



# WAKE COUNTY STRATEGIC PLANNING BLUEPRINT

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A Guide for Collective Impact for Wake County Youth  
March 2016



the  
**forum**  
FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT

**YOUTH**THRIVE  
WE ALL SUCCEED WHEN YOUTH SUCCEED  
wake county, nc

# DEDICATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING BLUEPRINT

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Youth Thrive wishes to dedicate this first-ever *Strategic Planning Blueprint: A Guide for Collective Impact for Wake County Youth* to all young people living in Wake County, as well as those who work so hard to serve them. Without the dedication of our youth-serving professionals and organizations, Wake County would not be the wonderful place that it truly is to raise youth. Together, we are helping Wake County youth thrive.

Compiled by Youth Thrive in consultation with the Forum for Youth Investment.

Youth Thrive is a community-based collaborative comprised of individuals and organizations working to create positive change for Wake County youth (ages 5-18). By ensuring an effective and unifying partnership, Youth Thrive seeks to provide a space for communication, alignment and sharing of resources to better serve our young people. [www.youth-thrive.org](http://www.youth-thrive.org).

The Forum for Youth Investment is a non-profit, nonpartisan action tank dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are ready by 21 – ready for college, work and life. [www.forumfyi.org](http://www.forumfyi.org). Ready by 21® is a set of innovative strategies developed by the Forum that helps communities and states make a measurable difference in the lives of children and youth. Ready by 21 is a registered trademark of the Forum for Youth Investment.

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# FOREWORD

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Every community has ample data that suggest that not all of its children and youth are thriving and that some are really struggling. Every community can name programs, organizations, initiatives and plans in place to improve specific systems, services and opportunities that work with particular populations to achieve defined outcomes. Few communities, however, have a plan for how all of these efforts could be aligned for maximum impact. This is not because they think alignment is unimportant. It is because they are all too aware of the fact that alignment is difficult.

It takes courage for community leaders to publicly commit to an alignment process. An alignment process does more than invite community stakeholders to look at the data and the research on a particular issue (e.g., bullying, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading, or obesity) and create a plan. It invites them to look at the data and research on multiple issues with full acknowledgement that many of these issues have already been addressed in existing plans and many of the strategies identified to address one issue may well move the needle on another.

The Wake County *Strategic Planning Blueprint* is a blueprint for alignment. It builds on the *Wake County Youth Well-being Profile* released only a year ago which organized data on children and youth across major well-being domains (academic, vocational, social, emotional, physical, safety). It is intentionally aligned with other major efforts and plans in the county, including the Healthiest Capital County Initiative, the Wake County Public School System's Strategic Plan and Vision for 2020, and plans focused on juvenile crime prevention, workforce development and community health.

It reflects the incredible commitment of individuals from almost 40 organizations who worked together in action teams to identify the challenges behind the data presented in the *Profile*, learn more about the local conditions and contexts that create both barriers and opportunities to address these challenges, and identify strategies and activities that, if implemented not only by them but by many other organizations, systems, and leaders in Wake County, should result in outcome improvements.



The recommendations honed by these action teams represent the end of a process whose worth will only be realized if this blueprint is seen as just that – a thorough initial outline for a long-term, complex construction project that requires the commitment and collaboration of many partners and that will undoubtedly have to be revised along the way.

The recommendations generated by each action team are presented separately to honor the work of the teams and provide a clear sense of the strategies and activities each team felt were critical to achieve the goal they were charged with. The *Blueprint*, however, is coded to encourage cross-issue, cross-sector action.

The teams worked hard to make sure they presented recommendations that were not only data-driven, evidence-based and locally relevant, but also balanced and impactful. The recommendations in each section are grouped by strategy (e.g., policies and systems, service delivery, parent engagement) and coded using icons to show the relevance of each list of strategies and activities to the other goal areas. This level of detail demonstrates the teams' and staff's commitment to a rigorous planning process.

This plan represents a blueprint of the work that needs to be done. It will be useful to engage with it both individually and collectively to set priorities.

Individually, we encourage you to read these recommendations with pen in hand. Which of these recommendations are you in a position to act on? How would you make the recommendations you select more specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound so that they move off the page and into practice?

Collectively, we encourage the Wake County community to periodically issue a call-to-action against this plan. Against this backdrop, what are the priorities that must be brought to the forefront for collective attention, effort and impact?

Kudos go to the staff and teams. The next steps, however, are up to you.



*Karen Pittman*  
**KAREN PITTMAN**  
Co-founder & CEO,  
The Forum for Youth Investment



*James West*  
**DR. JAMES WEST**  
Founder, Youth Thrive  
Wake County Board of  
Commissioners

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Youth Thrive was established to serve the community as a convener and collaborator; to support youth-serving professionals and organizations; and to work toward establishing shared measures and coordinated systems to ensure an environment where youth can thrive.

Based initially on data from the *Youth Well-being Profile*, five issue-based action teams were formed in February 2015. These teams included the following: Academic Success & Graduation, Emotional and Mental Health, Opportunity Youth, Physical Health and Safety, and Civic and Vocational Development. Using the Forum for Youth Investment's Big Picture Approach to Collective Impact, each team, led by co-conveners from the community, engaged in problem identification, root cause analysis, and goal identification for youth. Action teams relied heavily on data from the *Youth Well-being Profile* as well as other publicly available data in the problem identification stage. These challenges are outlined below.

## **Academic Success & Graduation**

- There is a lack of school readiness to meet academic milestones.
- Too few students graduate within four years.
- Too few students graduate from high school ready for college and career.

## **Emotional & Mental Health**

- Too many youth are bullied.
- Too many youth have seriously considered attempting suicide.

## **Opportunity Youth**

- There are too many youth who have dropped out and not reengaged in school.
- There are too many youth who are not in school and not participating in the labor market.
- There are disparities in outcomes for opportunity youth across gender, race and ethnicity.

## **Physical Health & Safety**

- Too many youth pedestrians are dying or sustaining injury from vehicle crashes.
- Too many youth are overweight or obese.
- Too many youth are using substances (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, drugs).
- Too many youth experience child abuse.
- Too many youth have sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

## **Civic Development**

- Too few youth are civically engaged.

## **Vocational Development**

- Youth seeking employment can't obtain it.

Youth Thrive and its partners offer the following strategies as recommendations we believe will have positive impact in the lives of youth and help to move our county forward in its endeavors to address the challenges youth face across multiple domains.

In each domain the strategies detailed include policy and system improvements; capacity building and service delivery enhancements; community-wide information; parent and youth engagement; and data. Policy strategies call for policies to change in order for the overall system to change. Similarly, system improvements are specific strategies requiring the entire system to change the way it operates in order for the most positive change to occur. Next, capacity-building strategies are those that increase the knowledge, skills, or abilities of those individuals working in the systems and supports that impact youth. Strategies that will often require

some type of mass media campaign in order to increase the awareness or knowledge of all individuals in the community are presented as community-wide information strategies. Parent engagement strategies target working with parents in multiple capacities to improve outcomes for youth while youth engagement strategies identify opportunities to include youth voice and leverage youth themselves as a critical resource for improving outcomes. Lastly, data strategies are those that suggest increasing, expanding or continuing the collection or analysis of data in order to inform data-driven decisions for our community. It is our hope that the reader will be able to easily identify which strategies are most applicable to their role(s) in impacting the lives of Wake County youth.

These strategies are not an exhaustive list to address all the goals in this *Strategic Planning Blueprint*. Due to the expansive scope of this document, such an undertaking would be unrealistic and ineffective. For all aspects of youth well-being to be addressed, the collective expertise and resources of all the youth-serving organizations in Wake County will need to be leveraged. Wake County has many extremely effective programs and initiatives that are highly valuable and beneficial to children, youth and families. Additionally, Wake County is touched by many excellent statewide initiatives that are underway to improve outcomes for youth. Thus, **the first and most important recommendation is to bring these existing efforts together to create even larger collective impact and ensure measured, positive change.**

## CROSS-CUTTING GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED

Throughout this *Strategic Planning Blueprint* planning process, high-level gaps in Wake County emerged. Most noteworthy is the lack of coordinated data collection and the **lack of a coordinated assessment tool across systems**. This gap is a serious challenge because without ongoing data collection it is impossible to know the state of youth in Wake County and if programs and services are making a difference in the lives of youth. An additional high level gap that impacts each action area is the **lack of mass transit options in Wake County**. Furthermore, **gaps in service delivery and in the system as a whole** were discovered through this process. Gaps in services existed around opportunity youth – particularly for foster youth, youth that are parents and for those that have dropped out of school. **Services and supports that help homeless families** are also lacking in Wake County.

Following the release of the *Strategic Planning Blueprint*, Youth Thrive will issue a call-to-action for our community to engage in multi-impact strategies. Youth Thrive will then convene the community to coordinate collective action and track progress over time. We invite you to join us as we work together to ensure all youth thrive.

# HOW TO USE THE BLUEPRINT

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The *Strategic Planning Blueprint: A Guide for Collective Impact for Wake County Youth* is first and foremost a living document that seeks to **clarify and prioritize what we as a county want to see concerning the well-being of youth**. The *Strategic Planning Blueprint* is an invitation to the community to make a commitment to our youth by working collaboratively to achieve the *Blueprint's* desired goals and to engage in ongoing priority setting for our youth.

This document, along with its companion document, the *Youth Well-being Profile*, released in February 2015, can be **used as a planning tool to enhance current services, programs, and supports as well as plan new initiatives within the community**. It is a developmental framework, where both prevention and promotion strategies are recommended to achieve better outcomes for youth. We seek to engage in cross-systems collaborations where youth and their caregivers enter no wrong door – instead they find a system of supports working together.

Systems and organizations such as nonprofits, schools, the faith community, government, funders, as well as families can align with these community recommendations in order to work collectively to ensure our youth develop into successful adults who will be ready for college, work and life. This *Blueprint* can **inform the strategic planning of individual organizations** as they identify SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time Bound)<sup>1</sup> related to the shared community goals.

Youth Thrive will continue to help build this collaborative space through ongoing monitoring and publicizing of implementation. This document will be updated every three years based on forward progress and the emergence of new community assets, concerns and challenges. Our future work depends on the continued engagement of individuals and organizations serving youth and the broader community. We hope you will join us and the great work happening in partnership to ensure better outcomes for youth in Wake County.

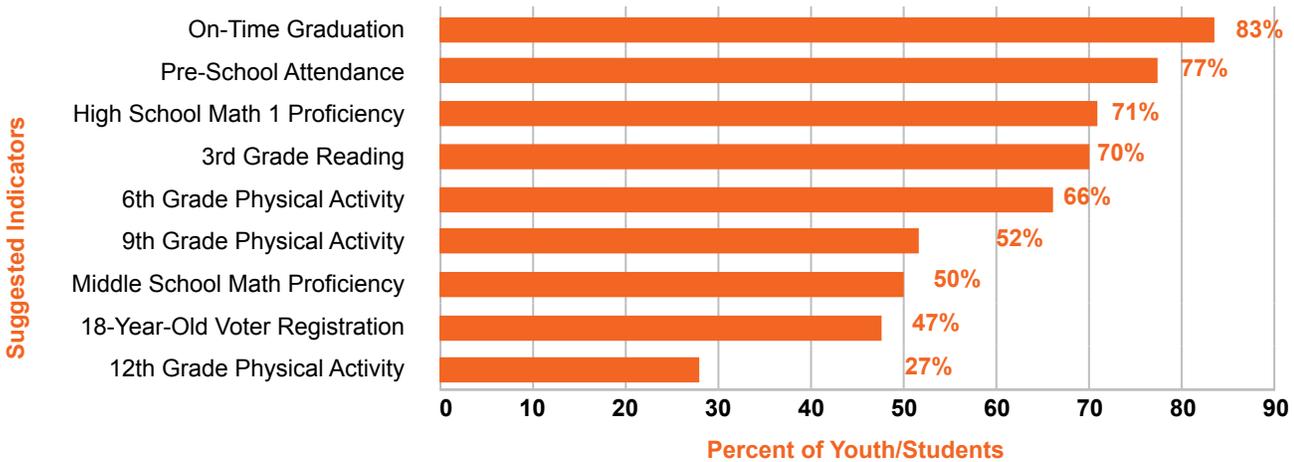
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<sup>1</sup> Doran, George T. "There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives." *Management Review* 70.11 (Nov. 1981): 35. Business Source Corporate. EBSCO . 15 Oct. 2008.

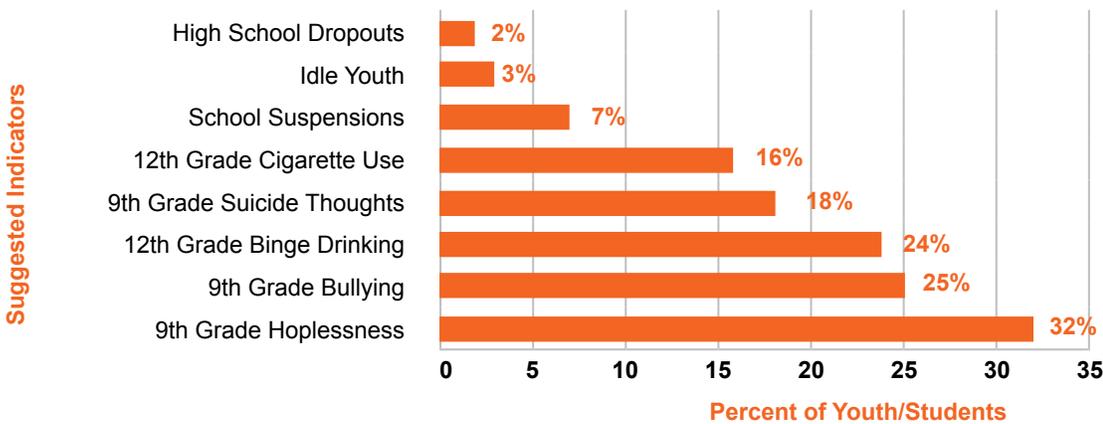
# OVERVIEW & APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BLUEPRINT

As mentioned in the Executive Summary, the five issue-based action teams relied heavily on data from the *Youth Well-being Profile* as well as other publicly available data in the problem identification stage. Key pieces of data and local conditions are reviewed below.

## WAKE COUNTY YOUTH ASSETS TO BUILD UPON



## WAKE COUNTY YOUTH RISKS TO REDUCE



During the last phase of their work, the action teams identified strategies and actions to contribute to our shared goals established in this *Blueprint* and leverage the existing work in the County.

The strategies and activities in this report are presented as recommendations. Strategies were identified based on the following criteria:

- **DATA-DRIVEN:** Strategies address the biggest gaps.
- **EVIDENCE-INFORMED:** Strategies are informed by research and/or evidence.
- **POTENTIAL FOR MULTI-ISSUE IMPACT:** Strategies address multiple indicators.
- **LOCAL WISDOM & EXPERTISE:** Strategies reflect priority-setting of action team leads, board members and community partners.
- **BALANCE:** Strategies are both individually and environmentally focused.

The strategies are presented as separate team recommendations in order to preserve the unique perspectives and details that come through the teams' areas of focus. During implementation, many of these strategies could be combined or adjusted (taking suggestions/strengths from various perspectives) to maximize their effectiveness. We know that many aspects of the life of a child do not occur in isolation, and we understand that when recommending strategies to improve certain factors there will be additional impact and a "ripple effect" of improvement in other areas. For example, improvement in the social and emotional well-being of a young person has also been shown to improve a young person's academic performance.<sup>2</sup> The following icons will be used to indicate when a strategy impacts multiple areas:

-  Academic Success & Graduation
-  Emotional & Mental Health
-  Opportunity Youth
-  Physical Health & Safety
-  Civic & Vocational Development

Furthermore, the strategies and activities are presented in subcategories based on the type of strategy, i.e., System Improvements, Capacity Building & Policy; Service Delivery; Community-wide Information; Parent Engagement; Youth Engagement; and Data Recommendations. Every aspect of the community is needed and we invite individuals, parents, youth, and organizations to find the best place to engage. The subcategory strategy types can also be viewed in a complete cross-systems strategy matrix in Appendix A.

## ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING STRATEGIC PLANS

Additionally, the *Strategic Planning Blueprint* is aligned with **Wake County Public School System's (WCPSS) January 2015 Strategic Plan and Vision for 2020**. The vision is that all Wake County Public School System students will be prepared to reach their full potential and lead productive lives in a complex and changing world. The overarching goal is that by 2020, 95 percent of WCPSS students will graduate ready for productive citizenship. Youth Thrive Action Team members reviewed this plan in full and many of the strategies from the WCPSS plan were incorporated into the *Strategic Planning Blueprint for Youth*. The reasons for this alignment are several fold: WCPSS serves as the singular school district for Wake County, extensive community feedback was included in the plan, strategies are evidence-informed and outcomes will be measured.

Furthermore, the *Strategic Planning Blueprint* is intentionally aligned with the **Wake County Juvenile Crime Prevention Annual Plan, the Capital Area Workforce Development Board's Strategic Plan, and the Community Health Needs Assessment**. Additionally, recommendations from three parent focus groups, six youth focus groups, and five county-wide community stakeholder conversations convened by Youth Thrive informed the development of this *Blueprint*.

<sup>2</sup> Zins, J. E., Weissberg, R. P., Wang, M. C., & Walberg, H. J. (Eds.). (2004). Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say? New York: Teachers College Press.

# KEY ACTION PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE POSITIVE COMMUNITY CHANGE

As the action teams developed strategies for the identified challenge areas for youth in Wake County, many themes emerged for cross-sector contribution. Key action principles for positive change correspond with core elements of Youth Thrive’s understanding of where the needs and assets are in Wake County and what will be needed to make a difference – in short, our Theory of Change.

## YOUTH THRIVE THEORY OF CHANGE



1. **Youth need more than strong academic skills in order to be successful.** They need a myriad of life skills and employability skills in order to be fully prepared and ready to be productive citizens.
2. **Quality of service** is an area in which multiple sectors can engage and improve. We must hold ourselves accountable to funding entities, the community and most importantly, to youth. Services and supports are encouraged to use research and evidence-informed program delivery and to engage in ongoing evaluation and improvement.
3. **Parent involvement and engagement** is critical in every stage and area of a young person’s life. When parents are healthy, have sufficient physical and emotional resources, understand child development, and prioritize the health of their children, youth have a better chance at success. What is needed is more information, awareness, access and support for parents to be able to effectively support their children.

4. **There is an overarching need to increase awareness of and access to** community supports and services for youth and their families. Although Wake County has abundant resources, often times these resources are unknown or out of reach for many youth. Access to transportation emerged as a complex and significant barrier impacting well-being across multiple focus areas.
5. **Community support at many levels is needed in order** to ensure youth have all the tools they need in their toolboxes. This support must come from families, programs, schools, the faith community, and business. The value of the business sector in ensuring the successful development of the future workforce cannot be overstated.
6. **There is a need to increase collaboration among systems involved in serving youth and their families.** Resources are finite and challenges for our youth are infinite. In order to help youth thrive, all sectors of the community must work together to address the needs. In this *Blueprint*, a myriad of strategies and activities are outlined for involvement of all sectors of the community.
7. **Youth themselves are a key resource and need to be a part of creating solutions and solving problems.** A growing body of research on youth civic development indicates that when youth take on leadership roles within organizations and communities – through initiatives such as youth in governance, youth organizing, youth activism, youth media, and youth as researchers – youth development is enhanced and civic engagement is promoted.<sup>3 4 5 6</sup>
8. **Our community must work to address the achievement gaps and disparities in success** that exist for many youth. This includes identifying areas where challenges exist and proactively choosing to do better together so ALL youth in Wake County, regardless of race, ethnicity, zip code or gender, can thrive.
9. **There is an ongoing need to collect, share, and make data-informed decisions in order to improve program and service delivery to the youth in our community.** In particular, the ongoing collection of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey or other similar data is imperative to support data-driven decisions.

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<sup>3</sup> Christens, B. D., & Peterson, N.A.(2012).The role of empowerment in youth development: A study of sociopolitical control as mediator of ecological systems' influence on developmental outcomes. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 41 (5), 623-635.

<sup>4</sup> Flanagan, C. & Faison, N. (2001). Youth civic development: Implications of research for social policy and programs, *Society for Research in Child Development*.

<sup>5</sup> McLellan, J.A., Youniss, J. (2003). Two Systems of Youth Service: Determinants of Voluntary and Required Youth Community Service. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 1 (32), 47-55.

<sup>6</sup> Sullivan, P.J., & Larson, R.W. (2010). Connecting Youth to High-Resource Adults: Lessons From Effective Youth Programs. *Journal of Adolescent Research*. 20 (9).

# GOALS & INDICATORS

Community-level data will be used to evaluate progress toward the shared goals and indicators over time and will be tracked by Youth Thrive through a visual analytics data platform.

## GOALS

1. Wake County youth will be prepared to meet academic milestones and graduate from high school on time, ready for college, career and citizenship.
2. Youth will have access to and knowledge of positive social emotional resources, competencies and support.
3. Opportunity youth will have the necessary supports to enable them to develop their confidence, skills, and self-efficacy; obtain a postsecondary credential or certificate with labor market value; and meaningfully connect to sustainable careers.
4. Wake County youth will be healthy and safe.
5. Wake County youth will be civically engaged and contribute to their communities.
6. Wake County youth will be prepared for lifelong, meaningful, and gainful employment.

## OUTCOME INDICATORS FOR THE GOALS



- Percent of students who score a 3 or above on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading and math End-of-Grade (EOGs) assessments
- Percent of students who score a 3 or above on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math EOGs
- Number of middle and high school students short- and long-term suspended
- Percent of students who pass 10<sup>th</sup> grade English II
- Average ACT scores
- Percent of Wake County Public School students who graduate on time
- Percent of students enrolling in college



- Percent of students reporting bullying behavior
- Suicide rates in Wake County
- Suicide attempts in Wake County
- The number of Mental Health First Aid trainers in Wake County
- Number of people trained in Mental Health First Aid in Wake County



- Number of students who have previously dropped out, but who re-enroll and graduate
- Percent of “idle” youth
- Number of unduplicated youth receiving juvenile justice complaints



- Number of child pedestrian injuries
- Percent of youth who are at healthy weight
- Percent of youth who smoke traditional and e-cigarettes
- Number of youth who are abused and neglected
- Rate of testing for STDs/STIs in the youth population
- Rate of STDs/STIs in the youth population



- Percent of Wake County 18-to-25-year-olds who vote in general elections
- Number of 18-year olds who are registered voters
- Percent of Career and Technical Education Students meeting ACT Work Keys Proficiency
- Youth unemployment rate

# AREAS FOR COLLABORATIVE, FOCUSED ACTION FOR WAKE COUNTY YOUTH

## ACADEMIC SUCCESS & GRADUATION

### CHALLENGE AREAS

- There is a lack of school readiness to meet academic milestones.
- Too few students graduate within four years.
- Too few students graduate from high school ready for college and career.

The data surrounding academic success of youth in Wake County indicate that youth are doing well, on average. However, there are significant issues related to disparities by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status that must be addressed by the community. An example of this disparity can be seen in graduation rates; 83 percent of all students graduate on time, but when separated by race, large disparities in on-time graduation exist: 92 percent Asian; 91 percent white; 74 percent Black/African American; 68 percent Hispanic/Latino; 84 percent multiracial; and 60 percent American Indian/Alaskan.<sup>7</sup> This disparity continues when dropout rates are examined. For additional detailed data, please reference the *Youth Thrive Well-being Profile*.

### DATA FROM YOUTH WELL-BEING PROFILE DATA

\* from year 2013-2014 unless otherwise noted

<b>Four Year Cohort Graduation (does not include those graduating in five or more years)</b>	83%
<b>Dropout Rate (2012-2013)</b>	2%
<b>Third Grade Reading and Math Proficiency</b>	70%
<b>Middle School Reading and Math Proficiency</b>	62% reading; 50% math
<b>English II and Math I Proficiency</b>	70%

### Local Conditions

Noteworthy local conditions impacting these challenges were identified by Actions Teams. First, the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) serves as the single school district in a very large county, which is diverse both geographically and in its population. In fact, WCPSS is the fifteenth largest school district in the US, and plans to open thirteen new schools in the next three school years. Moreover, exponential growth is expected in the county over the next decade.

WCPSS is faced with the challenges of meeting the needs of a diverse student population, such as the need for alternative learning options that cannot be met by the schools alone. The whole community needs to understand the challenges students face in the classroom and be able to work with the schools to overcome those challenges.

Furthermore, both school and community providers need to begin early when it comes to getting youth to on-time graduation. Research and community knowledge agree that high school is too late to begin to ensure students are on track for graduation and beyond. For example, attending school regularly is essential to students gaining the academic and social skills they need to succeed. Students who miss a significant amount of school are likely to fall behind academically.<sup>8,9</sup> Starting as early as preschool and kindergarten, chronic absenteeism has an impact, including missing basic milestones for literacy, early math skills and social-emotional development. Regularly missing 10 percent of the academic year in early primary school years can leave students unable to read proficiently by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and off track for high school graduation.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Youth Thrive. (2015). Wake County Youth Well-being Profile.

<sup>8</sup> Attendance Works: Advancing Student Success by Reducing Chronic Absence. In Attendance Works. <http://www.attendance-works.org/> (accessed October 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Balfanz R, Byrnes V. Chronic Absenteeism: Summarizing What We Know From Nation-ally Available Data. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools, 2012. [https://ct.global.ssl.fastly.net/media/W1siZiIsIjI -wMTQvMDgvMTUvMjE1dnkya3BzOF9G-SU5BTENocm9uaWNBYnNlbnRIZWI -zbVJlcG9ydF9NYXkxNi5wZGYiXV0/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport\\_May16.pdf?sha=ffcb3d2b](https://ct.global.ssl.fastly.net/media/W1siZiIsIjI -wMTQvMDgvMTUvMjE1dnkya3BzOF9G-SU5BTENocm9uaWNBYnNlbnRIZWI -zbVJlcG9ydF9NYXkxNi5wZGYiXV0/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport_May16.pdf?sha=ffcb3d2b) (accessed July 2015).

Additionally, it is very important to consider early grade reading and math scores, and have high quality supports in place for those students that are below expectations at 3<sup>rd</sup> and/or 8<sup>th</sup> grade EOG assessments. Hanover Research also cites course grades and overall performance in 9<sup>th</sup> grade is 80 percent accurate in predicting on-time high school graduation. Students with higher course performance and credit status are 3.5 times more likely to graduate high school on time.<sup>10</sup>

An added local condition impacting the academic success of Wake County youth is teacher compensation. It is well known that teacher pay is low throughout the United States, but North Carolina ranks in the bottom 10 percent of all states for teacher pay.<sup>11</sup> Thus, retaining highly qualified and effective teachers is a challenge. This was raised as a concern in the action team meetings, Youth Thrive parent focus groups, and Youth Thrive community stakeholder conversations, and is a strategy area for the Wake County Public School System.

Increasing parental engagement in children’s education was also identified as a local condition of critical importance by both the Action Team meetings and Youth Thrive’s community stakeholder conversations.

## GOAL

Wake County youth will be prepared to meet academic milestones and graduate from high school on time, ready for college, career and citizenship.

## OUTCOME INDICATORS

- Percent of students who score a three or above on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading and math EOGs
- Percent of students who score a three or above on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math EOGs
- Number of middle and high school students short- and long-term suspended
- Percent of students who pass 10<sup>th</sup> grade English II
- Average ACT scores
- Percent of students who graduate on time
- Percent of students enrolling in college

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Icons listed indicate that the strategy can impact issues beyond academic success.



Emotional & Mental Health



Opportunity Youth



Physical Health & Safety



Civic & Vocational Development

### System Improvements, Capacity Building & Policy



Offer cultural competence training to educators, justice personnel, and youth service providers to broaden understanding of issues contributing to racial disparities.



Business policies support parent engagement in their children’s education.

<sup>10</sup> Hanover Research. Critical Academic Indicators: What to Look for in Your Students to Ensure Future Success. <http://www.hanoverresearch.com/insights/critical-academic-indicators-what-to-look-for-in-your-students-to-ensure-future-success/?i=k-12-education> (accessed February 2016).

<sup>11</sup> National Education Association. (March 2015). Rankings & Estimates: Rankings of the States 2014 and Estimates of School Statistics 2015. [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NEA\\_Rankings\\_And\\_Estimates-2015-03-11a.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NEA_Rankings_And_Estimates-2015-03-11a.pdf) (Accessed February 2016).

## System Improvements, Capacity Building & Policy



Resource support is needed for WCPSS students who are parents, including access to childcare, parenting education, and other supports.



Cultivate environments of inquiry that enhance the unique skills and abilities of youth through collaboration, creativity, communication and critical thinking.



All students will be taught a high-quality curriculum by effective teachers in safe and nurturing learning environments.

## Service Delivery



Schools, community-based programs, and parents offer students meaningful rewards and incentives for academic achievements.



Enhance opportunities for students' and families' connection to school in early grades.



Expand participation in programs and initiatives promoting literacy.



Increase access to effective out-of-school activities or service-learning opportunities, such as tutoring, mentoring, skill-building, self-advocacy, time management/organization, and growth mindset.



Enhance college access through: college and career counseling, scholarships, decreasing/eliminating application fees, assisting with FAFSA submissions, increasing ACT prep opportunities, and assisting with college application completion.



Develop and expand extended learning opportunities to include high quality early learning, nontraditional learning, summer and intersession learning and alternatives to suspension to reduce learning loss and address diverse learning needs.

## Community-wide Information



Provide community with information on the importance of parental involvement in all aspects of children's education, in order to reduce barriers and increase parental involvement.



Implement a cross-agency campaign to increase awareness of services and supports for youth.



Host a community summit to create greater awareness, engagement and coordinated action around increasing graduation rates and college access.

## Parent Engagement



Enhance family and service provider understanding of the importance of successful transition points in education (elementary to middle and middle to high school), how to access services and supports at these points, and about course selection for the desired postsecondary plan.



Educate parents on the importance of youth having high attendance at school.

## Parent Engagement



Support parental knowledge and skills needed to advocate for their students, including an understanding of growth mindset and the educational benchmarks K-8 students need to meet in order to be successful in high school.

## Youth Engagement



Ensure youth participation in the community summit for coordinated action to increase graduation rates.



Intentionally engage youth in the cross-agency campaign to increase awareness of services and supports for youth.

## Data



Implement ongoing yearly survey providing information about student behavior and experiences related to issues identified in the *Strategic Planning Blueprint*.

# EMOTIONAL & MENTAL HEALTH

## CHALLENGE AREAS

- Too many youth are bullied.
- Too many youth have seriously considered attempting suicide.

A serious concern affecting the emotional and mental health of many school-age youth is bullying. Being teased or threatened for any reason is not conducive to a young person thriving in school or community environments. According to Wake County Public Schools 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), one in five (19 percent) of surveyed high school students reported being bullied on school property within the past year, with 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders reporting being bullied on school property more frequently than 12<sup>th</sup> graders. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey also noted that female students in middle school were significantly more likely than male students to have been bullied both on school property as well electronically. It should be noted that cyberbullying is a growing area of concern, with nine percent of youth ages 12-18 reporting cyberbullying during FY 2010-2011.<sup>12</sup>

### Local Conditions

Cyberbullying has become more prevalent in recent years due, in part, to the advent of social media. Youth have pervasive access to technology, even throughout the school day and there is often inadequate parental monitoring of electronic devices. Parents are frequently not up-to-date on the many forms of social media.

As referenced earlier, in the fall of 2013, Youth Thrive conducted six youth focus groups and three parent focus groups across Wake County. When asked about the things that get in the way of youth in Wake County being successful, youth as well as parents reported bullying was one of the main challenges. Both parents and youth voiced a need for strong adult support for youth. These adults include parents, and those in schools, the faith community, and community programs.

As discussions about bullying and other emotional issues faced by youth increase, so does concern about suicide. According to the WCPSS 2013 YRBS, over one-fourth (29 percent) of high school students surveyed report feelings of sadness or hopelessness that interfered with usual activities within the past year, with 37 percent of female students reporting these feelings.<sup>13</sup> The 2013 YRBS also indicated 17 percent of youth surveyed had seriously considered suicide. While there are racial and ethnic differences in suicide consideration, the biggest difference is between genders. Compared with male students, nearly twice as many female students indicated that they have seriously considered suicide.

The Wake County Human Services Public Health Quarterly Report for July-September 2015 documented suicide as an emerging issue.<sup>14</sup> According to NCDTECT, emergency department visits for suicide and self-inflicted injuries for 15-18 year olds exceeded those of 19-24 year olds in 2014. The number of visits for 0-14 year olds was 39 in 2009 and 87 in 2014. For 15-18 year olds, the number of visits was 139 in 2009 and 191 in 2014.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to suicide and bullying, the Emotional and Mental Health Action Team identified trauma as a significant challenge for many Wake County youth. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines “trauma” as experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions. It can refer to a single event, multiple events, or a set of circumstances experienced by an

<sup>12</sup> Robers, S., Kemp, J., and Truman, J. (2013). Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2012 (NCES 2013-036/NCJ 241446). National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, DC.

<sup>13</sup> Townsend, M. (Sept. 2014). North Carolina Youth Risk Behavior Survey: 2013 WCPSS High School Results. Data & Accountability Report No. 14.06. [https://webarchive.wcpss.net/results/reports/2014/hs\\_nc\\_yrbs.pdf](https://webarchive.wcpss.net/results/reports/2014/hs_nc_yrbs.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Wake County Human Services. Public Health Quarterly Report. July- September 2015. Injuries. <http://www.wakegov.com/humanservices/data/Documents/PH%20Quarterly%20Jul%20-Sep%202015%20FINAL%2009-11-15.pdf> (Accessed February 2016).

individual as physically and emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. Examples of traumatic experiences include but are not limited to emotional, physical or sexual abuse; living in poverty or with food insecurity; parental divorce; death of a family member; and domestic or neighborhood violence.

There are a myriad of ways in which different children may respond to the same experience based on a host of resiliency factors. These include: the age of the child; the child's developmental stage, severity, proximity, duration and frequency of violence; the child's gender; the child's role in the family, personal characteristics of the child; the presence or absence of loving and supportive adults in a child's life; and the stability and responsiveness of staff and systems that interact with the child.<sup>15 16</sup>

Protective factors within the family and community that help promote resiliency among youth include:

- Strong cultural identity
- Access to health care
- Stable housing
- Economic stability—ability to earn a livable wage
- Social support—connections to family and friends
- Affiliation with a supportive religious or faith community

### Local Conditions

In order to address some of the community challenges outlined above, Wake County is fortunate to have access to Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training, a groundbreaking public education program that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of their impact, and overviews common treatments. There are currently 20 trainers for MHFA in Wake County certified by the National Council for Behavioral Health. However, the county would benefit from more individuals being trained in MHFA. Mental Health First Aid is a live training course, which uses role-playing and simulations to demonstrate how to assess a mental health crisis; select interventions and provide initial help; and connect persons to professional, peer and social supports as well as self-help resources.

Another key issue identified by the Action Team was the need for Social Emotional Learning (SEL). SEL is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. These skills are critical to being a good student, and have been shown to prevent or reduce risk behaviors (e.g., bullying, drug use, and dropping out).<sup>17</sup>

## GOAL

Youth will have access to and knowledge of positive social emotional resources, competencies and support.

## OUTCOME INDICATORS

- Students reports of bullying behavior
- Suicide rates
- Rate of suicide attempts
- Number of Mental Health First Aid trainings in Wake County
- Number of people trained in Mental Health First Aid in Wake County

<sup>15</sup> Osofsky, J. D. (1999). The impact of violence on children. *The Future of Children: Domestic Violence and Children*, 9 (3), 38.

<sup>16</sup> Wyman, P. A., Cowen, E. L., Work, W. C., Hoyt-Meyers, L., Magnus, K. B., & Fagen, D. B. (1999). Caregiving and developmental factors differentiating young at-risk urban children showing resilient versus stress-affected outcomes: A replication and extension. *Child Development*, 70, 645–659.

<sup>17</sup> Zins, J. E., Weissberg, R. P., Wang, M. C., & Walberg, H. J. (Eds.). (2004). *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* New York: Teachers College Press

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Icons listed indicate that the strategy can impact issues beyond emotional and mental health.



Academic Success & Graduation



Opportunity Youth



Physical Health & Safety



Civic & Vocational Development

### System Improvements, Capacity Building & Policy



Ensure all youth-serving organizations have a suicide protocol, using the 2015 North Carolina Suicide Prevention Plan.



Incorporate knowledge and awareness of evidence-based social emotional learning and competencies through schools and youth-serving organizations.



All schools and youth-serving organizations develop and/or update their bullying/cyberbullying policies.



Adults receive training in evidence-based suicide identification and prevention in schools, community, faith communities, parent groups, etc. (i.e., Mental Health First Aid).



Collaboration between WCPSS and Alliance Behavioral Healthcare and other providers to address the mental health needs of youth.



Health professionals add evidence-based suicide screening tool to intake protocol.

### Service Delivery



Incorporate evidence-informed bullying prevention curricula in youth development programs (including faith-based), that include skills development in respectful assertiveness and positive peer support.



Schools and community organizations promote the safe disclosure of suicidal thoughts and behaviors by all (2015 North Carolina Suicide Prevention Plan).



Youth-service organizations, community organizations and schools address the unique challenges faced by vulnerable populations, for example youth that may be LGBTQ or have English as a second language.



Create a caring and supportive school climate.



Provide wraparound support to meet the needs of the whole child (e.g., counseling, social work, mental health, mentoring, nursing, psychology, etc.).



Expand access to mentors for vulnerable populations.



Youth receive timely evaluation and referral for behavioral, mental and emotional health issues, if needed.

## Service Delivery



Educate parents and youth on internet safety, raise awareness of cyber bullying, and safe and appropriate use of social media.

## Community-wide Information



Post bullying prevention and suicide prevention signs in schools and youth-serving organizations.



Raise awareness of the signs, risk factors and resources for suicide prevention through the Signs of Suicide Curriculum in all middle schools in Wake, including private, charter, and public.



Produce a media campaign around suicide risk identification, prevention messages and stigma reduction messages, specifically tailored to diverse audiences.



Deliver a comprehensive community-wide bullying prevention campaign including posters in schools and youth-serving organizations, billboards and social media.

## Parent Engagement



Educate adults on positively interacting with youth to support their social and emotional well-being.



Youth experience and receive active consistent parenting, positive communication, and emotional support from their families and/or other caring adults.



Organizations provide information to parents on bullying, victim/ aggressor behavior and how to teach and model appropriate behavior, including empathy and peaceful conflict resolutions.

## Youth Engagement



Peer to peer support options are available.



Intentionally engage youth as problem solvers and leaders in bullying prevention efforts.

## Data



Improve and expand capacity to routinely collect suicide-related data to implement prevention and inform policy decisions.

Collect and use data to raise awareness, monitor when bullying is happening, evaluate the need for training, tailor programs to meet needs, and measure efforts.

# OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

## CHALLENGE AREAS

- There are too many youth who have dropped out and not reengaged in school.
- There are too many youth who are not in school and not participating in the labor market.
- There are disparities in outcomes for opportunity youth across gender, race and ethnicity.

Nationally, there are 6.7 million opportunity youth, defined as youth between the ages of 16 to 24 who are neither enrolled in school nor participating in the labor market. While the identifiable number of “idle or opportunity youth” is low in Wake County, the burden for each one is high. Being able to find a job is a significant indicator of overall life success. Additionally, idle youth place economic burdens on the community now and in the future.

In Wake County, 2.7 percent rate of 16-to-19-year-olds are considered “idle youth.” While that might seem very low, that totals approximately 1,411 youth who are idle – putting a \$72.4 million tax and social burden on Wake County each year.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, when ages 16-24 are considered together, 8.4 percent of young people are idle, meaning that idleness continues to be a problem into early adulthood.<sup>19</sup> These youth are also more likely to have poor health and engage in criminal behavior. Additionally, it is important for youth to begin to enter into the labor force so they can develop soft skills and gain the work experience they need to be productive adults.

A disproportionate number of Black/African-American youth are considered idle – four percent of the population of Black or African American youth ages 16-19.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, this population is over-represented in both school suspensions (WCPSS) and Juvenile Justice Involvement (NCDPS). Efforts to address these challenges must include efforts to increase equitable treatment of all youth.

### FY 2014-2015 DISTINCT JUVENILES WITH JUVENILE JUSTICE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED IN WAKE COUNTY

Race/Ethnicity	Distinct Juveniles	% of Total Complaints
Asian	7	0.8%
Black or African-American	579	66.9%
Hispanic/Latino	104	12.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	0.1%
Two or More Races	3	0.3%
Unknown	6	0.7%
White	166	19.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>866</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Safety

Note: American Community Survey 2013 cites the total population of youth ages 6-17 as approximately 167,079

<sup>18</sup> Measure of America analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey PUMS Microdata (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>) and custom tabulations for county and county equivalents provided by special arrangement with the U.S. Census Bureau

<sup>19</sup> American Community Survey. (2013). Characteristics of Teenagers 15 to 19 years old [Data file]. Retrieved from <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

## Local Conditions

The Opportunity Youth Action Team identified several local conditions that contribute to youth dropping out of school and then not moving into the labor market. Individually, there are many challenges faced by youth that can lead to this condition. Educational disruptions caused by involvement in foster care, juvenile justice, or early parenthood can have a devastating impact on a young person, especially when parental or community supports are not in place. The greater the number of challenges youth face, the harder and more confusing the navigation becomes, with greater and greater consequences. For example, there is a six month waiting period for GED enrollment for youth under 18 years of age who have dropped out of high school and after this lag time, many may never enroll. Also, many youth lack the benefit of guidance provided by a caring and consistent adult who can help prevent disengagement from school, help them re-engage to graduate or obtain a GED, and form a subsequent career pathway leading to a living wage career. Youth are also often unaware of the resources that do exist or they lack the transportation to access the services.

Additionally, system challenges contributing to youth becoming idle include the lack of early identification of youth at risk as well as a lack of coordinated, aligned programs/services among systems (i.e., schools, social services, juvenile justice, mental health, etc.) that serve this population. Moreover, a central tracking system to track youth across multiple youth-serving systems does not exist.

Furthermore, the Action Team identified that disproportionality is a condition that contributes to the challenges of opportunity youth. The 2013 Blueprint for Using Data to Reduce Disparities/Disproportionalities in Human Services and Behavioral Health Care defines Disparities and Disproportionalities (D&D) as a social justice concern threatening the child, family and adult development and well-being.<sup>20</sup> D&D can be a direct result of racism, discrimination, and prejudice. D&D can lead to a lack of access/availability of prevention programs; lack of treatment services or other community resources; differential and/or discretionary decision points about placement, referral, or dismissal; negative agency climate; ineffective interventions; lack of cultural competence; or bias in the measures being used. The process for developing and implementing strategies in communities to impact D&D requires significant planning, monitoring, and coordination.

## GOAL

Opportunity youth will have access to the necessary supports to enable them to develop their confidence, skills, and self-efficacy; obtain a postsecondary credential or certificate with labor market value; and meaningfully connect to sustainable careers.

## OUTCOME INDICATORS

- Number of students who have dropped out who re-enroll and graduate
- Percent of “Idle” youth
- Number of unduplicated youth receiving juvenile justice complaints (Note: “unduplicated” refers to the actual number of youth who were involved in a complaint versus the total number of complaints received.)

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Icons listed indicate that the strategy can impact issues beyond opportunity youth.



Academic Success & Graduation



Emotional & Mental Health



Physical Health & Safety



Civic & Vocational Development

<sup>20</sup> Martinez, K., Francis, K., Poirier, J., Brown, L., and Wang, M. (2013). A Blueprint for Using Data to Reduce Disparities/Disproportionalities in Human Services and Behavioral Health Care. Available at <http://www.tapartnership.org/COP/CLC/>

## System Improvements, Capacity Building & Policy



Increase the age of juvenile jurisdiction up to 17 years old, for those charged with misdemeanors. This is currently in place in 48 other states.



Provide additional support to youth aging out of foster care.



Use innovative high school credit options, such as testing for credit, and Grad-Point.



Create a place-based approach for service delivery for opportunity youth that would serve as a one stop shop for academics, employment, and onsite childcare, using evidence-informed practices.



Enhance capacity, coordination, alignment and effectiveness of service delivery among service providers who serve youth who have dropped out of school and are not employed, or are vulnerable to disproportionality.



Opportunity youth service providers receive cross-training on vocational and educational opportunities, soft skills, and postsecondary pathways.



Offer cultural competence training to educators, justice personnel, and youth service providers to broaden understanding of issues contributing to racial disparities.



Youth service providers are trained in Positive Youth Development, including evidence-informed practices.



Youth service professionals use the Wake County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council's plan as a resource to decrease the number of youth committing delinquent acts.



Further inform private and charter school populations in Wake County about resources available for all Wake youth.

## Service Delivery



Connect youth to services and supports that provide long-term supportive relationships that build self-confidence, provide leadership opportunities, and include relevant community service opportunities for learning and skill development.



Create multiple youth-friendly means to reach out-of-school youth, publicize options, and work with youth to get them back on track to postsecondary success.



Parenting skill development for opportunity youth who are parents is offered, as well as support for prevention of future pregnancies.

Offer financial aid counseling to opportunity youth and their families.



Expand non-traditional educational options and vocational programs, including night programs, online learning, GED programs, adult literacy and WCPSS Acceleration Academy.

## Service Delivery



Opportunity youth receive basic needs support including housing assistance, health care (mental, physical, substance use), and assistance finding employment.



Reengage opportunity youth to develop a relevant career pathway plan, through exposure to businesses, job opportunities, and job training programs.



Information on NCworks.gov is accessed by opportunity youth and registration is encouraged.

## Community-wide Information



Increase community stakeholders' awareness of and access to services.

## Youth Engagement



Organizations utilize their current opportunity youth participants to reach out to unengaged opportunity youth.

## Data



Collect and analyze outcome and administrative data to identify racial disproportionality and act to ensure that services provided are free of racial or ethnic bias and are provided by culturally competent staff.

# PHYSICAL HEALTH & SAFETY

## CHALLENGE AREAS

- Too many youth pedestrians are dying or sustaining injury from vehicle crashes.
- Too many youth are overweight or obese.
- Too many youth are using substances (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, drugs).
- Too many youth experience child abuse.
- Too many youth have STIs.

The physical well-being of youth is important to understand, as it affects their ability to learn, interact and grow into productive and contributing adults. Long-term physical health of youth starts prenatally and continues throughout the lifecycle. Before reviewing the suggested strategies, it is important to reflect on some key data from the *Youth Well-being Profile* on Physical Health and Safety:

- 19 percent of all crashes occurring with pedestrians are child pedestrian crashes.<sup>21</sup>
- 37 percent of youth in Wake County are considered overweight or obese.<sup>22</sup>
- 16 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed report they had smoked a cigarette in the past 30 days.<sup>23</sup>
- 24 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed report they have engaged in binge drinking in the past 30 days.<sup>23</sup>
- 22 percent of high school students surveyed have used marijuana in the past 30 days.<sup>23</sup>
- Between July 2013 and June 2014 there were 7,873 reports of child abuse and neglect in Wake County.<sup>24</sup>
- 13.6 percent of high school males and 22.5 percent of high school females report talking with a parent or other adult family member about STIs or pregnancy prevention.<sup>23</sup>

It is also critically important to understand how these physical health conditions are interrelated. For example, research has demonstrated a strong relationship between ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and a variety of substance-related behaviors, including: early initiation of alcohol use; experiencing an alcohol problem into adulthood; increased likelihood of early smoking initiation; continued smoking and heavy smoking during adulthood; prescription drug use; lifetime illicit drug use; ever having problems caused by alcohol/drugs; and self-reported addiction.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, a prevention-oriented approach – building positive protective factors and reducing risk factors – can decrease the chances of tweens and teens initiating, regularly using or developing an addiction to alcohol and/or drugs. This approach not only lowers the chances for substance misuse, but also has a bigger impact, since similar underlying root causes have also been shown to contribute to increased likelihood of poor academic performance, bullying, depression, violence, suicide, unsafe sexual behaviors and other problems that can emerge during teenage years.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Highway Safety Research Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (2012). Retrieved from <http://nccrashdata.hsnc.unc.edu/>

<sup>22</sup> Wake County Human Services. (2012). Obesity & Over Weight. [http://www.wakegov.com/humanservices/publichealth/information/chronic/Pages/obesity\\_over\\_weight.aspx](http://www.wakegov.com/humanservices/publichealth/information/chronic/Pages/obesity_over_weight.aspx). (accessed February 2016).

<sup>23</sup> Townsend, M. (Sept. 2014). North Carolina Youth Risk Behavior Survey: 2013 WCPSS High School Results. Data & Accountability Report No. 14.06. [https://webarchive.wcpss.net/results/reports/2014/hs\\_nc\\_yrbs.pdf](https://webarchive.wcpss.net/results/reports/2014/hs_nc_yrbs.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Duncan, D.F., Kum, H.C., Flair, K.A., Stewart, C.J., Vaughn, J.S., Guest, S., Rose, R.A., Gwaltney, A.Y., and Gogan, H.C. (2015). Management Assistance for Child Welfare, Work First, and Food & Nutrition Services in North Carolina (v3.2). Retrieved [February, 2016], from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Jordan Institute for Families website. URL: <http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/>

<sup>25</sup> Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies. In Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [https://captus.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/capt\\_resource/aces\\_fact\\_sheet.4\\_24\\_15\\_jh.pdf](https://captus.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/capt_resource/aces_fact_sheet.4_24_15_jh.pdf) (accessed October 2015)

<sup>26</sup> Trust for American's Health. (2015). Reducing Teen Substance Misuse: What Really Works 2015. <http://healthyamericans.org/assets/files/TFAH-2015-TeenSubstAbuse%20FINAL.pdf>.

## Local Conditions

Youth in Youth Thrive's focus groups reported substance use as one of the main challenges getting in the way of youth being successful. Parents reported that there is a need for anti-drinking campaigns and information on youth weight management. Action Team members as well as community stakeholders expressed concern about access to both medical care and healthy food options. Access to these resources is limited to some in Wake County as there is a "food desert" in Southeast Raleigh, and Wake County has only bus mass transit options.

Furthermore, continued data collection on youth physical health, safety and wellness is a significant concern in Wake County. There is a specific gap in the data for childhood obesity, as the last reported year of the *NC Nutrition and Physical Activity Surveillance System* was 2012. Gaps in data make it difficult for schools, service providers, and funding agencies to make informed decisions on how to invest their time and resources.

## GOAL

Wake County youth will be healthy and safe.

## OUTCOME INDICATORS

- Number of child pedestrian injuries
- Percentage youth who are at healthy weight
- Percent of youth who smoke traditional and e-cigarettes
- Number of youth who are abused and neglected
- Rate of testing for STDs/STIs in the youth population
- Rate of STDs/STIs in the youth population

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Icons listed indicate that the strategy can impact issues beyond physical health and safety.



Academic Success & Graduation



Emotional & Mental Health



Opportunity Youth



Civic & Vocational Development

## System Improvements, Capacity Building & Policy



Youth have safe walking conditions in their neighborhoods, through promoting the "Complete Streets" guidelines.



Use and expand federally subsidized programs such as Universal School Breakfast and the Summer Food Service program.

Standardize use of Health Impact Assessments (HIA) in community design. (HIAs bring potential public health impacts and considerations to the decision making process for plans, projects, and policies that fall outside the traditional public health arenas, such as transportation and land use.)

Farmers markets serve as access points to fresh and local foods. Increase farmers markets with EBT access.

## System Improvements, Capacity Building & Policy

Community organizations adopt best practices for addressing healthy eating and physical activity, for example use of Advocates for Health in Action's Healthy Celebration Guide and Sports Snack Game Plans and the North Carolina Eat Smart, Move More Guide.



Educate decision makers, including local as well as national-level entities, on dangers of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) including e-cigarettes for youth and the need for regulation. The local community can advocate for the FDA to assert jurisdiction over e-cigarettes and take steps to prevent their marketing and sale to youth. FDA regulation is also necessary to prevent unproven or deceptive health claims about ENDS; set standards for their contents, including levels of highly addictive nicotine; and better understand the health risks they may pose.



Educate decision makers to secure full CDC-recommended levels of funding for evidence-based youth tobacco prevention and cessation programs in North Carolina.



Convene organizations focused on family support and child maltreatment prevention in order to facilitate communications and capacity building.



Ensure that all sections of the Healthy Youth Act of 2009 are fully implemented,

## Service Delivery



Use the Let's Go NC K-5 pedestrian and bicycle safety curriculum in schools, summer camps, after-school programs, etc. This education program teaches elementary age children how to walk and bike safely, giving them the essential skills that they need to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle.

Increase youth access to and participation in safe and healthy activities in their neighborhoods, including safe routes to schools.



Establish edible gardens at schools and in communities.

Schools and community organizations promote health and activity in service delivery.

Deliver recurring evidence-based substance use prevention programming to youth and parents (e.g., National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices curricula).



Community organizations implement selective prevention strategies, focused on helping youth develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to make good choices or change harmful behaviors.



Sexual health programs include an asset/skill-development component, such as problem solving, communications, and planning for the future.

Have medicine drops in all municipalities.



Develop and expand evidence-informed fatherhood initiatives for teen fathers.

## Service Delivery



Expand Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Treatment to youth who need it.



Condoms, testing and treatment services are accessible.

## Community-wide Information

Implement a bicycle safety campaign, such as Watch For Me NC.

Community is educated and uses the WCPSS bus stop safety campaign- “Brake for Buses.”

Expand local educational campaigns – such as North Carolina “Talk it out” campaign to prevent underage drinking.



Promote evidence-based cessation resources, including QuitlineNC, and FDA-approved nicotine replacement therapy, such as patches/gum.



Educate the public on the long-term and profound impact of trauma from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the ACES Study findings suggest that certain experiences are major risk factors for the leading causes of illness and death as well as poor quality of life in the United States. It is critical to understand how some of the worst health and social problems in our nation can arise as a consequence of adverse childhood experiences. Realizing these connections is likely to improve efforts towards prevention and recovery.



Foster positive community norms about parenting programs and acceptable parenting behaviors.

Launch a community-wide education campaign focusing on youth sexual health, including STIs.

## Parent Engagement



Implement evidence-based programs for parents and caregivers such as Nurse Family Partnership services, Triple P and others.



Offer education to parents on child development and positive discipline at various literacy levels.



Expand substance use treatment services for parents who have abused their children.



Support parents and caregivers in providing safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environment through promoting the community norm that we all share responsibility for the well-being of youth.



Educate parents on how to effectively communicate with youth about sexual health, such as Linking Lives, a program developed in part by the CDC’s Division of Adolescent and School Health.

## Youth Engagement



Engage youth in the maintenance and harvesting of community gardens.



Mobilize youth, parents, and community/champions to support evidence-based smoke-free public places in accordance with the Board of Health Rule (i.e., public places: any enclosed area to which the public is invited or permitted), which would encompass all of Wake County.

## Data



Implement ongoing yearly survey that provides information about student behavior and experiences related to issues identified in the *Strategic Planning Blueprint*.

# CIVIC & VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## CIVIC DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE AREA

- Too few youth are civically engaged.

### Local Conditions

A few key concerns were identified by the Action Teams and in the community forums related to youth civic engagement. Having a clear understanding of what civic engagement means to both adults and youth in Wake County is one of those concerns. Not having a clear understanding of what civic engagement is leads to individuals not engaging civically or not providing youth with meaningful opportunities to engage, not understanding the value of this engagement, and having a dearth of data to determine how Wake County is doing civically.

Civic engagement is working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivations to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes. In addition, civic engagement encompasses actions where individuals participate in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community.<sup>27</sup>

Participation in the electoral process is one key component of civic engagement. A total of 85,042 individuals, ages 18-25, were registered to vote in Wake County as of Nov. 3, 2014 according to the North Carolina Board of Elections.<sup>28</sup> Assuming that approximately 100,000 individuals in the 18-25 age range reside in Wake County, this means that most young adults are registered to vote. Voter registration numbers were lowest among 18-year-olds and increased with age. Unfortunately, a relatively small proportion of youth who are registered to vote actually do vote. Between 2010 and 2013, an annual average of approximately 10,000 individuals ages 18-25 voted in Wake County general and municipal elections.<sup>29</sup> Assuming that the number of registered young voters in November 2014 is similar to the number of registered young voters in 2010 to 2013, this means that only about one out of every eight eligible young people voted.

## GOAL

Wake County youth will be civically engaged and contribute to their communities.

## OUTCOME INDICATORS

- Percent of Wake County 18-to-25-year-olds who vote in general elections.
- Number of 18-year-olds who are registered voters.

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Icons listed indicate that the strategy can impact issues beyond civic development.



Academic Success & Graduation



Emotional & Mental Health



Opportunity Youth



Physical Health & Safety

<sup>27</sup> Ehrlich, T. (2000). Civic responsibility and higher education. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx. North Carolina State Board of Elections, Oct. 3, 2014

<sup>28</sup> Wake County, North Carolina, Demographic Profile from the 2010 Census: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/371831k.html>

<sup>29</sup> North Carolina State Board of Elections, Oct. 3, 2014

## System Improvements, Capacity Building & Policy



Expand public transportation so youth can participate in positive opportunities.



Educate local boards and commissions about the importance of involving youth in decision making, including skill development on authentic youth-adult partnerships.

## Service Delivery

Community organizations and service providers educate youth on civic rights and the value of civic engagement.



Youth have access to and engage in positive pro-social activities such as community service and civic engagement.

Expand volunteer opportunities and service-learning for youth within civic organizations, clubs, camps, and school programs.

## Youth Engagement

Each municipality will maintain an active youth council.

Design and implement a civic engagement campaign for youth to be involved with the strategies in this *Blueprint*.

## Data

Develop a way to collect and analyze data related to youth civic engagement.

## VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE AREA

- Too many youth seeking employment can't obtain it.

One component of youth vocational well-being is the employment or unemployment rate of youth. Unemployment rates in the county are generally low, 4.6 percent.<sup>30</sup> Teen employment rates are expected to be lower than adults, because many teens are still in school. That said, many teens, even those committed to school, report an interest in or need for working part-time and during the summer. According to data from the 2014 American Community Survey, approximately 35 percent of 16-to-19-year-olds have entered into the labor force, and about 25 percent of those youth are unemployed.<sup>31</sup> Teen employment patterns are complex and job seeking can vary significantly across student populations, depending on their need or desire to work.

<sup>30</sup> Wake County. Data Dashboard: Unemployment. (2015). <http://www.wakegov.com/data/bythenumbers/Lists/Data%20Indicator/DispForm.aspx?ID=25> (accessed December 2015).

<sup>31</sup> American Community Survey. (2014). Employment Status [Data file]. Retrieved from <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

## Local Conditions

It was a concern in both the Action Teams and in the community forums that the employment opportunities that are available to youth are not always good learning environments, where failure is used as a teaching opportunity and expectations are realistic. Investment in work-based learning environments, like apprenticeships, has been shown to reduce youth unemployment.<sup>32</sup>

Whether or not a young person has decided to enter the labor force, there is still a need for vocational development. The Action Teams and community forums placed an emphasis on the need for youth to develop the “soft skills” (such as communication, problem solving, and critical thinking) necessary to be successful in the work place. Furthermore, youth need multiple opportunities for exposure to various careers, such as career fairs, internships, job shadows, employer field trips, etc. This will help youth to begin to think about and plan for their desired career path. The importance of adult guidance and support for youth regarding vocational planning and career pathway development was also identified as critical.

## GOAL

Wake County youth will be prepared for lifelong, meaningful and gainful employment.

## OUTCOME INDICATORS

- Percent of Career and Technical Education Students meeting ACT Work Keys Proficiency
- Youth unemployment rates

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Icons listed indicate that the strategy can impact issues beyond vocational development.



Academic Success & Graduation



Emotional & Mental Health



Opportunity Youth



Physical Health & Safety

## System Improvements, Capacity Building & Policy



Offer high school credit for internships, apprenticeships or other employment.



Provide schools and organizations with the *Capital Area Youth Work Based Learning Resource Guide*.



Expand partnerships between businesses and the public/private sector to create job opportunities and encourage entrepreneurship among youth, especially in sectors that might be growing.

Expand City of Raleigh Summer Youth Employment Program and encourage other municipalities to offer similar programs to youth.

<sup>32</sup> The Century Foundation, Can Apprenticeships Help Reduce Youth Unemployment?, C. Chang, 2015, <http://www.tcf.org/bookstore/detail/can-apprenticeships-help-reduce-youth-unemployment>

## Service Delivery



Include soft skills in service delivery- what they are, why they are needed and how to teach them.



Community organizations, schools, and parents intentionally instruct youth on resume and interviewing skills.



Educate youth on use of NCWORKS, the labor market and career options/ salaries.



Connect youth with relevant work experiences to help them gain the credentials and connections that will facilitate entry into living wage careers such as job shadowing, internships, volunteering, apprenticeships, etc.

Expand volunteer opportunities and service-learning for youth within civic organizations, clubs, camps, and school programs.

## Data

Develop a method to collect and analyze data related to youth vocational development.

## CROSS-CUTTING GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED

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Throughout this *Strategic Planning Blueprint* planning process, high-level gaps in Wake County emerged. Most noteworthy is the **lack of coordinated data collection and the lack of a coordinated assessment tool across systems**. This gap is a serious challenge because without ongoing data collection it is impossible to know the state of youth in Wake County and if programs and services are making a difference in the lives of youth. Youth Thrive and its partners are working diligently to develop a shared data platform with predictive visual analytics so the community can see progress. However, all agencies and large systems that work with youth need to commit to data collection and the sharing of that data.

An additional high-level gap that impacts each action area is the **lack of mass transit options in Wake County**. The bus system is currently the only option and is often not an efficient option for individuals living in the outer portions of the county. This is a major cause of concern because when excellent services exist they may not be accessible to all youth or youth have to travel by bus for hours each way. Furthermore, with the exponential population growth expected in Wake County, a youth's ability to travel within the county will be hindered unless additional efficient mass transit options become available.

Furthermore, **gaps in service delivery and in the system as a whole** were discovered through this process. Gaps in services existed around opportunity youth, particularly for youth that are parents or foster youth, and for those that have dropped out of school. **Services and supports that help homeless families** are also lacking in Wake County.

For a complete list of identified gaps in service delivery, reference the Service Delivery Gaps section in Appendix A.

# RECOGNITION FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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## ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED ON ACTION TEAMS

Alliance Behavioral Healthcare  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Capital Area Workforce Development Board  
City of Raleigh  
Division of Juvenile Justice  
EDSI  
Education for Successful Parenting  
Eleventh Judicial District ReEntry Inc.  
Family Resource Center of Raleigh  
Garner- PAAL  
Garner Police Department  
Garner Road Community Center  
Girl Scouts NC Coastal Pines  
Haven House Services  
HealthCore Resource  
Hopeline  
Interact  
John Rex Endowment  
Learning Together  
MADD

NC Child  
NC Central University  
NC State Women's Center  
Poe Health Education Center  
Raleigh Police Department  
ReCity  
RTI  
SAS Institute  
The Hope Center at Pullen  
Triangle Family Services  
UNC Chapel Hill Injury Prevention Research Center  
United Way of the Greater Triangle  
Wake County Cooperative Extension  
Wake County 4-H Youth Development  
Wake County 4-H Spaces  
Wake County Human Services  
Wake County Public School System  
Wake Tech  
Wade Edwards Foundation and Learning Lab  
YMCA of the Triangle

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Support was provided by the Forum for Youth Investment, especially Karen Pittman, Merita Irby and Amy Zawada.

# APPENDIX A

Color code:

- Academic Success & Graduation
- Emotional & Mental Health
- Opportunity Youth
- Physical Health & Safety
- Civic & Vocational Development

All the strategies contained in the *Blueprint* are captured here based on strategy type. Color blocks indicate all the issue areas each strategy could potentially impact. The area where it would likely have the most direct primary impact is indicated with a dot.

<b>Specific curriculums and guides</b>				
			•	Use of the Let's Go NC K-5 pedestrian and bicycle safety curriculum in schools, summer camps, after-school programs, etc. This education program teaches elementary age children how to walk and bike safely, giving them the essential skills that they need to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle.
			•	Deliver recurring evidence based substance use prevention programming to youth and parents (National Registry of Evidence based Programs and Practices NRREPP curricula)
	•			Incorporate an evidence informed bullying prevention curriculum in youth development programs (including faith based), that includes skills development in respectful assertiveness and positive peer support.
	•			Schools and Community Organizations promote the safe disclosure of suicidal thoughts and behaviors by all (2015 NC suicide prevention plan)

<b>Enhance Current Services</b>				
			•	Community Organizations and service provides educate youth on civic rights and the value of civic engagement.
			•	Include soft skills in service delivery- what they are, why they are needed and how to teach them
			•	Community organizations, schools, and parents intentionally instruct youth on resume and interviewing skills
	•			Youth service organizations, community organizations and schools address the unique challenges faced by vulnerable populations, for example youth that may be LGBTQ or have English as a Second Language.
	•			Create a caring and supportive school climate.
	•			Provide wraparound support to meet the needs of the whole child (Counseling, social work, mental health, mentoring, nursing, psychology, etc.)
		•		Connect youth to services and supports that provide long-term supportive relationships that build self-confidence, provide leadership opportunities, and include relevant community service opportunities for learning and skill development.
•				Schools, community based programs, and parents offer students meaningful rewards and incentives for academic achievements.
			•	Community organizations implement selective prevention strategies, focused on helping youth develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to make good choices or change harmful behaviors.
•				Enhance opportunities for students and families connection to school in early grades.
•				Expand participation in programs and initiatives promoting literacy.
			•	Sexual health programs include an asset/skill- development component, such as problem solving, communications, and planning for the future.
			•	Schools and community organizations promote Health & Activity in service delivery

Access					
	•				Expand access to mentors for vulnerable populations
•					Increase access to effective out-of-school activities or service learning opportunities, such as tutoring, mentoring, skill-building, self-advocacy, time management/organization, and growth mindset.
				•	Youth have access to and engage in positive pro-social activities such as community service and civic engagement.
				•	Expand volunteer opportunities and service learning for youth within civic organizations, clubs, camps, and school programs.
				•	Educate youth on use of NCWORKS, the labor market and career options/salaries
				•	Youth have access to and participate in safe and healthy activities in their neighborhoods, including safe routes to schools.
				•	Condoms, testing and treatment services are accessible
•					Enhance college access through : college and career counseling, scholarships, decreasing/eliminating application fee, assisting with FAFSA submissions, increasing ACT prep opportunities, assisting with college application completion
	•				Youth receive timely evaluation and referral for behavioral, mental and emotional health issues, if needed

Service/Delivery Gaps					
		•			Create multiple youth-friendly means to reach out of school youth, publicize options, and work with youth to get them back on track to post-secondary success.
		•			Parenting skill development for opportunity youth who are parents is offered, as well as support for prevention of future pregnancies.
	•				Educate parents and youth on internet safety, raise awareness of cyber bullying, and safe and appropriate use of social media.
		•			Offer financial aid counseling to OY and their families.
			•		Develop and expand evidence informed Fatherhood initiatives for teen fathers

Expand Existing Services					
			•		Expand the Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Treatment to youth who need it.
			•		Have medicine drops in all municipalities
			•		Establish edible gardens at schools and in communities
•					Develop and expand extended learning opportunities to include high quality early learning, nontraditional learning, summer and intersession learning and alternatives to suspension to reduce learning loss and address diverse learning needs.
			•		Expand non-traditional educational options and vocational programs, including night programs, online learning, GED programs, adult literacy and WCPSS Acceleration Academy.
			•		Opportunity youth receive basic needs support including housing assistance, health care (mental, physical, substance use), assistance finding employment
			•		Reengage opportunity youth to develop a relevant career pathway plan, through exposure to businesses, job opportunities, and job training programs.
			•		Information on NCworks.gov is accessed by opportunity youth and registration is encouraged.
				•	Connect youth with relevant work experiences to help them gain the credentials and connections that will facilitate entry into living wage careers such as job shadowing, internships, volunteering, apprenticeships, etc.

Parent/Family Education & Support				
•				Educate adults on positively interacting with youth to support their social and emotional well-being.
•				Youth experience and receive active consistent parenting, positive communication, and emotional support from their families or other caring adults.
•				Organizations provide information to parents on bullying and victim/ aggressor behavior, how to teach and model appropriate behavior, including empathy and peaceful conflict resolutions.
•				Enhance family and service provider understanding of the importance of successful transition points in education (elementary to middle and middle to high school), how to access services and supports at these points, and about course selection for the desired post-secondary plan.
•				Educate parents on the importance of children having high attendance at school.
•				Parents have the knowledge and skills needed to advocate for their students, including an understanding of growth mindset and the educational benchmarks K-8 students need to be successful in High School
			•	Educate Parents on how to effectively communicate with youth about sexual health, such as Linking Lives, a program developed in part by the CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health.
			•	Implement evidence-based programs for parents and caregivers such as Nurse Family Partnership services, Triple P and others.
			•	Appropriate community organizations offer education to parents on child development and positive discipline at various literacy levels.
			•	Expand substance use treatment services for parents who have abused their children.
			•	Support parents and caregivers in providing safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environment through promoting the community norm that we all share responsibility for the well-being of children.

Community-wide Information/Mass Campaigns				
•				Post bullying prevention and suicide prevention signs in schools and youth serving organizations.
•				Educate on the awareness of signs, risk factors and resources for suicide prevention through the Signs of Suicide Curriculum in all Middle schools in Wake, including private, charter, and public.
•				Produce a media campaign around suicide risk identification, prevention messages and stigma reduction messages, specifically tailored to diverse audiences.
•				Deliver a comprehensive community-wide bullying prevention campaign including posters in schools and youth serving organizations, billboards and social media.
•				Provide community with information on the importance of parental involvement in all aspects of children's education, in order to reduce barriers and increase parental involvement.
•				Implement a cross-agency campaign to increase awareness of services and supports for youth.
			•	Foster positive community norms about parenting programs and acceptable parenting behaviors
			•	Implement a bicycle safety campaign, such as Watch For Me NC
			•	Community is educated and uses the WCPSS Bus stop safety campaign- "Brake for Buses"
			•	Educate the general public on the long term and profound impact of trauma-ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The ACE Study findings suggest that certain experiences are major risk factors for the leading causes of illness and death as well as poor quality of life in the United States. It is critical to understand how some of the worst health and social problems in our nation can arise as a consequence of adverse childhood experiences. Realizing these connections is likely to improve efforts towards prevention and recovery.
			•	Expand local educational campaigns- such as North Carolina "Talk it out" campaign to prevent underage drinking.
			•	Community wide education campaign focusing on youth sexual health, including STIs

<b>Community-wide Information/Mass Campaigns (cont.)</b>					
			•		Promote evidence-based cessation resources, including QuitlineNC, and FDA approved nicotine replacement therapy, such patches/gum.
•					Host a community summit to create greater awareness, engagement and coordinated action around increasing graduation rates — all leading to better outcomes for local young people.
		•			Increase community stakeholders' awareness of and access to services

<b>Capacity Building for Youth Service Providers</b>					
		•			Opportunity youth service providers receive cross training on vocational and educational opportunities, soft skills, and post-secondary pathways.
		•			Offer cultural competence training to educators, justice personnel, and youth service providers to broaden understanding of issues contributing to racial disparities. *
		•			Youth service providers are trained in Positive Youth Development, including evidence based practices.
		•			Youth service professionals use the Wake County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council's plan as a resource to decrease the number of youth committing delinquent acts
		•			Further inform private and charter school populations in Wake County about resources available for all Wake Youth.
	•				Ensure all youth serving organizations have a suicide protocol, using the 2015 NC Suicide Prevention Plan.
	•				Incorporate knowledge and awareness of evidence based social emotional learning and competencies through schools and youth serving organizations.
	•				All schools and youth serving organizations develop and/or update their bullying/ and or cyber bullying policies.
	•				Adults receive training in evidence based suicide identification & prevention in schools, community, faith communities, peers, parents, etc. i.e. Mental Health First Aid.
				•	Provide schools and organizations with the Capital Area Youth Work Based Learning Resource Guide.
				•	Expand partnerships between businesses and the public/private sector to create job opportunities and encourage entrepreneurship among youth, especially in sectors that might be growing.
				•	Expand City of Raleigh Summer Youth Employment Program and encourage other municipalities to offer similar programs to youth
				•	Educate local boards and commissions about the importance of involving youth in decision making, including skill development on authentic youth-adult partnerships.
•					Offer cultural competence training to educators, justice personnel, and youth service providers to broaden understanding of issues contributing to racial disparities.
			•		Community organizations adopt best practices for addressing healthy eating and physical activity, for example use of Advocates for Health in Action's Healthy Celebration Guide and Sports Snack Game Plans and the NC Eat Smart, Move More Guide.
			•		Convene organizations focused on family support and child maltreatment prevention in order to facilitate communications and capacity building.

<b>Youth as a Resource</b>					
				•	Each municipality will maintain an active youth council.
				•	Design and implement a civic engagement campaign for youth to be involved with the strategies in this master plan.
	•				Peer to peer support options are available.
	•				Intentionally engage youth as problem solvers and leaders in bullying prevention efforts.
			•		Engage youth in the maintenance and harvesting in community gardens
			•		Mobilize youth, parents, and community/champions to support evidence-based smoke-free public places Board of Health Rule (public places: any enclosed area to which the public is invited or permitted), which would encompass all of Wake County including municipalities

Youth as a Resource (cont.)				
•				Intentionally engage youth in the cross-agency campaign to increase awareness of services and supports for youth
•				Ensure youth participation at the community summit for coordinated action to increase graduation rates
		•		Organizations utilize their current opportunity youth participants to reach out to unengaged opportunity youth.

Policy				
			•	Offer high school credit for internships, apprenticeships or other employment.
			•	Standardize use of Health Impact Assessments (HIA) in community design, HIA brings potential public health impacts and considerations to the decision-making process for plans, projects, and policies that fall outside the traditional public health arenas, such as transportation and land use.
			•	Ensure that all sections of the Healthy Youth Act of 2009 are fully implemented in WCPSS
•				Business policies support parent engagement in their children's education.
			•	Educate decision makers, including local as well as National level entities on dangers of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) including e-cigarettes for youth and the need for regulation. The local community can advocate for the FDA to assert jurisdiction over e-cigarettes and take steps to prevent their marketing and sale to kids. FDA regulation is also necessary to prevent unproven or deceptive health claims about ENDS; set standards for their contents, including levels of highly addictive nicotine; and better understand the health risks they may pose.
			•	Educate decision makers to secure full CDC-recommended levels of funding for evidence-informed youth tobacco prevention and cessation programs in North Carolina.
		•		Increase the age of juvenile jurisdiction up to 17 years old, for those charged with misdemeanors. This is currently in place in 48 other states.

System Improvements				
		•		Additional support is provided to youth aging out of foster care.
		•		Use innovative high school credit options, such as testing for credit, and Grad-Point.
		•		Create a place based approach for service delivery for opportunity youth that would serve as a one stop shop for academics, employment, and onsite childcare, using evidenced based practices.
		•		Enhance capacity, coordination, alignment and effectiveness of service delivery among service providers who serve youth who have dropped out of school and are not employed, or are vulnerable to disproportionality.
	•			Collaboration between WCPSS and Alliance Behavioral healthcare and other providers to address the mental health needs of youth.
	•			Health professionals add evidence-informed suicide screening tool to intake protocol.
			•	Expand public transportation so young people can participate in civic opportunities
•				Cultivate environments of inquiry that enhance the unique skills and abilities of educators and students through collaboration, creativity, communication and critical thinking.
•				All students will be taught a high quality curriculum by effective teachers in a safe and nurturing learning environments.
			•	Use and expand federally subsidized programs such as Universal School Breakfast and the Summer Food Service program.
			•	Farmer's markets serve as access point to fresh and local foods and increase farmers markets with EBT access
			•	Youth have safe walking conditions in their neighborhoods, through promoting the "Complete Streets" guidelines.
•				Resource support is needed for WCPSS students who are parents, including access to childcare, parenting instruction, and other supports

**Data**

		•			Collect and analyze outcome and administrative data to identify racial disproportionality and act to ensure that services provided are free of racial or ethnic bias and are provided by culturally competent staff.
	•				Improve and expand capacity to routinely collect suicide related data to implement prevention and inform policy decisions.
	•				Collect and use data to raise awareness, monitor when bullying is happening, evaluate the need for training, tailor programs to meet needs, and to measure efforts.
•					Implement ongoing yearly survey that provides information about student behavior and experiences related to issues identified in the <i>Strategic Planning Blueprint</i> .
				•	Develop a method to collect and analyze data related to youth vocational development
				•	Develop a way to collect and analyze data related to youth civic engagement
			•		Implement ongoing yearly survey that provides information about student behavior and experiences related to issues identified in the <i>Strategic Planning Blueprint</i> .



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