

Youth Leadership Initiative

2018-19 Outcome Report

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J U N E 2 0 1 9



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What is YLI outcomes report?

The Wilder Foundation's Youth Leadership Initiative (YLI) is dedicated to learning and growing by evaluating their program, and then making changes based on what they find. In this report for YLI's 2018-19 program year, we include findings about YLI's program quality and outcomes as it relates to youth self-awareness, working with others, making meaningful actions, and academic success. We also present data about who comes to YLI – demographic and participation data for YLI youth. Our hope is that this report gives insight into what YLI is doing well as well as provides impetus for strategic changes to improve YLI's programming.

This report is a summary of YLI's outcomes. For detailed findings, please see the YLI 2018-19 data book.



Selected quotes from youth about what they have learned about themselves after participating in YLI

I'm powerful, my voice matters, I matter and that's something I really appreciated from YLI

I am capable of many things.

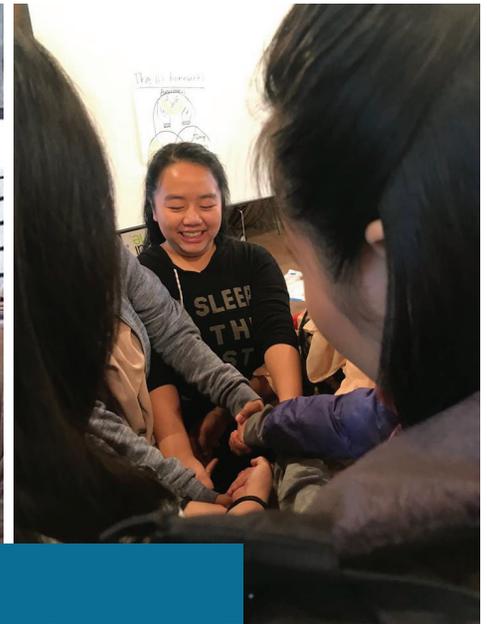
How important I am as a person and how I can be the game changer.

I think the most important thing I discovered about myself this year is that I deserve to be proud of my culture and that I can be a string leader.

I am capable of everything I put my mind to.

The most important that I learned and discovered about myself this year is that I have to understand myself and other.

That I can advocate for myself and my voice matters.



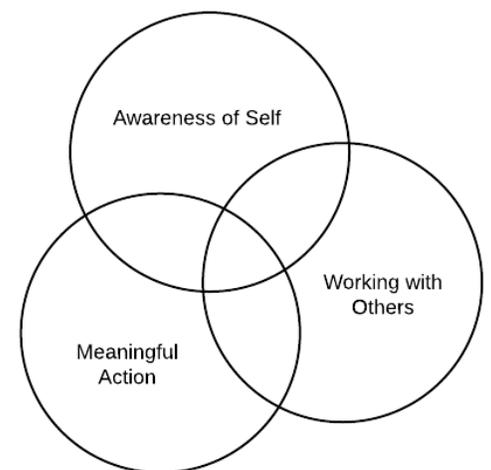
What is YLI?

The mission of the Youth Leadership Initiative (YLI) is to develop a new generation of strong, effective, multicultural leaders. The work of preparing these extraordinary leaders is grounded in the following core beliefs:

- Everyone has the capacity to lead, regardless of age, position or experience.
- Leaders should be reflective of the communities they serve.
- Effective leaders understand who they are and are clear about their purpose and values.
- Young people should be co-creators of the programs they are a part of.
- Leaders must understand how to live and work in diverse communities.
- Authentic collaboration between youth and adults can produce powerful intergenerational spaces of learning.
- Quality programming requires intentional, responsive, and relevant curriculum design.

YLI brings diverse youth together in a cohort model to learn about and practice leadership. YLI's framework of leadership consists of strengthening self-awareness, understanding how to work effectively with others, and taking meaningful action in community.

Through this process, participants develop qualities they need for leadership in a multicultural and global community, such as confidence, empathy, connections, positive self-identity and cross-cultural skills. YLI youth mentors design programming, facilitate activities, and model leadership. The roles of adults, including staff and volunteers, are to support, encourage, share knowledge and power, and create access and opportunity. Overall, youth and adults work together as colleagues and learn from one another.



YLI's program goals are:

1. Youth **increase** their leadership, voice, and action, and feel better prepared to be effective leaders for the multicultural world in which they live.
2. Youth **deepen** their understanding of themselves and develop self-confidence by grounding themselves in their own culture.
3. Youth **develop skills and resiliencies** to work effectively with others and discover the attributes needed for effective leadership in multicultural environments.
4. Youth **apply** what they are learning from YLI to their life outside of the program, particularly school.
5. Youth have a satisfactory **experience** in the program.

YLI is organized into five key program components that contribute to achieving these goals:

- **Youth mentors.** Youth mentors are past participants of high school age who have been nominated from the previous cohort to be youth leaders in the upcoming year. They leverage their past experience in YLI and passion for community leadership to lead the program and be positive role models. They receive additional training for their new roles.
- **Learning retreats.** Youth attend three multicultural learning weekend retreats, which are entirely led by the youth mentors and where they explore concepts of leadership, strengthen cross-cultural relationships, reflect on their strengths and areas for growth, develop their character, and participate in experiential learning activities that focus on problem solving and working effectively with others.
- **Cultural exploration sessions.** Youth meet weekly in large group to explore the topics of culture, identity, bias, micro-aggressions, and ally building. Youth share their personal stories and learn from each other. Youth also get a chance to meet in culturally-specific cohorts of their choosing over several weeks to examine their culture and heritage and its impact on their leadership style and personal development.
- **Action teams.** Youth participate in weekly sessions to learn about leadership and different ways of taking action in the community. In small multicultural teams, participants share their learning styles, identify the issues they want to address, partner with community organizations, design and implement a community action project, and engage in reflection on lessons learned. They learn leadership skills such as communication, project management, planning, team work, public speaking, research, collaboration, and continuous quality improvement.
- **School support.** Youth discuss the importance of education, set school improvement goals, learn about higher education, and are provided with structured support based on individual needs.

YLI is in its 11th year of operations and has been the recipient of the 2014 Minnesota Ethical Leadership Award, which honors youth leadership programs that foster cross-cultural understanding and inclusive leadership; and the 2015 Delta Airlines Innovation Award, a highly-competitive award given to one program in out of school time field among United Way's cohort of grantees for innovative work on developing social emotional learning skills in young people.

Who does YLI serve?

The data below refers to the 59 youth who participated during YLI's 2018-19 program year. Three quarters of the youth (73%) attended regularly, meaning 30 or more days.

Gender



Grade



Race/Ethnicity



The Asian group included Hmong and Karen students and the other group included Hispanic and multi-racial students.

Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch



English language learner (ELL)



Note that some youth did not provide demographic information.



How is YLI being evaluated?

YLI's quality and outcomes in 2018-19 are measured by four evaluation tools. These tools are: the Youth Program Quality Assessment, developed by the Center for Youth Program Quality; the YLI program post-survey, developed by Wilder Research; the Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes, developed by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time; and the Holistic Student Assessment, developed by Partnerships in Education and Resilience Institute (PEAR).

Throughout this report, we denote which findings came from which tool with the following icons:



The Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA). The YPQA tool is a validated observational instrument designed to measure the quality of youth programs and to identify staff training needs.



The YLI program post-survey. The YLI program post-survey collects youth perceptions of their own development in YLI and their satisfaction with YLI overall. For some measures, this survey asks youth to retrospectively compare their end-of-year answers with how they would have answered at the beginning of the year.



The Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes (SAYO). The YLI program collects three domains of SAYO that ask about youths' experiences in having a support adult in the program, youths' sense the competence as a learner and sense of competence socially.



The Holistic Student Assessment (HSA-R). The HSA is a self-report tool that provides a social-emotional "portrait" of the unique strengths and challenges of each young person.



Is the YLI program high quality?

The first step to assessing YLI's impact is assessing its program quality. If YLI's programming is high quality, it is more likely that we'll see its expected impact. In this case, YLI's 2018-19 programming was of high quality.



YLI's program instructional score: 4.4 out of 5

The YPQA measures program quality as it relates to the instructional experience between staff and program participants in the following domains: safe environment, supportive environment, interaction, and engagement. Each domain is given a rating from 1-5, with 5 being the top rating. An external assessor conducted an observation of the program on all the quality domains. The external assessor gave YLI an average score of 4.4 out of 5, which means that YLI programming in 2018-19 was high quality.



Youth said that YLI is high quality

Most youth (92-100%) "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the following statements about program quality.

- *I would recommend this program to others.*
- *I feel welcomed in this program.*
- *What we do here will help me in the future.*
- *I belong here.*
- *This program has helped me learn how to get along with others.*
- *What we do here will help me be successful in school.*
- *I get to have some say in the program activities we do.*



Youth felt supported by YLI staff and volunteers

87-100% of youth in YLI at the beginning and end of the year mostly agreed or agreed that...

- *There is an adult at YLI who is interested in what I think about things.*
- *There is an adult at YLI who helps me when I have a problem.*
- *There is an adult at YLI I can talk to when I am upset.*
- *There is an adult at YLI who I will listen to and respect.*

What is YLI's impact?

Awareness of self

In order to measure YLI's impact on young people's awareness of self, we used and developed a number of evaluation tools that specialize in measuring social-emotional learning (SEL). SEL is the process of acquiring core competencies to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations constructively.¹ When it comes to leadership development, social-emotional skills are important because they allow youth to gain the ability to self-regulate, which has been associated with positive academic and social outcomes. More importantly, these skills enable youth to react productively to negative environments and thus empower youth to thrive and gain a sense of agency even in contexts that limit their potential.



Youth developed a deeper understanding of themselves

At the end of the year, more youth (35-78 percentage points more) said...

- *I am confident.*
- *I am aware of my personal strengths.*
- *I can handle stressful situations.*
- *I know my voice matters.*
- *I am able to set goals and work towards achieving them.*
- *I have knowledge of the history and traditions of my culture.*
- *I am proud of my culture.*

...than at the beginning of the year.



Youth grew more resilient

Compared to the beginning of the year, on average, the youth in YLI said that they are...

- *More proactive*
- *More assertive*
- *More trusting*
- *More empathetic*
- *More reflective*
- *More optimistic*
- *More persistent*



Youth developed leadership skills

At the end of the year, more youth (47-87 percentage points more) said...

- *I understand what it means to be a leader.*
- *I believe I can make a real difference on issues that are important to me.*
- *I have the skills needed to solve problems.*
- *I have the skills to speak in front of a group.*
- *I think about what will happen as a result of my decisions.*
- *I feel prepared to be a leader.*

...than at the beginning of the year.

¹ Elias, M. J., et al. (1997). Promoting social and emotional learning: Guidelines for educators. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Working with others

For YLI, effective leadership means a connection to and ability to work with others. Overall, youth expressed improvement in their skills and attitudes related to working with others.



Youth developed skills and values to collaborate with others

At the end of the year, more youth (45-68 percentage points more) said...

- *I have the skills to communicate with others.*
- *I can find commonality with people that are from a different culture than me.*
- *I am able to work with a team or small group to accomplish a project.*
- *I think it is important to listen to and value the opinions of others.*
- *I can appreciate the different experiences of people of other cultures.*

...than at the beginning of the year.



Youth had higher sense of social competency

A majority of youth (71-89%) “mostly agreed” or “agreed a lot” at the beginning and end of the year

- *It's very easy for me to get along with other kids.*
- *I get along with friends as well as other kids my age.*

At the end of the year, more youth (16-17 percentage points more) “mostly agreed” or “agreed a lot” that ...

- *It's easy for me to join a new group of kids.*
- *When I meet someone new, I know he or she will like me.*

...than at the beginning of the year.

Meaningful action

YLI's perspective on leadership includes a commitment to service and meaningful action in the community. YLI believes that everyone regardless of age has the potential to be leaders in their community.



Youth increased their awareness of community engagement

Nearly all youth (98%) reported that since participating in YLI, they have increased their awareness of opportunities and ways to get engaged in their community.

A majority youth (82%) reported that they talked to their family and friends about social issues important to them at least a few times a month.

As a result of participating in YLI, 28% of youth mentioned in an open-ended question that they would like to be involved in topics related to cultural awareness, equity, and social justice.

Selected YLI former participants participated as youth mentors. Although indirectly impacted the participants' outcomes, youth viewed the youth mentors as a role model. All youth strongly agreed or agreed that youth mentors showed good examples for learning by doing and experiences, being open to talking about their feelings, and respecting and honoring other people's opinions, cultures, and life style that might be different from theirs. In this context, these past YLI participants acted meaningfully as mentors to this year's participants.

Academic success

Like most out-of-school time programs, YLI is interested in assisting youth in their program succeed in many areas of their life, including in school. YLI helps youth directly with school success through their School Support activities. These activities are mainly intended to increase students' confidence and motivation in in school.



Youth grew more engaged in school

At the end of the year, more youth (29 percentage points more) said...

- *I am motivated to be successful at school.*

...than at the beginning of the year.

Compared to the beginning of the year, on average, the youth in YLI said that they have experienced...

- *Increased learning interest*
- *Increased academic motivation*
- *Increased critical thinking*
- *Increased social bonding*



Youth reported fairly high levels of confidence in their learning skills

71-92% of youth in YLI at the beginning and end of the year “mostly agreed” or “agreed” that...

- *I like to give new things a try, even if they look hard.*
- *In school, I'm good as good as other kids.*
- *When I can't learn something right away, I keep trying until I get it.*
- *I'm as good as other kids my age at learning new things.*

Also, nearly all youth (95%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with a statement that what they do in YLI will help them be successful in school.

What does this outcomes report tell us?

Our evaluation of YLI's 2018-19 program tells us that young people in YLI's program experienced an increase in self-awareness, improved their skills at working with others, an increase in awareness and interest in community engagement, and improved academically. In other words, YLI's programming resulted in its intended impact.

That being said, there are several limitations of this evaluation that should be communicated when considering the evaluation results:

- Many young people in YLI are English Language Learner (ELL) students. It is possible that not all young people in YLI understood the content or terminology of evaluation tools when participating in this evaluation.
- Many of the concepts in the evaluation tools are from a "Western" or "European" cultural lens. This means that there might be a "cultural mismatch" between the evaluation tools and the young people who participate in YLI.
- The response rate is not consistent across all surveys. The attendance of the youth on the day each of the evaluation tool is administered may impact whose voice is heard in the data and whose voice is absent.
- Finally, participating in YLI has improved youth interest and awareness of ways that they can be involved in their community. YLI might want to follow up with these youth in the future to learn about their community engagement and changes in the community as a result of their engagement.

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This summary presents highlights of the *YLI 2018-19 data book*. For more information about this report and the data book, contact Edith Gozali-Lee at Wilder Research, 651-280-2676.

JUNE 2019

