

Youth Development Force field: Safe Places

Forces that help us...

- Partnering to do more
- Educated and empowered parents
- Preparation of youth to self actualize
- People stuck in “my family, my life..” and don’t get beyond themselves
- Success stories
- Handling conflict as a character building experience
- Vision for hope
- Connecting people to community problems
- Reading and tutoring, Summer reading programs
- New options for youth, like WMCAT
- Meeting places like Neighborhood Assoc.
- 300 Afterschool programs, 80% are free
- Family Outreach Centers
- Early Childhood Commission
- United Way and Greater Grand Rapids Reads
- FACTS program
- Kent Schools Services Network
- Resource Coordinators in schools
- Need through survey of services
- Community Policing
- Mentoring
- Churches are responding
- Involve youth in service learning—leadership development
- YMCA
- Get the Lead Out
- Early intervention programs
- Nonprofits rebuilding neighborhoods
- Recognizing assets

Actions:

- Strengthen Youth Centers and Afterschool programming
- Summer Jobs for 1000 kids—Short term job training for kids
- Policy change is most important
- Need neighborhood level councilors or people kids can talk with
- Kalamazoo Promise idea
- Create a Shared Vision because agenda’s not money are the issue

Forces that hinder us...

- Disparity between kids in juvenile justice system
- Lack of innovation in programming
- Low expectations
- Schools don’t foster safety and opportunity
- Youth attracted to things beside education
- Unsupervised internet access
- Teens with little defined interest
- Lack sense of integrity
- Lack intergenerational influence
- Negative perception of youth (media)
- Lack of awareness of available resources and coordination
- Increased education but where are the jobs?
- Negative perception of urban neighborhoods
- Misalignment of projects with city and county values
- Kids are being mistreated and there are limited funds to address the issue
- Teach adults how to create safe environments
- Drop out rate
- Disparity of opportunity
- Greater access to negative influences than positive ones
- Years of disempowerment
- Not speaking up
- Dealing with surface issues rather than underlying causes
- Over processing Moving from talk to action
- Tend to focus on traditional powerbrokers
- Poor communication
- Moving into the stakeholders arena
- Too much overlap

Youth Development Force field: Caring Adults

Forces that help us...

- Mentoring programs
- Pressure to succeed—aiming high
- Caring adults to volunteer as mentors
- Empowered Parents that feel they can make a difference
- WMCAT—
- Leadership Grand Rapids
- Baxter Community Center as example of neighborhood based programming
- Education Reform Initiative
- ELO –Expanded Learning Opportunity Program coordinates efforts
- Early Childhood Initiative and GR Reads
- FACTS, HOSTS, Kent Serve
- Spectrum Health Healthier Communities
- LOOP
- YMCA & YWCA
- Camp Tall Turf
- Campfire

Forces that hinder us...

- Violence
- Alarming dropout rates
- Lack of opportunities for families in poverty
- Lack of connection between those that need help and those that offer it
- Parents that don't change
- Community Message needed
- Parent accountability
- Educational and Poverty are linked: poverty remains the big issue
- Difficult to recruit volunteers
- Parent skill building for new parents
- Adults view children more frequently as little adults; children with too much responsibility to early
- Multiple voices and messages aimed at kids
- Difficult to change adult behavior
- Lack of collaboration
- A systemic long term approach is needed that coordinates services and resources
- More community wide discussion
- Duplicate services distract from overall goal, and decreases sustainability
- Need more opportunities with youth boards, mayors youth council
- Public doesn't grasp urgency of problem
- Regional issue, not just a city problem
- Interconnectedness is not understood
- Time
- Lack of hope for the future
- Culturally accessible
- communication challenges to low income families and parents
- Funding strategies need to be coordinated

Actions:

- Central Clearinghouse for resources available
- Strategic Action plan to make change—plan to sustain vision in the community
- Kalamazoo Promise is an example of a plan that is both an economic and education plan
- Measurable results are needed
- Hire a marketing director
- We need to link together existing resources to maximize impact—demand collaboration for funding

Youth Development Force field: Kids Learning

Forces that help us...

- Programs that build communication, reading and business skills to set kids up for success
- Desire for reading
- Hope
- Mentorship programs and role models
- Need to reinforce teachers and tutor efforts
- Literacy coaches
- Community collaboration
- Sharing resources
- WMCAT
- Willingness to collaborate and recognize issues
- Student achievement in GRPS
- Collaboration of schools and nonprofits –YMCA
- Religious community involved
- Student advancement foundation
- Philanthropic community leaders
- Innovative Schools
- Museum partnership
- Many organizations serving youth effectively
- Accreditation for programs
- Character Development
- Family Resource Center materials

Forces that hinder us...

- We know the issues but lack the strategy
- Need more volunteers and adult involvement
- Funding to carry out and enhance programming
- Coordinate available and effective community resources
- Creating a learning environment that involves parents, adults, infrastructure and solving issues
- Lack of resource collaboration
- Lack of supervision or education opportunities between 3-7pm or until parents get home
- Disparity in education
- Drop out issue
- Basic and functional needs get in the way of learning
- Availability of after school programs
- Can we focus on one achievable outcome together?
- Literacy
- Latch key kids
- Engaging the full body, mind and spirit in learning
- Low wages for early childhood educators
- Childcare not available to all children—expensive
- Lack of parent involvement
- Job/skill development
- Lack of life skill training
- Increased violence
- Central clearinghouse for info on organizations
- Funding erosion for children's programs
- Sustainability— organizations that have been doing things for a long time get overlooked
- Outcome measurement strategies—sharing outcomes
- Moving from awareness to action
- Time to diagnose the gaps and commit to a central focus with action steps
- Family challenges
- Create Expectations

Youth Development Force field: Kids Learning (cont.)

Forces that hinder us...

- Funding
- Finding the programs that meet the needs
- Ownership and “turf-dom”
- Continuity
- Lack of media support and cooperation
- Lack of volunteers
- Coordinated Communication

Action Items:

- Develop a community strategy involving government, religious groups, nonprofits and schools—create common agreement about where we are going
- Grand Rapids Promise—hope for the future
- Literacy Outreach from preschool to 3rd grade
- Job Skill training for parents
- Connect the issue with businesses and look at economic implications
- Character development curriculum