WCC Youth Leadership Initiative

2012-2013 evaluation data tables

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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. The survey includes the Youth Participant School and Program Connectedness Survey used by 21st Century Community Learning Centers. 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 eight youth out of 19 Emerging Leader and Youth Mentors participants completed the survey, a 42 percent response rate.

To meet the requirements of the 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant, an online survey was also sent to mentors' teachers. YLI staff sent the link to each of the 19 students' teachers and a total of 6 teachers (32%) completed the survey.

Limitations

This grant year, only students who are in the Emerging Leaders and the Youth Mentor programs are included in the year-end reporting, as agreed upon by YLI and MDE staff. Because this is already a small subset of students, any missing data from these students has a large impact on the response rate. While there were 19 students in the Emerging Leaders and Youth Mentor programs, only eight completed student surveys and only six of their teachers completed the federal teacher survey, which resulted in very low response rates for both of these tools. 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

Increase participants' opportunities to develop and apply 21st Century Skills

Youth self-report

One of YLI's program outcomes is that youth develop 21st Century Skills defined as: critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity and innovation, responsible citizenship, and career exploration.

Youths' retrospective pre- and post-survey ratings were compared to determine the extent to which their participation impacted their self-identify and appreciation of others. All respondents agreed with each item at the end of the program. The greatest improvement was seen in respondents' confidence and willingness to take risks and stand up for what is right (3 improved for each; see Figure 1).

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

	Number that agree or strongly agree		
	Pre (N=8)	Post (N=7)	Improved
I am willing to take risks and stand up for what is right.	4	7	3
I am confident.	5	7	3
I think about what will happen as a result of my decisions.	5	7	2
I have goals for my future	8	7	0
I can handle stressful situations.	7	7	0

Note: Results are reported in numbers rather than percentages because fewer than 10 people responded. Improved is the number of respondents that moved from disagree to agree/strongly agree or agree to strongly agree. One person only responded to the retrospective pre-survey questions.

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

■ I've learned to be more open-minded to learning about other cultures.

■ It's given me a place to go where I know I'm cared about.

- YLI has changed me by teaching me more about myself, how I can develop on my own, and how I can succeed in the future.

- It helped me talk more in school and to my teachers, which I would never do before.

- YLI has really impacted me and the quality of the work I do inside and outside of YLI.

- YLI has created a family for me and I love them so much!

- YLI has really changed my perspective of the world. It has opened my eyes to new things. I have learned more about myself and to really appreciate my culture and everything about me. I have learned to accept things about myself that I cannot change but can grow from. YLI has really supported me through my hard times and struggles. It has picked me up when I have fallen and helped me grow into a stronger person, emotionally and mentally.

YLI participants were also asked how much their skills in specific areas improved. Overall, all youth reported their skills improved at least "some" in all areas. The most impact was seen in leadership, team work, problem solving, and public speaking skills; all but one participant reported improving their skills "a lot" in each of these areas (see Figure 2).

2. Improvement in skills since participating in YLI (N=8)

Skill area	A lot	Some	A little	None
Team work skills	7	1	0	0
Leadership skills/styles	7	1	0	0
Problem solving skills	7	1	0	0
Public speaking	7	1	0	0
Goal setting	6	2	0	0
Project planning skills	6	2	0	0
Interpersonal communication	6	2	0	0

Note: Results are reported in numbers rather than percentages because fewer than 10 people responded.

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 six of eight learning "a lot."

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

- Public speaking and group facilitation (3)

- Active listening (2)

- Stepping up when needed and stepping down when needed (2)

- Time management (1)

- Making a website (1)

- Accepting others with less judgment (1)

Teacher report

Teachers tended to report that students did not need to improve in nearly all 21st Century skill areas. The only exception was in the area of volunteering, in which two students needed to improve, and one of those students did improve while the other stayed the same (see Figure 3).

3. **Teacher reports of changes in student development of 21st Century skills (N=6)**

Skill area	Did not need improvement	Improvement	No change	Decline
Turning in homework on time	6	0	0	0
Being attentive in class	6	0	0	0
Behaving well in class	6	0	0	0
Coming to school motivated to learn	6	0	0	0
Getting along well with other students	6	0	0	0
Volunteering (e.g., for extra credit or more responsibilities)	4	1	1	0

Note: Results are reported in numbers rather than percentages because fewer than 10 people responded.

Increase school and community connectedness of participants

Community connectedness

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 connectedness. Individuals' ratings on the retrospective pre- and post-surveys were compared to determine the extent to which their participation impacted their knowledge and attitudes.

All participants "agree" or "strongly agree" that they know what they can do to help make the community a better place, with five students improving in this area (see Figure 4). In addition, all "agree" or "strongly agree" that they feel part of community, prepared to be a leader, and that they have people they can depend on when they need help, with 4 improving in each of these areas. All respondents also understand that it is important to listen to and value the opinions of others and that young people can make a difference in the community.

4. Youth self-ratings on community connectedness

	Percent that agree or strongly agree		
	Pre (N=8)	Post (N=7)	Improved
I know what I can do to help make the community a better place.	2	7	5
I feel prepared to be a leader.	3	7	4
I feel like I am part of a community.	3	7	4
There are people in my life I can depend on when I need help.	3	7	4
I will help my community.	4	7	3
I believe young people can make a difference in the community.	4	7	3
I think it is important to listen to and value the opinions of others.	7	7	0

Note: Results are reported in numbers rather than percentages because fewer than 10 people responded. Improved is the number of respondents that moved from disagree to agree/strongly agree or agree to strongly agree. One person only responded to the retrospective pre-survey questions.

School and program connectedness

Student report

All participants report feeling that adults in the program care about them, they have tried new things and things that make them feel good about themselves in the program, and there are opportunities to speak up in the program (see Figure 5). Seven of the eight respondents also feel welcome in the program, like being in the program, and believe that what they do in the program will help them in the future. Overall, seven students reported agreed with all of the elements of school and program connectedness.

Another measure of school connectedness is the number of activities youth are involved in at school. YLI youth are involved in up to five school activities or clubs, with three being the average number of activities across the eight respondents.

5. Youth feelings of connectedness to school and the program (N=8)

	YES!	Yes	No	NO!
At least one adult (staff) in this program cares about me.	8	0	0	0
In this program, I have done things that make me feel good about myself.	8	0	0	0
I have tried new things in YLI that I have never done before.	8	0	0	0
There are opportunities to speak up in this program	8	0	0	0
I feel welcomed in this program.	7	1	0	0
I like being in this program.	7	1	0	0
What we do here will help me in the future.	7	1	0	0
The adults (staff) in this program care about what I have to say.	7	1	0	0
I have facilitated or led an activity during YLI this year.	7	1	0	0
This program has helped me learn how to get along with others.	6	2	0	0
I speak up when there is something I want to say.	6	2	0	0
The adults (staff) here treat me fairly most of the time.	5	3	0	0
I know how to access school resources when I need them.	5	3	0	0
This program helps me with school stuff (like getting my homework done).	2	5	1	0

Note: Results are reported in numbers rather than percentages because fewer than 10 people responded.

Teacher report

While none of the students for whom teachers provided data needed to improve in class attendance, two students needed improvement in class participation and demonstrated this needed improvement (see Figure 6).

6. Teacher reports of changes in student school connectedness (N=6)

Skill area	Did not need improvement	Improvement	No change	Decline
Participating in class	4	2	0	0
Attending class regularly	6	0	0	0

Note: Results are reported in numbers rather than percentages because fewer than 10 people responded.

Increase the academic performance of participating students who are low performing / failing or at high risk of failure in core academic areas

Student report

Six of the eight survey respondents reported missing school "rarely" or "occasionally," which amounts to an average of one absence per month or less. The remaining two respondents reported missing school about twice a month. Students' reported GPAs ranged from 3.58 (better than B average) to 4.6 (better than A average); four students reported a GPA of 4.0 (A average) or better at the end of the program year.

School records

School records were provided for 10 students. These records closely align with student self-reports. Of the ten students with school records submitted, 70 percent had fewer than 10 unexcused absences for the school year. In addition, the GPAs of the students for whom school data was submitted ranged from 3.64 to 4.59, with 60 percent over 4.0.

Teacher report

Teachers were more likely to report that students needed improvement in the areas of student achievement than in school connectedness or 21st Century skills. In the areas of academic achievement, teachers felt that some students needed to improve the quality of their homework completion and overall academic performance; all students needing improvement in these areas did improve (see Figure 7).

7. Teacher reports of changes in student achievement (N=6)

Skill area	Did not need improvement	Improvement	No change	Decline
Completing homework to your satisfaction	4	2	0	0
Academic performance	3	3	0	0

Note: Results are reported in numbers rather than percentages because fewer than 10 people responded.

Participant satisfaction

YLI participants and mentors were satisfied with the program and rated all aspects highly (see Figure 8). As in previous years, they rated the retreats and youth mentors particularly high, and are highly satisfied with the overall program and staff.

8. Satisfaction with YLI [1] (N=8)

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
The retreats	7	1	0	0
The youth mentors	7	1	0	0
The program overall	6	2	0	0
The staff	6	2	0	0
The volunteers	5	3	0	0
Action team meetings	3	5	0	0
The emerging leaders	3	5	0	0
Cultural sessions	2	3	3	0

Note: Results are reported in numbers rather than percentages because fewer than 10 people responded.

Participants offered the following suggestions for improvement:

■ Going back to camp Heartland

■ Getting things rolling faster, such as cultural sessions instead of so much introduction.

■ Continue supporting participants after they leave YLI. It seems we build up this YLI community and then lose touch after people leave.

■ Have volunteers be more committed to what they are doing with youth.

■ During cultural sessions, have youth teach youth.

■ Change how we join YLI because I think that the first impression of YLI is just another youth program for fun and games, but we are more than just that.

■ Have the program over the summer!!!

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[1] Satisfaction with college visits and the college success initiative were not reported, as about twice as many students rated these items than participated in them.