



FAQs

The following questions were identified by FrameWorks researchers as those likely to arise from public forums and media interviews, based on the kinds of issues that ordinary people struggle to understand. In each example, we offer a typical answer that advocates might be inclined to offer, and an analysis of its weaknesses. We then compose an answer based on the FrameWorks research and deconstruct its key elements.

1. What is this new report all about?

False Start

The report is about the fate of Minnesota's children, and the need for out-of-school time programs that can give each of them the learning opportunities they deserve.

Analysis

Over dramatizes the problem (“the fate of ...”) and risks backlash
Uses a term (“out-of-school time”) that will confuse and distance most listeners
Refers narrowly to “learning” rather than more broadly to development
Focuses exclusively on benefits to kids, leaves out community's stake
Ignores the fact that most Minnesotans believe good programs are in place

Reframed

The report is about the substantial benefits to both young people and communities from programs that provide structured activities during times when kids aren't in school – and it's about the fact that these important programs are disappearing all over the state.

Analysis

Establishes that there is a growing need, using the vivid image of disappearing

Treats this as a state issue rather than one that only concerns individual kids or families

Sets up discussion of benefits to both kids and communities

Refers to the programs in terms everyone can understand

2. Why the sudden interest in out-of-school time?

False Start

: Well it is not really a *sudden* interest in out-of-school time. Youth advocates have been concerned about OST for a long time.

Analysis

Says there is nothing new about this report

Restricts the circle of the concerned to advocates

Uses insider terminology (OST)

Does nothing to advance the conversation

Reframed

This new report represents the views of a range of citizens and experts from around the state who are committed to ensuring that every community provides opportunities that will help young people enter adulthood as productive members of the community.

Analysis

Implies the report has wide-ranging consensus in the state

Says responsibility lies with communities

Sets the objective as providing opportunities for youth development

Establishes “stewardship” and “giving back” as appropriate values

3. Is this more important for at-risk kids, kids who may be in bad neighborhoods and be in danger of drugs and other influences?

False Start

While at-risk kids are likely to benefit the most from these programs, all children will benefit from such interventions because all children are vulnerable to the influence of drugs and crime.

Analysis

Starts with an “elephant” by stating this is about “those” kids

Reinforces that the objective is crime prevention

Reframed

All adolescents benefit from experiences that allow them to practice the roles and values they will take on as adults, but not all communities are providing the range of experiences that are needed.

Analysis

Sets the expectation that this is about all kids
 Conveys that development is the goal
 Says responsibility lies with communities
 Transitions to at-risk communities through inclusion, not division

4. If the public schools aren't doing what they need to do for teens, why don't we insist that they be fixed, instead of trying to remedy the problem in after-school programs?

False Start

Actually, good quality after-school programs can help youth achieve in school, by providing homework help, study skills, and other educational opportunities.

Analysis

Limits the goal of youth programs to educational achievement
 Does not supplant the perspective that schools are failing and this is likely to be an extension of that failure
 Does not advance a broader understanding of development

Reframed

Many places have a role to play in providing opportunities for young people to develop well, including schools, community centers, and places of worship, to name a few.

Analysis

Expands responsibility to a variety of community institutions, not just schools
 Conveys that development is the goal, not just "education"

5. Isn't the parental relationship still the most important?

False Start

There's no question that children's relationship with their parents is the most central and influential one in their lives. On the other hand, if children have the opportunity to develop relationships with other adults around them, they can experience many opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have.

Analysis

Accepts the counterproductive framing in the question
 Reinforces the already dominant view that parenting is all that matters

Ends up framing relationships with others outside the family as exceptional
Doesn't mention community

Reframed

It's important to remember that as they grow, all children are affected by both the experiences they have within the home and the broader circumstances in the community in which they live. As children move into adolescence, the balance shifts so that there is a more and more direct connection with the community. Parents are always keys to the child's development, but another important part of that development involves increasing engagement with the community.

Analysis

Acknowledges parents' central role without emphasizing it so strongly that community is excluded

Takes a developmental view of adolescence

Offers listeners a vivid (metaphorical) picture of a "balance shifting" over time, and a connection that is becoming more and more direct

6. What do teens learn in these programs?

False Start

Teens can learn a variety of things depending on the activity. They can learn to play a sport, a foreign language, work skills...

Analysis

Accepts the term teenager

Implies that the goal of these programs is education, knowledge

Does not advance a broader understanding of development

Does not provide a clear role for community

Does not convey the necessity of youth programs

Reframed

A host of structural changes occur in the architecture of the human brain during adolescence, and experiences affect virtually all aspects of young people's development -- social, emotional, intellectual and moral. Young people gain confidence and boost their self-esteem when they...

Analysis

States that the goal is developmental, not educational

"Brain Architecture" model makes programs a necessity

Introduces values-based objectives for programs and reminds people of what they already know (self-esteem inoculates against risky behavior)

7. How do parents benefit from having someone else put values into their kids?

False start

Kids get values from many places, including mass media and from their own peers.

Analysis

Sets up negative images of young people
 Defines too large a problem (mass media) for any youth program to solve
 Problem is also defined as other kids and sets up bad kids v. good kids.

Reframe

Youth development programs create structured opportunities for young people to put into practice the values they've learned from their families, church, and other influences. The opportunity to lead a discussion, to work with a group of seniors, to work with others in performing arts or community volunteering, help make positive connections in a young person's brain and guide them toward positive roles in the community. Over time, these connections – I can make a difference, I can work with others – become the natural response to situations that present themselves.

Analysis

Honors the role of parents
 Emphasizes development
 Positions community as destination

8. Most adults today didn't have programs like this when they were growing up, and most of us turned out OK. Why the sudden need? Is this because both parents are now working?

False Start

It is certainly more difficult today for parents to juggle work and family. Communities can help by providing positive experiences for adolescents outside school time.

Analysis

Reinforces existing dominant frame by placing blame with parents
 Suggests that communities need to step in to assist failing families
 Does not explain why programs are important
 Does not advance the conversation

Reframed

That's not correct. Every one of us can point to influential people and experiences from our youth – the coach who made us strive hard, the

youth minister who encouraged us, the volunteer work that gave us the chance to see how we could contribute to the community. But in Minnesota, these experiences have become less available to many young people because...

Analysis

Refutes the negative frame without repeating
 Makes community youth development efforts part of a traditional childhood, not a “new” effort nor a “government” effort
 Reminds people of important influences in their own youth
 Introduces values-based objectives for programs
 Provides a transition to talk about the reasons programs are not available

9. We hear a lot in the news media about the “critical hours between 3 and 6” when most juvenile crime takes place. Is that true? Will these programs lessen crime in our communities?

False Start

Studies show that the hours between 3 and 6, when children are unsupervised until their parents return from work, are the primetime hours for juvenile crime. Supervised programs can keep kids safe and out of trouble.

Analysis

Makes crime prevention the objective, therefore the only criteria for youth programs is to keep kids busy after school
 Reinforces existing dominant frame by placing blame with parents for not providing supervision
 Reinforces existing dominant frame of scary teenager
 Does not advance the conversation

Reframed

Strong, healthy communities are based upon engaged, committed citizens who are vested in the community. When young people become engaged in the community, through volunteer work, or teams and clubs, they grow up to become adults who are committed to the community, which builds strong communities for the long-term.

Analysis

Makes strong, healthy communities the objective (striving for a positive outcome) rather than crime prevention (avoiding a negative outcome)
 Suggests that adolescents can contribute to the community
 Defines the developmental objective as long-term community engagement, i.e. citizenship

10. Can you explain what adolescent development is all about? Is there really new science that would help us control teenagers better, and keep them from taking risks?

False Start

All parents would love to learn new ways of keeping our kids safe and out of trouble, and the new research does show how youth programs can help do that, by teaching them judgment and keeping them off the streets.

Analysis

Doesn't challenge the bad framing in the question – *reinforces* the idea that keeping kids safe and under control is the main concern (lock them in their rooms!)

Makes this an issue that is about parents and not communities

Misses the opportunity to say that the capacity for judgment is *developed* (in a literal, biological sense), and not just learned like facts in school

Reframed

It's helpful to think of adolescent development as two processes: changes on the inside, such as the continuing development of the young person's brain architecture, and changes in how a young person is connected to other people, including a developing capacity for engagement with the community. There's lots of new science that teaches us, for example, how parts of the brain devoted to consequences, judgment and decision-making are still developing during adolescence.

Analysis

Offers a simple mnemonic ("two processes") to help people learn about development

Uses the "brain architecture" explanatory model

Takes emphasis off of merely keeping kids safe and puts it on broader developmental benefits

Brings community into the discussion

11. Some of the youth in the programs you describe are 22, 24 – are they adolescents too?

False start

The age of 18 is really an arbitrary designation. Many young people need support through their early twenties because of lack of work or family problems. They may be delayed in getting a degree....

Analysis

Undermines the category of youth and confuses people
 Sounds like over-protection
 Likely to invoke babysitting as stand-in for irresponsible parents
 Makes adolescences sound situational, not material

Reframe

Avis must have had some pretty good scientists advising them when they set 25 as the age you can rent a car. That's about the age when the sensitive period called adolescence closes. Up to that age, for most young people, the brain's architecture is being refined, in relationship to experiences and opportunities. The more we can do as a society to provide consistent, positive ways for young people to exercise judgment, practice problem-solving, make a contribution to something bigger than themselves, experience their own efficacy in helping others, the more benefits we all reap in healthy communities and shared citizenship. That outcome is dependent on our ability to provide consistent settings where young people can get a variety of experiences and guidance as they practice taking on adult roles. That phase of practice and opportunity, scientists tell us, continues through the mid-twenties.

Analysis

Establishes adolescence as a process and teaches developmental basics
 Uses an authority (business) that is not associated with the issue and not suspected of over-protection
 Makes community benefits explicit, thereby establishing public responsibility
 Closes by defining the age span for adolescence as a process

12. Most teens today complain about being over-programmed. What evidence is there that they have time on their hands? Or that this is a bad thing?

False Start

There's lots of evidence. Recent studies show that young people have, on the average, a minimum of 1900 hours per year of discretionary time without structure or supervision. And we also know that this idle time is when teens are most at risk for committing or being the victims of crime. In fact, a 2002 survey of over 1,000 law enforcement leaders, found that they chose – by a 4 to one margin – providing after-school programs for school-age youngsters rather than hiring more police officers as having the greatest impact in reducing youth violence and crime.

Analysis

Overuses statistics rather than translating them into user-friendly “social math”

Puts such a great emphasis on crime and danger that *quality* of programs becomes irrelevant

Uses language that would be difficult and off-putting for most listeners (e.g. “discretionary time”)

Reframed

In a certain few communities, kids may already have as many opportunities as they need. But we know that in most communities across the state, these opportunities are missing or declining. Our state has the highest percentage in the country of children age 12 and over who are alone at home every single afternoon. And a recent nationwide study found that kids typically have about 2000 hours of unstructured time during the year – about as much as a full-time job! These can be hours of opportunity, risk or stagnation. It’s up to the citizens of Minnesota to decide which of these options our communities are able to offer our young people.

Analysis

Doesn’t repeat the counterproductive idea that kids are already too busy

Offers a way to understand a small percentage of kids have lots of activities while others have none – *it depends on where they live*

Only uses one statistic, and translates this into meaningful terms

13. There are only so many hours in a kid’s week. What do you take away in order to make room for these programs?

False start

Too many young people spend too much time watching TV or playing video games.

Analysis

Emphasizes individual youth and sets up good kid/ bad kid thinking, which leads immediately to the question of parental responsibility.

Reframe

Young people are developing all the time. The physical structures and architecture of their brains are forming all the time. Every day this developmental challenge is met with opportunities, risk or stagnation. The important question is this: what is the quality of the experiences available to them? What can communities do to provide young people and their parents with the range of experiences and relationships that enhance adolescent development?

Analysis

Introduces brain architecture. Emphasizes developmental quality over filling up time. Introduces sustainability. Positions programs as on the side of parents and youth rather than government dictates.

14. What exactly happens in these programs? What is the outcome?False Start

Children with the opportunity to participate in quality programs have learning experiences they could never have otherwise, and their learning doesn't end when the school bell rings – it happens on afternoons, weekends and summer days, too. The result is kids who are both better rounded and better prepared for success in school and in life.

Analysis

Places too much emphasis on the narrow idea of “learning,” as opposed to the broader idea of development.

Mentions benefits to kids, to the exclusion of benefits to communities

Programs end up sounding like a luxury that some (privileged) kids get to benefit from

Makes awkward use of the idea of filling up kids' *time*, instead of focusing on development, community and benefits

Reframed

Children in quality programs have the critical opportunity to engage with others in their community and practice social, cognitive and other skills. Along with parents, the programs play an important role in producing “decent and solid kids” – the kind who have developed the capacity for good judgment and who go on themselves to become good parents, good neighbors and good citizens.

Analysis

Mentions benefits to communities

Mentions development

Frames the community as a field for engagement and “practice”

Offers user-friendly descriptions (“decent and solid”) for healthy developmental outcomes that aren't just about success in school

15. What exactly is a youth development professional?False start

You don't have to be a social worker or have a degree in psychology to become a youth development professional. In fact, many youth development professionals are youth themselves. But you must be able to work well with young people and to give them the time and attention they need to succeed.

Analysis

Defines by the negative (what a youth development professional is not) and avoids a simple declarative answer.

Confuses rather than clarifies

Reinforces the oft-held assumption that this is touchy feely stuff or babysitting

Negates development

Reinforces assumption that this is the stand in for parents who should be assuring a child's success

Reframe

A youth development professional is a person of any age who has been trained to understand the complex processes that shape young people's brain architecture during the critical period of adolescence. They are also trained to design and implement programs that provide the kinds of experiences young people need to make critical connections, exercise judgment, and generally try on new roles as team players, contributors and problem solvers that are rewarding for them and for the communities to which they belong. Youth development professionals are trained to play a supporting role alongside parents and schools in helping young people prepare for adulthood.

Analysis

Uses simple declarative sentences

Establishes and respects the training required to perform the job

Explains adolescence as a process (uses brain architecture)

Emphasizes mutual benefits to youth and community

Puts youth development programs on the side of parents

16. Do communities get a return on this investment? How would we measure it?

False Start

Communities around the State are forced, these days, to make very difficult choices about where to spend scarce funds. But we know that dollars invested in youth programs do yield substantial benefits. One way we can begin to measure the impacts is in terms of reduced numbers of arrests and teen pregnancies for kids who participate.

Analysis

Reminds people, forcefully and unnecessarily, of objections based on cost
 Takes a weak stand (“we can begin to measure”) on whether benefits are really objective, measurable
 Focuses on the kinds of benefits that would come from *any* program to keep kids busy

Reframed

Investments in youth programs have been shown to be among the most cost-effective that a community can make. Repeated studies have established that kids who participate in quality programs are more likely to be active voting citizens, settled in stable personal relationships, employed and economically self-sufficient, and happy with their lives as young adults compared to those who did not participate. These are all measurable, and important, benefits to the community.

Analysis

Takes a strong and positive stand on the value of the investments
 Gives positive examples of the kinds of young adults the programs can help create
 Uses vivid, user-friendly images, rather than statistics

17. Why is this a public concern? Most parents save for their child’s music lessons or summer camps. Why shouldn’t everyone do so, except those for whom scholarships are necessary?

False start

Nationally, approximately 8 million children ages 5-14 spend time without adult supervision on a regular basis. These hours are prime time for accidents, unsafe activities, troublesome behavior, unsupervised group activity, sexual exploration and crime.

Analysis

Negative images of troubled youth set up issues of blame (parental responsibility), unhelpful comparisons (not my kids), and security (lock them up).

Reframe

Parents want what’s best for their kids, which includes the kinds of experiences they can only get through interactions and connections with those around them in the community. Positive youth development

programs are essential for providing what every parent wants their kids to have – the opportunities and experiences that promote the development of solid, happy, decent kids. There is an enormous public interest in supporting them in that effort, because the young people whose development we support grow into solid, productive and engaged citizens who give back to the community many times over.

Analysis

Honors the role of parents, universalizes the challenge of adolescence, emphasizes the values of exchange between generations, positions community as the destination of youth.

18. What would a well-designed after-school program in Minnesota look like?

False start

After-school programs led by qualified youth development professionals would feature these characteristics:

Analysis

The phrase “after-school” minimizes the importance of programs, implying a way to fill un-programmed hours. The phrase “youth development professionals” means nothing to most people.

Reframe

Minnesota has some excellent youth development and youth leadership programs, where qualified adults help young people build self-esteem, practice teamwork and learn to put their own desires in perspective. To see what these programs look like, visit a Parent-Teen book club sponsored by Shoulder-to Shoulder Minnesota, or the Leadership Development program at the YWCA, or the Local 4-H Club. We would like to see every community have access to programs like these. Make sure to ask the leaders of these groups how many programs exist and how many kids are left out, because of program cuts, geographic distance between programs or other barriers to participation.

Analysis

Makes vivid the nature of these programs
Emphasizes that providing quality programs is not beyond current capability
Sets up the idea of diminishing programs and explains why

19. Minnesota is better than most states when it comes to education and investing in children. Why should we invest more when we are already at the top?

False start

Minnesota's ranking has dropped in the last five years from #3 to #21...

Analysis

This is a game advocates cannot win – there are always multiple ways to measure the ranking, and unless our position is that Minnesota must be #1, there will always be states above and below.

Reframe

Minnesota's ranking is at jeopardy because of precipitous state actions. The State allocated \$4 million a year to after school activities, until the current administration withdrew all of those funds, which also resulted in a loss of Federal matching dollars. The real question is, are we investing enough to make sure young people have the opportunities they need to grow into solid, well-rounded and engaged adult members of the community? The answer is, No. The money and attention we invest in the development of our youth comes back to us many times over, when they become adults. We must not turn our backs on our youth – to do so would be to abandon our own future. This state is at serious risk of losing ground.

Analysis

Positions state decisions as moving backward
Clearly describes the funding problem
Restates the core question as an investment one
Makes clear the public interest in youth development

20. Are you talking about community programs like Big Brother, Big Sisters or government programs?

False start

While most programs are not run by the government, many rely on state or federal funding for a substantial part of their budgets, in addition to charitable contributions and support from philanthropy. So it is hard to distinguish between many of these programs in the way you ask the question.

Analysis

Sentence structure reminds people of government, not non-government
Likely take away is government is the big funder and some others chip in
Sounds disingenuous or uninformed
Likely to prompt re-examination of party affiliation of messenger (are they on my side?)

Reframe

We believe that everyone who gets benefits from youth development should pay their fair share of the costs. There are three beneficiaries: healthy communities, and the community institutions that represent them, which reap the quality of life and economic benefits of solid decent young people, parents and youth themselves, which are offered experiences and opportunities for growth which no family could provide on its own, and government at all levels, whose agencies and services benefit from better citizens committed to solving problems before they happen in their communities. If we look at these three groups as the three-legged stool that has a stake in youth development, the actual costs become pretty manageable – you could fund a fine youth development effort for our state with about 33 cents from each of the three sectors per child per month. If we would all do our share, Minnesota would be a healthier state for families, communities and citizens.

Analysis

- Shifts the discussion from who pays to who benefits
- Establishes value of fairness
- Makes benefits vivid
- Explains costs in small units (would benefit from social math)
- Closes with a vision

21. What is the proof that programs have been disappearing in Minnesota?False start

While there aren't actual reliable measures of this sector, because it is so diverse, we do know that many programs have had to cut back because of diminished funding, and some programs have disappeared altogether.

Analysis

- Undercuts authoritativeness because numbers are lacking
- Suggests charges of cut-backs may be overblown, or other opinions needed
- Raises questions about reliability/motivation of messenger

Reframe

Instead of moving forward with youth development, Minnesota has lost substantial ground since 2003. Four million dollars that had been dedicated to after school programs alone was not allotted. That's about the equivalent of what the state of Minnesota will spend this year on XXX (social math example). As a result of this precipitous reversal, a sample of programs showed almost 1 in 4 no longer in existence, and 2/3 reduced significantly. What industry would expect a reliable outcome from unreliable investments? This is a mistake we cannot afford to make about

our own future. Youth development is not just an afternoon a week with random staffing and program. Youth development happens when positive experiences are sustained over time. This is what creates competence and meaning and builds a foundation for establishing adult behaviors. We urge every Minnesotan in every community to talk to local education officials and youth leaders to learn what has been lost in their communities and how to get it back.

Analysis

Begins with the (uncomfortable) idea that Minnesota is going backwards
Provides simple numbers to document loss (and social math to drive comparisons home)
Establishes the cuts as irresponsible
Explains the loss as a statewide problem (not one group or region)
Explains what the losses mean in terms of youth development
Directs subsequent action