 7% more than at baseline that networking collabration occurred in issues related to youth health, development and well-being.



Contents

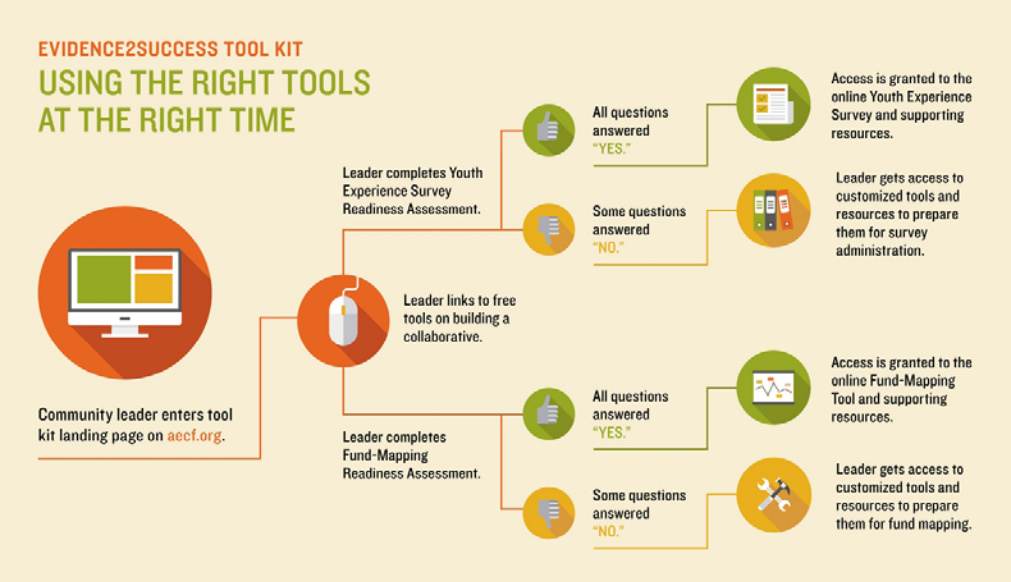
Figure 12: Distribution of School Districts and Number of Schools Where Survey Was Administered in Evidence2Success, by Size



Evidence2Success Tool Kit

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has developed a tool kit of resources to help any city, state, or collective understand and address the underlying causes of social problems and improve the well-being of children, young people, and families. Tools in the kit were developed as part of the Evidence2Success framework, which has helped community members and public systems in six localities improve the well-being of children and youth over the past decade. With tools that include the Youth Experience Survey and Fund-Mapping Tool, these communities have used data to understand how young people are doing, and selected proven programs to address challenges and improve outcomes. Communities using those tools also develop financing and action plans to support those proven programs over the long term. These proven tools are being made available virtually and at no cost.

To ensure leaders are prepared to use these tools, the tool kit starts with a road map and two readiness assessments that users must take to access resources, including the survey and online fund-mapping tool.



The following link will take you to the online tool kit and resources:

https://www.aecf.org/work/evidence-based-practice/the-evidence2success-tool-kit.

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