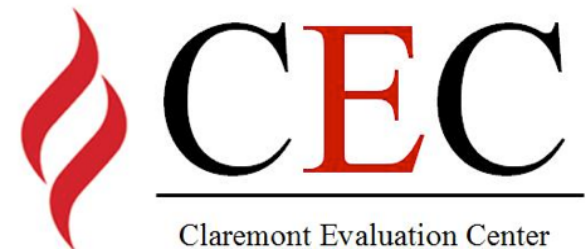


# Positive Youth Development in Action

## *Evaluating Afterschool Programs from a Strengths-Based Perspective*

Tiffany Berry, Ph.D.  
Claremont Evaluation Center  
Claremont Graduate University



**Defining PYD**

**Afterschool  
Programs as a  
Context for PYD**

**Overview**

**Evaluating from a  
Strengths-Based  
Perspective**

**Using Evaluation  
to Promote PYD  
in Research and  
Practice**

# DEFINING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

“**Positive youth development** is an **intentional, pro-social** approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is **productive and constructive.**”

*[www.youth.gov](http://www.youth.gov)*







A conceptual diagram featuring a large, leafy green tree against a blue sky with light clouds. The letters 'PYD' are prominently displayed in white within the tree's canopy. The tree's trunk and a dense network of roots are visible, extending into a dark brown soil layer. Various psychological theories and concepts are labeled in white text, positioned around the roots to represent the foundational elements of Positive Youth Development. The labels include 'Developmental Assets', '5 C's', 'Relational Systems Theories', 'Stage-Environment Fit', 'Ecological Theories', 'Resiliency', and 'Self-Determination Theory'.

# PYD

Developmental  
Assets

5 C's

Relational Systems  
Theories

Resiliency

Stage-Environment  
Fit

Ecological  
Theories

Self-Determination  
Theory



# **AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS AS A CONTEXT FOR PYD**

Typically offer  
academic, recreation/  
enrichment

Great variability



Funded federally at  
\$1 billion

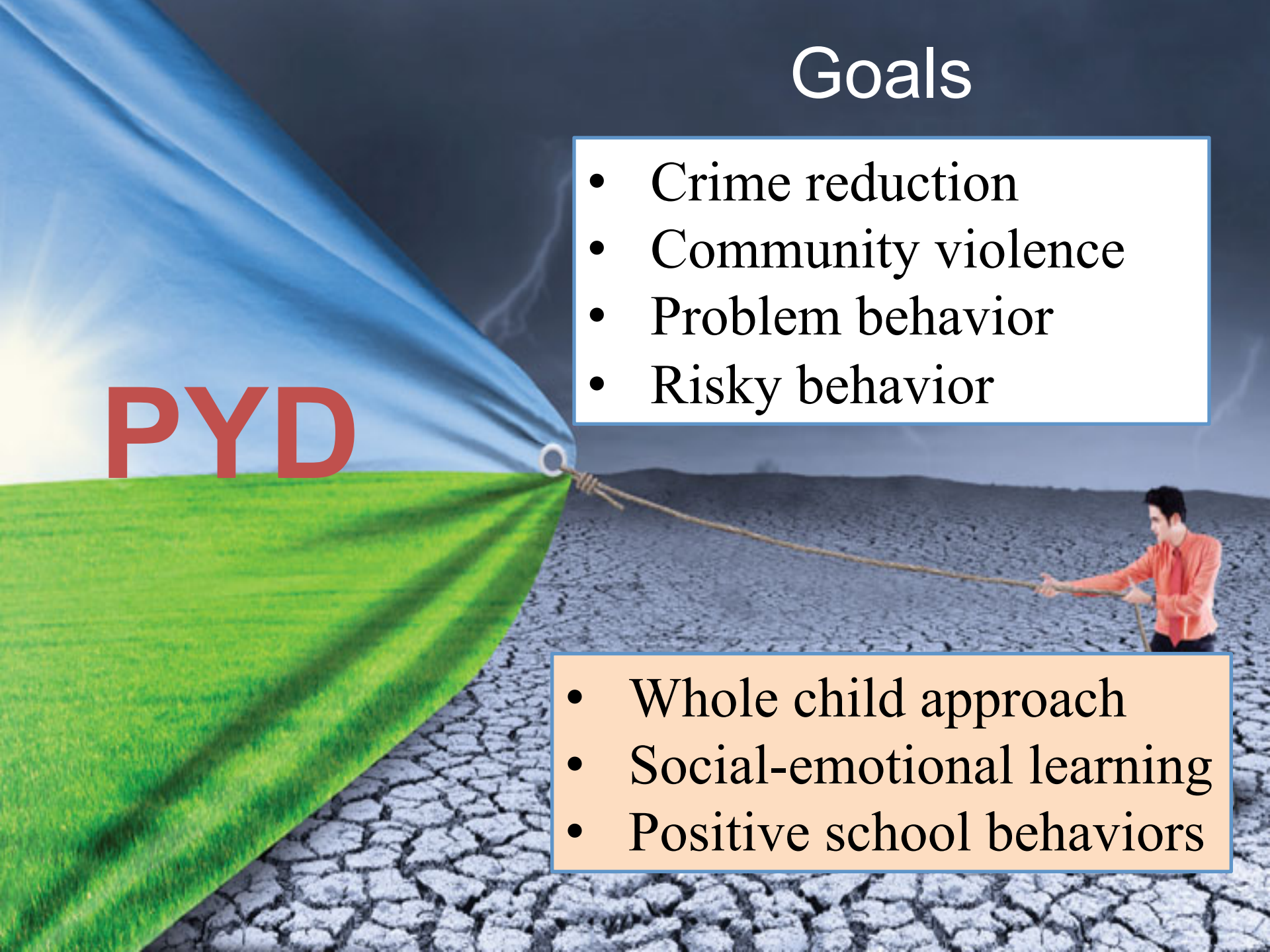
10.2 & 11.3 million  
18 million parents

# Goals

- Crime reduction
- Community violence
- Problem behavior
- Risky behavior

PYD

- Whole child approach
- Social-emotional learning
- Positive school behaviors





# Structure

PYD

- Keeping them safe
- Academic prioritization
- Staff-directed
- Youth as recipients

- Building critical skills
- Improving life skills
- Student-led
- Youth as active partners



# Experiences

Did you attend or not?

PYD

- Participation
- Quality
- Relationships



# **EVALUATING FROM A STRENGTHS-BASED PERSPECTIVE**



- *“Determining the merit, worth, or significance of an evaluand.”*
- *“Evaluation is the systematic assessment of the operation and/or the outcomes of a program or policy, compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards, as a means of contributing to the improvement of the program or policy.”*





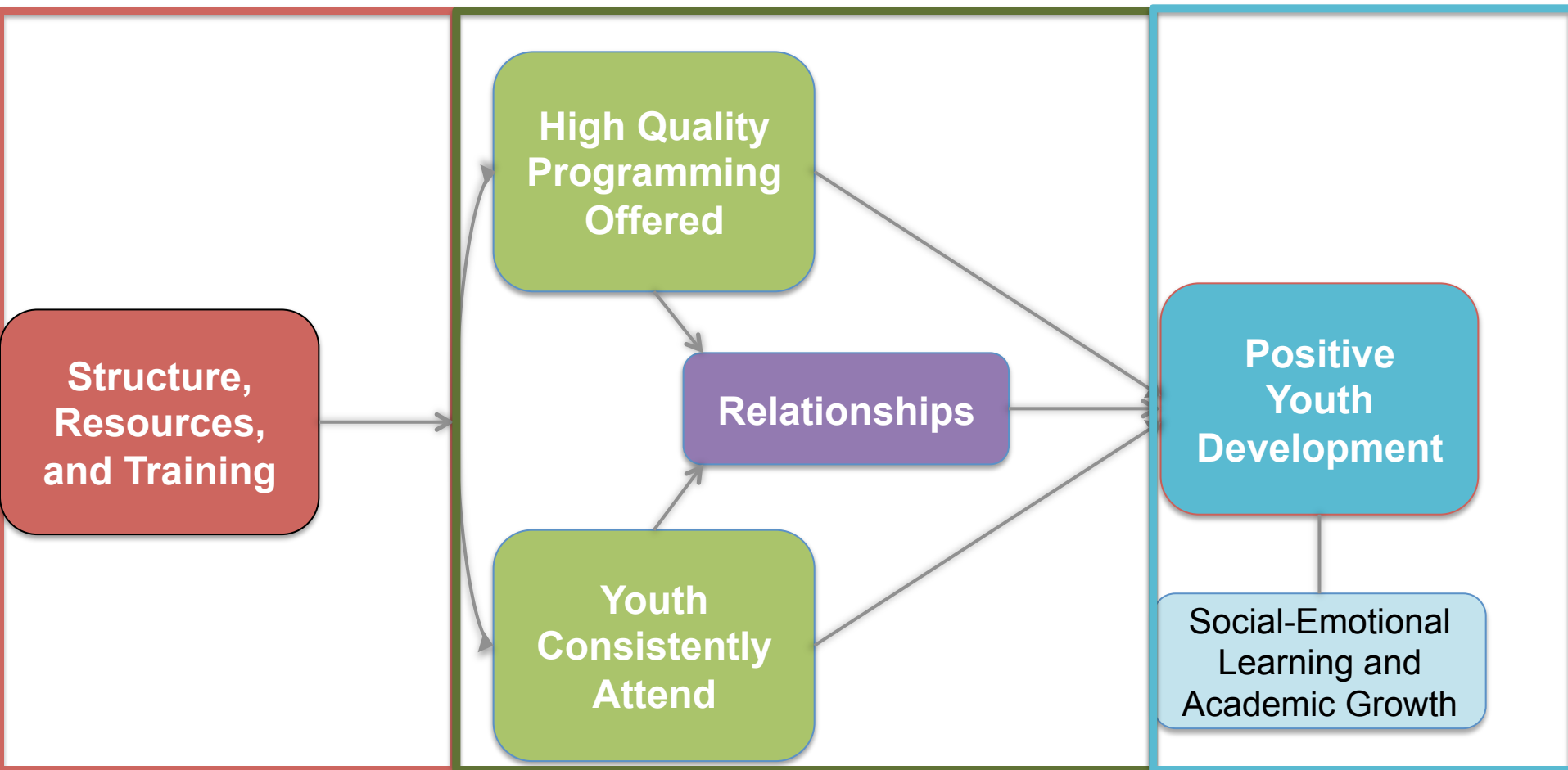
# Strengths-based



- Catch what staff and kids are doing right
- Measure cumulative assets and experiences
- Examine longitudinal trajectories of growth
- Incorporate the whole child
- Evaluate the characteristics of the system that promote positive growth



- Are environments structured around students' needs?
  - Are the materials and resources sufficient?
  - Are staff prepared to offer optimal environments?
- What type of experiences do youth need?
  - How much do youth need?
  - How much do youth get?
  - Is the quality good enough to warrant positive changes in youth outcomes??
- Are youth forming strong connections with positive adults?
  - Are they connecting with other youth?
  - Are they connecting with other teachers?



# Partnering with Youth Development Programs



LESSONS  
LEARNED

# 1

## Structure of Environments

- Importance of intentionality, planning, the presence of organizational supports that afford high-quality programming, organizational leadership
- Activities designed around youth interests
- Professional development needs to be embedded and continuous; a focus on skill-building is key



# 2 Experiences

- Consistent attendance is required to move youth outcomes; need multiple measurements of attendance (depth, breadth, duration, intensity, cumulative days)
- High quality can be achieved, but takes extensive commitment to it across the organization
- Program quality is consistently related to better PYD outcomes; choice and voice is central
- Formative feedback and internal observations are a powerful tool for promoting continuous learning and development
- Relationships with staff are a critical mechanism for cultivating positive outcomes

# 3

## Positive Youth Development

- Academics and social-emotional learning are inter-related
- Frameworks for SEL numerous, need to link specific program activities to specific outcomes
- Measure both proximal and long-term outcomes
- Outcomes regularly moderated by age, gender, school type, & reason for joining



# Popular SEL Models

## **Gil Noam (PEAR)**

- Assertiveness
- Belonging
- Reflection
- Active engagement

## **Developmental Assets (Search Institute)**

- Commitment to learning
- Positive identity
- Positive values
- Social competencies

## **Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning**

- Self-management
- Self-awareness
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making

## **University of Chicago CCSR Non-Cognitive Factors**

- Academic mindsets
- Social skills
- Academic perseverance
- Academic behaviors
- Learning Strategies

## **SCE & Weikart Center**

- Emotion management
- Empathy
- Teamwork
- Responsibility
- Initiative
- Problem-solving

# 3

## Positive Youth Development

- Academics and social-emotional learning are inter-related
- Frameworks for SEL numerous, need to link specific program activities to specific outcomes
- Measure both proximal and long-term outcomes
- Outcomes regularly moderated by age, gender, school type, & reason for joining

# **USING EVALUATION TO PROMOTE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN PYD**



# Evaluation

Research

Practice





*“We can, through the application of our science to serve our world’s citizens, actualize the idea that there is nothing of greater value to society than a science devoted to using its scholarship to improve the life chances of all people.”*

*Richard Lerner, p. 57*