

Youth Development Measurement Tool

Measuring and understanding the impact of Best Starts investments is critical to its success. This means assessing factors that promote positive outcomes for young people like identity development and social connection. Best Starts is partnering with University of Washington School of Social Work to develop tools that Stopping the School to Prison Pipeline and Youth Development providers can use to measure their impact. At each stage, feedback from Best Starts staff, program leaders, and young people informed decision-making. This snapshot presents data from Phase I of this assessment.

What we did

Identified priority topics

Through meetings with Best Starts staff and interviews and focus groups with providers and young people, we identified three priority topics for the tool to measure:

- Positive racial, ethnic, and gender identity development
- Social and emotional development
- Features of supportive programs

Conversations with program leaders and young people allowed us to learn how they define these topics, and the similarities and differences in how they understand them.

Developed the tool

We searched for existing measurement tools related to the three topics and reviewed their strengths and limitations. We developed a survey tool using some questions from existing tools and wrote new ones.

Reviewed the tool

We interviewed 41 young people across Best Starts providers to learn how they perceive and interpret the questions and identify potential problems. Questions young people saw as problematic were revised or removed based on their recommendations.

Tested the tool

319 young people from 31 different Best Starts-funded organizations took the survey so we could see if different young people interpreted the survey questions in similar ways and if the survey accurately measures the three priority topics. The tool has some promising features, as well as areas that need further development.

What's next?

We are bringing together a committee of providers and young people to guide Phase II. Our next steps in Phase II are:

- Adapt the questions to be more culturally relevant across different populations.
- See how well the tool measures change over time.
- Explore how to incorporate youth and community perspectives to inform the three topic areas.