

The Youth Success Record

A way to answer the question “how are the children?” — for one child, and for a whole community

Among the Maasai, warriors greet each other not with “how are you?” but with “how are the children?” The expected answer is “all the children are well.” It means the community has not forgotten what it exists for.

Ask that question here and nobody can answer it. Not the school, which sees six hours a day for one year at a time. Not the clinic, which sees fifteen minutes twice a year. Not any of the good programs working in this community, each of which holds one slice and defines its own measure of success. Every one of them starts from scratch with every child.

The only person who sees the whole child is the parent — and nobody has ever given them anywhere to put what they know.

What the Youth Success Record is

A record of one child, kept by their family, that travels with them. Modeled on what happened in medicine: a patient’s history used to sit in one doctor’s filing cabinet, and now it follows the patient. Nothing equivalent exists for a child’s development.

It is **not** a program tool, a government database, or a form the school keeps. The family owns it, the family controls who sees it, and it belongs to the child.

Eight things worth watching

Each holds a handful of simple observations. Most take minutes. Most cost nothing.

1 • Body	Vision — and not just an eye chart. Hearing, and the ear infection history nobody asks about. Sleep and breathing. Food. Dental. Lead.
2 • Safety and stability	Somewhere settled to live. Enough food. A household not in crisis. Difficult experiences, past or present.
3 • Feelings	Mood, worry, and how a child recovers when things go wrong.
4 • Belonging	Whether there is an adult they would actually go to. Friendships. Whether they feel part of things.
5 • Machinery	Attention, memory, processing speed, and how the brain handles what the eyes and ears take in — the equipment every kind of learning runs on.
6 • Language and knowledge	Vocabulary, conversation, knowledge of the world, and which kinds of question a child can answer.
7 • Learning	Reading first and above all — then math, then the state tests from third grade onward.
8 • Doing	Attendance. Effort. Whether they keep going at something hard — and whether they still believe effort changes anything.

Reading sits inside the seventh, and it carries more weight than anything else in the record. Not because the others matter less, but because reading is the door every other subject comes through. A child who cannot read stops learning history, science and everything else — and after third grade almost all new knowledge is supposed to arrive through print.

What the record is aiming at

A record is only useful if it is heading somewhere. This one has a destination, and every entry in it is a step toward that destination or a warning that the path is blocked.

Birth to five	Arrives at kindergarten with the engine started — language, curiosity, the ability to sit with something hard, and no uncorrected condition in the way.
Kindergarten to grade 2	Learning the words, and building the understanding half at home at the same time. Every condition checked at least once.

Grade 3	Reads with understanding, and passes the state reading test. The single most consequential milestone in the record.
Grades 4 to 8	Passes every state test. Reading now carries every subject, and knowledge compounds instead of gaps compounding.
Grades 9 to 12	Passes every state test. Graduates on time, with real options — not the one option left over.
After school	Into training, an apprenticeship, college, or work — and into a stable career and an independent life. That is the point of all of it.

Each milestone is reachable if the ones before it were reached. That is the whole argument for keeping a record at all — you can see the path being built, or you can see where it stopped, in time to do something.

How it works in practice

Who keeps it	The family. It starts at birth and follows the child.
Who fills it in	Mostly parents, using free checks that take a few minutes. Doctors and schools contribute what they already produce — screening results, test scores — which the family requests and keeps.
Who sees it	Only whoever the family chooses. It is theirs.
What it costs	Nothing. Every tool behind it is free and already available.

And this is how a community answers the question

Every one of the eight produces a number a community can report — not from a new institution, but from families reporting on their own children, with nothing identifying anyone.

What proportion of our children have had a full eye exam in the past two years?	Body
What proportion sleep enough on a school night?	Body
What proportion of our families have enough food?	Safety
What proportion of our children say there is an adult they would go to?	Belonging
What proportion read with understanding by the end of third grade?	Learning
What proportion pass every state test from third grade through twelfth?	Learning
What proportion graduate on time, with somewhere to go next?	Learning
What proportion still believe that effort changes anything?	Doing

That is a real answer to “how are the children?” — specific, honest, and ours to change. Today the honest answer in most communities is that we do not know, and what little we do know is not good.

Where it stands

The tools behind the record already exist and are free to any family today — condition checks, reading checks, milestone guides, and short screens a parent can run at the kitchen table in ten minutes. The record itself begins on paper, kept by the family, and becomes a digital record as the Movement grows.

What we are asking of this community is to help put it into families’ hands: endorse it, open a door to one more group, volunteer a few hours a month, or help us fund the pieces that are not yet built.

How are the children? Let us be able to answer honestly.