

The Child Indicator

THE CHILD, YOUTH, AND FAMILY INDICATORS NEWSLETTER

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Giving a Boost to Indicators and Evidence: *Race to the Top, Investing in Innovation, Promise Neighborhoods, Social Innovation Fund*

The outlines of a concerted policy to invest in place-based, comprehensive strategies for transforming communities, with a particular focus on school improvement, are becoming clear as the Obama administration rolls out some major initiatives. All give a strong role to measurement—both performance measures, and well-being indicators—as a means for identifying needs and documenting improvement.

All four of these initiatives—*Race to the Top* (RTT), the *Investing in Innovation Fund* (i3), *Promise Neighborhoods* (PN), and the *Social Innovation Fund* (SIF)—involve competitive grants to states or communities. The first three originate with the U.S. Department of Education; the fourth, with the Corporation for National & Community Service (an independent federal agency). (Note: applications for all of these, except PN, will have closed by the time this newsletter appears.)

RTT is a state-based school reform effort that targets four areas for improvement:

- Academic standards and assessments;
- Data systems for monitoring students' progress;

- Recruitment and retention of effective teachers and principals; and
- Turning around the lowest-achieving schools

Student outcomes specifically mentioned in the announcement include academic achievement, high school graduation rates, and preparation for college and careers.

i3 grants go to local education agencies, or to nonprofit organizations partnering with schools. The purpose of this funding is “to expand and develop innovative practices.” Grants will go to applicants with a record of achieving progress on students' academic achievement, dropout rates, high school graduation rates, and college-going rates. The announcement emphasizes the importance of documenting “strong” or “moderate” evidence for programs' or strategies' effectiveness, so that best practices can be shared and taken to scale.

Promise Neighborhoods is an initiative based on “cradle to college to career” models such as the Harlem Children's Zone. As its title suggests, eligible entities (which must include as a partner at least one school), will focus

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on a neighborhood. The emphasis is on community revitalization through a continuum of academic and family supports, “with a strong school or schools at the center.” The announcement for planning grants stresses the need for ongoing data collection that will document neighborhood needs (both academic and family/community), and measure progress on indicators applicants select in light of the “continuum of solutions” they propose. Again, the PN announcement reflects a distinct preference for solutions with demonstrable evidence of effectiveness. A national evaluation during the implementation phase will have a comparison-group design, allowing assessment of both the program as a whole, and site-specific programs and strategies.

SIF makes grants to nonprofit community organizations to help them leverage effective approaches that target:

- Economic opportunity for disadvantaged youth;
- Youth development and school support (including school success, civic engagement, work, health, and safety); and
- Healthy Futures (promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing risk factors)

Successful applicants will “produce measurable outcomes,” evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts, and share and expand these to serve more people and communities.

For more information on RTT, see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>

For more on i3, see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/index.html>

For more on PN, see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/index.html>

For more on SIF, see www.nationalservice.gov/about/serveamerica/innovation.asp

Lowest Performing High Schools. As noted in the previous article (*Giving a Boost to Indicators and Evidence*), at the center of many of the federal supports to community revitalization efforts are schools—in particular, “low performing schools.” A new issue brief from the Alliance for Excellent Education helps to clarify what and where these schools are.

Sometimes referred to as “dropout factories,” just 12 percent of the nation’s high schools account for nearly half of the country’s dropouts. These schools are located in every state; nearly half are located outside of urban areas; they are large and small, traditional and public charter. However, minorities are much more likely than whites to be enrolled in these lowest-performing schools, which also disproportionately enroll poor students.

State-by-state data are available at: www.all4ed.org/

KIDS COUNT Report on Early Reading Proficiency

“Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters” is the title of a new KIDS COUNT report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. It makes the case for a comprehensive, national strategy to improve the reading proficiency of all children, which is a major factor in successful academic achievement and subsequent economic success. Currently, millions of young children lack the skills they need to move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Poor literacy skills are a top contributor to high school dropout.

Among the highlights of the report:

- Three-quarters of the poor readers in third grade will remain poor readers in high school.
- Many nations’ students outperform the U.S.’s in reading achievement. The U.S. will need 16 million more graduates with post-secondary degrees than it is producing at current rates, if it is to stay globally competitive
- Without concerted intervention, “readiness gaps” for disadvantaged children starting school develop into achievement disparities that persist throughout their school years.
- Chronic school absence, and summer learning loss, particularly for low-income children, hinder their ability to catch up with their more advantaged peers.
- A new national policy focus on achieving results, “from cradle to career,” offers great opportunities to move the dial on this key indicator of third-grade reading proficiency.

Read the report at: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

La Raza Report on Latino Children

The National Council of La Raza, in association with the Population Reference Bureau, has produced a data book: “America’s Future: Latino Child Well-Being in Numbers and Trends.” An online, downloadable database is also available, with data for all 50 states.

The report’s data both underscore some now-familiar trends (e.g., Latinos comprise one in five American children, and by 2030 will be one-third), and challenges some common misperceptions. For example, more than 90 percent of Latino children and youth are U.S. citizens, although 58 percent have at least one foreign-born parent. There are great regional differences in the demographics of Latino youth within the U.S.

By some measures, Latino children have made important strides toward improved well-being: maternal education levels have increased, and teen pregnancy rates have decreased. In other areas of well-being, the statistics are troubling: Latino children are more likely than the average American child to be poor, to live in single-parent families, to live in unaffordable housing, to not complete high school on time, and to be in the juvenile justice system.

Read the report at: www.nclr.org/content/news/detail/63009

From Youth into Young Adulthood

Chapin Hall report on adult functioning of former foster youth. There are few studies that inform us on what happens when youth “age out” of the foster care system: what are their prospects for a healthy, successful adulthood? This Chapin Hall paper reports on an ongoing study of youth formerly in foster care in three states (IL, IA, and WI), who at the time of this latest wave of interviews were 23-24 years old. The results paint a well-being portrait that is decidedly mixed.

At the time of this interview, nearly half of these young adults were living in their “own place”; but more than a third had been homeless or had “couch surfed” at some point since exiting foster care. Former foster youth were generally positive about their experience in care, and maintained adequate social networks, often including members of their biological families. However, many wished they had received greater assistance with life skills, especially budgeting and money management.

These young adults experienced big challenges to attaining economic self-sufficiency: compared to their peers in the general population, former foster youth were much less likely to be on a college-degree track, much less likely to be employed, and reported median earnings less than half those of their counterparts. Young women in the Midwest Study were more likely to be pregnant, and young men more likely to have impregnated a female partner. Former foster youth were more likely to be cohabiting and less likely to be married. They were more likely to have had involvement with the criminal justice system.

More information is available at: www.chapinhall.org/research/report/midwest-evaluation-adult-functioning-former-foster-youth

Future of Children report on Youth in Transition. Taking a broad view of the transition to adulthood, this volume (with chapter contributions from multiple authors) describes how in many ways this transition today is fundamentally different from what it was in previous generations. Dramatic changes in the structure of the economy, the circumstances of families, and the roles of immigration, race, and class, have altered the normative trajectory of young adults to economic and social maturity.

More information is available at: www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/index.xml

Pew report on Millennials. “Millennials”—the generation (some 51 million strong) of Americans currently 18 to 29 years old (born between 1981 and 1992)—are the topic of a recent Pew Research Center report. Based upon recent nationally representative survey data, the report covers issues ranging from personal identity to life priorities, and attitudes and practices related to work, education, family, politics, religion, and technology.

This generation stands to be the most-educated in American history. Ethnically and racially diverse, they favor multiple modes of self-expression, and are particularly wedded (no surprise!) to digital technology and social media. Indeed, they name “technology” most often as what makes their generation distinctive. In contrast to those of the three preceding generations, “work ethic” doesn’t show up on the Millennials’ list of what makes them unique—a difference they themselves acknowledge.

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Pew report on Millennials (cont.)

In some ways they're close to their parents' generation: they respect their elders, and get along well with parents. However, in other ways, they are breaking new ground: they're more accepting than older generations of diverse family arrangements, less religious, more satisfied with the general direction the country is headed, but also more sure that government should do more to solve social problems. Only about half as many Millennials are married as were among their parents' generation at a similar stage in life, and nearly four in ten are unemployed or out of the work force.

Oh, and eight out of ten Millennials sleep with their cell phones.

More information is available at: <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1501/%20millennials-new-survey-generational-personality-upbeat-open-new-ideas-technology-bound>

Recently Released Reports

Trends in cesarean delivery: According to a new report from the National Center for Health Statistics, the share of births that were cesarean deliveries rose by 53 percent between 1996 and 2007, and now account for nearly one in three (32 percent) of all births. National and state rates are available at: www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db35.htm

2006 infant mortality statistics: Taking an in-depth look at infant mortality, this National Vital Statistics Report reveals wide disparities by mothers' race and national origin, and marital status; birth plurality (multiple versus singleton births), and gestational age. For example, even "late preterm" infants (born at 34-36 weeks) had mortality rates three times those for full-term infants. National and some state-level data are available at: www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr58/nvsr58_17.pdf

CDC report on immunization information systems: As of 2008, 75 percent of all U.S. children younger than six participated in an immunization information system (IIS). An IIS collects and consolidates child-based vaccination data from multiple health-care providers, and can generate reminder and recall notices, and assess coverage within a state or other geographic area. A CDC program goal for 2010 is to achieve 95-percent participation in an IIS for children ages 0-5. More information is available at: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5905a3.htm

WIC-eligible children by state and congressional district: The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (commonly known as WIC) is one of the largest federal programs supporting low-income infants and toddlers. The Urban Institute has published estimates (based on 2006-08 American Community Survey data) of the number and percentage of children ages 0-4 who are eligible for WIC, by state and congressional district. More information is available at: www.urban.org/publications/412056.html

Child maltreatment, 2008 report: The latest statistics on child abuse and neglect are now available from the Children's Bureau of the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. While it is important to note that each state has its own standards for what constitutes child maltreatment, and many occurrences go unreported, 2008 data on the rate of substantiated cases show a second straight year of decline. Extensive state-level tables are included in the report, available at: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm08/index.htm.

Mortality Among Teenagers: Accidents (unintentional injuries) accounted for nearly half (48 percent) of all deaths among teenagers (ages 12-19), 1999-2006. Homicide and suicide accounted for nearly equal portions (13 and 11 percent, respectively). At every age within this group, males were more likely to die than females, and black teenagers were more likely to die than whites or Hispanics. For more information, see www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db37.htm

Medical care for young adults: Among the challenges youth face in transitioning to adulthood is gaining access to medical care. Young adults ages 20-29 in the U.S. were nearly twice as likely as adults 20-64 to lack health insurance coverage in 2008. Those not covered (and especially women among this group) were much more likely than those with health insurance to have unmet medical needs. (Note: Recently passed national health care reform legislation allows young people to remain covered under their parents' health plan until age 26.) More information is available at: www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db29.htm

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Occupational injuries and deaths among younger workers: Between 1998 and 2007 more than 5,700 young workers (ages 15-24) died from work-related injuries. Over the period, the fatality rate declined by 14 percent; however, the rate of nonfatal injuries did not decline significantly. Fatalities were particularly high for young Hispanic workers. More information is available at: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5915a2.htm

Impact of state income taxes on low-income families: Living below the federal poverty line does not exempt families in many states from paying state income tax—often hundreds of dollars. Forty-four states have an income tax, and in more than a quarter of those, families living in poverty are liable. At the other end of the spectrum, 17 states not only avoid taxing poor families, but offer credits that result in refunds to these families. More information is available at: www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3173

The New Demography of American Motherhood: Women ages 35 and older now account for a greater share of total U.S. births (14 percent) than do teens (10 percent). As recently as 1990, these proportions were reversed. A majority of mothers of newborns now have at least some college education. One in four new mothers is Hispanic. These and other findings, part of a Pew Research Center Report, are available at: <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1586/changing-demographic-characteristics-american-mothers>

About the Child Indicator

The goal of *The Child Indicator* is to communicate major developments and new resources within each sector of the child and youth indicators field to the larger community of interested users, researchers, and data developers on a regular basis. By promoting the efficient sharing of knowledge, ideas, and resources, *The Child Indicator* seeks to advance understanding within the child and youth indicators community and to make all of its members more effective in their work.

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Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that studies children at all stages of development. Our mission is to improve outcomes for children by providing research, data, and analysis to the people and institutions whose decisions and actions affect children. For additional information on Child Trends, including publications available to download, visit our Web site at www.childtrends.org. For the latest information on more than 100 key indicators of child and youth well-being, visit the Child Trends DataBank at www.childtrendsdatabank.org. For summaries of over 400 evaluations of out-of-school time programs that work (or don't) to enhance children's development, visit www.childtrends.org/WhatWorks.

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