



Youth Leadership Initiative

2015-16 Program Evaluation

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation's Youth Leadership Initiative (YLI) is a multicultural youth leadership program that provides young people the opportunity to build skills and qualities needed to be agents of change in their community. The goal of YLI is to develop a new generation of leaders who reflect the Saint Paul community and are prepared and committed to contribute their talents to building a thriving, inclusive, and multicultural community. YLI partnered with Wilder Research to evaluate short-term programmatic outcomes. The following are the results.

YLI develops youth's leadership skills

As a focus of the program, it is not surprising that 81 percent of participants better understand what it means to be a leader and 73 percent feel more prepared to be a leader. In addition, all responding youth learned at least a little about leadership and teamwork skills, critical thinking, and goal setting.

YLI positively impacts youth's self-awareness & social-emotional skills

The program positively impacts youth's awareness of self and social-emotional skills. Seventy percent report increases in their confidence and awareness of their personal strengths. Similarly, the PEAR Institute reported that YLI youth had "statistically significant improvements" in six of seven resiliency factors over the course of the program, with the most growth in the areas of action orientation, empathy, and reflection.

YLI learn how to work with others and develop relationships

Most youth (65-69%) reported growth in their skills communicating with others and their ability to work with a team (Figure 22). While results from the SAYO-Y on youth's relationships with supportive adults and social competence are mixed, the PEAR Institute reported that YLI youth had "statistically significant improvements" in their relationships to both peers and adults over the course of the program.

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Top 7 areas in which youth self-reported changes (percent improving)



Some youth increase their involvement in their school & community

Over half of youth (58%) report their involvement in the community has increased, and over a third (39%) report their involvement in school has increased since joining YLI. In addition, YLI students are much more highly engaged in activities outside of regular school days relative to Ramsey County youth overall.

Recommendations

- Continue to build on its existing strengths of developing leadership skills, self-awareness, and ability to work with others, all areas the program is showing impact.
- Increase diversity, in response to youth feedback as well as data indicating three of four participants were of Asian descent, the program may consider ways to appeal to youth from other racial backgrounds and ensure they feel welcome and included to keep them involved through graduation.
- Address youth concerns about meeting their commitment to YLI while also balancing schoolwork and other responsibilities.
- Work with funders and evaluation partners to streamline and reduce the number of surveys collected from youth. Response rates for some of the data collection tools were less than 25 percent, making them less useful for evaluation.

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For more information

This summary presents highlights of the *Youth Leadership Initiative: 2015-16 Evaluation*. For more information about this report, contact Jennifer Valorose at Wilder Research, 651-280-2654.

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