

A National Indicator Project for the United States!

In this issue: The United States will finally have a national indicator project, Susan Brutschy goes to Israel to share expertise about community indicator projects, ASR shares findings from kindergarten readiness studies in California, a new journal article about ASR's community assessment work, and new projects in the areas of juvenile probation, parent education, youth assets, children of parents who use methamphetamine, and hands-on learning to improve our oceans.

We'd love to hear from you! Please email any comments to asr-reports@appliedsurveyresearch.org.

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State of the USA

The Obama Health Bill Allocates Funding for a National Indicator Project

Communities all over the United States have been launching their own local community assessment projects starting with Jacksonville Florida over 25 years ago and ASR's Santa Cruz County project 16 years ago, but there has never been a national indicator project in the United States. **All that is about to change.**

The new Obama Health Care bill has a provision to fund the creation of a new national indicator project. People have been trying to create such a project for

several years. Chris Hoenig, formerly of the Government Accountability Office (GAO), has been working tirelessly to get support for a national indicator project known as the **State of the USA**. The effort began in 2003 with a forum of experts from the GAO, the National Academy of Sciences, and leaders from around the country. The forum participants agreed that a national indicator project was key so that political decision-making would be based on good quality data. As part of the overall effort to create a national indicator project, the GAO was asked to research local community indicator projects around the country. In 2003, Susan Brutschy, President of ASR, was interviewed by GAO staff about the Santa Cruz



County Community Assessment Project, one of the oldest indicator projects in the country. In May 2010, the GAO interviewed Susan Brutschy again about ASR's community assessment work.

In March 2010, President Obama signed the new healthcare bill which provides funding to the State of the USA (SUSA) project. The SUSA project will be organized as a non-profit, blending public and private funding, and will be overseen by the National Academy of Sciences. Chris Hoenig, the director of SUSA expects the project to be up and running by this summer. They have already chosen 20 key indicators in the area of health such as life expectancy, infant mortality, serious psychological distress, smoking, obesity, binge drinking, condom use, insurance coverage, unmet medical, dental and prescription drug needs.

Chris Hoenig and his staff have reached out to local community assessment projects to discuss how local projects might work with the national project. Local projects are interested to know whether their data will be made available through the national site. Those conversations are expected to continue between SUSA and partners such as the [Community Indicator Consortium \(CIC\)](#) - a network of local community indicator projects in the United States.

- To visit the State of the USA website, or to be part of their beta testing for the site, please visit: <http://www.stateoftheusa.org/>.
- To read an article in the *New York Times* about going beyond GDP and the new SUSA project,
 - o Click here to view the original article on the *New York Times* website: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/16/magazine/16GDP-t.html?scp=2&sq=state%20of%20the%20usa&st=cse>
 - o Click here to view the article in [PDF format](#).

ASR in Israel

Susan Brutschy Visits Israel to Share ASR's Community Assessment Process

In late May 2010, Susan Brutschy, President of Applied Survey Research, traveled to Israel to share ASR's community assessment work and our community improvement cycle. She participated in discussions about how to construct the new Israeli national indicator project. The state of Israel is creating Israel's Progress Index. The goal is to establish the index to assess quality of life and to use the index as a central part of decision-making. Another goal is to create small local community indicator projects with citizen involvement throughout the country. The project is part of the Israeli Society for Sustainable Economics (ISSE), a non-profit



organization that works to promote sustainable economic thinking in Israel. Susan was able to meet with the CEO of Israel's Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services and the Ministry was one of the sponsor's of Susan's visit. In Israel, Susan participated in several community discussions on how to create a community assessment project, how to move from data to action, and how to use Results Based Accountability™ to improve quality of life in communities.

ASR has created a ten step process to help communities create and conduct a community assessment project and then to move from data to action to improve quality of life. ASR has helped to conduct these community improvement processes in California, Alaska, and Arizona. We received a national award from the Brookings Institution and the Community Indicator Consortium in 2007 for having the best community indicator project in the country. ASR has also participated in several international forums in Turkey,



France, and South Korea to share our community assessment work. Anat Itay is the leader of the Israel Progress Index and hosted Susan Brutschy's visit, along with Aliya Kedem, the leader of Shvil Hakehila, a non-profit social welfare organization using Results Based Accountability in Israel. Other sponsors included the Joint, a non-profit organization working to enhance community outcomes, and the Israeli Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services.

School Readiness Assessments in California

First 5 Association Holds Conference on School Readiness Assessments in California

On May 20th, the First 5 Association held a conference in Sacramento to gather kindergarten readiness experts together to share what they have learned over the last decade in California. ASR and several of our partners were invited to present on our kindergarten readiness assessment efforts in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and San Francisco Counties. Lori Burns, of the Santa Clara County Partnership for School Readiness, presented information about ASR's Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF) and its use in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties over the last ten years. Overall, the data have shown just how crucial it is for children to have some key readiness skills at kindergarten entry in order to ensure that they will succeed in school.

Debbie Armstrong of First 5 San Mateo County and Jeanie McLoughlin of the San Mateo County Office of Education described how they have used the data to help assess summer transition programs for children before they entered kindergarten, and preschool for all programs targeted to some of the highest needs districts. Data over the last decade in San Mateo County show that more children are attending preschool, children who attend preschool have higher school readiness scores, a higher percentage of children are being read to daily, and children's literacy is improving. San Mateo County

partners have also created a DVD and a handbook for parents to help them know whether their children are ready to enter kindergarten.

Partners in Santa Clara County have used the data to track children over time and have seen that the lowest income children have had some of the greatest gains in readiness over the last several years. First 5 Santa Clara County and First 5 San Francisco County have both created handbooks for parents to help them decide if their children are ready to enter kindergarten and the skills children need to help them succeed in school.

- Here is the Santa Clara Handbook in English:
http://www.first5kids.org/files/Kindergarten_booklet_2010_English.pdf
They also have handbooks in Spanish and Vietnamese.
- Here is the San Francisco Handbook in English:
<http://www.first5sf.org/downloads/KinderGuide.pdf>
They also have it in Spanish and Chinese.

San Francisco County has been using the kindergarten readiness data to improve preschool curricula in the areas of social and emotional development, where they saw a great need.

Dr. Lynne Mobilio of ASR shared information at the conference about how ASR helps to assess children at entry to kindergarten and in preschool, the validity and reliability of the assessment tool, how children have changed over time in several California counties, and the greatest predictors of readiness. Data show that children who attend preschool are much more ready for kindergarten and they transition into kindergarten far more easily. Dr. Mobilio's PowerPoint can be accessed [here](#).

For more information about ASR's kindergarten readiness work in California Counties, please contact Lisa Colvig-Amir at 408-247-8319.



New Article about ASR's Community Improvement Cycle

Article to be Published in Applied Research in Quality of Life Journal (ARIQ) by Springer

ASR's community assessment work will be featured in a new article to be published by Springer in a journal called Applied Research in Quality of Life (ARIQ). The special journal is focused on **community indicators that are used as tools for social change**. The article focuses on how the Santa Cruz County Community Assessment Project contributes to better outcomes for children and youth. It highlights ASR's ten step community improvement cycle and how it has contributed to new countywide initiatives

in the areas of universal health care for children, teen drug and alcohol abuse, and childhood obesity. More recently, the process has contributed to improved outcomes for youth in one historically low-performing school district. The ASR community improvement cycle is unique in that there are explicit action steps where community members come together to develop action plans based on community data findings. The process also involves using Results Based Accountability™ as created by Mark Friedman where stakeholders focus on the outcomes that they would like to achieve for the community, and then work backwards to determine the means. The following figure shows the ten step process that ASR uses with communities to improve quality of life:



The article should be available on-line over the summer and in print form in the fall of 2010. For more information, please contact Deanna Zachary, Project Manager at ASR, at 831-728-1356.

New Projects

Cara y Corazón and Joven Noble

ASR has been asked to help evaluate two projects in Santa Cruz County that are funded by Proposition 63, the Prevention and Early Interventions Services Act. Cara y Corazón is a family strengthening project that helps parents to build positive healthy relationships with their children and themselves. Joven Noble is a companion program that focuses on adolescent males ages 10-24 and that guides young men



through “rites of passage” to becoming strong, responsible, and respectful men. Both programs are based on strong Latino cultural traditions around the concepts of self, family and community. The adult program explores the values of dignity, respect, trust and love while the youth program focuses on physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of a young man’s life. For more information, please contact Tracy Keenan, Project Manager, at 831-728-1356.

Marine Habitats: A Project-Based Informal Educational Program

ASR will help evaluate a science education project that focuses on the health of the oceans and our marine habitats. The goal is to improve community understanding of the types of data and technology necessary to make wise decisions about our oceans. Experts in robotics, marine platforms, sensor development and educational outreach activities will help create a curriculum for teachers and students. The teaching modules include building robots, learning how sonar works, using remotely operated vehicles to collect specimens, and testing for oxygen in the water.



The goal is to combine the use of novel technologies to collect data to improve our understanding of the earth and the seas. For more information, please contact Tracy Keenan at 831-728-1356.

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