

Messaging & Building Movements to Advance a Children's Opportunity Agenda



By All Means
November 2017



Keeping Kids on Track

Empowered by United Way

United  **Way**

KEYSPAN

WCVB-TV
BOSTON



KKOT Message #1

After-school programs help young people academically—through homework help, tutoring, and enrichment



KKOT Message #2

After-school programs help
working parents



KKOT Message #3

After-school programs keep
kids off the streets



Multiple Formats

- News segments
- Newsmagazine pieces
- Dramatic vignettes
- Public service announcements
- Prime-time specials
- On-air interviews & editorials

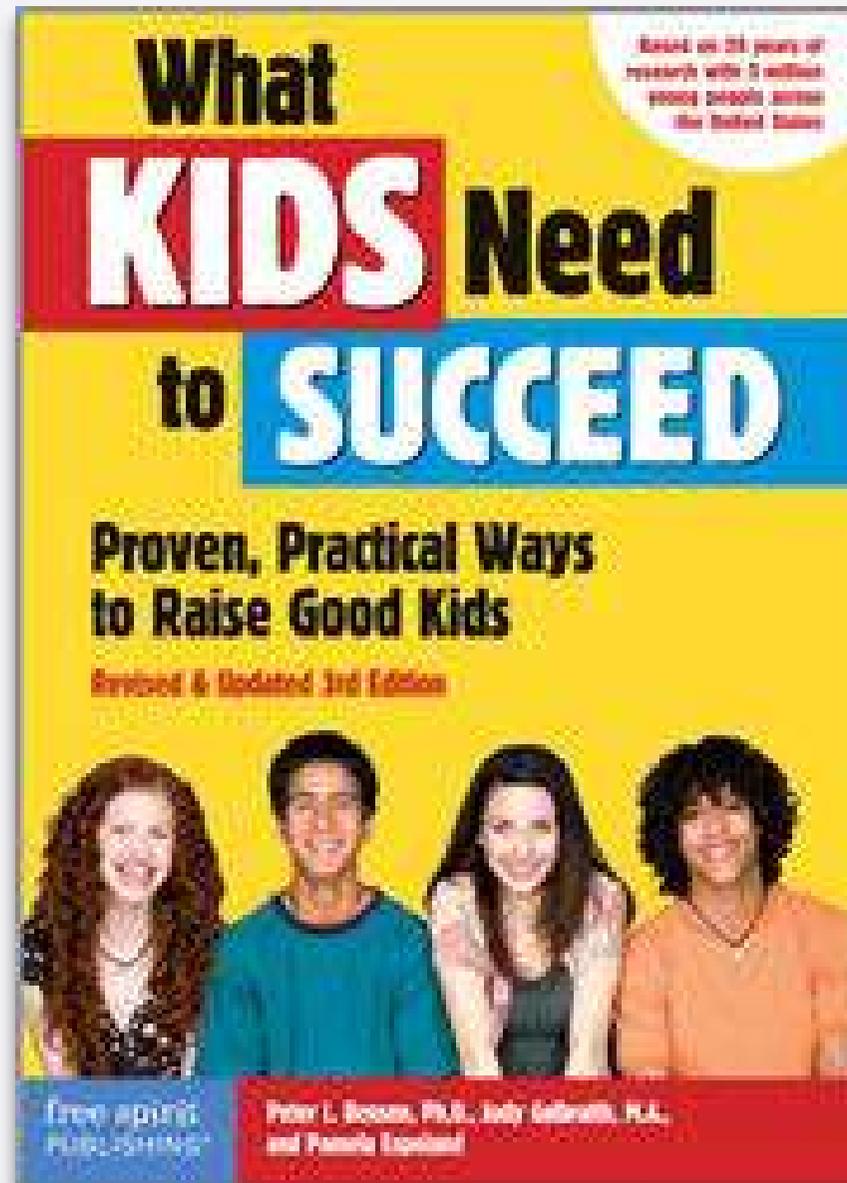


The Danger Zone

20,000 children are home alone every day in Massachusetts



Positive Youth Development

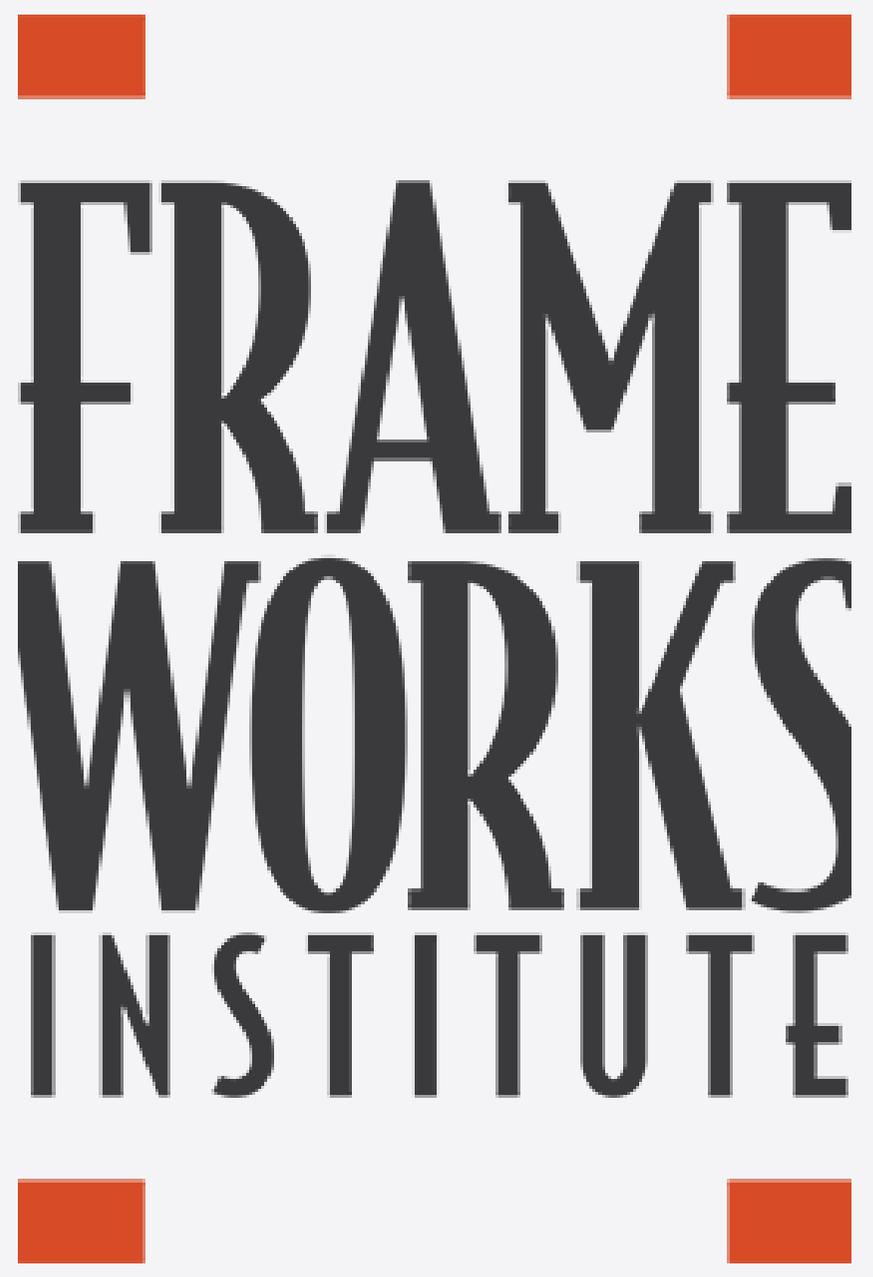


Post Campaign Reflections



Eureka!!!!!!

- Report: How Americans Think About Youth Development and Out-of-School Time Programs
- Research Reports: Used Methods from the Cognitive & Social Sciences to Map Public Thinking—the Deep Mental & Cultural Models
- Reframing Recommendations: How to Communicate So That People Can Easily See the Public Dimensions of a Problem/Issue.



FRAME
WORKS
INSTITUTE

How are child and youth issues framed?

Media focuses on:

Parental responsibility aka

“The Family Bubble”



How are child and youth issues framed?

Media focuses on:

Crime prevention and safety



What is in the public's mind?

- While there is now greater understanding that community is important to development, people still struggle with how children and youth might be supported by their communities.
- There is a persistent idea that children “just grow up,” that all you need to do is “add water.” The commonly used metaphor of children as plants doesn’t give people a sufficiently concrete description of how development occurs.



What is in the public's mind?

- Adolescents are thought to have reached a stage when they are relatively formed and self-contained. It's all about individual judgment and choice, rather than how experiences and environments shape development.



What is in the public's mind?

- At the root of it all is a very vague understanding of how development happens.
- FrameWorks says: “Communicators need to prioritize explaining the science of child development and how it’s related to adolescent development in order to help people make sense of the different policies and interventions designed to provide developmental support at critical moments.”
- Getting inside “The Black Box”



What do the experts say?

- Development is an active process; children are not empty vessels or sponges
- Context is key because the brain changes in response to environments and experience; changing contexts can improve developmental outcomes
- Brain's ability to change is greater earlier in life, but there are many critical periods across the years for the brain to grow because of "plasticity."
- Adolescence is a particularly important period to intervene, to promote positive outcomes, and to change negative or unhealthy developmental trajectories.
- Providing the right kinds of experiences at the right times is critical.
- Policies and programs are most effective when they are aligned with an understanding of when particular brain systems are most plastic and what experiences are best

A new story: translating the science of child and youth development

- The basic **architecture of the brain** is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood
- A complex interaction of genes and experiences shapes the developing brain. Relationships are the active ingredient in this process, activated by back-and-forth interactions known as “**Serve and Return.**”
- Cognitive, emotional, and social capacities are inextricably intertwined and interwoven, like a

braided rope. When the rope is tightly braided, children’s development progresses.

A new story: translating the science of child and youth development

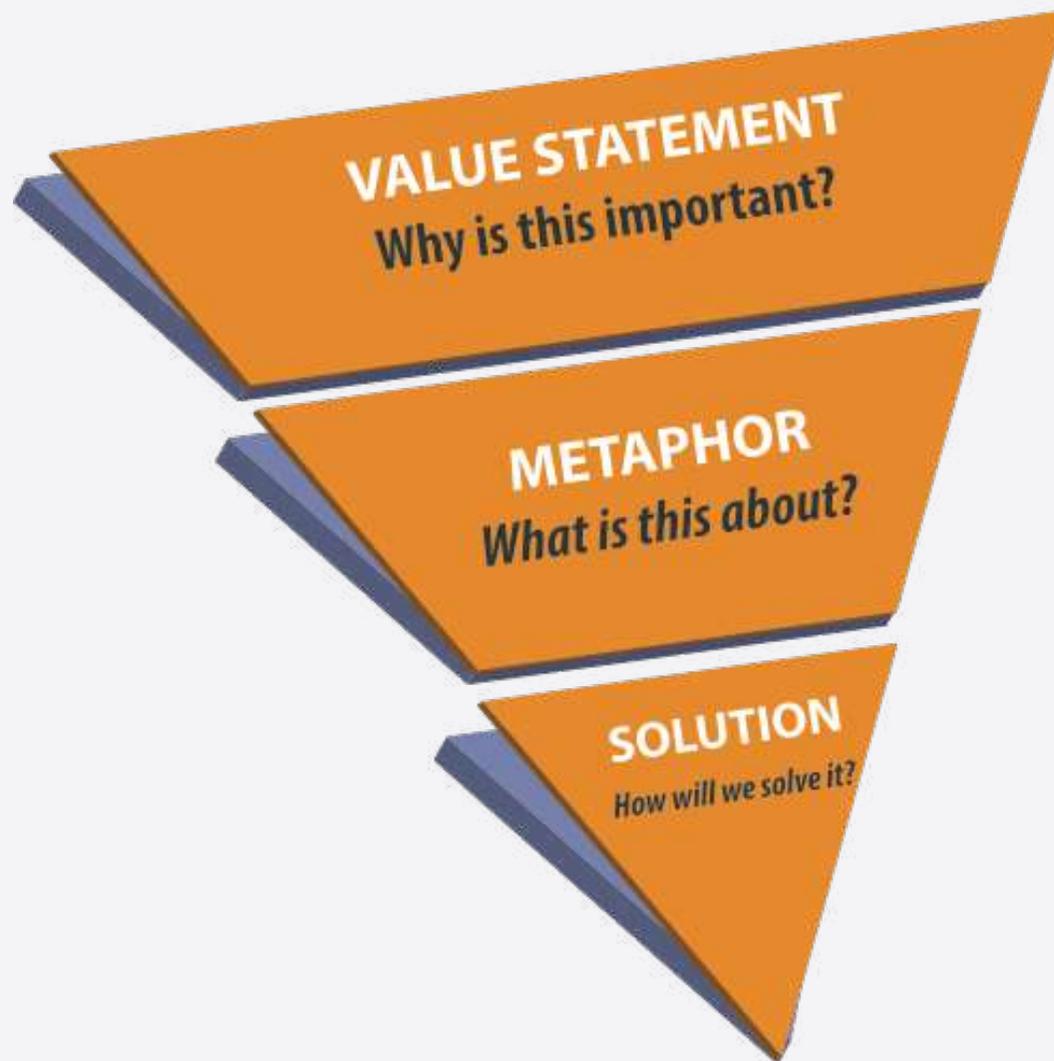
- While there are many kinds of stress, some of which can be positive, “**Toxic Stress**” damages the developing brain, leading to problems in learning, behavior, and physical and mental health over time.
- Child development becomes a strong foundation for community and economic development because capable children become the adults who drive a **prosperous and sustainable society**.

Cognitive and Linguistic Tools for Telling a New Story



Framing Public Issues

Message Structure



EMPLOY A COLLECTIVE VALUE

A collective value is a general claim about desirable social conditions such as equality and interdependence.



VALUE for Early Childhood

Collective Prosperity: As we look for ways to keep our country prosperous, addressing both its civic and financial health, we need to think of the connection between child development and economic development.



VALUE for Early Childhood

Ingenuity: When we invent and replicate high quality programs for children and youth, we can solve problems in early childhood development and show significant long-term improvements for children. Taking advantage of opportunities that arise as we understand science better allows us to innovate.

VALUE for Youth Development

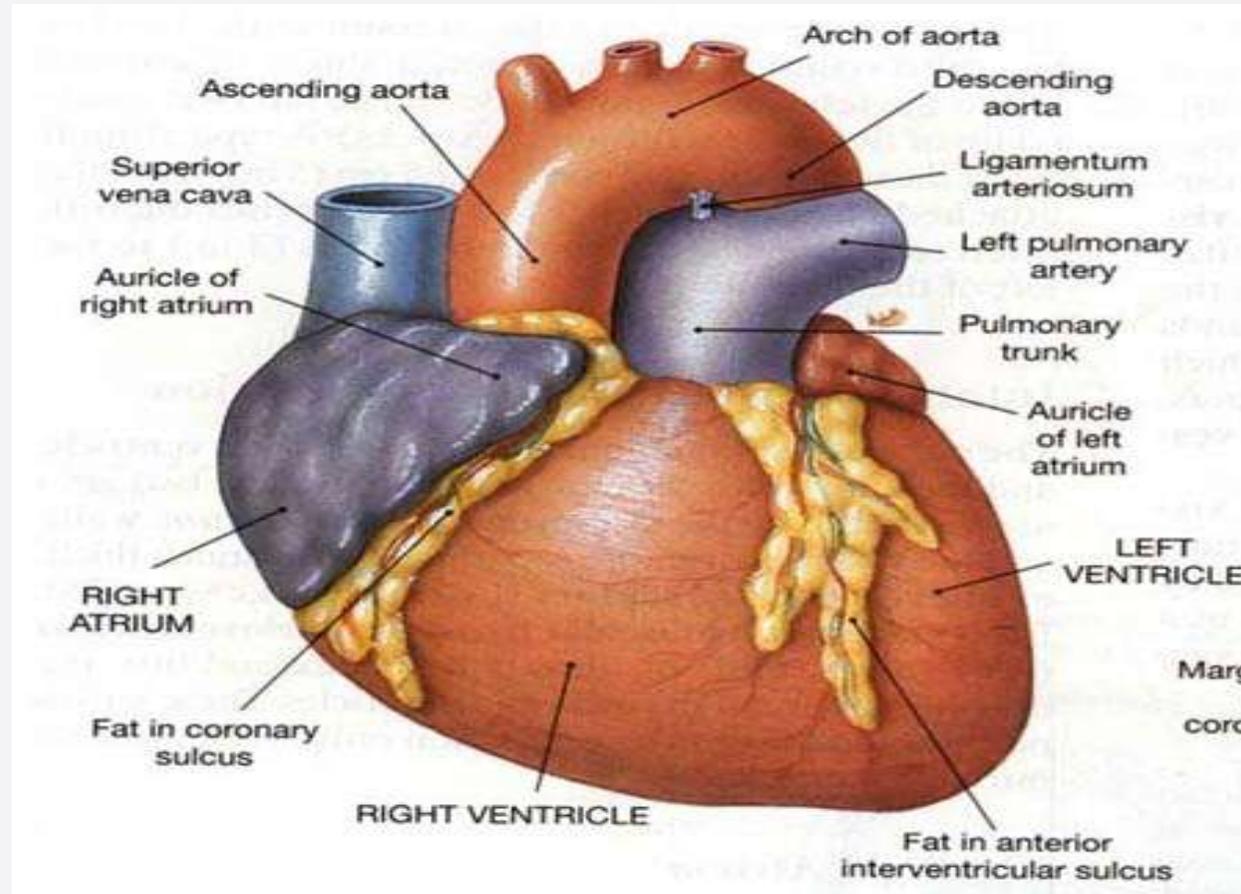
Reciprocity: We give support to our young people now so that they can grow up to become good citizens and contributing community members



VALUE for Youth Development

Fairness Across Places: Our goal is to create a country where all children—regardless of where they live—have a fair chance to reach their potential and contribute to society. We need to devote more resources to those areas where the current opportunities are patchy or low-quality.

EMPLOY A METAPHOR



METAPHOR for Early Childhood Development

The early years of life matter because early experiences affect the **architecture of the maturing brain.**

As it emerges, the quality of that architecture establishes either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all of the development and behavior that follows --- and getting things right the first time is easier than trying to fix them later.



Overarching Metaphor: The Resilience Scale



Resilience Scale

- You can think of a child's life as a scale, and the things stacked on either side that shape that child's development.
- Scales have two sides onto which factors are stacked.
- The factors placed on either side determine how the scale tips, but factors don't all weigh the same.
- We want children to have scales that tip positive.
- There is a fulcrum point that determines the effect of placing weight on either side—shaping how easily the arm of the scale tips in either direction.



Resilience Scale

- Children are born with a fulcrum point in a certain place, and its early position matters a lot, but it can also shift over time.
- Resilience is having a scale that's tipped positive even when a lot of things are stacked on the negative side.
- Scales can be counterbalanced and calibrated so as to achieve different inclinations.





Tipping the Scales

How integrating school and
community resources can
improve student outcomes
and the Commonwealth's future

Benefits of a Shared Story

By having a shared narrative, we can help the public overcome unproductive ways of thinking about child and adolescent development and begin to appreciate what it would take to support child- and youth-serving organizations in their efforts to improve our society.





Full Frame Communications