WCC Youth Leadership Initiative

2012-2013 evaluation data tables

July 2013

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Contents

Figures

Data collection methods

Wilder Research conducted an online survey with youth participants and mentors at the end of the 2012-2013 program year. The survey was developed by Wilder Research with consultation from YLI staff, and includes a retrospective pre- and post-program assessment. A retrospective pre-post method asks youth at the end of the program how they feel and think now, and to think back to how they felt and thought before the program. This method is used instead of a pre-post method, in which participants complete a survey at the beginning of the program and again at the end, because participants tend to overestimate their levels of knowledge and abilities beforehand, scoring themselves lower retrospectively *after* gaining knowledge and abilities during the program. YLI staff had laptops at the final retreat in May for students to complete the survey and those who could not attend were sent links after the retreat. A total of 39 youth out of the 75 enrolled in the program completed the survey, a 52 percent response rate.

Limitations

While there were 75 students in the program, just over half completed student surveys. Therefore, results should be interpreted with caution. In addition, data represent youth perceptions and self-report, which is largely subjective. Youth also tend to give the response they believe is "correct." Long-term data on change in youth behavior as a result of participation in YLI are not available. Finally, youth who have negative experiences in the program are more likely to have dropped out and are not in the program to complete a survey. Despite these limitations, survey results provide a perspective of how youth feel they have grown while in the program, and their satisfaction with program components.

Outcome evaluation

Understanding oneself, and one's culture

One of YLI's program outcomes is that youth develop their understanding of themselves and their culture. Youth rated themselves on various aspects of self-identify. Their ratings on the retrospective pre and post surveys were compared to determine the extent their participation impacted their self-identify and appreciation of others.

Almost all students (94 percent or more) agreed with each item at the end of the program, with all students reporting being self-confident and willing to stand up for what is right. These two areas also reflected the greatest increase (68% improved in each area; see Figure 1). Over half improved in four of the five areas, indicating self-growth over the course of the program, and the remaining area reflected the highest level of agreement before the program, which left less room for growth.

Youth were also asked how much they learned about their cultural heritage. Sixty-three percent reported learning "a lot" about their cultural heritage, 29 percent learned "some," and 6 percent learned "a little." Only one youth reported not learning anything new about his/her cultural heritage, though he/she may have already known a lot.

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1. Youth self-ratings on attitudes about future-orientation, resiliency, and self-confidence

	Percent that agree or strongly agree		
	Pre (N=35)	Post (N=34)	Improved (N=34)
I am willing to take risks and stand up for what is right.	57%	100%	68%
I feel confident in myself.	57%	100%	68%
I think about what will happen as a result of my decisions.	66%	100%	53%
I have goals for my future	86%	97%	47%
I can handle stressful situations.	69%	94%	53%

Note: Improved is the percent of respondents that moved from disagree to agree/strongly agree or agree to strongly agree.

In their comments, 30 youth noted the following changes to their own self-awareness and cultural awareness:

- Made friends and shared feelings with peers in a way they have not before (6)

- Increased awareness of oneself, including knowing one's strengths and weakness, being honest and accepting oneself, (5)

- Increased understand of one's own and other cultures (5)

- Increased willingness to take risks, push oneself, and step out of a comfort zone (5)

- More open-minded to new ideas and opportunities (5)

- Felt more connected to others and cared for (4)

- Increased self-confidence (2)

Community engagement and voice

Another goal of YLI is to build youth leadership through meaningful engagement in real community issues. Again, youth rated themselves on various aspects of community engagement. Individuals' ratings on the retrospective pre and post surveys were compared to determine the extent their participation impacted their knowledge and attitudes.

All participants agree or strongly agree that they know what to do to help make the community a better place and that they will help their communities, with 77 percent improving (see Figure 2). In addition, all respondents reported that they believe young people can make a difference and it's important to listen to and value the opinions of others. Almost all (97%) agree or strongly agree that they feel part of community and prepared to be a leader, with 74-82 percent improving.

2. Youth self-ratings on community connectedness, engagement and voice

	Percent that agree or strongly agree		
	Pre (N=35)	Post (N=34)	Improved (N=34)
I know what I can do to help make the community a better place.	37%	100%	77%
I will help my community.	46%	100%	77%
I believe young people can make a difference in the community.	71%	100%	62%
I think it is important to listen to and value the opinions of others.	80%	100%	35%
I feel prepared to be a leader.	31%	97%	82%
I feel like I am part of a community.	49%	97%	74%
There are people in my life I can depend on when I need help.	37%	94%	56%

Note: Improved is the percent of respondents that moved from disagree to agree/strongly agree or agree to strongly agree.

Leadership knowledge, skills and qualities

YLI also has the goal of equipping youth with the knowledge, skills and qualities needed for leadership. YLI participants were asked how much their skills in specific areas improved. Overall, most youth reported their skills in all areas improved. The most impact was seen in team work, leadership, problem solving, and goal setting skills; 97 percent or more of participants reported improving their skills at least some in each of these three areas (see Figure 3).

3. Improvement in skills since participating in YLI (N=35)

Skill area	A lot	Some	A little	None
Team work skills	86%	14%	0%	0%
Leadership skills/styles	80%	20%	0%	0%
Project planning skills	77%	17%	6%	0%
Goal setting	69%	29%	3%	0%
Interpersonal communication	69%	26%	6%	0%
Public speaking	68%	24%	9%	0%
Problem solving skills	66%	34%	0%	0%

Youth were also asked how much they learned about the topic their Action Team worked on. Overall, all respondents learned at least "some" about the topic area they worked on, with 83 percent learning "a lot."

In their comments, youth noted learning the following other skills:

- When to speak-up and when to step-back (9)

- Effective communication skills, including public speaking and active listening skills (7)

- Leadership skills, including how to lead and facilitate groups (5)

- Tangible skills, such as time management, project planning, and making websites (3)

- Valuing different cultures (5)

School success outcomes

School attendance

Most students (89% of 35) reported missing school "occasionally," which is defined as about once a month, or less. Eleven percent of students reported that they "never" missed school.

Academic achievement

Students GPA's ranged from 2.0 (C average) to 4.59 (better than A average), with 3.5 being their average GPA; 77 percent (of 34) reported a GPA of 3.0 (B average) or better at the end of the program year. Students who are struggling academically are identified and provided with individual support. This year 10 youth received individual academic support.

School engagement

Eighty-six percent were involved in at least one activity or club at school. On average, students were involved in three activities or clubs, with a range of zero to nine.

School and program connectedness

All respondents reported liking being in the program, feeling welcome in the program, and feeling what they do in the program will help them in the future. All participants strongly felt that they tried something new in YLI that they had never done before. In addition, all respondents reported that the program has helped them feel good about themselves, get along better with other students, and find opportunities to speak up. All respondents also felt that the adults in the program care about them and what they have to say and treat them fairly most of the time. Three-quarters of youth (77%) felt the program helps them with school stuff, though not all students participate in the college success initiative or receive individual academic support; these two program elements focus directly on college preparation and academic and school success. Overall, 67 percent reported yes to all the elements school and program connectedness.

4. Youth feelings of connectedness to school and the program (N=39)

Items from federal survey	YES!	Yes	No	NO!
I have tried new things in YLI that I have never done before.	100%	0%	0%	0%
Youth are provided opportunities to speak up.	97%	3%	0%	0%
I like being in this program.	95%	5%	0%	0%
In this program, I have done things that make me feel good about myself.	95%	5%	0%	0%
The adults (staff) in this program care about what I have to say.	95%	5%	0%	0%
I feel welcomed in this program.	92%	8%	0%	0%
What we do here will help me in the future.	92%	8%	0%	0%
At least one adult (staff) in this program cares about me.	92%	8%	0%	0%
The adults (staff) here treat me fairly most of the time.	85%	15%	0%	0%

4.   Youth feelings of connectedness to school and the program (N=39) continued

Items from federal survey	YES!	Yes	No	NO!
I have tried new things in YLI that I have never done before.	100%	0%	0%	0%
This program has helped me learn how to get along with others.	80%	20%	0%	0%
I have had an opportunity to facilitate or lead activities in YLI this year.	77%	13%	10%	0%
I speak up when there is something I want to say.	67%	31%	3%	0%
I know how to access school resources when I need them.	59%	31%	10%	0%
This program helps me with school stuff (like getting my homework done).	26%	51%	23%	0%
Total reporting "Yes" or "YES!" on all items		67%		

Participant satisfaction

YLI participants and mentors were satisfied with the program and rated all aspects highly (see Figure 5). As in previous years, they rated the retreats and staff particularly high, and are highly satisfied with the youth mentors and overall program.

5.   Satisfaction with YLI

	N	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
The retreats	34	94%	6%	0%	0%
The youth mentors	35	94%	6%	0%	0%
The program overall	35	91%	9%	0%	0%
The staff	35	91%	9%	0%	0%
The volunteers	35	80%	20%	0%	0%
The emerging leaders	35	74%	26%	0%	0%
Action team meetings	35	71%	26%	3%	0%
College visits	15	53%	27%	20%	0%
Cultural sessions	35	51%	31%	17%	0%
College success initiative	18	50%	39%	11%	0%

While most participants did not have anything they would change about YLI, some participants offered the following suggestions for improvement:

- Increase programming, especially specific activities such as more college visits and cultural sessions, longer retreats, and summer programming (6)

- Alter the structure of the program by streamlining activity introductions, provide more free time, and having youth assist with teaching cultural sessions (3)

- Provide follow-up programming or opportunities for engagement for students who graduate (2)

- Improve the speed of transportation (2)

- Make the benefits of the program more clear in the beginning (1)