



Centering Youth Thriving: *Adolescence. Thriving.* Learning Ecosystems.

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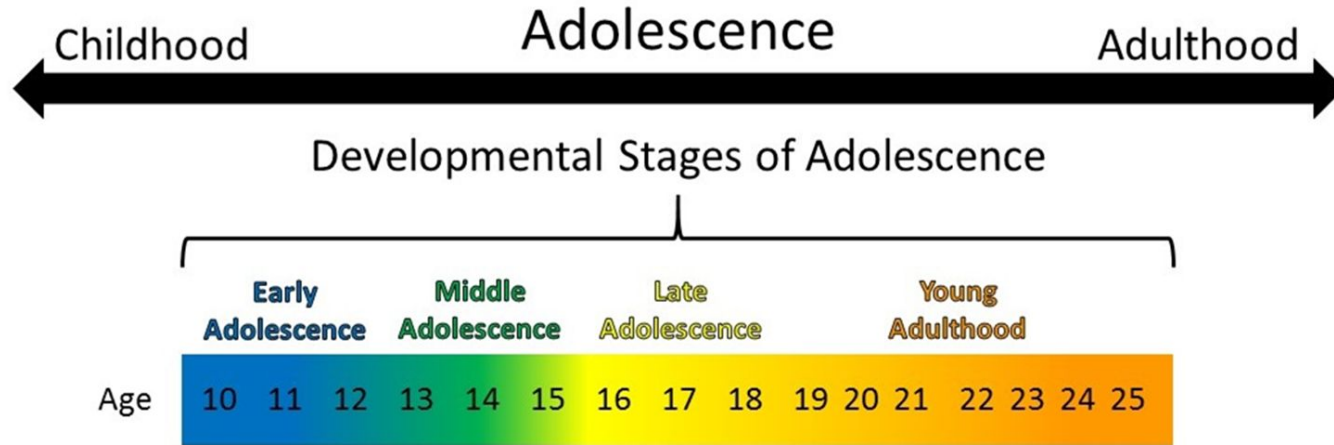
The Promise of Adolescence

Adolescence is a period of **extraordinary opportunity** for learning and exploration and for **laying a strong foundation** for a successful life.

Our nation needs to commit itself to a sustained plan for **reversing the worsening inequities** of childhood disadvantage, thereby **enabling all adolescents to flourish.**

Source: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (2019). *The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunities for All Youth*.

What is Adolescence?

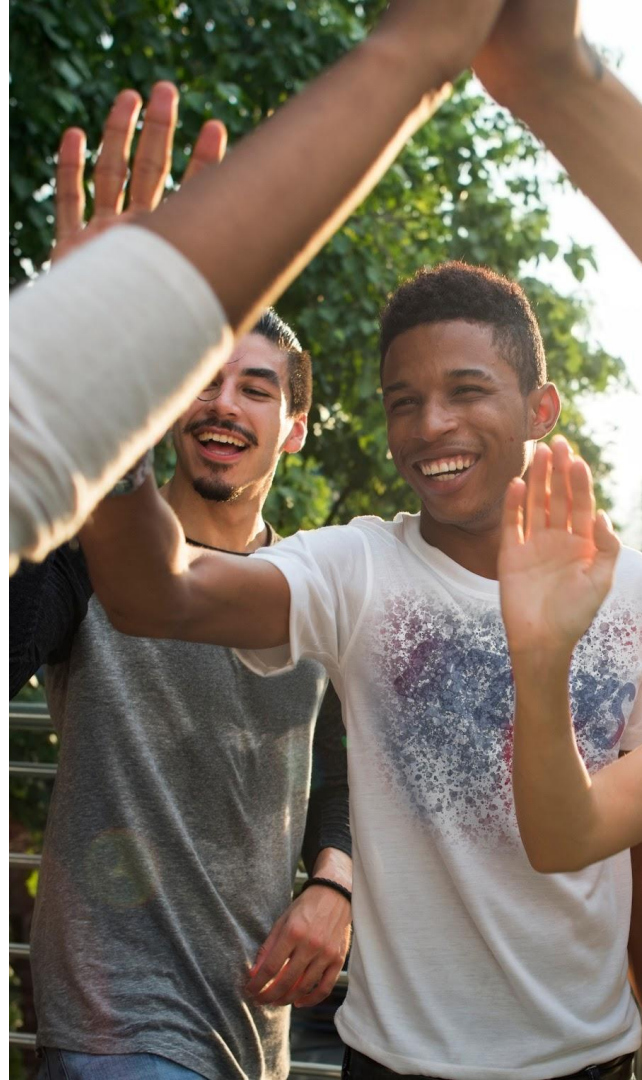


Source: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (2019). *The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunities for All Youth*.

Dynamic Changes, Connections, and Growth

- Increased strength & efficiency of neural connections within & between brain regions
- Pruning away connections we don't need
- Timing & location of changes: unique to adolescence

(NASEM, 2019)



“Adolescent brains are **uniquely fit** to prepare young people to meet new life challenges.”

(NASEM, 2019)

Expanding Skills & Capacities

- Exploration & discovery
- Identity development
- Emotion regulation
- Problem-solving & Decision-making
- Relationship-building
- Sense of purpose
- Contribution and leadership

(NASEM, 2019)



Meeting developmental needs to support thriving: As adolescents, we need opportunities to...

Explore & discover
Take healthy risks
Test new ideas

Build
decision-making &
emotion-regulation
skills

Earn respect &
social status from
peers & adults

Experience secure,
developmental
relationships

Define personal
goals & values
Develop a positive
sense of identity

Contribute to our
worlds
Gain a sense of
purpose

Relational Ecosystem for Thriving

- Access to **relationships** is a critical lever for fostering thriving ecosystems
- The *kinds* of relationships in the ecosystem also matter
- **Developmental Relationships** are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them.



Key Questions

Why is the “science of adolescence” important for thinking about thriving communities, thriving ecosystems?

How are adolescents’ developmental needs currently being met within learning systems?

How might a “learning ecosystem” approach ensure we’re supporting core developmental needs of adolescents?

“...it is every young person’s **right to have access** to the environmental conditions and resources they need **to thrive** in whatever community they are part of. Namely, the **integrated conditions of thriving that all youth need** to be safe and supported; healthy and able to heal; rooted and connected; learning and growing; living with joy and purpose; and pursuing their passions and interests”

Youth-Nex (2023). *Portrait of a Thriving Youth*

THANK YOU!

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