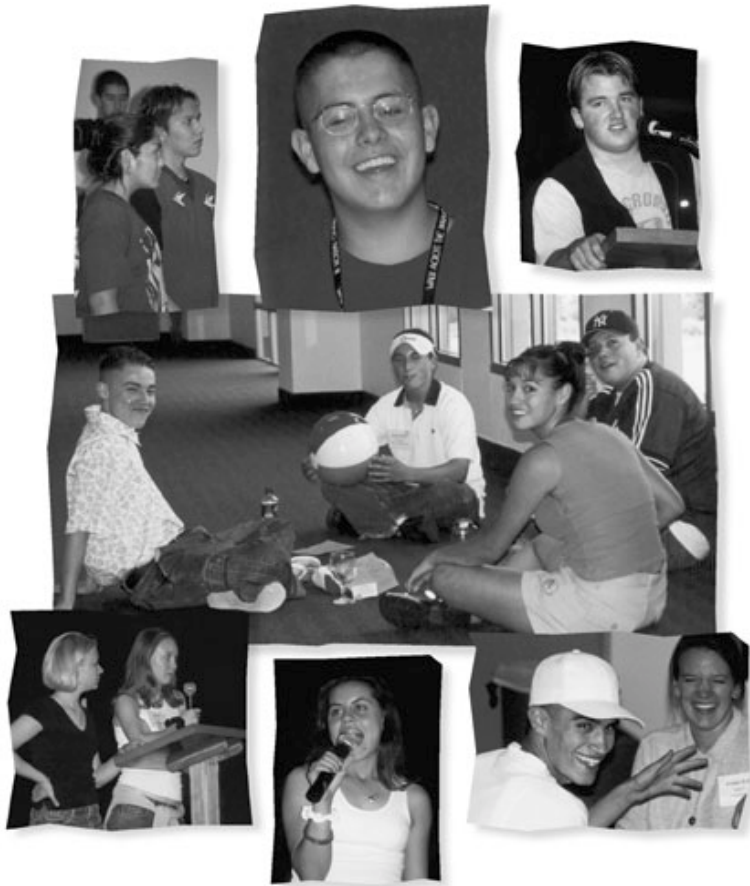


# *Invest in Us...*



# *We're Worth It!*

- Everyone's Guide to  
Positive Youth Development
- In New Mexico

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[www.healthierschools.org](http://www.healthierschools.org)**

**For more information regarding  
positive youth development resources  
Contact: Adolescent/Youth Development Program,  
NM Department of Health 505-476-8578**

## *The Youth Policy and Action Strategic Planning Forum*

On August 3 and 4, 2000, a group of 54 young people and 54 adults from across the state came together to develop a platform that would move New Mexico and its communities to promoting positive youth development.

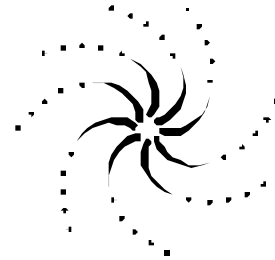
Participants gathered in focus groups for the two days, using the eight well-established categories of developmental assets. They discussed the status of young people today and the many things that could be done to promote positive youth development.

Positive youth development means purposefully seeking to meet youth needs and build youth competencies so that they can become successful adults. Rather than seeing young people as problems to be "fixed," a positive developmental approach views them instead as resources and builds upon their strengths and capabilities.

The course of action called for by forum participants has three parts:

- **First, we need to look at our attitudes and beliefs and how we talk about young people.**
- **Second, we need to get better informed about the positive youth development movement.**
- **Third, we need to get involved.**

*Here is what they said...*

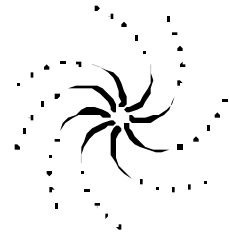


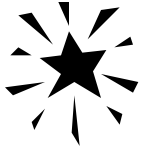
## *Young People Are Not Viewed Positively*

Currently, there are major differences between the levels of caring and commitment to youth in families, schools, and communities.

- The general public and many communities are relatively uninformed and uninvolved in any meaningful positive youth development. Youth are not taken seriously and are often viewed in the negative. Media attention to youth is typically more negative than positive.
- Schools are either too overwhelmed or otherwise resistant to getting involved in positive youth development. There is little focus on fostering positive identity, promoting social competencies, and developing programs and supports. Counseling services are hard to access and programs such as music and art are being eliminated. Teachers are described as overworked, underpaid, disillusioned, and worn out. Classes are too large and interactions too impersonal.
- Many parents only minimally participate in the school or other aspects of their children's lives. Many youth are not consistently supported with trust and guidance, nor are they taught basic values. Often there is little family life and parents lack the basic skills and competencies to foster positive development.
- Public officials tend to give lip service to the needs of youth. In general they do not promote policy or funding that supports positive youth development.

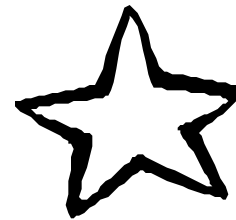
*So what do we do about this? Read on...*





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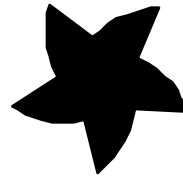
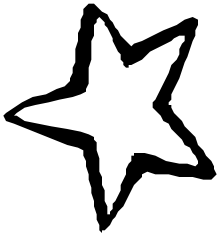


## *ALLOW A VOICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE*

*We have a lot to say and many good ideas but we are hardly ever taken seriously. We should get more credit for the good stuff we do.*

Here are some ideas:

- Involve youth in planning events and programs, as leadership role models, as facilitators, in developing community collaborations, in policy development, in the legislative process, in developing positive media campaigns.
- Create positions for youth on school boards, non-profit boards, and other boards. Create local youth advisory councils to schools, local government, tribal government, and community groups. Create youth safety coalitions.
- Expand the state level youth advisory council (the Youth Development Advisory Council) to include youth from each county.
- Develop youth directed non-profit organizations.
- Give youth the opportunity to promote a positive image – newspaper columns by and for youth, teen produced radio shows or a Youth Radio Station, school publications and announcements, a Youth Speakers Bureau, a Youth Website.
- Train youth in leadership, lobbying, advocacy, using the media, influencing the media to eliminate violence and generally change advertising practices, meeting principles and meeting management, facilitation, peer counseling, grievances and appeals, public speaking, presentation techniques (like Power Point), fundraising, grant writing, and program evaluation.



*LINKS TO ACTION*

**Lisa Gomez – Youth Development Advisory Council:  
505-476-8578**

**Jan Syling – Las Cruces Mayor’s Youth Advisory Board:  
505-524-3991**

**Kristin Krell – Santa Fe Mayor’s Youth Advisory Board: 505-428-1714**

**Harold Vann – Albuquerque Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council:  
505-232-6027**

**Jeanette Olivas – Mora Community Action Team: 505-387-2665**

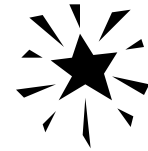
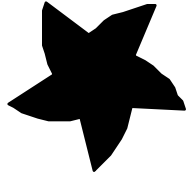
## HELP YOUTH DEVELOP THINGS TO DO AND PLACES TO GO

*There should be places where we can hang out, where we can dance and just be with our friends. Many of us want to learn art, dance, theater, and other new things like that. There are a lot of things we could do with a little help.*

Here are some ideas:

- Create alternative activities and spaces – teen centers, dances, youth space, art and drama programs, youth centers.
- Promote inter-racial, inter-religious, and inter-cultural opportunities. Promote activities that get youth involved with those outside of their social circle. Teach tolerance. Work to eliminate age profiling and other stereotyping.
- Promote cultural exchange – swaps on the Internet, in-state and in-community exchanges, foreign exchanges, cultural pride group presentations, opportunities to travel, etc.
- Create opportunities for community service (e.g., working with senior citizens, providing child care to single parents so they can participate in school activities, etc.).
- Develop programs that teach social and emotional literacy; develop more mentoring and peer educator programs.
- Develop mentoring and other programs for detained or incarcerated youth; create opportunities for incarcerated youth to work with other youth on issues of social justice.





### *LINKS TO ACTION*

**The Unity Center** in Roswell is a teen center run by teens with opportunities for recreation, social activities, and vocational training: 505-624-2773

**The NM Center for Dispute Resolution** in Albuquerque offers statewide training and assistance in developing peer mediation and conflict resolution training: 505-247-0571

**Amigos de las Americas** in Albuquerque is a youth leadership program that provides opportunities for young people to spend a summer in Latin America doing service projects: 505-822-9870

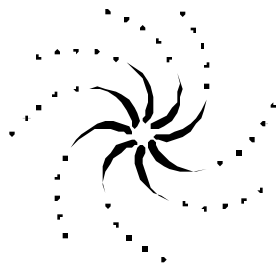
**Man2Man** is a mentoring program working with incarcerated youth: 888-671-KIDS/505-244-9505

## GET PARENTS AND FAMILIES INVOLVED

*Our parents aren't usually involved much anymore. They don't really know what's going on. They're like too busy or something.*

Here are some ideas:

- Create places and programs where parents can learn more about basic parenting skills, how to work with youth on social competencies and life skills, how to work with special needs children, how to set boundaries, how to get involved with schools.
- Develop services and supports for single parents and for grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Develop comprehensive family centers; encourage youth and older adults to work at family centers as community service.
- Encourage schools to create a more inviting and friendly place for parents to be involved.
- Promote parental involvement with detained and incarcerated youth, and with youth upon their release from these facilities.
- Develop and implement pre-parenting programs that teach adults to plan for the nurturing of their children before pregnancy.





### *LINKS TO ACTION*

**Starting Out Right & What Young Children Need to Succeed** – materials to help create a firm foundation for children.  
Search Institute 877-240-7251 or [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

**Parents Reaching Out** – helping families statewide with children who have unique needs 505-865-3700

**County Maternal & Child Health** – local/community-based collaborations that work to improve MCH outcomes 505-827-2451

**Strengthening Families Model Programs** – science-based, exemplary programs [www.samhsa.gov/csap/modelprograms](http://www.samhsa.gov/csap/modelprograms)

**NM Parent Teacher Association** – statewide connection for parent involvement in the schools 505-881-0712

## GET COMMUNITY PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

*The adults around us don't know what all we can do. For that matter, they don't even know what they can do. We need to start working together.*

Here are some ideas:

- Develop local public awareness campaigns – use billboards, posters, TV and radio, the printed media. Work with local media to shift their focus from the negative to the positive in terms of their reporting about youth.
- Strengthen local collaborations and partnerships that involve youth organizations, the schools, PTAs, local government, civic organizations, employers, the faith community, universities and colleges, parents and youth.
- Train these partnerships in assets-based goal development, needs assessment, resource mapping, program planning, fundraising, proposal development, and evaluation.
- Promote civic involvement and responsibility; encourage youth to register and vote; develop community organized service projects.
- Push for more local funding and other support of positive youth development efforts.
- Promote the use of school and other community buildings for youth programs and activities at hours when youth can use them; develop integrated and intergenerational school/community activities.

- Provide transportation to youth activities and programs, either free or at low cost, so that transportation is available to everyone.



### *LINKS TO ACTION*

Contact your local Public Health Office and the statewide New Mexico Partnership for Healthier Communities (505-224-7722) to find out what coalitions and groups are working in your community. They can also help find training resources to meet your community's needs.

Contact your city or town council and make an appointment to discuss how young people can learn about local government and get involved in community service and advocacy.

Get to know your local media (radio, newspaper, TV), invite them to youth events, push for positive coverage.

Visit the school district office and other public agencies. Inquire about the use of their buildings and vehicles for youth and community events.

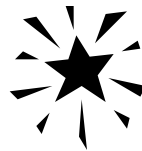
**Big Brothers Big Sisters** – 7 sites throughout New Mexico that provides opportunities for community people to mentor young people.  
505-837-9223 or [www.swcp.com/bbbs-cnm](http://www.swcp.com/bbbs-cnm)

## WORK WITH AND IN THE SCHOOLS

*A lot of us get lost at school. Sometimes we just don't fit in. It's hard to find someone to talk to at school.*

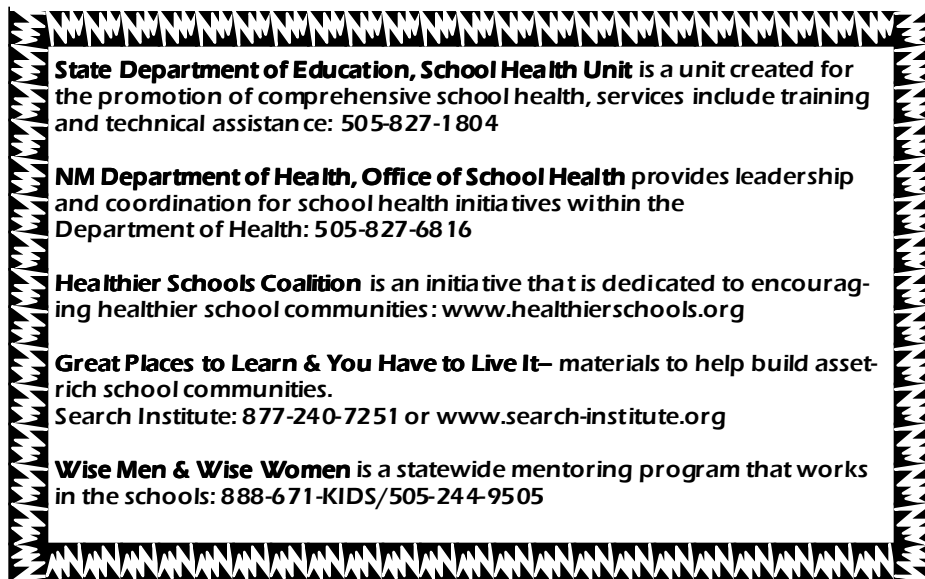
Here are some ideas:

- Involve youth in curriculum development, teacher selection and evaluation, and school related decision-making -- treat youth as customers.
- Work to create better and safer facilities and higher standards.
- Develop more community schools, charter schools, and alternative schools; promote the “school within a school” concept.
- Examine school policies such as suspension and expulsion, standard dress and uniforms, access to transportation.
- Collaborate with community agencies and groups to implement programs known to work for our youth:
  - ✓ Service learning, school to work, and community service
  - ✓ Mentoring
  - ✓ After school and summer opportunities
  - ✓ Conflict resolution and mediation
  - ✓ Counseling and support groups
  - ✓ Teen parenting
  - ✓ Music and art programs, field trips
  - ✓ Health, wellness, and open sports
  - ✓ Media literacy
  - ✓ Empathy training
  - ✓ Life Skills
  - ✓ Character Counts



- Support teachers and schools: support higher teacher salaries, retention programs for good teachers, smaller classes, more materials and supplies, more textbooks, better buildings, more services, equity in school financing, etc.
- Improve teachers skills in communication and anger management.
- Train teachers on how to facilitate the learning of life skills, diversity, social competencies, and how to work with students with special needs.
- Develop more parent involvement in the schools through outreach and other efforts; work directly with the schools to promote parent involvement, both structured and informal.

### *LINKS TO ACTION*



**State Department of Education, School Health Unit** is a unit created for the promotion of comprehensive school health, services include training and technical assistance: 505-827-1804

**NM Department of Health, Office of School Health** provides leadership and coordination for school health initiatives within the Department of Health: 505-827-6816

**Healthier Schools Coalition** is an initiative that is dedicated to encouraging healthier school communities: [www.healthierschools.org](http://www.healthierschools.org)

**Great Places to Learn & You Have to Live It**— materials to help build asset-rich school communities.  
Search Institute: 877-240-7251 or [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

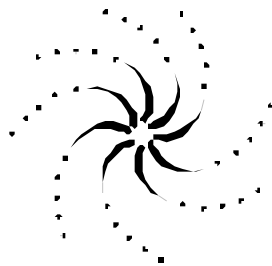
**Wise Men & Wise Women** is a statewide mentoring program that works in the schools: 888-671-KIDS/505-244-9505

## **GET EMPLOYERS AND BUSINESSES INVOLVED**

*We need a chance to get real world experience. Businesses can help us do that.*

Here are some ideas:

- Create workplace release policies that promote and support parental involvement in the schools, volunteerism, and community service.
- Develop school and business partnerships where businesses support schools with personnel, financial and other contributions.
- Work with businesses to create job fairs, job training, job sharing opportunities, internships, and mentored employment.
- Work with the schools on service-learning and school to work programs, on job training and career development programs.
- Look into Work Force Investment programs that provide money for youth employment.
- Develop more longstanding and securely funded programs like AmeriCorps where youth receive stipends. Think about developing these locally.







### *LINKS TO ACTION*

The **Center for Entrepreneurship** in Albuquerque provides opportunities for business skill development for youth: 505-272-7677

**Join-A-School** in Albuquerque is a program partnering businesses with individual schools: 505-256-4420. Most other school districts have a staff person assigned to build these partnerships.

For information on the **Workforce Investment Act**, contact the NM Department of Labor in Santa Fe: 505-827-7436

**The Center for Service Learning** is a statewide program integrating service in education: 505-988-1724

**AmeriCorps** is a national program providing opportunities for youth to serve their communities and earn a stipend: [www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org)

## GET ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS ON BOARD

➤ *We don't know if the people who make decisions really want to hear from us or care what we think.*

Here are some ideas:

- Invite lawmakers and other public officials to meet with young people.
- Educate lawmakers in the principles, practices, and benefits of positive youth development.
- Get state level lawmaker support and passage of the Next Generation Fund; pursue other means of funding positive youth development; involve youth in decisions about how money is allocated and spent.
- Pass a bill on employer release of employees as volunteers, mentors, and to participate as parents in school activities. Consider a tax credit.
- Pursue more equitable school financing.
- Allocate additional funding to youth programs and services.



- Secure legislation encouraging all cities, counties, and municipalities to have youth advisory councils.
- Pass legislation that provides adequate and equitable health insurance to all youth.
- Pass a bill creating incentives for parent participation in school.
- Request that a legislative session be devoted solely to youth issues and programs.



### *LINKS TO ACTION*

**Las Cruces Mayor's Youth Advisory Board: 505-524-3991 (Jan Syling)**

Go to your local library for a list of the elected officials in your community.

Contact your Tribal Office of the President and/or Governor of the Pueblo for a list of tribal officials.

New Mexico State Board of Education: 505-827-6571

New Mexico State Legislature: [www.legis.state.nm.us](http://www.legis.state.nm.us)  
(e.g. Next Generation Trust Fund, SB 48, 2000 Regular Session)

Senator Bingaman's Student Leadership Institute on six different topics of public policy: 505-988-6647

## *How Will We Know If We Are Getting Anywhere?*

We will know we are getting somewhere when we start to see:

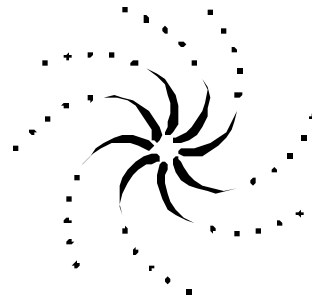
- More positive attitudes and values about youth
- More positive media attention to young people
- More community involvement in the lives of young people
- More positive relations between youth and adults
- More youth organizations with positive youth development frameworks
- Increase in the number of community schools
- Decreased class sizes
- At least one pilot charter school developed on positive youth development principles
- Funding of the Next Generation Fund
- Increased number of boards with youth members
- More funding for positive youth development
- More retention programs for good teachers and administrators
- More Community Youth Centers
- More Comprehensive Family Service Centers
- Increased parental involvement in the schools
- Increase in exchange programs and participation rates
- Increase in number of cross-cultural activities
- Increase in volunteers and mentors
- A legislative session devoted to youth
- Improvements in academic performance
- Lower rates of violence, substance abuse, dropout, and other harmful behaviors

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*It Starts  
With You.*



*It Starts Today!*

And 10...Get Ready To Begin!

## 1 2 3...Open Up and See

This guide is intended to *launch a movement* that changes how we think, act, involve, and support our young people, a movement that needs to take place within our families, our schools, and our communities.

This is a movement based on the principles of *positive youth development*. Think about it: when adults talk about young people, they usually talk about problems. Many adults have a distorted and negative perspective of young people and an incomplete picture of what they need to succeed. We need to turn this around. We need to rethink about how we care for our children.

This guide is a start. It contains dozens of ideas and resources for youth, families, community members, schools, employers, and elected officials. We all have the capacity to positively affect the lives of our young people.

New Mexico Youth Action Network convened the Forum and coordinated the production of this report. The Network intends to pursue the recommendations in this guide whenever and wherever possible. We invite you to join our movement.



New Mexico Youth Action Network is a statewide network whose mission is to mobilize youth and adults to promote positive youth development policies and programs at the local and state level.

## 7 8 9...If You Just Give Your Time

4 5 6...The Future You Can Fix