

HEALTHY YOUTH / HEALTHY REGIONS

INFORMING ACTION FOR THE 9 COUNTY
CAPITAL REGION AND ITS YOUTH



JULY 2011

COMMISSIONED BY SIERRA HEALTH FOUNDATION
WITH ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT

STUDY DESIGNED AND CONDUCTED BY
THE UC DAVIS CENTER FOR REGIONAL CHANGE

Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions is a collaborative partnership of the UC Davis Center for Regional Change, Sierra Health Foundation and The California Endowment. Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions was commissioned and funded by Sierra Health Foundation with additional funding from The California Endowment to document the connections between youth well-being and regional prosperity in the nine-county Capital Region of Northern California.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS CENTER FOR REGIONAL CHANGE (CRC) is dedicated to producing “research that matters for the region.” To accomplish this, the CRC builds two kinds of bridges. One set is on campus between faculty and students from different disciplines and departments; the other between the campus and its surrounding home regions. These bridges allow us to bring together faculty, students and communities to collaborate on innovative research to create just, sustainable and healthy regions in California’s Central Valley, Sierra Nevada and beyond. Learn more on the Center’s web site at <http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/>.

SIERRA HEALTH FOUNDATION is a private philanthropy with a mission to invest in and serve as a catalyst for ideas, partnerships and programs that improve health and quality of life in Northern California. The foundation is committed to improving health outcomes and reducing health disparities in the region through convening, educating and strategic grant making. Visit Sierra Health’s web site at www.sierrahealth.org.

THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT, a private, statewide health foundation, was established in 1996 to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. From 2010-2020, The Endowment will focus the majority of its resources on its 10-year strategic plan, Building Healthy Communities. For more information, visit The Endowment’s web site at www.calendow.org.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
6. HEALTHY YOUTH/HEALTHY REGIONS:
THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US
7. WE NEED TO THINK REGIONALLY ABOUT YOUTH
9. FAILING OUR YOUTH
13. PRICING THE REGIONAL LOSSES
15. VULNERABLE YOUTH/VULNERABLE REGION
18. KEEPING UP WITH MOBILE YOUTH
20. BUILDING ON OUR ASSETS:
A CONNECTED AND CARING REGION
24. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING
HEALTHY YOUTH/HEALTHY REGIONS
31. ENDNOTES
32. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
34. HEALTHY YOUTH/HEALTHY REGIONS
PARTNERS
35. HEALTHY YOUTH/HEALTHY REGIONS
WORKING PAPERS AND PRODUCTS

Suggested citation:

London, Jonathan and Erbstein, Nancy, et al. (2011). Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions: Informing Action for the Nine-County Capital Region and its Youth. Davis, CA: UC Davis Center for Regional Change.

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to share with you *Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions: Informing Action for the Nine-County Capital Region and its Youth*. The study, commissioned by Sierra Health Foundation with additional funding provided by The California Endowment and conducted by UC Davis Center for Regional Change, documents the connections between improvements in youth well-being and regional prosperity in the nine-county Sacramento Capital Region. Researchers from multiple disciplines, including youth leaders from across the region, examined five critical areas that affect youth well-being: education, health, employment, civic engagement and the built environment.

The Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions study confirms the ways in which the future of our youth and our region remain inextricably linked. The Capital Region's future is dependent to a crucial degree on the ability of its young people to become caring, engaged, productive and innovative contributors and leaders. As the researchers uncovered, our region has a wealth of largely untapped assets, including the motivation of young people themselves and their desire to succeed. These assets, if better aligned and coupled with strategic investments and opportunities, would allow more of our young people an opportunity to succeed, which in turn will lead to greater regional prosperity.

The interrelated challenges and systemic barriers our young people are navigating – from struggling education systems, decreasing employment opportunities, inaccessible transportation and disconnected systems – are putting our region at great social and economic risk. An increasing body of research shows that a regional approach to addressing such challenges is warranted. Likewise, efforts to ensure that regions are inclusive and proactive in addressing disparities have been shown to provide a competitive edge and to promote prosperity for all.

We offer this report and its research-based recommendations to support the strategic efforts of policymakers, funders, nonprofit organizations and businesses to improve youth well-being, and promote long-term economic, social and cultural health in the region.

In this time of austerity, as a region we must ask, will we find the collective will to take action to ensure all of our young people are provided the resources and opportunities they need to grow into healthy, productive adults, or will we succumb to inaction and risk, becoming a region with a bleak and depressed future. Our region is known for its innovation and commitment to support its young people, and now is the time to collectively act.

Sincerely,



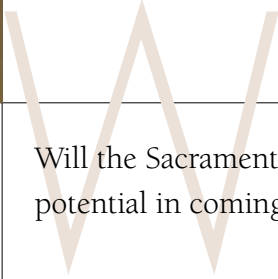
Chet P. Hewitt
President and CEO
Sierra Health Foundation



Dr. Robert K. Ross
President and CEO
The California Endowment



Jonathan K. London, Ph.D.
Director
UC Davis Center for Regional Change



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Will the Sacramento Capital Region prosper, thrive and ultimately grow into its full potential in coming years?

To answer this question, we have to look carefully at the well-being of young people who now inhabit the Capital Region’s nine counties. As go today’s young people – tomorrow’s workers, parents, neighbors and leaders – so goes the region. The interconnected prospects for our youth and our region have been examined by Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions (HY/HR), a two-year, multimethod study commissioned by Sierra Health Foundation with additional funding from The California Endowment and conducted by the UC Davis Center for Regional Change.

The study reflects evidence that many different factors determine our youth’s and region’s health and well-being, while focusing on five major, interrelated contributors: 1) education, 2) physical and mental health, 3) employment, 4) civic engagement, and 5) the built environment – the structures and surroundings created and modified by people. We explored the relationship between positive outcomes and regional dynamics, drawing on data from secondary sources and youth surveys, interviews with institutional leaders, young adults who left or considered leaving high school without graduating and their adult allies, and youth-generated media documenting local conditions. This report synthesizes the research findings. Detailed HY/HR Working Papers, as well as maps and data on specific subjects addressed in this report, can be found at <http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/projects/Healthy-Youth-Healthy-Regions>.

The overall findings of HY/HR can be briefly summarized by four key points:

1. The Capital Region cannot succeed unless its youth are successful in terms of health, education, job readiness and their preparation for the demands of family and civic life.
2. Today significant structural challenges undermine youth’s progress in all these areas. Underscoring these challenges are disparities in resources and opportunities

associated with geography, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, immigration status and other factors.

3. The challenges we now face must be met through a unified approach that crosses sectors and systems on both a local and regional scale.
4. Fostering healthy youth and a healthy region requires leadership from many people, including youth themselves, and unrealized community assets across all nine Capital Region counties.

This report urges leaders and community members to think regionally about youth, stressing that the conventional demarcations frequently used to plan and allocate public resources fail to account for young people’s highly mobile lives. Many young people live their lives regionally as they seek jobs, education, services and recreation, and change their residence frequently as dictated by family crisis or opportunity.

In addition, this report highlights undertapped regional wealth that could be mobilized to foster youth and regional health, including the energy, insight and talents of young people themselves throughout the area. “If I don’t attempt to change the community,” asked one teenager, “who will? Doesn’t it start with the ones living in it? ‘Me’ participating in a group effort to improve my community – that’s an obvious answer to an unasked question.”

Capital Region Index of Youth Vulnerability (by Zip Code)

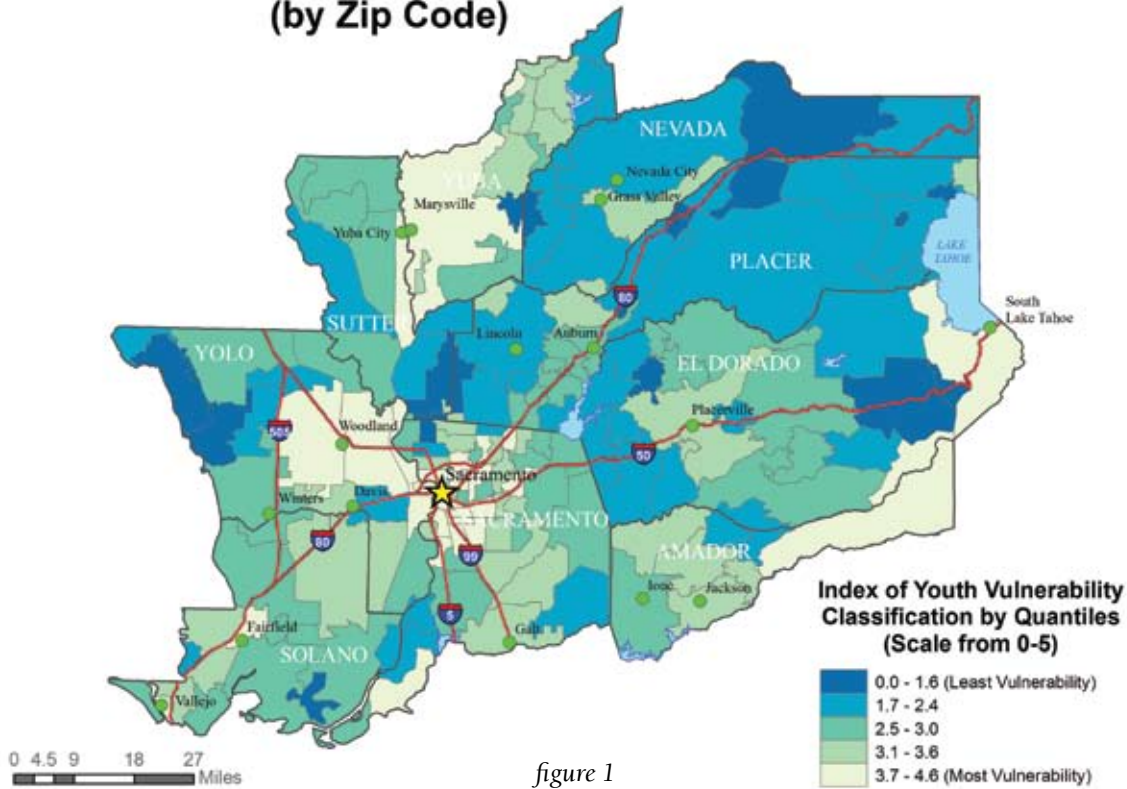


figure 1



Sactown Heroes,
West Sacramento
Youth Resource
Coalition

THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US

“You can’t describe the region as a whole,” observed a legal advocate. “The region includes pockets of poverty and pockets of intense wealth. We have a patchwork of political subdivisions that result in inequitable allocations for infrastructure, schools and the like. So for white kids from wealthy families, it’s a great place to live. For others, especially young people of color, it can be miserable.” Overall, youth opportunity and well-being, as well as disparities associated with who you are and where you live, are undermining our regional well-being.

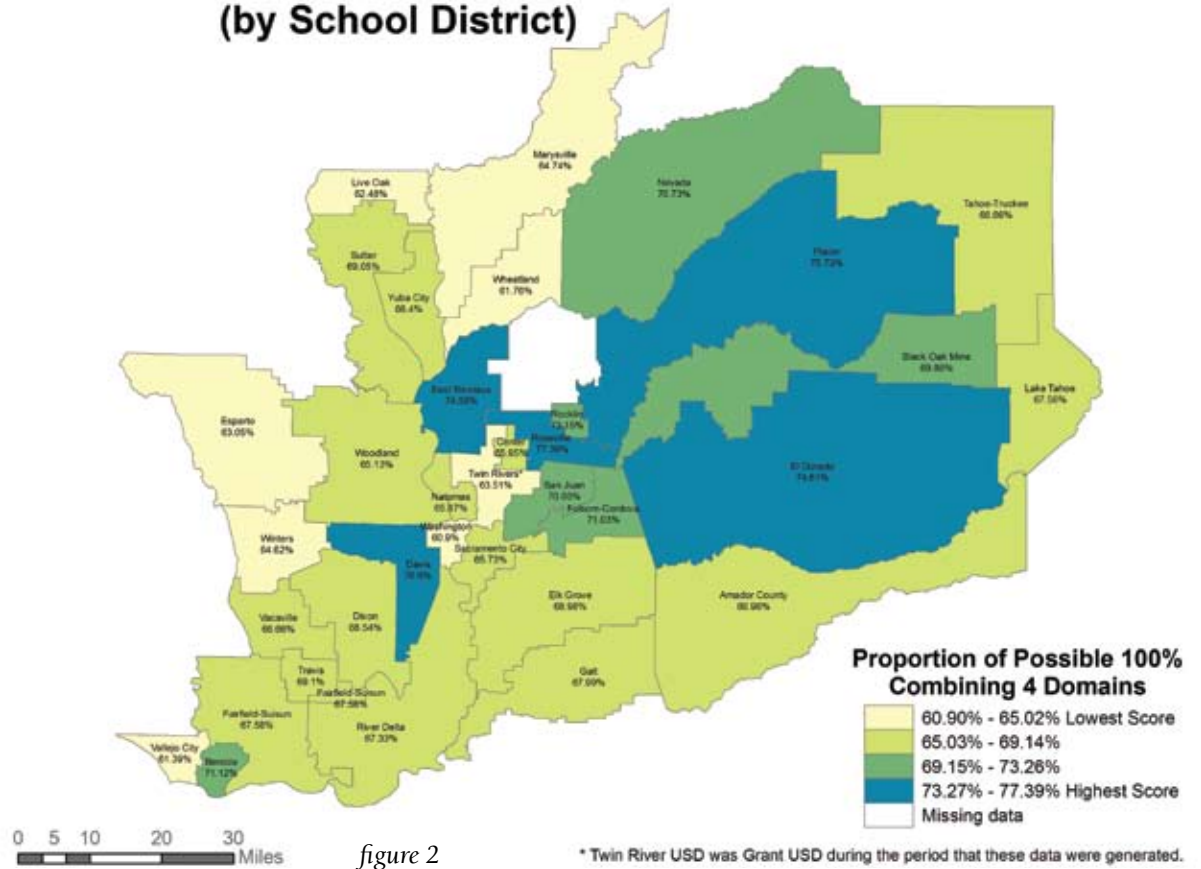
Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions outlines a host of interrelated challenges facing young people and the Capital Region. For example:

- Of the 41,000 students who entered 9th grade in 2004, only 66% graduated in four years;
- Only 28% of Latino students and 31% of African-American students attend schools with high or very high graduation rates;
- Among the students entering high school in 2004, only 23% graduated having completed their college entrance requirements for the University of California or California State University systems, compared with 37% statewide;

- Only 39% of the region’s students entered a public college or university within one year of graduation, far fewer than the statewide average of 55%;
- Fewer than one in 10 students reported that they have high levels of adult encouragement to explore future careers or pursue formal education.
- African-American and Latino young adults (18-24) in the Capital Region are overrepresented in low-wage retail occupations and underrepresented in the region’s higher wage growth sectors of health care, education and high technology.
- The economic costs of teen birth is approximately \$82 million a year – the culmination of lost tax revenues, public assistance, child health care, foster care and involvement with the criminal justice system.

The research team constructed a Youth Vulnerability Index that measures concentrations of youth experiencing conditions that often disconnect them from support for a healthy transition to adulthood: high school completion, teen pregnancy, foster care placement, poverty and juvenile felony arrests (figure 1). At the regional scale, these

Capital Region Index of Youth Well-Being (by School District)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

data demonstrate high and concentrated levels of vulnerability in the urban core and some inner-ring suburbs and rural areas.

Researchers also constructed an Index of Youth Well-Being to assess overall youth well-being in four major domains: physical health, education, psychological/emotional health and social supports (figure 2). Although parts of the Capital Region ranked relatively high, far more areas scored very low, with more than two-thirds of school districts lodged in the lowest two categories of well-being scores. This is likely a conservative estimate of the situation, as youth who left high school without graduating or who attend alternative schools (e.g., continuation schools) or who are incarcerated are likely underrepresented in these data.

In sum, the Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions study points to recurring cycles of social neglect and missed opportunity whose impact compounds over time, while also identifying significant assets and opportunities that could be mobilized.

For the Capital Region, these limited supports and accumulated losses presage a social and fiscal

calamity. The estimated lifetime bill for one year's cohort of Capital Region students who do not complete high school totals \$480 million for state and local governments and more than \$1 billion for the federal government. The human cost remains incalculable.

Yet these real and mounting challenges do not describe the entire picture. The region's past achievements and present assets also figure significantly in our ability to address this crisis. Our collective research suggests that the Capital Region contains many of the elements necessary to uproot even the most entrenched problems facing young people today. Not least among these are our youth themselves. We were impressed by the tone of hope and optimism that characterized the worldview of many young people, including those facing enormous obstacles. While these young men and women spoke candidly about their doubts, confusion and fears for the future, they also described their deep desire and efforts – which in some cases are truly heroic – to be part of the solution.

Passion, urgency and a willingness to work hard exist in substantial measure among the Capital

T HIS REPORT URGES LEADERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO THINK REGIONALLY ABOUT YOUTH, STRESSING THAT THE CONVENTIONAL DEMARCATIONS FREQUENTLY USED TO PLAN AND ALLOCATE PUBLIC RESOURCES FAIL TO ACCOUNT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S HIGHLY MOBILE LIVES.

Region's youth. Many long to engage the issues that will determine their future. The real question is whether the adults currently in charge will support their aspirations and afford them the opportunity to grow into their rightful role as today's and tomorrow's leaders.

INFORMED ACTION FOR HEALTHY YOUTH AND A HEALTHY REGION

This study indicates that successful initiatives on behalf of youth's healthy development can only be secured by changes in our regional approach to education, youth development, employment, health services and infrastructure improvements. One youth employment specialist illustrated the urgency for collective action, saying, "[Youth need] people behind them, a broad spectrum of people ... None of us is successful unless this [young] person is successful, so we need to do something to make sure that they are successful."

To this end, the Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions report makes three broad recommendations as a framework for action.

1. PLACE YOUTH AT THE CENTER (NOT MARGINS) OF REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

A coherent policy framework for youth that individuals, organizations and networks can rally around remains an essential unmet need in the Capital Region. While specific action strategies could assume a myriad of shapes, any framework should address social and geographic disparities in youth opportunities and outcomes, and four areas of emphasis should be afforded serious consideration: 1) reframing public perceptions of youth, 2) amplifying the voices of young people (including our most vulnerable populations), 3) designing youth and family-friendly regional infrastructure, and 4) promoting policy tools that make the health and well-being of young people a primary metric of success.

2. ENSURE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES FOR LONG-RANGE PLANNING, ACTION AND EVALUATION

The report urges improvements in the effectiveness of allocating and coordinating existing funds through the use of children's budgets, tax-sharing measures across local governments, and evidence-based and performance-based budgeting. In addition, increasing the available funds for youth development through parcel taxes and through public-private partnerships are important steps.

3. CONVENE A CAPITAL REGION COORDINATING BODY DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS FOR YOUTH

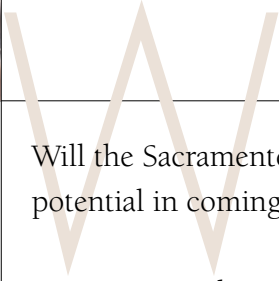
A vital regional coordinating body can enable local leaders to think, plan and act at a cooperative level of unprecedented breadth and depth. It also holds the potential to make room for new voices, including those of young people themselves. Support for associated community organizing efforts – particularly with the most underserved populations – will facilitate effective policy strategies and representation of all regional constituencies. An urgent priority for this body should be bridging the gaps between systems and jurisdictions to ensure that the most vulnerable youth do not fall through the cracks, and are provided on-ramps to healthy, prosperous and meaningful lives.

THE OPPORTUNITY BEFORE US

We face a clear, unambiguous choice. We can take the actions outlined in this report and invest the funds and energy now required to support the development of healthy youth who will contribute immensely toward building a healthy region. Or we can push our civic responsibilities further down the road, allowing the social problems to compound and the accumulated fiscal costs to skyrocket. Like the fate of our youth and our region, the moral and economic cases for action remain inextricably linked. We need to back the creative renovation of systems, services and social networks, ensuring the well-being of our youth because we should and because we must. In pursuing this path, we have everything to win.



Tuere Anderson, director of Health Services for Youth Radio, speaks at the Youth Media Forum for Social Change, 2010.



**HEALTHY YOUTH/
HEALTHY
REGIONS:
THE CHALLENGE
BEFORE US**

Will the Sacramento Capital Region prosper, thrive and ultimately manifest its full potential in coming years?

It is increasingly understood across sectors, including business, government, philanthropy, nonprofit and grassroots, that our collective fate will be shaped by young people’s present condition and future possibilities. As go today’s young people – tomorrow’s workers, parents, neighbors and leaders – so goes the region.

So to restate the question more pointedly:

- Are young people today being prepared to assume the adult responsibilities of earning their living, raising families and shouldering the increasingly complex duties of civic engagement?
- Are they acquiring the knowledge, skills and work experience that will enable them to become productive, self-sufficient, tax-paying contributors to the commonweal?
- Are they benefiting sufficiently from institutions responsible for promoting their safety, security, social advancement, physical vitality and psychological health, and are these benefits equitably distributed?
- Are they supported by peer and adult systems of support that challenge them to make the most of their talents, foster their aspirations and develop their capacity to assume ever-greater responsibility for the direction of their own lives and the strength of the community?

Answers to these questions can be found in the research findings of Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions, a two-year, multimethod study commissioned by Sierra Health Foundation with additional funding from The California Endowment, and conducted by the UC Davis Center for Regional Change. This report presents a synthesis of the study and provides both an overview of the relationship between youth and regional well-being in

California’s nine-county Capital Region and a guiding framework for action.

The study reflects the evidence that many different factors determine health and well-being, while focusing on five major, interrelated contributors: education, physical and mental health, employment, civic engagement and the built environment – the structures and surroundings created and modified by people.¹ The breadth of these factors reflects the understanding that health is not simply a product of health care, but instead is shaped by multiple and overlapping influences, sometimes called the social determinants of health.

In each area, we explore the relationship between positive outcomes and regional dynamics, drawing on data derived from a wide range of secondary data sources and youth surveys, interviews with institutional leaders, young adults classified by schools as “drop outs” and their adult allies, and youth-generated media exploring local conditions. More detailed Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions (HY/HR) Working Papers on research methods and specific subjects addressed in this report can be found at <http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/projects/Healthy-Youth-Healthy-Regions>.

We define the Capital Region as encompassing the area within a 45-minute drive of California’s Capitol – the area’s approximate commute-shed. It touches upon nine counties (Yuba, Sutter, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Amador, Sacramento, Yolo and Solano). We focus primarily on youth and young adults, ages 12 to 24.

FAR TOO MANY YOUTH ARE FORCED TO COPE WITH FAILING EDUCATION SYSTEMS, SCARCE JOB TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AND INNAVIGABLE PATHS TO EMPLOYMENT.

We base our findings on multiple data sources, including: secondary data sources (e.g., U.S. Census data, employment data, etc.), which were employed to produce GIS maps analyzing key inputs and outcomes related to youth health, employment, civic engagement and education; surveys of middle and high school students; qualitative data, including semi-structured interviews with more than 200 individuals to explore relevant regional institutional networks and youth and their adult allies' experiences of school dropout; and youth-generated media documenting community/ neighborhood conditions that facilitate and impede well-being, produced by several teams totaling 55 young people throughout the region.² This youth action research component was at the core of the study, and provided important contributions of youth voice to enrich the data, inform the analysis and shape the recommendations. Except where otherwise noted, the photographs in the report, as well as the excerpts from the comic book, were produced by the youth action research teams.³

The findings of the HY/HR study can be briefly summarized by four key points:

1. Regional prosperity will be undermined unless its youth are correspondingly successful in terms of health, education, job readiness and their ability to meet the demands of family and civic life.
2. Significant structural challenges undermine youth's progress in all these areas. Underscoring these challenges are enormous resource disparities in regard to geography, socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, and immigration status, among other factors.
3. The challenges we now face must be met in concert through a unified approach that crosses sectors and systems on both a local and regional scale.
4. Effective solutions to address the myriad challenges that impede the healthy



development of significant numbers of youth across the Capital Region must involve youth themselves as leaders, tapping unrealized community assets.

WE NEED TO THINK REGIONALLY ABOUT YOUTH

The Capital Region is large, geographically varied, ethnically diverse and wildly divergent in terms of income, occupation and culture (London, Campbell and Kuhns, 2010). For those young people privileged with strong familial supports, financial assets, legal residency and staunch adult allies, life can be pleasing and fruitful. For an increasing number of youth, childhood and adolescence too often turns out to be dangerous, frustrating and unrewarding. Young people of color, who constitute the fastest growing segments of California's population, disproportionately share this experience. Sub-groups facing significant barriers that were identified during this study include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth, undocumented youth and youth with undocumented caretakers, youth in foster care, young people whose parents are incarcerated or who themselves are involved with the juvenile justice system, youth with untreated mental health issues or whose caretakers are untreated, and youth who are highly mobile due to family and/or housing instability.

Youth Voices for Change was a collaboration of the West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition's Sactown Heroes, the UC Davis HY/HR team and the Art of Regional Change.

Capital Region Study Area

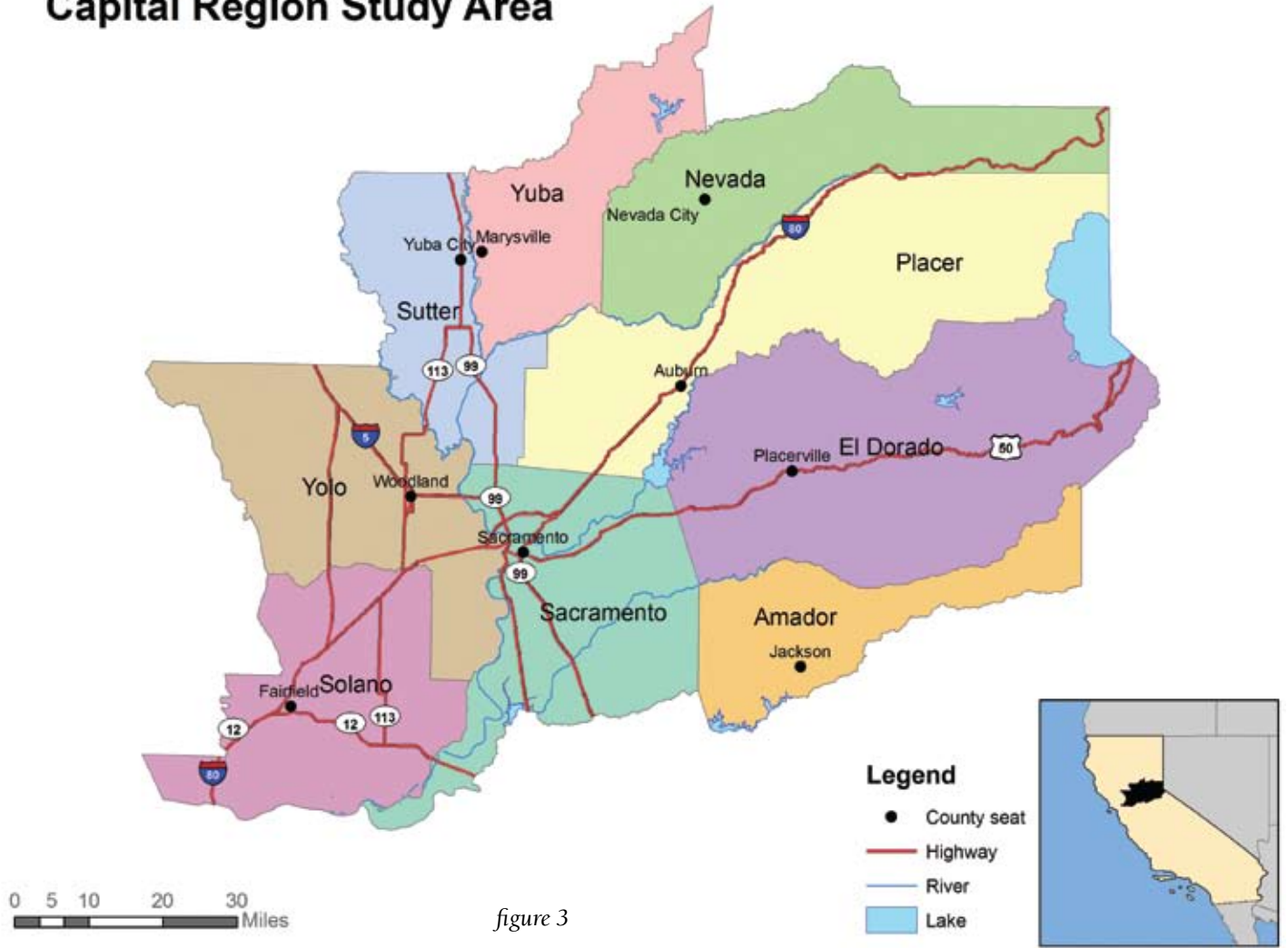


figure 3

Far too many youth are forced to cope with failing education systems, scarce job training opportunities and innavigable paths to employment. Despite pressing needs, they often lack access to physical and mental health services. Moreover, their lives are complicated by inadequate transportation and housing, unsafe streets and neighborhoods, and a built environment that offers less a sense of comfort and familiarity than alienation and disconnection (Erbstein, Burciaga and Rodriguez, 2010). Even the social safety nets meant to support our most vulnerable youth too often allow them to plummet into a well of crises.

Increasingly, we are coming to understand the ways in which the plight of young people undermines all of our prospects for success. The Capital Region's quality of life depends to a crucial degree on the ability of its youth to become caring, engaged, productive and innovative citizens and leaders. To ignore their concerns – and to dismiss the potential

and inner resources they now palpably demonstrate – constitutes a willful abandonment of civic duty and the reckless endangerment of our shared and increasingly connected present and future.

The Capital Region is a cross-section of California's unique geographic and cultural topography. It stretches from the low crests of the western coastal range to the high peaks of the eastern Sierra Nevada with the wide expanse of the Central Valley nestled in between. On a clear day, the vista from east to west suggests the cohesiveness and unity of a single place, a fertile valley fit between mountain ranges whose rivers nourish agricultural and metropolitan communities alike. At other times, a murkier vision prevails. The region's extremities appear dim, distant and obscure to one another. Hidden from view are the cultural, economic and political factors that divide the Capital Region against itself and compromise the potential of young people as they grow toward adulthood.

THE EXPERIENCE OF LIVING REGIONALLY IS EVEN MORE PRONOUNCED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO CANNOT RELY ON WEALTH AND PRIVILEGE TO INSULATE THEM FROM THE VAGARIES OF SOCIAL DISLOCATION AND INSTITUTIONAL NEGLECT.

Unfortunately, we tend to speak about the Capital Region – and plan for its future – in terms of narrow municipal or county demarcations. As adults, we may identify primarily with our homes and neighborhoods in an urban, suburban or rural area. We work, vote and send our children to schools in Yuba or Yolo County, in El Dorado Hills or the Dunnigan Hills, in Pollock Pines or Oak Park. These political boundaries do not serve young people well. Nor do they protect us from the cumulative economic, social and cultural effects generated by significant percentages of youth not reaching their highest potential. Increasingly, youth live their lives regionally, seeking jobs, education, recreation and entertainment, traveling to visit extended families – and in some cases, changing their residence frequently as dictated by family crisis or opportunity. Youth also are affected by regional systems and conditions largely informed by the perceptions and actions of adults, such as housing, transportation, land use and economic development. Yet each of these factors critically shapes the health and well-being of young people. Simply put, the region matters to young people (Erbstein, Burciaga and Rodriguez, 2010).

The experience of living regionally is even more pronounced for young people who cannot rely on wealth and privilege to insulate them from the vagaries of social dislocation and institutional neglect. Instead of providing an expansive playing field for exploration and achievement, regional life for these youth is experienced as a wider scope of inequitable opportunity characterized by inadequate services that rarely track their mobility or keep pace with their shifting needs.

“You can’t describe the region as a whole,” affirmed a legal advocate for low-income communities. “The region includes pockets of poverty and pockets of intense wealth. We have a patchwork of political subdivisions that result in inequitable allocations for infrastructure, schools and the like. So for white kids from wealthy families, it’s a great place to live. For others, especially young people of color, it can be miserable.”

Yet the assets and resources that can amplify youth’s capacities and support their well-being also reside within our region. The Capital Region has a long history of innovation, progress and compassion. It’s an economic hub with influence throughout the Central Valley and Northern California. It’s the political center of a state boasting the world’s seventh largest economy – a magnet for social and economic entrepreneurs who use their home base as a spawning ground for ideas that eventually take flight to spread across the country and around the world. It’s a microcosm of the U.S. and world cultures with networks and knowledge that can facilitate global connections.

What might the Capital Region look like in the future if all of our youth were able to harness the power of these extraordinary resources?

One national study presents a vision for a healthy and equitable region as follows.

[A competitive and inclusive] region is one in which members of all racial, ethnic and income groups have opportunities to live and work in all parts of the region, have access to living wage jobs and are included in the mainstream of regional life. It is also one in which all neighborhoods are supported to be vibrant places with choices for affordable housing, good schools, access to open space, decent transit that connects people to jobs, and healthy and sustainable environments.⁴

Before we discuss the means of achieving these desired conditions, we must first take the full measure of the burdens and barriers currently impeding the progress of young people in the Capital Region.

FAILING OUR YOUTH

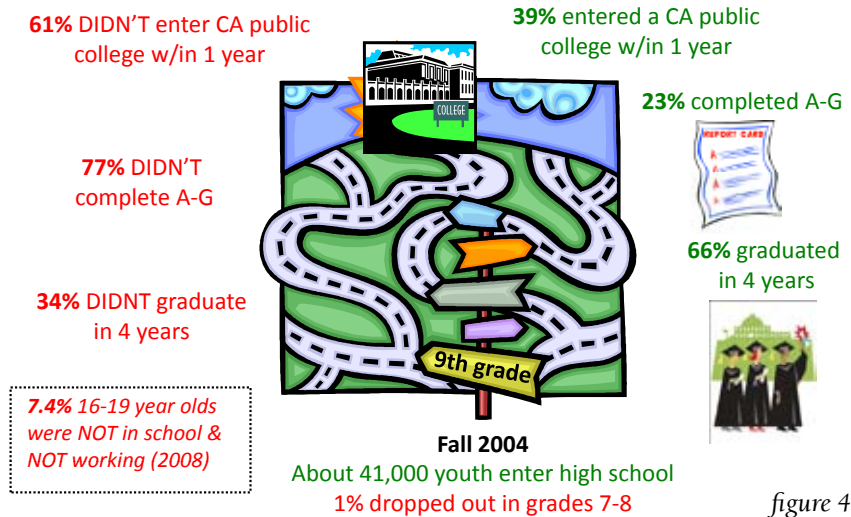
A primary concern must be education, a keystone associated with the healthy development of all young people.

We know that academic progress through high school, and on to higher levels of education, remains central to expanding personal economic and social

Photo taken by a youth as part of the Action Research and Photo Voice Project, Youth In Focus: Wind Youth Services, Eyes of the Youth Group



Leaking Education Pipeline: Class of 2008



Of the approximately 41,000 students who entered 9th grade in 2004, only 66% graduated in four years, leaving a full third ill-prepared for a prosperous work life (figure 4). This squandering of human potential is further compounded by the sluggish advancement of high school graduates. Our data indicate that only 39% of the region's students entered a public college or university within one year of graduation – far lower than the statewide average of 55%. In an economy hungry for physical laborers or rich with apprenticeship programs to train young people for skilled trades and technical fields, this cessation of academic progress might prove less vexing. But our high-tech, information-driven economy is already struggling to absorb a surplus of low-skilled labor. We have not created sufficient numbers of apprenticeship slots keyed to living wage occupations that can absorb the next generation. Nor have we crafted an array of reliable on-ramps back into formal education. As a result, we find almost two-thirds of the Capital Region's graduation-age youth suited, perhaps, for the manufacturing and agriculture-based labor force of the mid-20th century – and utterly underprepared to meet the demands and opportunities of the 21st century. Without a consistent pipeline of well-educated and skilled young people entering the workforce, the Capital Region will not be able to compete with other regions of the state, nation or globe as a center for economic innovation and growth.

opportunities for most. Educational outcomes are also closely correlated to health conditions over a life span. But the success or failure of any young person shouldn't be measured exclusively in individual terms. Indeed, the cumulative effect is profound. Well-educated youth ensure a high-quality workforce, add to the tax coffers, reduce poverty and expand community involvement. Our region's economic competitiveness and civic vitality demand widespread educational success.

Unfortunately, the data suggest painful disparities (Breslau, Rodriguez, Erbstein, Burciaga and Hartzog, 2010). Across the school districts that comprise the K-12 systems in the Capital Region, the educational pipeline leading to success appears attenuated, clogged or badly leaking. The high dropout rate stands as a potent indicator.

Percent of Students Enrolled in Schools with Lowest Dropout Rates, by Ethnicity

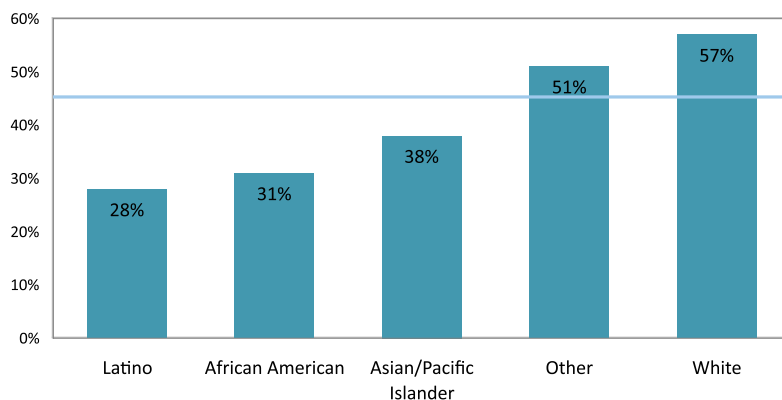


figure 5

The picture grows even more worrisome when we parse graduation rates by race and ethnicity (Breslau, Rodriguez, Erbstein, Burciaga and Hartzog, 2010). Only 28% of Latino students and 31% of African-American students attend schools with high or very high graduation rates. For white students, the figure stands at 57%. As a group, Asian-Americans fall in the middle (figure 5).

These figures underscore a jarring reality. A substantial portion of our region's students of color – the majority of tomorrow's workforce and heads of households – attend schools where academic failure has established itself as the norm. Given the forces of globalization and the shift

Employment by Industry and Race, 20-24 year olds, 2008

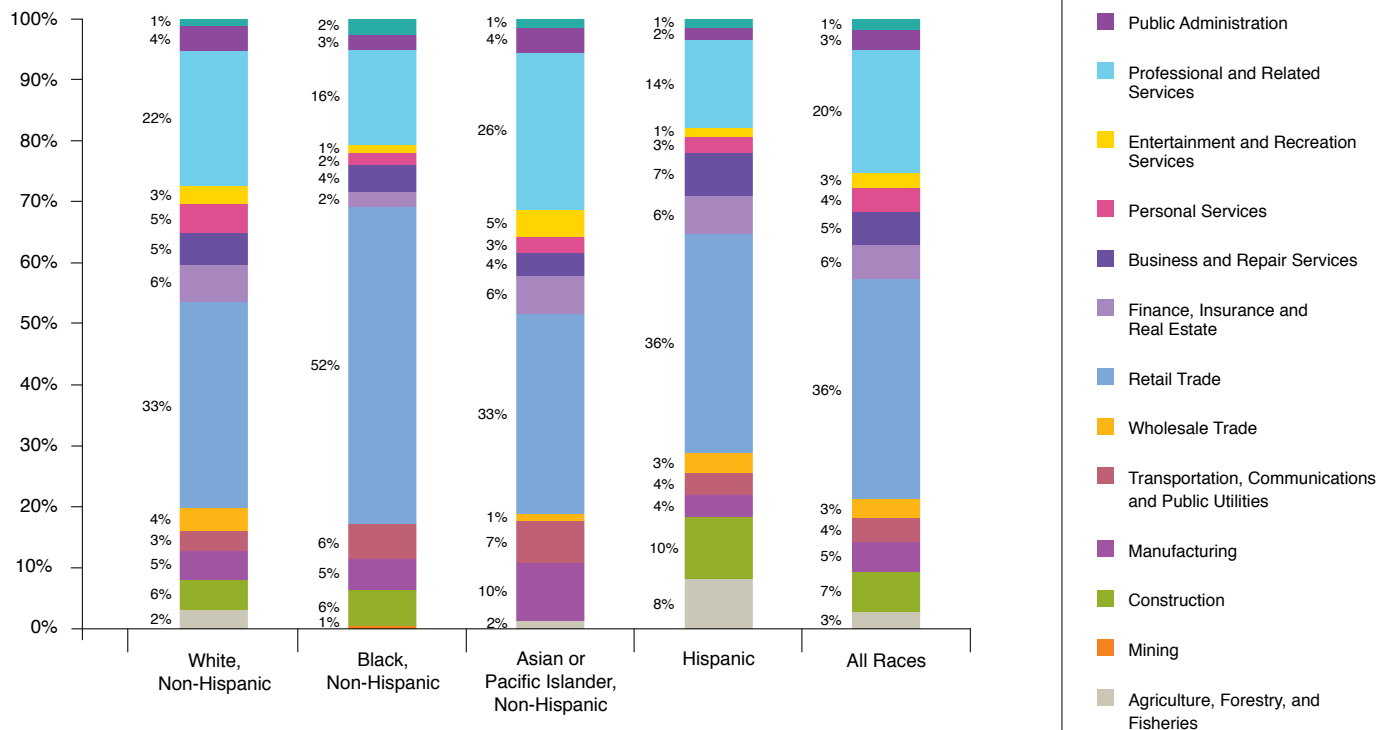


figure 6

*includes El Dorado, Sacramento, Placer, Solano, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba Counties

from manufacturing to service jobs, these poorly equipped students could languish as long-term members of a growing population of un- and underemployed individuals. Instead of enriching the Capital Region, they may find themselves struggling to provide for themselves and their families.

Young people, educators and advocates all point to multiple factors undermining the ability of youth to pursue an education that will prepare them for college or employment (Owens, Nelson, Perry and Montgomery-Block, 2010; Burciaga and Erbstein, 2010; Erbstein, Burciaga and Rodriguez, 2010). Many cite inadequate academic counseling and learning support, zero-tolerance disciplinary policies, the lack of culturally relevant curriculum and culturally competent teachers and staff, as well as physically and emotionally unsafe campuses, limited mental health services and scant measures to support school persistence. Indeed, school retention strategies in some cases even exacerbate problems – for example, further isolating vulnerable youth in independent study programs. Beyond the campus environment, students also face unsafe routes to school, family crises, inadequate financial resources and the compelling need to find employment to contribute to household upkeep.

These educational experiences are mirrored in the region's current employment patterns (Benner, Mazinga and Huang, 2010). As figure 6 above demonstrates, young African-Americans are increasingly concentrated in retail jobs with limited career ladders. A disproportionately low percentage of African-American and Latino young adults enter the higher-wage professions. Other analyses confirm the under-representation of both African-Americans and Latinos in education and health care, the region's most prominent high-growth, high-wage industries.

*"We need more education and less worrying about how bad the kids are."
Youth Voices for Change*



Capital Region Dropout Rates By High School and Unified School Districts (2007/2008)

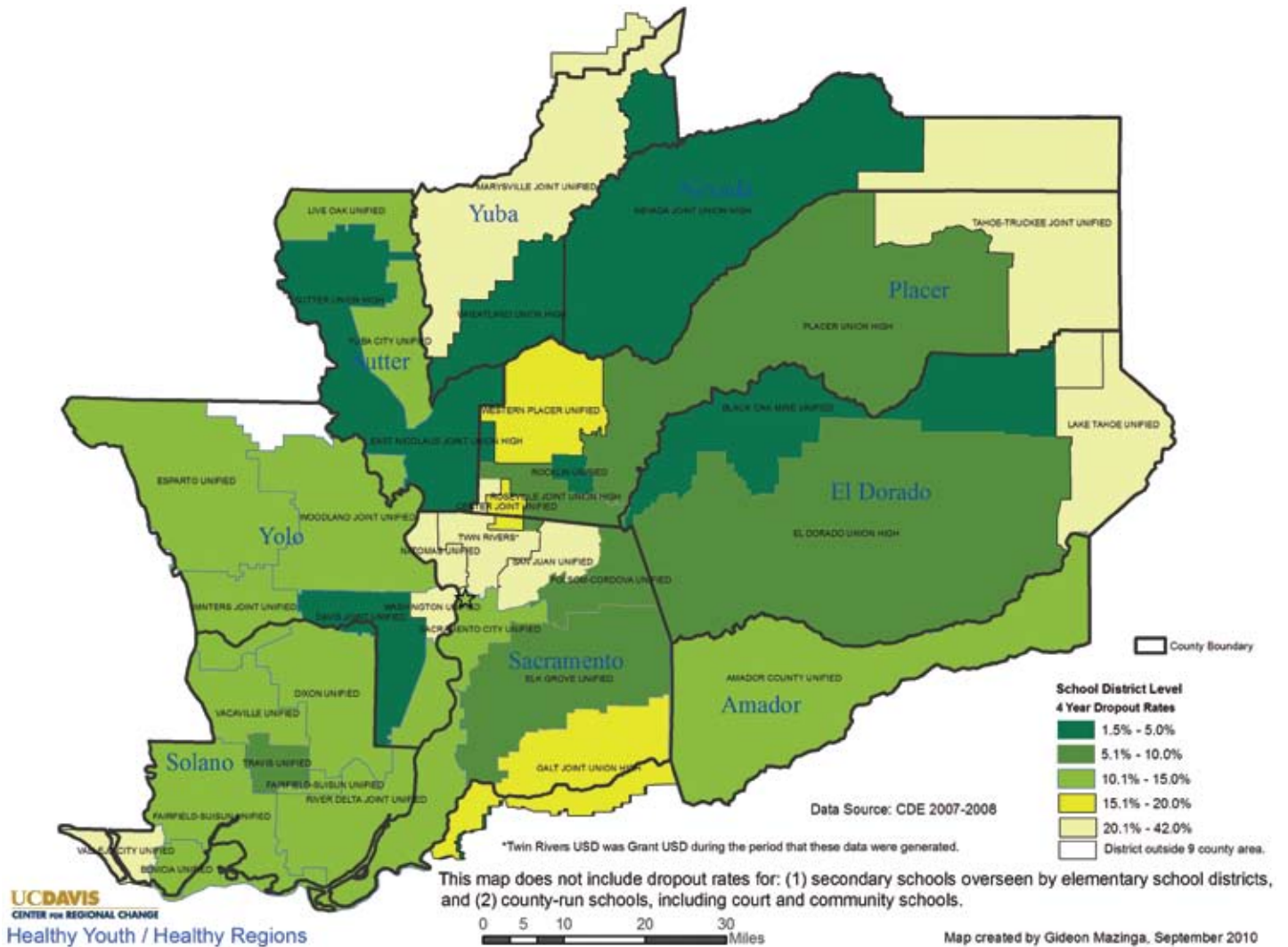


figure 7

Interviews with students who cut short their education often reveal a heartfelt intention to return to school. Fifteen out of 16 young adults who had left high school without graduating told our researchers about their plans to earn a diploma in the near future, regarding their departure from the classroom as a “pause” rather than a decisively disruptive event. But as pressures mount to earn a living and raise their families, these young people will face stiff odds. Returning demands fierce determination, given the tide of expectations and the bureaucratic and logistical complexity of re-enrollment. Tragically, the statistics on re-entry students suggest that most will not succeed in their efforts.

But dropout rates alone do not fully describe the problems facing our region (Breslau, Rodriguez, Erbstein, Burciaga and Hartzog, 2010). College readiness, as measured by the numbers who

graduate from high school having passed the prerequisite classes for the University of California or California State University systems, also points to a significant lag. Among the students entering high school in 2004, only 23% graduated having completed these college entrance requirements. Because the readiness of Capital Region students ranks substantially lower than the statewide rate of 37%, just bringing the region up to California’s overall level would increase the proportion of students graduating with UC/CSU requirements by 60%, accounting for more than 5,000 additional students ready for a bachelor degree program each year.

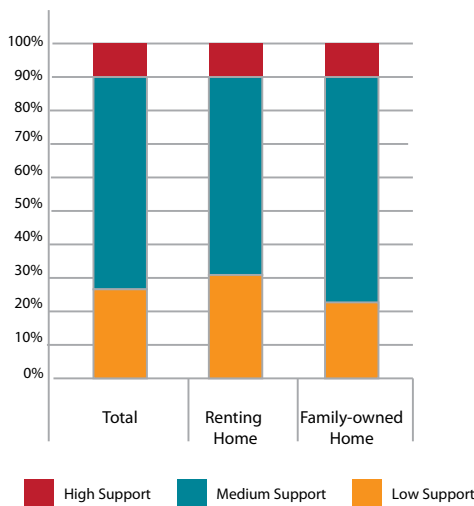
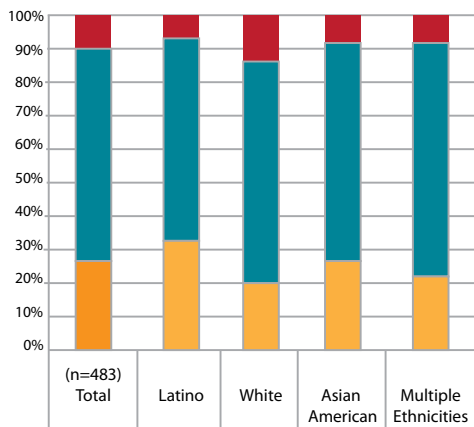
Of course, disparities in school outcomes don’t just happen. They emerge over time, spawned by a multiplicity of entrenched factors. One powerful influence is the level of encouragement offered to young people at an early age to pursue formal education and explore future careers. Here, once

OUR STUDIES OF EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND JOB AVAILABILITY POINT TO RECURRING CYCLES OF SOCIAL NEGLECT AND MISSED OPPORTUNITY WHOSE IMPACT COMPOUNDS DISASTROUSLY OVER TIME.

again, we find revealing, if dismaying, conditions (Breslau, Rodriguez, Erbstein, Burciaga and Hartzog, 2010).

We asked 483 youth across the region, ages 12 to 14, to estimate how often they had been counseled by adults about career choices, college requirements and methods for seeking a summer or after-school job (Breslau, Rodriguez, Erbstein, Burciaga and Hartzog, 2010). Fewer than one in 10 could count on consistent and informed adult guidance. One in four reported low or negligible support.

Youth Experiences of Support to Explore Future Work and Education (Age 12-14)
REACH Youth Survey, Fall 2009



Two important patterns emerged from these survey data (figure 8). First, we found that one in three Latino youth experienced low levels of support for investigating educational and vocational opportunities. Latinos also proved least likely among ethnic groups to receive high levels of support. (We were unable to gauge the experiences of African-American and Native American youth due to the small sample size.) Second, we learned that young people from less affluent homes, as indicated by renting rather than owning their residence, similarly lacked adult counseling and encouragement. In other words, those drawn from the fastest-growing ethnic populations in our state, and those coming from positions of greatest economic need, proved the least likely to benefit from the kind of direction that could expand their opportunities and enlarge their economic and civic contributions to the region.

In sum, our studies of educational achievement and job availability point to recurring cycles of social neglect and missed opportunity whose impact compounds disastrously over time. For those who have spent years listening to vulnerable youth speak of their dashed hopes and unrealized potential, there resides behind the impersonality of these statistics a very human face. For each individual whose richness and promise has been undervalued and compromised, we see a personal tragedy with community and regional ramifications (Breslau, Rodriguez, Erbstein, Burciaga and Hartzog, 2010; Burciaga and Erbstein, 2010; Erbstein, Burciaga and Rodriguez, 2010).

For the Capital Region, these limited supports and accumulated losses presage a social and fiscal calamity.

PRICING THE REGIONAL LOSSES

Young people who do not finish high school not only earn less than graduates; they also have higher unemployment rates, higher rates of part-time employment and they work fewer weeks out of the year. Truncated educational attainment, in combination with limited employment



figure 8



opportunities, functions as a perpetual economic wound, draining resources from youth, their families and the region (Benner, Rodriguez, Tithi and Hartzog, 2010).

In 2006-07, the Capital Region saw an estimated 9,000 students leave high school without graduating. This represents a combined annual loss of nearly \$215 million in wages and purchasing power within the regional economy. (We based these figures on the average earnings of all high school graduates compared to those without a high school diploma or equivalent: \$39,160 versus \$15,201). Over a lifetime, these losses will add up to the equivalent of \$2.6 billion in earnings and purchasing power abandoned with each year's cohort of students who do not graduate.

Beyond reducing contributions to the regional economy, dropout represents a significant net cost. A system in which young people do not graduate from high school increases public expenditures on health, welfare and criminal justice services – even as lowered earnings lessen tax revenues. The estimated lifetime bill for one-year's cohort of Capital Region high school students who do not graduate totals \$480 million for state and local governments, and more than \$1 billion for the federal government.⁵

If the Capital Region were able to reduce its high school dropout rate by 50%, over the lifetime of

each student cohort, it would reap \$1.4 billion in savings to local and state governments. This figure includes increased tax revenues, reduced costs associated with health care, crime and social services that accrue with graduation from high school. (Benner, Rodriguez, Tithi and Hartzog, 2010) (figure 9).⁶

In another era, these costs and losses might have been expected to reverse themselves as young people with limited education were gradually absorbed into the labor force. But today, underskilled, under-schooled and – in the mind of many employers – underprepared young people will find few routes to living-wage jobs. In 2008, nearly one in five of the Capital Region's 20- to 24-year-olds were neither enrolled in school nor employed. As time passes, those with limited training or work experience will be supplanted by waves of younger job seekers, further diminishing their prospects and threatening to turn their early experience of unemployment and dependency into a chronic condition.

Reversing the trend of young people leaving school before graduation could have a profound impact on the regional economy. Based on a scenario in which the Capital Region achieved a 30% reduction in the dropout rate, the total lifetime fiscal savings to the local, state and federal governments would be approximately \$454 million. A 50% reduction would total savings of \$757 million. By including a calculation for additional “social gains,” such as

Projected Fiscal Effects of Reducing 2006-2007 High School Dropout				
	If 30% of dropouts were to graduate		If 50% of dropouts were to graduate	
	State/local government	Federal government	State/local government	Federal government
Fiscal savings	\$144 million	\$310 million	\$240 million	\$517 million
Socio-economic savings	\$722 million		\$1.2 billion	
Social Gains for Region*	\$866 million		\$1.4 billion	

Source: California Department of Education, 2009; Belfield and Levn, 2007a

*Social gains figures are derived by Belfield & Levin (2007a) based on estimated benefits, including increased earnings to additional graduates (net of taxes), reduced insurance and other costs to potential victims of crime, and fiscal savings to state/local governments (this is detailed separately in their article).

figure 9

B BEYOND THESE SPECIFIC CALCULATIONS OF ECONOMIC COSTS OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT, THERE ARE BROADER IMPACTS OF REGIONAL FAILURE TO EDUCATE ALL YOUNG PEOPLE IN A WAY THAT PREPARES THEM FOR A MEANINGFUL AND PROSPEROUS FUTURE.

Capital Region Index of Youth Vulnerability (by Zip Code)

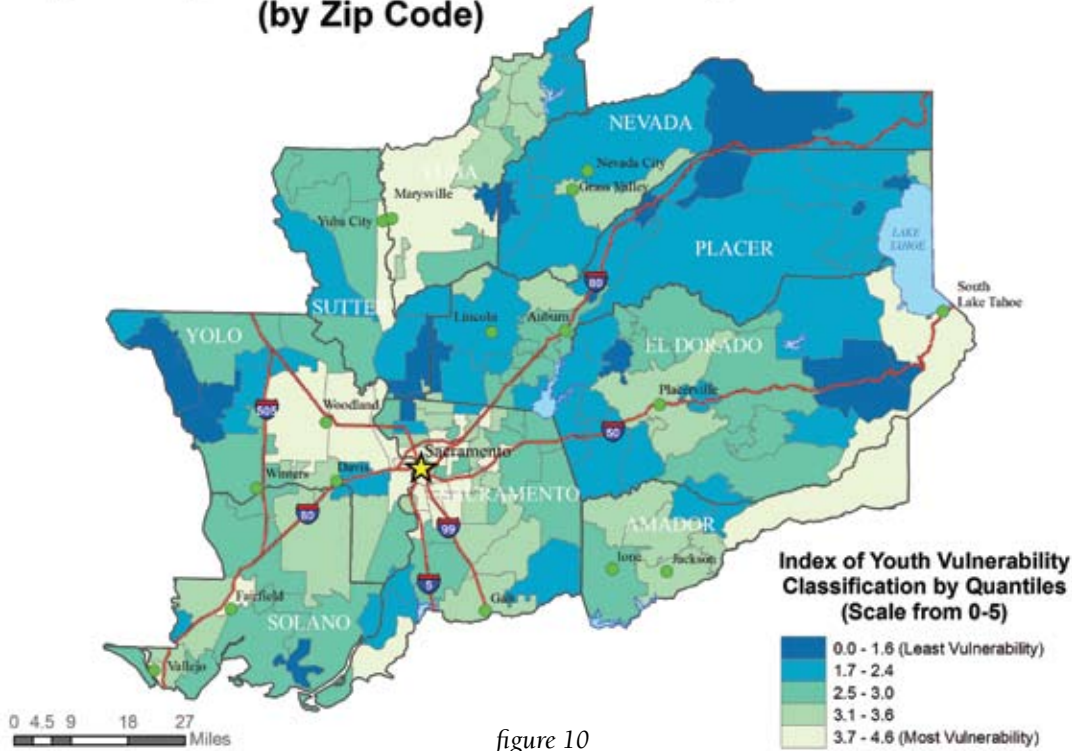


figure 10

increased earnings and reduced costs to potential victims of crime, our savings climb to \$866 million at the 30% rate and \$1.4 billion at 50% (Benner, Rodriguez, Tithi and Hartzog, 2010).

Beyond these specific calculations of economic costs of high school dropout, there are broader impacts of regional failure to educate all young people in a way that prepares them for a meaningful and prosperous future. A workforce pipeline that washes out large portions of its pool of future workers, entrepreneurs and innovators and that does not prepare these workers for the complex and shifting knowledge-based economy may lead to regional stagnation and loss of competitiveness over time. Given the demographic shifts in the region and the state as a whole, as well as increasing global competition, attention to the educational success of young people of color, immigrants and other typically underserved populations will likely be a lynchpin for the region's future

economic and civic vitality.

VULNERABLE YOUTH/VULNERABLE REGION

Given the fiscal and social impact of the Capital Region's educational failure, it would seem logical to advance youth prospects with an ambitious strategy focused only on revitalizing public schooling. Unfortunately, this narrowly crafted approach would prove both problematic in today's funding environment and ineffective in transforming young people's lives. Children and adolescents must negotiate a complex of interrelated forces whose combined influence shape their health and well-being (Geraghty, 2010; Geraghty, Hartzog and Erbstein, 2010; Owens, Nelson, Perry and Montgomery-Block, 2010). School retention and academic performance rank merely as one of several significant factors in an array of layered challenges undermining their potential. To explore

Youth Mortality Rate, Ages 0-19 Years

9-County Capital Region, 2004-2007

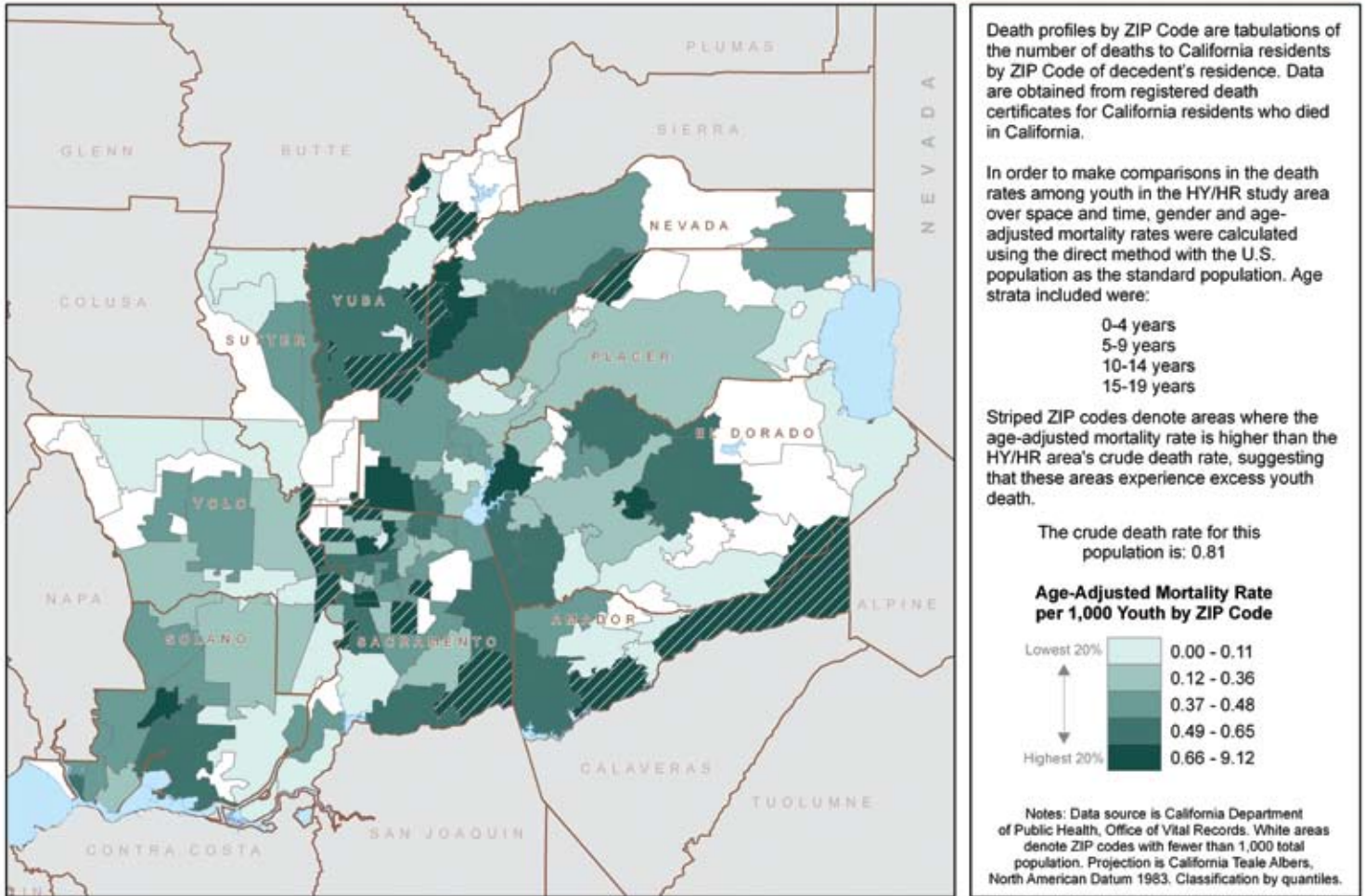


figure 11

multiple challenges that often disconnect youth from support for a healthy transition to adulthood, our team constructed a Youth Vulnerability Index that integrates measures of school dropout rates, teen pregnancy, foster care placement, poverty and juvenile felony arrests (Geraghty, Erbstein and Greenfield, 2010). Examining the raw numbers for 2008 suggests an undeniably harsh portrait of our region.

- 52,935 households raised children on incomes under the federal poverty line⁷;
- 3,467 young people entered foster care⁸;
- 4,932 juvenile felony arrests were logged (ages 10-17)⁹;
- 3,812 teens gave birth¹⁰;
- 7,798 youth left high school without graduating¹¹;
- 12,136 young people ages 16-19 were out of school and work¹².

When visualized at the regional scale (figure 10), these data demonstrate high concentrations of vulnerable youth in the urban core, some inner-ring suburbs and some rural areas – with a clear tendency for problems to cluster, intermingle and multiply. The ultimate expression of the interrelated challenges facing young people is chillingly exhibited in the measure of “excess death” – the increased risk of mortality among the Capital Region’s children and adolescents versus the rates for the nation as a whole. The analysis and map (Geraghty, 2010) reveal high mortality rates in a patchwork of areas that match the pattern of youth vulnerability described (figure 11).

Researchers also constructed a complementary Index of Youth Well-Being (Geraghty, Hartzog and Erbstein, 2010). This instrument generates a Youth Well-Being “score” out of a possible 100% based on measures across four domains: physical health,

Capital Region Index of Youth Well-Being (by School District)

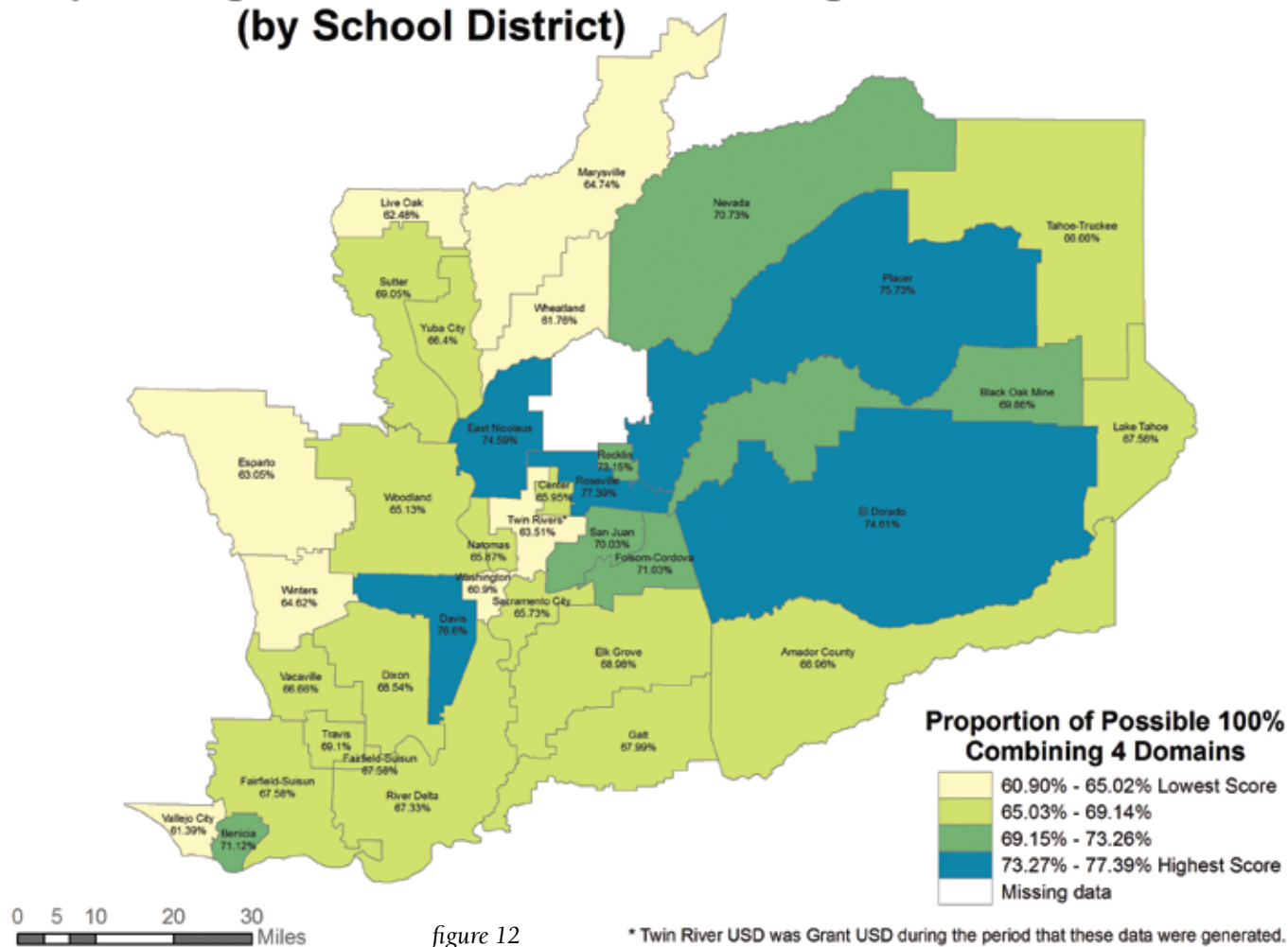


figure 12

* Twin River USD was Grant USD during the period that these data were generated.

education, psychological/emotional health and social support. Although parts of the Capital Region ranked relatively high in these domains, far more areas scored very low. Indeed, more than two-thirds of school districts were lodged in the lowest two categories of well-being scores (figure 12). This is likely a conservative estimate of the situation, as the dataset used to generate the index appears to underrepresent youth who left high school without graduating, attend alternative schools (e.g., continuation schools) and are incarcerated (Geraghty, Hartzog and Erbstein, 2010).

If we take a closer look at the daily experience behind these data, we also see how challenges coincide, overlap, incite one another and give rise to further obstacles and problems (Geraghty, 2010; Geraghty, Hartzog and Erbstein, 2010).

The individual and social costs associated with teen parenthood provide a striking example. While all

young parents interviewed for this study described being inspired to pursue education and career to support their own children – an important foundation on which to build support – we also heard about many challenges associated with parenting as a teen. The quest to obtain living-wage jobs, quality health care, housing, childcare and social supports greatly complicates the ability of many teen parents to provide for their families.

On the national level, more than a third of young women who gave birth as teenagers failed to earn a high school diploma or GED – compared with 6% of teens who forestalled motherhood. This is largely the result of the competing pressures of parenting and schooling, and the failure of many families, schools and their potential community-based partner organizations to provide adequate social, emotional and academic support for teen parents. Not completing high school, in turn, weakens employment prospects, lowers lifetime earning



capacity and heightens the likelihood of raising children with inadequate financial resources. When teen mothers and fathers alike do find employment, they tend to earn less money than their childless peers.¹³ Using the nationally validated social cost of \$21,500 per teen birth (including depressed tax revenues and expenditures on public assistance, child health care, foster care and involvement with the criminal justice system), the 3,812 births to teens in 2008 in the Capital Region incurred an economic cost of approximately \$82 million. The human costs remain incalculable.

KEEPING UP WITH MOBILE YOUTH

In the lives of highly mobile youth, discontinuity often proves the rule.

“If you really want to find out what’s happening with these kids,” offered a youth organizer in the Sacramento schools, “you have to look beyond the city level. They’re moving all around the county – sometimes across state lines.”

Interviews with young adults who had previously left high school without graduating provide a stark reminder of the risks involved with persistent movement. Before curtailing their education, our interviewees had attended an average of eight

schools. Family instability, parental job loss, lack of affordable housing near job centers and good schools, and hopes for new work in another community variously prompted the changes. Thus, these young people, all from low-income families, found themselves persistently uprooted instead of settling into a secure and stable home and neighborhood environment during their adolescence (Erbstein, Burciaga and Rodriguez, 2010).

What about our social safety nets? Haven’t we constructed an array of institutions and services explicitly designed to meet the needs of our most vulnerable youth?

In many communities, valuable institutions do exist. But when we stand back to view the manner in which our most vulnerable young people lead their lives across the broad swath of the Capital Region, we find a youth sector characterized by disconnected services, severed ties and missed opportunities.

Many students ping-pong between school districts, becoming perpetual strangers in each new classroom, unable to get started with their education before they’re called upon to readjust once again. Health records of mobile youth often fall through the administrative cracks, and young people suffering from depression, anxiety or other mental and physical challenges fail to receive closely monitored treatment. Sudden placement openings in foster care send minors careening abruptly from one corner of the region to another. Run-ins with the juvenile justice system pluck young offenders out of familiar surroundings, hold them for a time in an institutional no man’s land, and then return them back into communities without addressing the root causes of their behavior – unprepared to deal with their rage and hurt or to help them manifest their potential. This contributes to the state’s high recidivism (return to incarceration) rates. Children who desperately need assistance after an eruption of domestic violence or the arrest of a parent fall between the jurisdictions of service providers. Those losing a parent or close relative to prison or deportation are left to deal with the trauma of separation, often without any support from the organizations

Photo from Sactown Heroes, West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition



IN MANY COMMUNITIES, VALUABLE INSTITUTIONS DO EXIST. BUT WHEN WE STAND BACK TO VIEW THE MANNER IN WHICH OUR MOST VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE LEAD THEIR LIVES ACROSS THE BROAD SWATH OF THE CAPITAL REGION, WE FIND A YOUTH SECTOR CHARACTERIZED BY DISCONNECTED SERVICES, SEVERED TIES AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES.

intended to serve them (Rios, Campbell and Romero, 2010; Erbstein, Burciaga and Rodriguez, 2010).

“I am constantly amazed,” lamented a physician and youth advocate, “at how agencies have no idea what their colleagues in similar organizations are doing.”

Distance and discontinuity also militate against young people’s best efforts to help their communities and themselves (Romero, London and Erbstein, 2010). Almost half the respondents to our survey about civic participation indicated that transportation difficulties inhibited their volunteer efforts. The limited career pipelines and employment mentoring for many youth decreases the likelihood of employment for those who would most benefit from the learning opportunities, social networks and salary provided by a job.

“Adults now compete with kids for a McDonald’s job or a position as a Starbucks barista,” explained a youth employment specialist. “There isn’t a push for young people to establish their proving ground with a first job. The opportunity for real youth employment and valuable work experience – that simply doesn’t exist anymore because of the competition in the labor market.”

This difficult economic context is exacerbated by transportation limitations that curtail the ability of young job seekers to secure quality employment. Many young people find themselves cut off from both work and social connections by expensive, infrequent or nonexistent trains and buses – a situation made worse by continued public transit service cuts. Others must trek along dangerous bike and pedestrian routes, squandering precious time and risking their safety. Even when transport proves accessible, the cost in hours and energy can escalate to a prohibitive level, particularly for rural residents (Burciaga and Erbstein, 2010). For example, “Audrey¹⁴,” a 19-year-old Yuba County resident described the struggle of spending four hours each day on buses, while traveling only a few miles between work, school, counseling and childcare. Although she ends each day in a state of exhaustion from her efforts, she may lose her CalWORKs grant



because she cannot squeeze all her work and study obligations into the demanding commute schedule.

The region’s built environment thrusts other hardships upon young people (Owens, Nelson, Perry and Montgomery-Block, 2010; Burciaga and Erbstein, 2010). Vulnerable youth often perceive the physical infrastructure of the Capital Region as an obstacle to their well-being. Young people bemoan the lack of sidewalks or bike lanes on routes they must travel to study, work and shop, inadequate and expensive public transportation and the absence of areas designated for teen gathering and recreation.

In addition to these physical barriers, youth described the challenges of social barriers. Youth in areas with greater overall wealth describe struggling with a suburban assumption of affluence and well-being, when some families don’t have food in their refrigerator or grapple with other serious challenges. In addition, many across rural, urban and suburban settings described experiencing direct and institutional bias based on their race, ethnicity, documentation status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, place of residence, and experiences in systems such as foster care and juvenile justice that

“There are many fast food restaurants around—youth need more healthy choices, too!”

Youth Voices for Change/Sactown Heroes



In their youth-produced comic book, youth from the Sactown Heroes of the West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition described challenges in the built environment, such as transportation, that affect their health and well-being.

“The bike lane on Jefferson Boulevard makes me feel like I’m going to get hit by a truck!”

left them feeling unwelcome, unsupported and even unsafe.

“Outside my neighborhood,” said “Angie,” a young African-American woman who had moved many times, “people look at me and think, ‘All you know is the streets. All you know is how to sell drugs.’”

For too many Capital Region young people, the discontinuous social, institutional and built landscape presents a significant barrier to pursuing their hopes and visions of the future. The forces mobilized against the health and well-being of our youth and our region present a cause for genuine alarm. For several decades, disinvestment in basic youth services has produced a knot of complex problems that will not untangle themselves overnight. The lingering effects of the 2008 financial crisis, state budget woes and the collapse of public confidence in governance at all levels has further frayed the social safety net, blunted employment efforts, reduced options in public transportation, eliminated alternatives to incarceration and roundly battered

public education. Our failure to resolve the challenges of our immigration policy has left in limbo many foreign-born youth without legal documentation who have grown up and gone to school here and now seek to contribute to the region, state and nation.

**BUILDING ON OUR ASSETS:
A CONNECTED AND CARING REGION**

These real and mounting challenges do not describe the entire picture. The region’s past achievements and present assets also figure significantly in our ability to address this crisis. Our collective research suggests that the Capital Region contains many of the elements necessary to uproot even the most entrenched problems facing young people today. As shown in other regions of the country (Blackwell and Fox, 2004), by tapping the potential that surrounds us in many forms, we can band together to create an environment that supports all youth to become healthy, productive, engaged adults.

A first task is to build alliances within the vast skein of civic groups that represent the many faces and aspirations of the Capital Region. Vital associations affiliate along ethnic and cultural lines, their existence inspired by challenges unmet in the formal structures of government. We can find likely collaborators among groups such as the Latino Leadership Council in Placer and El Dorado counties, Rural Innovations in Social Economics working in rural Yolo County, the Solano County Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Reducing Rates Coalition, United Way, Sacramento’s African-American Parallel School Board, Mexican American Concilios, Asian Resources, the Southeast Asian Assistance Center, ethnic chambers of commerce and immigrant hometown associations. Faith-based and interfaith organizations continue to generate active memberships, as well as organizing networks such as Sacramento Area Congregations Together, a PICO affiliate, and the Gamaliel Foundation. The Coalition on Regional Equity offers a network of networks, formed by a host of community agencies to plan for affordable housing, better transit, jobs and economic opportunity – demonstrative proof that multiple movements



THE CAPITAL REGION CAN DRAW ON ONE OF ITS MOST POWERFUL, IF COMMONLY OVERLOOKED ASSETS: THE AMBITION, ENERGY AND DETERMINATION OF YOUTH THEMSELVES.

for social justice can, in the words of one leader, “march under their own banners, but in the same direction: toward regional equity.”

Secondly, we can recruit strategists and operatives from innovative public policy campaigns to join the cause for youth. For example, we might look to Healthy Kids/Healthy Future, which has worked in five of our region’s counties to enroll children in state-sponsored health insurance programs. We can turn to the youth agencies collaborating with the hospital-based Wraparound project to address the roots of violence among young people admitted to emergency room care, and the HealthShack mobile youth medical records program. Transportation planning has set the standard for collaboration in the Capital Region with representatives from six counties and 22 cities involved in the Sacramento Area Council of Governments – and producing sustainable community plans for transit, bicycle networks, affordable housing, economic development and related issues over the long term. Regional assets such as the Metro Chamber and ethnic chambers of commerce, the many colleges and universities, diverse media outlets, nonprofits and service pro-



viders also can serve as powerful allies. From each of these entities and efforts, we can find lessons, tactics, volunteers, inspiration and leadership.

Finally, the Capital Region can draw on one of its most powerful, if commonly overlooked assets: the ambition, energy and determination of youth themselves. To be sure, youth are presently underrepresented in most formal efforts to promote change on their behalf. Nevertheless, promising youth involvement practices now abound, including Sierra Health Foundation’s REACH Community Action grantees in Woodland, West Sacramento, South Sacramento, Meadowview, Galt, Yuba-Sutter, El Dorado Hills, Rancho Cordova and Vacaville; the youth-engagement strategy of The California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities initiative in South Sacramento and its Boys and Men of Color program; and the California Center for Civic Engagement’s new capital region youth sustainability council. Initiatives like the annual Youth Media Summit, Sacramento Area Youth Speaks and the Capital Region Youth Voices Map developed for



Photos of Sactown Heroes, West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition

“WE HAVE TO EMPOWER PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY, BECAUSE ‘AUNT MARY’ KNOWS WHAT’S NEEDED, MORE SO THAN [SOMEONE] WHO LIVES ACROSS TOWN BEHIND GATES. THAT’S THE ONLY WAY WE’RE GOING TO BE EFFECTIVE.”

YOUTH ADVOCATE

HY/HR, among others, are opportunities for young people to be seen and heard in influential ways.

“I’ve always wanted to help people,” said one young woman, “based on the fact that I couldn’t get help on anything myself. Whether it was school, work or getting around from place to place, I just felt like I couldn’t get help whether I asked or not. When I did ask, it was always a no.”

Many young adults defy expectations by voting in relatively high numbers, including residents in some low-income and diverse neighborhoods, countering larger regional and national trends (Romero and London 2010). Surveys and interviews with our region’s youth also reveal a large degree of informal engagement in public life. Young people serve as translators for their families, caregivers to their younger siblings, allies to friends and acquaintances in their own neighborhoods who must negotiate the complicated byways of the legal system, health care, public schools and other institutions (Romero and London with Erbsstein, 2010; Burciaga and Erbsstein, 2010; Benner, Mazinga and Huang, 2010; Campbell, Erbsstein, et al., 2010). Indeed, young people of color who participated in a study survey demonstrate the highest rates of assisting with their families: a stunning 94% for both African-Americans and Asians, and 85% among Latinos.

One Latino youth, speaking about the peer assistance networks linking undocumented immigrants, commented: “I feel like we have the similar system to what African-Americans had. It’s our own Underground Railroad.”

Joaquin, a young Latino man in Yuba County, recalled his advocacy efforts with teachers, principals and district administrators on behalf of his younger brother, whose speech impediment had been misinterpreted as a learning disability.

“I had to convince them he’s not retarded,” said Joaquin. “His teachers put him in a mentally challenged class, and I’m like, ‘No, my brother is not going to be in there. He just needs a little bit more attention from a teacher.’”

In their youth-produced comic book, youth from the Sactown Heroes of the West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition presented their vision of positive environments for young people.



ATTITUDE AND COMMITMENT MATTER. RESEARCHERS FOR THIS STUDY WERE FREQUENTLY IMPRESSED BY THE HOPE AND CARE THAT CHARACTERIZED THE WORLD VIEW OF MANY YOUNG PEOPLE NOW FACING ENORMOUS OBSTACLES.



Through regular meetings with school and district officials, which his parents were unable to attend due to workplace policies, Joaquin negotiated to have his brother removed from the special education class. He's now succeeding in a regular classroom with ongoing support from his older brother, who continues to play an active role while living in Sacramento and completing a GED.

Attitude and commitment matter. Researchers for this study were frequently impressed by the hope and care that characterized the world view of many young people now facing enormous obstacles. While these young men and women spoke candidly about their doubts, confusion and fears for the future, they also expressed an impassioned desire to be part of the solution.

"If I don't attempt to change the community," asked one teenager, "who will? Doesn't it start with the ones living in it? 'Me' participating in a group effort to improve my community – that's an obvious answer to an unasked question."

Have no doubt that passion, urgency and a willingness to work hard exist in substantial measure among the Capital Region's youth. Many long to engage the issues that will determine their future. The real question is whether our region's institutional leaders and policymakers – the adults currently in charge – will support their aspirations and afford them the opportunity to grow into their rightful role as today's and tomorrow's leaders.

"We need more shelters and the homeless need to know about them."

Youth Voices for Change



**RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR BUILDING
HEALTHY YOUTH/
HEALTHY REGIONS**

A healthy Capital Region requires vigorous support for young people’s health, safety, education and developmental needs. Initiatives on behalf of youth’s healthy development must include changes in our regional approach to education, employment, health services and infrastructure improvements.

How can we intervene most effectively on behalf of the entwined fates of our youth and region?

To orient our efforts, let us summarize a guiding vision for the changes we believe to be both necessary and feasible. This vision represents a synthesis of the aspirations expressed by the hundreds of youth and adults whose perspectives informed this study through interviews, surveys and youth media. It should be considered a statement of what the region would look like as a world-class place for youth to grow up and thrive. We offer it to inform and guide strategies to strengthen regional well-being.

OUTCOMES

- All youth – no matter their background or place of residence – receive the support necessary to achieve their highest educational, career and personal potential.
- All youth feel cherished, respected, physically safe and emotionally secure.
- Young people coming of age in the Capital Region embrace their rightful role as contributors and leaders.

STRUCTURES

- Elimination of institutional and cumulative biases undermining youth development and well-being.
- Integration/deepened connections among education, health, social services and other systems across the region critical to young people’s well-being.
- Alignment of public policies in pursuit of a healthy region characterized by healthy youth.
- Ongoing monitoring of youth well-being across the nine-county region.

PROCESSES

- Ongoing evaluation of research-based regional strategies on behalf of youth.
- Meaningful participation of young people – including the most vulnerable populations – to inform planning, action and assessment.
- Adequate and strategic investment of public and private funds.

The precise shape of the action plan required to achieve this vision extends beyond the scope of this study. We will not presume that we can describe in detail what must emerge from vigorous dialogue among grassroots advocates, youth service providers, public institutions, scholars, government decision-makers, private business, foundations and, crucially, young people themselves. The talents, experience and collaboration of all these networks, organizations and individuals will prove essential.





Nevertheless, we feel compelled to point to three recommendations solidly grounded in our collective findings (London, Campbell and Kuhns, 2010; Rios, Campbell and Romero, 2010; Erbstein, Burciaga and Rodriguez, 2010; Benner, 2010; Burciaga and Erbstein, 2010; Geraghty, 2010; Owens, Nelson, Perry and Montgomery-Block, 2010; Romero, London and Erbstein, 2010). Far from being exhaustive, we offer these recommendations as a starting point, with the hope that their thrust will be regarded in the spirit of informed possibility – a first step in a long journey toward securing the future of our youth and our region.

1. PLACE YOUTH AT THE CENTER (NOT MARGINS) OF REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Generating a coherent policy framework for youth that individuals, organizations and networks can rally around remains an essential unmet need in the Capital Region. While specific action strategies could assume a myriad of shapes, we believe four areas of emphasis should at the start of planning be afforded serious consideration.

- **Reframe public perception of youth**
Action is always informed by opinion, biases and information. Unfortunately, young people today must contend with an

array of negative stereotypes and misinformed viewpoints regarding their present state and future potential that infuse our culture and policies. We need to construct a nuanced, accurate and hopeful perception of our young people, while highlighting the performance of institutions charged with guaranteeing their well-being. In addition to youth-produced media described in the section below, outreach to community and mass media to promote more positive accounts of youth and examination of regional systems to support their healthy development should be key elements of these efforts. In addition, strategies to infuse positive youth development approaches and social equity analyses into policy, philanthropy, youth-serving agencies and the private sector can help institutionalize this cultural shift in how the region thinks about and engages young people.

- **Amplify the voices of young people in determining their future**
Youth can and should serve as informed, impassioned advocates for public policies directly affecting their lives. Indeed, the entire community can benefit from the

Photo of Sactown Heroes, West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition



“The waterplay at Bridgeway is great! Let’s add some more parks around town!”

*Youth Voices for Change/
Sactown Heroes*

thoughtful participation of young people on county and city commissions, advisory boards and planning committees. But engaging younger regional residents requires coordinated efforts to build knowledge, confidence and relationships. It also demands receptivity to the perspectives and recommendations of our most marginalized, underrepresented populations. Digital media, web sites and publications produced by young people can project an authentic voice throughout the region, shaping public opinion and empowering young people. The Youth Media Forum for Social Change and the Capital Region Youth Voices Map mentioned above are good examples of this kind of effort. In addition to youth organizing and advocacy training at the local level, youth activists may profit from regional convenings where they can hone skills, build common cause

and forge partnerships with a diverse range of peers and adult allies.

- **Design youth-friendly regional infrastructure**

Youth rely heavily on parks, recreation centers, informal public spaces, public transit, shopping/entertainment, job opportunities and related community services. Yet these assets remain unevenly distributed throughout the Capital Region with disproportionate shares benefiting wealthier communities. A first step in expanding access for low-income youth should be a survey of existing resources and gaps with young people themselves participating in the data collection and analysis. Plans for the redesign of the built environment should consider the effects of socioeconomic segregation in housing, transit and economic development patterns



A FIRST STEP IN EXPANDING ACCESS FOR LOW-INCOME YOUTH SHOULD BE A SURVEY OF EXISTING RESOURCES AND GAPS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE THEMSELVES PARTICIPATING IN THE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS.

– with a goal toward ensuring teen-friendly places to gather and safe routes to school and work. Given that these services and sites are coordinated at the county and municipal levels, efforts should focus on improving communication at multiple scales to assist those most in need.

- **Promote policy strategies that bring caring for youth into the center of policy formation**

Regional leaders should consider adapting tools that have been used successfully in other regions to ensure that the health and well-being of young people attain a more prominent place in public policy. Examples include: 1) Youth Benefit Agreements (modeled after Community Benefit Agreements¹⁵) define how publicly subsidized development projects can contribute to local youth well-being. Benefits might take the form of local hiring preferences, job training and contributions to public amenities or systems supporting youth civic engagement; 2) A “Youth In All Policies” initiative (potentially integrated into California’s new “Health in All Policies” initiative¹⁶) can catalyze interagency coordination at the regional scale on issues such as housing, economic development and transportation that typically include little emphasis on youth well-being; 3) Youth Impact Assessments¹⁷, akin to the newly developed Health Impacts Assessments, analyze the effects of proposed policies, regulations and projects on the healthy development of youth.

2. ENSURE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES FOR LONG-RANGE PLANNING, ACTION AND EVALUATION

Our research demonstrates the high cost of inaction to change the status quo. Youth inadequately supported to assume their role as productive, responsible community members will drain the public coffers to pay for compensatory services in welfare, housing, foster care, public safety and



health care, while failing to contribute to the tax base. Conversely, we can secure sizable social and fiscal gains borne of increased economic productivity, civic engagement and community health if we find the will and means to grapple with our current dilemma. To assure these kinds of future gains, we must invest wisely today. To these ends, we should consider the following as a baseline for action:

IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS ACCOUNTABILITY OF EXISTING FUNDING

- Investments in improved accountability, data and evaluation systems to track the progress of policy actions across the region will ensure the highest degree of public accountability and transparency, allowing taxpayers and elected officials to assess the

Photo from Sactown Heroes, West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition



*Harmony.
Riding with harmony.
This image shows
that more people
can ride together.
We need to get over
ourselves and think
about others.*

*Youth In Focus
Photo Voice Project,
Sutter/Yuba
Friday Night Live*



results of public investments and prioritize the most successful programs. Children's budgets can be used as a tool for tracking public expenditures dedicated to the welfare of young people, paying strict attention to the strategic allocation of funds in areas such as education, health, social services and juvenile justice.¹⁸ This strategy is well-aligned with current efforts to promote "performance-based budgeting" that make investments of public funds dependent on demonstrated commitment and success in making structural reforms to improve the effectiveness of the programs. The standards for this performance can be informed by findings of this study: the critical need to demonstrate real progress in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and underserved youth. Metrics such as improving the profile of the youth vulnerability and youth well-being indexes presented above are one way to measure this progress over time.

- We can offset the fiscal fragmentation of the region's jurisdictions by enacting tax-sharing measures. Originally developed to address the self-defeating competition among cities and counties for auto malls,

big box retailers and similar enterprises promising high sales tax revenues, regional tax sharing has the potential to stimulate reinvestment in central cities and rural communities and equalize services across a metropolitan area.

INCREASE FUNDING AND RELATED RESOURCES

- Past efforts to place a parcel tax measure on the Sacramento County and City of Sacramento ballots were not successful. But recent polling indicates strong public support for a "youth development" funding option that would pay for services to reduce school dropout and recruitment into gangs, while increasing youth programming, job training and employment. These attitudes reflect a base on which to build consensus regarding increased public funding for youth.
- An outreach strategy with local and regional businesses can mobilize the private sector as an ally for healthy youth. Partnerships with the K-12 and community college systems to promote school-to-career pipelines focused especially on growth sectors such as health care,

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING EFFORTS — PARTICULARLY WITH THE MOST UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS — WILL PROVE ESSENTIAL IN CRAFTING REALISTIC POLICY STRATEGIES AND ENSURING THAT EFFORTS OF A REGIONAL BODY REFLECT THE INTERESTS OF ALL THEIR CONSTITUENCIES.

education and clean/green technology are one of many potential contributions. Professionally oriented high school career academies, mentorships, internships and shadowing opportunities with innovative businesses — such as those promoted by organizations such as the Sacramento-based Linking Education and Economic Development (LEED) — are promising practices.

3. CONVENE A CAPITAL REGION COORDINATING BODY DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS FOR YOUTH

Few if any of the above strategies can be achieved without greater collaboration across the boundaries of jurisdictions, systems and populations of the region. Interviews with the Capital Region's community agencies and youth service providers reveal a cogent grasp of the ways in which the future of our region and our youth prove inseparable. Unfortunately, the experience of local agencies, policy-makers and grassroots advocates actually working together on health and well-being at the regional level remains negligible. No broadly recognized vehicles presently exist to bring together key players — or to identify and recruit emergent leaders, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color. Some local agency directors even express skepticism about the prospects for regional alliances, fearing that decision-making would be dominated by metropolitan Sacramento. Others view regional planning as an invitation to endless meetings and fear entanglement in a new layer of bureaucracy.

These factors compound the difficulties in creating a regional body charged with the planning and execution of an action agenda. They do not make it any less necessary.

Likewise, given limited regional organizing precedents, it may also prove wise to simultaneously drive strategies at the local level, building steadily toward regional collaboration.

Such a coordinating body need not be a formal institution, but could take the form of regular summits, and working groups where local leaders gather to think, plan and act at a cooperative level of unprecedented breadth and depth. It also holds the potential to make room for new voices, including those of young people themselves.

Community organizing efforts — particularly with the most underserved populations — will prove essential in crafting realistic policy strategies and ensuring that efforts of a regional body reflect the interests of all their constituencies. To ensure that organizers have the resources they need to sustain their efforts and scale up to regional action, dedicated support from local, regional, state and national foundations must be cultivated to underwrite the mobilization and coordination needed to win widespread approval for a solid and ambitious youth agenda. This aspect of inclusion will be important to ensure that efforts bring together grassroots, private sector and institutional leaders.

With time devoted to building internal relationships and crafting measurable objectives, the new body could powerfully reframe discussion about



Photo from Sactown Heroes, West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition



the ways in which the health of our youth and region must be viewed and acted upon interdependently. Building on this dialogue across sectors, the regional body could develop and advocate for policies and practices that better align youth-serving systems with each other and with the most urgent and important youth needs and opportunities. Such a regional body also can address barriers and opportunities for parents and other adults to provide better supports for young people. This regional forum also could help coordinate regional data sharing and collaborative research on youth health and well-being in ways that cross jurisdictional, sector and organizational boundaries, and make this information accessible to the youth, families and communities who need it most.

Immediate actions should focus on improving coordination at a regional level to ensure the provision of social supports for the most vulnerable youth and communities. Examples of high impact strategies include the following.



1) Early warning approaches across multiple systems and jurisdictions to identify youth struggling to live up to their potential in terms of school, work, health and civic engagement. One example would be programs reaching out to chronically absent children or those with limited reading capacities early in primary school.

2) Reorganized systems to prevent young people from falling through the cracks, especially when they move across jurisdictions. Examples could include “one-stop” access to multiple effective social, health, employment and legal services at the same location with portable records, and seamless communication across systems to eliminate scenarios such as schools not knowing of students’ need for additional support due to family or community crises.

3) Intensive support to redirect youth who are off-track to accessible on-ramps for success, such as connecting young people with unconditional, culturally responsive mentoring.

4) Policies to better support parents and other adults to serve as allies for youth, including ensuring that schools’ orientation to students and families is education and health promotion – rather than punishment and building workplace, criminal justice and immigration policies – that support healthy families.

THE OPPORTUNITY BEFORE US

We face a clear, unambiguous choice. We can take the actions outlined in this report and invest the funds and energy now required to support the development of healthy youth who will contribute immensely toward building a healthy region. Or we can push our civic responsibilities further down the road, allowing the social problems to compound and the accumulated fiscal costs to skyrocket. Like the fate of our youth and our region, the moral and economic cases for action remain inextricably linked. We need to back the creative renovation of systems, services and social networks ensuring the well-being of our youth because we should and because we must. In pursuing this path, we have everything to win.

Photo from Sactown Heroes, West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition

ENDNOTES

1. This framework draws on the Pathways Mapping Initiative (Schorr and Marchand, 2007), which identifies four goal areas associated with a pathway on which “more young people make a successful transition to adulthood.” They are: 1) youth are prepared for employment and higher education, 2) youth have expanded labor-market prospects, 3) youth have increased prospects of thriving, belonging and engaging, and 4) the highest risk youth receive effective services and supports. www.cssp.org/publications/documents/pathways-to-outcomes
2. See Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions Methods (2010) for a comprehensive treatment of methods.
3. For more of the youth action research products see: Youth Voices for Change: Opinions and Ideas for the Future of West Sacramento (Comic book) Owens, P. (Ed.); Capital Region Youth Voices Map: Greenfield, T. (2011) <http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/hyhr/youthvoicesmap>; and Youth Voices for Change SacTown Heroes Map ross, j.m, Schmidt, E. and Owens, P. (2010) http://artofregionalchange.ucdavis.edu/?page_id=38
4. Pastor, Benner and Matsuoka (2009) This Could be the Start of Something Big: How Social Movements for Regional Equity are Reshaping Metropolitan America. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press.
5. Belfield, C.R. and Levin, H.M. (2007a). The Economic Losses from High School Dropouts in California. California Dropout Research Project, Report #1. Rumberger, R.W. and Rotermund, S. (2009). How California's Dropout Crisis Affects Communities: Economic Losses for The City of Sacramento. California Dropouts Project City Profiles. Retrieved from http://www.cdrp.ucsb.edu/dropouts/pubs_cityprofiles.htm
6. Belfield, C.R. and Levin, H.M. (2007b). The Return on Investment for Improving California's High School Graduation Rate. California Dropout Research Project, Report #2. Levin, H.M., Belfield, C.R., Muennig, P. and Rouse, C. (2007b). The public returns to educational investments in African-American Males. *Economics of Education Review*, 26(6): 699-708.
7. United States Census Bureau (2008). American Community Survey 2006-2008 3-year Estimates Dataset. Retrieved from http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS
8. California Department of Social Services (2008). Child Welfare Dynamic Report System. Retrieved from http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/GeoData.aspx.
9. Felony arrest data obtained from the California Department of Justice crime statistics web site: <http://ag.ca.gov/cjsc/statisticsdatatabs/ArrestCityJuv.php>.
10. California Department of Public Health (2008). Birth Profiles by Zip Code. Retrieved from <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/data/statistics/Pages/BirthProfilesbyZIPCode.aspx>
11. California Department of Education.
12. United States Census Bureau (2008). American Community Survey 2006-2008 3-year Estimates Dataset. Retrieved from http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS
13. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2009) Beyond Health Care: New Directions to a Healthier America. Retrieved from <http://www.rwjf.org/pr/product.jsp?id=41008>
14. All youth names are pseudonyms.
15. See Salkin, Patricia and Levine, Amy 2008. Understanding Community Benefits Agreements: Equitable Development, Social Justice and Other Considerations for Developers, Municipalities and Community Organizations. *UCLA Journal of Environmental Law and Policy*. 26, 2.
16. Information on California's Health in All Policies can be found at: <http://gov.ca.gov/executive-order/14537>
17. See (See <http://cis.cgaccess.com/>, Schmidt and Coffee (forthcoming) and Sylwander, (2001) and for more information on the Child/Youth Impact Statements.
18. For information on Youth Budgets, see <http://gardner-center.stanford.edu/resources/tools.html>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, the Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions team extends its sincere thanks to the hundreds of youth and adults who shared their stories and wisdom to inform the project.

HY/HR RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: UC DAVIS

Jonathan London, *Human & Community Development/CRC, Principal Investigator*

Chris Benner, *Human & Community Development, Co-PI/ Quantitative Team Lead*

Joshua Breslau, *UCDMC Co-PI*

David Campbell, *Human & Community Development, Co-PI*

Nancy Erbstein, *Human & Community Development, Co-PI/ Qualitative Team Co-lead*

Patsy Eubanks-Owens, *Environmental Design, Co-PI/ Youth Voices Team Lead*

Estella Geraghty, *UCDMC, Co-PI*

Michael Rios, *Landscape Architecture, Co-PI/ Qualitative Team Co-Lead*

Gloria Rodriguez, *School of Education, Co-PI/ Qualitative Team Co-Lead*

Omotunde Adesina, *School of Education, Intern*

Jennifer Alexander, *UCDMC, Administrative Assistant*

Rebeca Burciaga, *San Jose State University, Postdoctoral Fellow*

Johnathen Duran, *Community Development, Intern*

Kristana Erikson, *UCDMC, Intern*

Mike Fitzgerald, *CRC, Informatics Coordinator*

Anne-Marie Flynn, *CRC, Project Coordinator*

Teri Greenfield, *CRC, Informatics Coordinator*

Cassie Hartzog, *Sociology, Graduate Student Researcher*

Michelle Kuhns, *Community Development, Graduate Student Researcher*

Larisa Jacobsen, *International Agricultural Group, Graduate Student Researcher*

Gideon Mazinga, *CRC, Postdoctoral Fellow*

Kindra Montgomery-Block, *School of Education*

Dina Okamoto, *Sociology*

Amanda Perry, *Community Development, Graduate Student Researcher*

Carol Ramirez, *School of Education, Intern*

Mindy Romero, *Sociology, Graduate Student Researcher & Outreach Coordinator*

jesikah maria ross, *Art of Regional Change*

Socorro Shiels, *School of Education, Intern*

Florence Surratt, *UCDMC, Intern*

Biditha Tithi, *Geography, Graduate Student Researcher*

YOUTH IN FOCUS

Sergio Cuellar

Alyssa Nelson

Jesus Sanchez

Julia Vargas

SIERRA HEALTH FOUNDATION

Chet P. Hewitt, *President and CEO*

Diane Littlefield, *Director of Program Investments*

Matt Cervantes, *Program Officer*

Katy Pasini, *Communications Manager*

THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT

Christine Tien, *Program Manager*

Jim Keddy, *Vice President and Chief Learning Officer*

Will Nicholas, *Former Research Director*

All photos were taken by youth for this study

HY/HR REGIONAL ADVISORS

Edward Augustus
formerly with Children's Defense Fund, California

Debra Azrael
Harvard School of Public Health

Gilberto Conchas
UC Irvine Department of Education

Lyn Corbett
formerly with City of Sacramento, Office of Youth Development

Roger Dickinson
California State Assembly, 9th District

Dave Gordon
Sacramento County Office of Education

Chet P. Hewitt
Sierra Health Foundation

Jim Keddy
The California Endowment

Pat Fong Kushida
Sacramento Asian Pacific Chamber

Manuel Pastor
University of Southern California

Claire Pomeroy
UC Davis Health System

Daniel Solorzano
UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies

PROJECT CONSULTANTS

Victor Rubin, *PolicyLink*

Lori Dorfman, *Berkeley Media Studies Group*

Larry Wallack, *Berkeley Media Studies Group*

Fred Setterberg, *Writing and Editing*

The Dunlavey Studio, *Graphic Design*

YOUTH MEDIA PROJECT PARTNERS

Galt Area Youth Coalition

Hmong Women's Heritage

La Familia Counseling Center

Sacramento ACT/Meadowview Partnership

Sacramento Gay and Lesbian Center

South Sacramento Coalition for Future Leaders

Sutter/Yuba Friday Night Live

The Met Sacramento High School

UC Davis School of Education/Center for Community School Partnerships

West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition/
Sactown Heroes

Wind Youth Services

Woodland Coalition for Youth

Youth In Focus

Additional funding for Youth Voices for Change was generously provided by the California Council for the Humanities through the UC Davis Art of Regional Change.

**HEALTHY YOUTH/
HEALTHY REGIONS
PARTNERS**

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS CENTER FOR REGIONAL CHANGE (CRC) is dedicated to producing “research that matters for the region.” To accomplish this, the CRC builds two kinds of bridges. One set is on campus between faculty and students from different disciplines and departments; the other between the campus and its surrounding home regions. These bridges allow us to bring together faculty, students and communities to collaborate on innovative research to create just, sustainable and healthy regions in California’s Central Valley, Sierra Nevada and beyond. Learn more on the Center’s web site at <http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/>.

SIERRA HEALTH FOUNDATION is a private philanthropy with a mission to invest in and serve as a catalyst for ideas, partnerships and programs that improve health and quality of life in Northern California. The foundation is committed to improving health outcomes and reducing health disparities in the region through convening, educating and strategic grantmaking. Visit Sierra Health’s web site at www.sierrahealth.org.

THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT, a private, statewide health foundation, was established in 1996 to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. From 2010-2020, The Endowment will focus the majority of its resources on its 10-year strategic plan, Building Healthy Communities. For more information, visit The Endowment’s web site at www.calendow.org.

**HEALTHY YOUTH/
HEALTHY REGIONS
WORKING PAPERS
AND PRODUCTS**

The following papers and summaries of them are available at <http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/projects/Healthy-Youth-Healthy-Regions>.

Race, Space and Youth Labor Market Opportunities in the Sacramento Region
Benner, C., Mazinga, G. and Huang, G. (2010)

Cost of Dropouts in the Capital Region
Benner, C., Rodriguez, G.M., Tithi, B. and Hartzog, C. (2010)

Challenging Assumptions, Revealing Community Cultural Wealth: Young Adult Wisdom on Hope in Hardship
Burciaga, R. and Erbstein, N. (2010)

Educating for Equity: An Analysis of the Sacramento Capital Region Educational Pipeline
Breslau, J., Rodriguez, G.M., Erbstein, N., Burciaga, R. and Hartzog, C. (2010)

Regional Matters: Through Young People's Eyes
Erbstein, N., Burciaga, R. and Rodriguez, G.M. (2010)

Understanding Youth Health in the Capital Region
Geraghty, E. (2010)

Index of Youth Vulnerability
Geraghty, E., Erbstein, N. and Greenfield, T. (2010)

An Analysis of Youth Well-Being in the Capital Region
Geraghty, E., Hartzog, C. and Erbstein, N. (2010)

The Capital Region: A Place in Progress
London, J., Campbell, D. and Kuhns, M. (2010)

Methodology for Studying Healthy Youth and Healthy Regions
London, J., Erbstein, N., Benner, C., Rios, M., Romero, M. (2010)

HY/HR Map Atlas

Mazinga, G., Benner, C., Huang G., Greenfield, T. and Fitzgerald M. (2010)

Youth Voice Matters: Toward Healthy Youth Environments
Owens, P., Nelson, A.A., Perry, A. and Montgomery-Block, K.F. (2010)

Imagining the Spaces of Regional Action: Framing Youth Problems and Solutions
Rios, M., Campbell, D. and Romero, M. (2010)

Youth Voices for Change: Opinions and Ideas for the Future of West Sacramento (Comic book)
Owens, P. (Ed.). (2010)

Youth Voices Curriculum Resource and Guidebook
Owens, P., Nelson, A.A., Perry, A., Montgomery-Block, K.F. and ross, j.m. (2010)

Opportunities and Challenges for Youth Civic Engagement
Romero, M. and London, J. with Erbstein, N. (2010)

Youth Voices for Change (map)
ross, j.m., Schmidt, E. and Owens, P.
Created June 2009, Google Maps, <http://artofregionalchange.ucdavis.edu/?pageid=38>

Capital Region Youth Voices Map
Created April 2011, <http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/hyhr/youthvoicesmap>

THESE IMAGES ARE DRAWN FROM A YOUTH PHOTO VOICE PROJECT CONDUCTED BY YOUTH IN FOCUS AS PART OF HEALTHY YOUTH/HEALTHY REGIONS. THEY INCLUDE CAPTIONS WRITTEN BY THE YOUTH RESEARCHERS. THESE AND OTHER PHOTO AND VIDEO VOICE PROJECTS CAN BE FOUND AT [HTTP://REGIONALCHANGE.UCDAVIS.EDU/HYHR/YOUTHVOICESMAP](http://REGIONALCHANGE.UCDAVIS.EDU/HYHR/YOUTHVOICESMAP).

“On one side of the street is life and on the other is dead trees. In a society there [are] good things and bad things. There [are] bad times and good times.”

Photo from Sutter/Yuba Friday Night Live Youth Memories Group



“Nature – beautiful nature and people don’t notice a lot....This can educate people that nature is beautiful and we should go green.”

Photo from Hmong Women’s Heritage Association



UC DAVIS CENTER FOR REGIONAL CHANGE

Jonathan London
Principal Investigator
Director, UC Davis Center for Regional Change
530.752.3007
crcinfo@ucdavis.edu

Project inquiries, contact:

Mindy Romero
Research Team/Outreach Coordinator
530.665.3010
msromero@ucdavis.edu
<http://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu>

SIERRA HEALTH FOUNDATION

1321 Garden Highway
Sacramento, CA 95833
916.922.4755
info@sierrahealth.org
www.sierrahealth.org

THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT

1000 North Alameda Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
800.449.4149
www.calendow.org

COMMISSIONED BY



SIERRA HEALTH FOUNDATION
An Endowment for Northern California



STUDY DESIGNED AND CONDUCTED BY

UCDAVIS
CENTER FOR REGIONAL CHANGE