



Youth Leadership Initiative

2015-16 Evaluation

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Introduction

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.

The program targets youth of diverse backgrounds, age 14-18, including both youth that are struggling and those that are excelling and engages them to become contributing members and leaders of a thriving Saint Paul and east metro. Each year, YLI engages up to 60 racially, ethnically, and geographically diverse youth from across the Saint Paul metropolitan area.

YLI is a high-quality, comprehensive and cutting-edge multicultural leadership development program that is not offered elsewhere. YLI’s program is designed to foster leadership in the following three ways: awareness of self, understanding and effectively working with others, and meaningful engagement in community. YLI also believes that leadership is life-long learning; involves developing your character; must be practiced in community; rooted in personal culture; leveraging our multicultural communities, not just learning but also taking action, and learning how to lead in our everyday life.



Adapted from J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership’s framework.

YLI utilizes peer mentoring as a strategy, practices youth/adult partnership, provides “scaffolding” which allows youth to take on increased responsibility and leadership, and engages young people in thinking about real community issues.

Youth make a one year commitment to participate in four core program activities.

- **Leadership Retreats**, held three times a year on weekends, are where youth explore concepts of leadership, strengthen cross-cultural relationships, and participate in experiential learning activities focused on working with others.
- **Cultural Sessions** are held once a week after school. Aided by volunteer cultural coaches, youth explore their culture and heritage, stereotypes and prejudices, share experiences, and learn about their culture's contributions to society.
- **Action Team meetings**, held once a week after school, youth choose a community issue they are passionate about, explore it and address it through direct service, advocacy, awareness and philanthropy.
- **Creating Success Initiative** is held once a week after school for youth to define what success looks like to them, and gain understanding around college preparedness, professionalism and life skills through a multi-cultural lens.

There are two levels of participation in YLI:

- **Participants:** 60 youth participate in the program as regular or first year participants.
- **Youth Leaders:** 15-20 youth are peer-nominated to return for a second year or third year as Emerging Leaders (ELs) and Youth Mentors (YMs), respectively. YLI is about youth leading youth, in partnership with adults. ELs and YMs take on increasing responsibility for leadership, mentoring, curriculum development and facilitation of the program. They plan, lead and facilitate the retreats. Some also participate in helping to inform and design evaluation of programming, in partnership with the adult staff. They receive training in facilitation, program design and peer mentorship. Youth mentors also actively participate in other program activities and support the personal and leadership development of participants throughout the year.

Regardless of which leadership track participants are on, they are challenged to get to know themselves better, to take risks to “get out of their comfort zones,” to take on added responsibilities for themselves and their communities, and to discover all that they are capable of. Through deliberate practice, active participation and reflection, the program aims to build youth skills and confidence to be a leader.

Evaluation methods

Wilder Research has partnered with YLI to evaluate short-term programmatic outcomes. The evaluation is designed to evaluate progress toward YLI's own goals, as well as meet the funding requirements of three grants, which support the programming:

- The 21st Century Community Learning Center grant (21st CCLC) from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)
- An out-of-school time (OST) programming grant from the Greater Twin Cities United Way
- The Youth Intervention Programs (YIP) grant from Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Justice Programs (OJP)

This evaluation measures the short-term impacts the program has on youth over the course of the program year based on feedback from youth themselves and their teachers, using multiple methods. Figure 1 lists the various data collection methods used (see Appendix A for complete details), the outcome area measured by each tool, the number of responses for this program year, and the response rates. The report includes findings from the 2015-16 program year organized around the main outcome areas.

1. Response rates

Data collection method	Outcome areas measured	Number	Response rates	
			Out of all (N=68)	Out of “retained” attendees (N=50)
Attendance & demographic data – Sprockets	Demographics Program participation	68	100%	100%
Holistic Student Assessment – Retrospective (HSA-R) (completed by youth)	Social emotional skills Working with others Engagement in school & learning	41	60%	82%
Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes for Youth (SAYO-Y) (completed by youth)	Working with others Engagement in school & learning	12 ^a	18%	24%
School attendance & GPA (school records)	Academic performance	46	68%	92%
End-of-year, retrospective pre-post survey (completed by youth)	Self-awareness Working with others Development of leadership skills Engagement in school & learning	44	65%	88%
Federal Teacher Survey	Engagement in school & learning Academic performance	19	28%	38%

^a A total of 34 youth completed the SAYO-Y pretest and 26 completed the SAYO-Y posttest; however there were only 12 matched pairs. This may be in part due to respondent burden, given there are three different surveys youth are asked to complete.

Limitations

This is a short-term evaluation that does not attempt to explain the impact the program has on youth beyond the program, although a recent long-term follow-up study and anecdotal feedback from staff indicate the program likely does impact youth's future trajectories.

Due to the relatively small size of the program, data on all youth are analyzed together. Thus, the annual evaluation does not take into account that some youth are first-time participants of the program and others are in their third or fourth year and have been exposed to program offerings for several years, or that youth participate at varying levels (participant vs. youth mentor).

These limitations are common among youth development programs. Despite these limitations, survey results provide a perspective of how youth feel they have grown while in the program, and youth's satisfaction with program components.

Description of program participants

Program participation

During the 2015-16 program year, 68 students participated in the program. Fifty youth were retained, a retention rate of 74 percent; 49 also “graduated” from the program (Figure 2). While retention for the MDE grant is defined as attending at least 30 days of programming, the program retains students with lower participation as long as they remain connected and communicate with staff about their reasons for missing activities. On average, students attended 54 days of programming, with students attending up to 140 days

2. Attendance

	Number	Percent
Recruited	68	100%
Retained (30 or more days of participation)	50	74%
Graduated (attended 75% of activities or otherwise stayed connected with the program)	49	72%
Days attended		
Less than 30 days	18	26%
30-59 days	21	31%
60-89 days	21	31%
90-119 days	6	9%
120+ days	2	3%
Range	4 – 140 days	
Mean	54 days	
Median	51 days	

Almost all youth (94-96%) participated in each of the weekly afterschool components: Action Team meetings, Cultural Sessions, and the Creating Success Initiative (Figure 3). Most (91%) participated in at least one retreat. Twelve of the youth were youth mentors, all of whom attended mentor meetings.

3. Attendance by activity

Activity	Number attending one or more	Percent
Cultural sessions	65	96%
Action team meetings	64	94%
Creating Success Initiative	64	94%
Retreats	62	91%
Special event	21	31%
Field trips	10	15%

Description of youth participants

The YLI program has a relatively low “barrier to entry;” the only requirement is that youth commit to participate 75 percent of the time and to commit to sticking with the program for a full program year. Staff recruit youth through the schools and at local community centers, many youth are referred to the program from current or former participations, and, occasionally, probation officers refer youth when they are seeking for community service opportunities. YLI staff report that a large proportion of YLI youth live and go to school in Saint Paul’s Frogtown/Thomas-Dale neighborhood, where 36 percent of households are living in poverty. Many also come from Saint Paul’s east side neighborhoods.

More than two-thirds (69%) of participating youth identified as female (Figure 4). The largest portion were in 10th grade (41%). Younger students were retained at a higher rate, with 80 percent or more of youth in grades 8-10 being retained compared to 50-60 percent of 11th- and 12th-graders.

4a. Participant characteristics, gender and grade

	Out of all (N=68)	Out of “retained” attendees (N=50)	Percent retained
Gender			
Male	31%	30%	71%
Female	69%	70%	74%
Grade			
8 th	2%	2%	100%
9 th	18%	22%	92%
10 th	41%	45%	81%
11 th	24%	18%	56%
12 th	15%	12%	60%

In terms of race/ethnicity, 3 of 4 youth participants (76%) identified as Asian. These students had the highest rates of retention. Staff report that 82 percent are low-income youth, the majority of whom live at or below the poverty line; and many are immigrants or first-generation U.S. citizens who speak a language other than English in their homes.

4b. Participant characteristics, race/ethnicity

Race	Out of all (N=68)	Out of “retained” attendees (N=50)	Percent retained
Asian – total	76%	80%	77%
Unspecified	56%	56%	74%
Hmong	16%	18%	82%
Karen	4%	6%	100%
Multi-racial/other	13%	10%	56%
Hispanic	6%	6%	75%
Black	4%	4%	67%

Development of leadership skills

In order to take meaningful action in their communities, youth need appropriate skills to do so. Youth’s development of leadership skills is measured by self report on the end-of-year, retrospective pre-post survey.

Of all areas measured, the most youth noted improvements in their leadership skills, with 81 percent better understanding what it means to be a leader and 73 percent feeling more prepared to be a leader (Figure 5). Over half also reported growth in knowing what they can do to make the community better, taking risks, public speaking, thinking about what will happen as a result of their decisions, and problem-solving.

5. Youth self-ratings of their leadership skills, retro-pre/post and change

	Percent agree or somewhat agree		Percent with higher agreement on post (N=40)
	Retro-Pre (N=40-41)	Retro-Pre (N=40-41)	
I understand what it means to be a leader.	73%	100%	81%
I feel prepared to be a leader.	54%	98%	73%
I know what I can do to help make the community a better place.	73%	98%	68%
I am willing to take risks and stand up for what is right.	76%	100%	64%
I have the skills to speak in front of a group.	53%	98%	62%
I think about what will happen as a result of my decisions.	78%	100%	58%
I have the skills needed to solve problems.	66%	98%	56%

Youth indicated that they gained skills in most of the areas asked about, confirming the findings on the retrospective pre-post survey with all but one youth reporting gains in all skill areas. Two-thirds of respondents reported learning a lot about leadership skills and styles, and over half learned a lot about team work, project planning, critical thinking, and goal setting (Figure 6). Youth noted less skill development in the area of time management, with less than half indicating they learned a lot about time management. However, all but one youth noted at least a little improvement.

6. Improvement in skills since participating in YLI

Skill/knowledge area, N=42-43	A lot	Some	A little	None
Leadership skills/styles	67%	28%	5%	0%
Team work skills	61%	37%	2%	0%
Project planning skills	61%	30%	7%	2%
Critical thinking	60%	31%	10%	0%
Goal setting	58%	33%	9%	0%
Time management	47%	30%	21%	2%

Youth’s awareness of self

Youth’s awareness of self is measured by a retrospective pre-post survey developed by Wilder Research completed by youth at the end of the program year.

In their self-ratings on the Wilder-designed retrospective pre-post survey, youth reported having more self-awareness at the end of the program than before. The most improvement was seen in youth being confident and aware of their personal strengths (70% improved; Figure 7). Although fewer than half noted growth in their knowledge or pride of their culture, 80-90 percent indicated they agreed with these statements prior to the program; these were likely strengths they brought to the program.

7. Youth self-ratings of their self-awareness, retro-pre/post and change

	Percent agree or somewhat agree		Percent with higher agreement on post (N=40)
	Retro-Pre (N=40-41)	Post (N=42-43)	
I am confident.	58%	100%	70%
I am aware of my personal strengths.	63%	100%	70%
I can handle stressful situations.	75%	100%	59%
I have goals for my future.	83%	98%	59%
I am able to set goals and work towards achieving them.	75%	98%	59%
I have knowledge of the history and traditions of my culture.	85%	100%	49%
I am proud of my culture.	90%	100%	40%

Youth were asked “What is the most important thing you learned or discovered about yourself this year?” In addition to discovering more about their individual assets (e.g., they are patient, introverted, or funny), they noted a greater sense of confidence, empowerment, and their purpose and ability to create change both large and small. They also learned the values and skills of leadership, and their role as leaders for their community. Here is a sample of their responses:

All the criticism I feel is all in my head.

I can leave a great impact on someone for just doing something small and that I am capable of doing more.

I am powerful beyond measure and I am a change-maker. I am enough.

I have purpose to live my life. I may not realize what I am doing now, but when I will look back to my past I will feel proud then of who am I and what I have done.

The most important thing I learned is that a leader is someone who makes the right choices regardless of what others say and leads others down a better path.

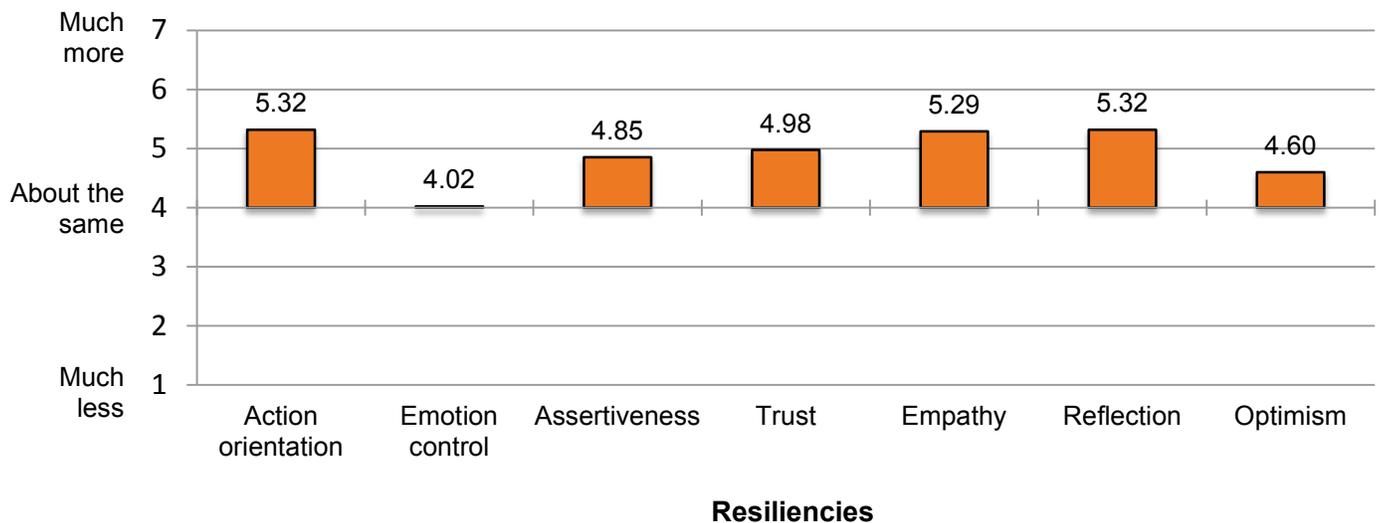
I have a voice and people need to hear it.

Youth’s social-emotional skills

Youth’s social-emotional skills are measured by the Holistic Student Assessment – Retrospective from the PEAR (Program in Education, Afterschool & Resiliency) Institute. In their report, the PEAR Institute reported that YLI youth had “statistically significant improvements” in six of seven resiliency factors over the course of the program (See average scores in Figure 8). The most growth was seen in the areas of action orientation (engagement in hands-on activities), empathy (recognition of other’s experiences), and reflection (self-awareness and internal responsiveness toward broader issues). The only area in which youth did not improve was emotional control (self-regulation of distress).

In comparing differences by grade or gender, 11th- and 12th-graders showed more positive change in their assertiveness than 9th- and 10th-graders. While the women tended to show more improvement over men, there were no statistically significant difference, perhaps because most of the youth to complete the survey were women.

8. Youth self-ratings of their own resiliencies, HSA-R results



Source: Sprockets Wilder, *Holistic Student Assessment – Retrospective (HSA-R) spring 2016 PowerPoint summary of results*.

The HSA-R prompts students to “Think about how you feel today compared to the beginning of their program,” and uses a 7-point scale (1 = Much less than before to 7 = Much more than before). Average scores above 4 indicate positive change.

Youth’s ability to work with others

Youth’s awareness of self is measured by three separate youth surveys. The retrospective pre-post survey developed by Wilder Research is focused on youth working with others, while the Holistic Student Assessment – Retrospective from the PEAR (Program in Education, Afterschool & Resiliency) Institute, and the SAYO-Y surveys are used to measure youth’s relationships with peers and adults. All are completed by youth at the end of the program year.

Attitude and communication skills toward others

In their self-ratings on the Wilder-designed retrospective pre-post survey, youth reported improvements in their ability to work with others over the course of the program. Two-thirds (65-69%) noted a stronger ability to communicate with others and work with a team or small group to accomplish a project (Figure 9). Though they joined the program with some appreciation for and ability to find commonality with people of other cultures, over half (56-58%) also noted greater strengths in these areas. Although fewer than half reported increased agreement in the importance of listening to and valuing the opinions of others, 98 percent agreed prior to the program, indicating they already knew this was important.

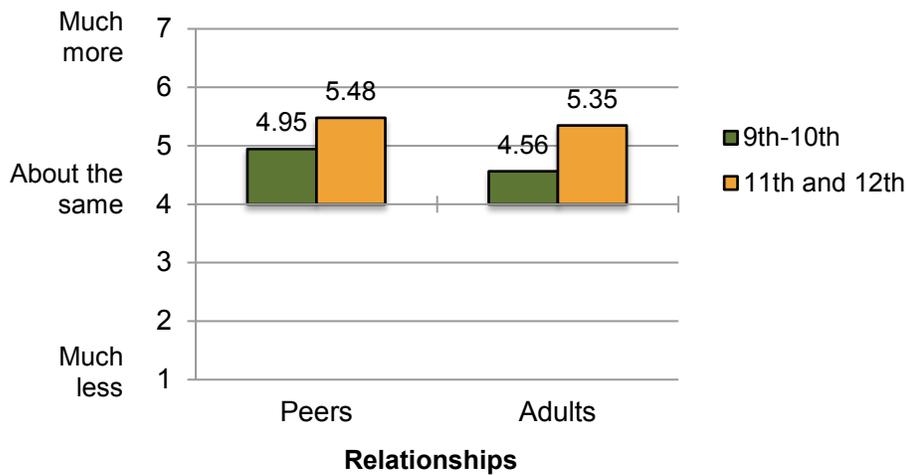
9. Youth self-ratings of their ability to work with others, retro-pre/post and change

	Percent agree or somewhat agree		Percent with higher agreement on post (N=40)
	Retro-Pre (N=40-41)	Post (N=40-41)	
I have the skills to communicate with others.	61%	100%	69%
I am able to work with a team or small group to accomplish a project.	85%	100%	65%
I can appreciate the different experiences of people of other cultures.	93%	100%	58%
I can find commonality with people that are from a different culture than me.	82%	100%	56%
I think it is important to listen to and value the opinions of others.	98%	100%	46%

Relationships with peers and adults

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, with 11th- and 12th-graders showing more positive change in their relationships with adults than 9th- and 10th-graders (See average scores by grade in Figure 10). There were no statistically significant differences by gender.

10. Youth self-ratings of their relationships, HSA-R average scores, by grade



Source: Sprockets Wilder, *Holistic Student Assessment – Retrospective (HSA-R) spring 2016 PowerPoint summary of results*.

The HSA-R prompts students to “Think about how you feel today compared to the beginning of their program,” and uses a 7-point scale (1 = Much less than before to 7 = Much more than before). Average scores above 4 indicate positive change.

On the SAYO-Y, youth indicated no change or declines in terms of their relationships with a supportive adult and sense of competence socially (Figure 11). This contradicts data reported above and may be a result of multiple factors. First, there were only 12 youth who completed both a pre and post survey; thus even one person noting a decline could have a big impact on results. Second, this is the only survey that is a true pre/post (administered at the beginning and end of the program) compared with the Wilder-designed survey and the Holistic Student Assessment, both of which are retrospective and only completed at the end of the program year. At the beginning of the program, youth may overrate their connections, not realizing the extent they will grow over the course of the program. Finally, at the beginning of the program 92 percent indicated they have a supportive adult in their life and 75 percent felt competent socially, meaning there was not much room for change.

11. Youth believe they have a supportive adult and sense of competency socially, SAYO-Y average scores

	Total		Matched pairs (N=12)	
	Pre (N=34)	Post (N=26)	Pre	Post
Youth believe they have a supportive adult				
Is there an adult here who is interested in what you think about things?	3.6	3.5	3.8	3.5
Is there an adult here you can talk to when you are upset?	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.2
Is there an adult here who helps you when you have a problem?	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.3
Is there an adult here who you will listen to and respect?	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.8
Total for subscale	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.4
Sense of competence socially	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
It's very easy for me to get along with other kids	3.1	3.0	2.7	2.7
When I meet someone new, I know he or she will like me	2.8	2.6	2.7	2.2
I get along with friends as well as other kids my age	3.2	3.1	3.2	3.0
It's easy for me to join a new group of kids	2.7	2.4	2.4	2.2
Total for subscale	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.5

Youth rate themselves on a 4-point scale on the SAYO-Y where 1=no and 4=yes. The higher the average score, the more agreement youth had with the statement.

Youth engagement in school and learning

Youth’s engagement or motivation for school and learning is also measured by the three youth surveys noted above, as well as teacher’s ratings of youth engagement in the classroom.

Youth self-ratings

Fewer than half of the youth noted changes in their motivation to be successful at school on the Wilder-designed retrospective pre-post survey, largely because 90 percent agreed or somewhat agreed with this statement prior to the program (Figure 12).

12. Youth self-ratings of their school motivation, retro-pre/post and change

	Percent agree or somewhat agree		Percent with higher agreement on post (N=40)
	Retro-Pre (N=40-41)	Post (N=40-41)	
I am motivated to be successful at school.	90%	98%	44%

Almost all of the YLI students (93-95%) report caring about doing well in school all or most of the time, and paying attention in class all or most of the time (Figure 13). These rates are higher than other Ramsey County high schools students. Just 12 percent reported going to class unprepared always or most of the time.

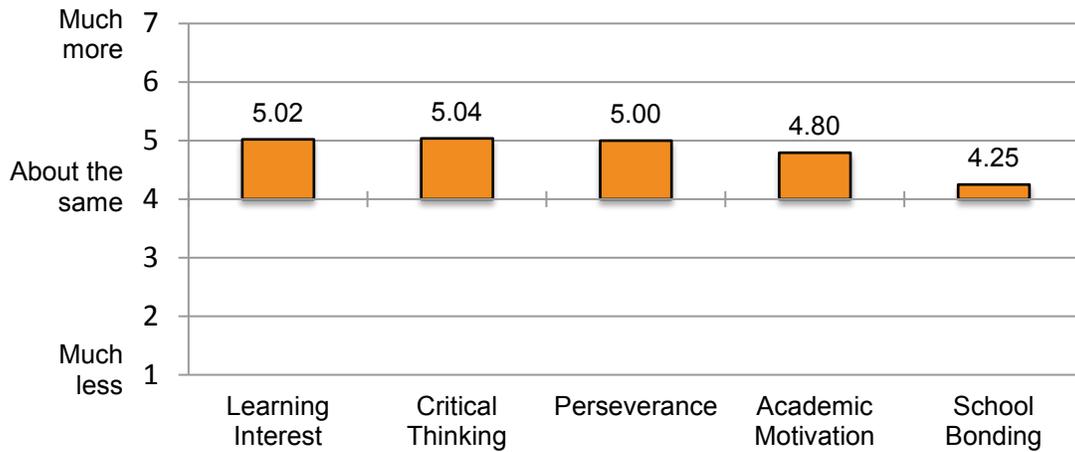
13. Youth self-ratings of their school engagement compared with all Ramsey County youth

All or most of the time, I . . .	YLI students (N=43)	Ramsey County, 2013 ¹
care about doing well in school	95%	88%
pay attention in class	93%	84%
go to class unprepared	12%	8%

¹ Minnesota Student Survey, 2013.

The PEAR Institute reported that YLI youth had “statistically significant improvements” in all five factors related to learning (Figure 14). There were no statistically significant differences by grade level or gender.

14. Youth self-ratings of their learning abilities, HSA-R average scores



Source: Sprockets Wilder, *Holistic Student Assessment – Retrospective (HSA-R) spring 2016 PowerPoint summary of results*.

The HSA-R prompts students to “Think about how you feel today compared to the beginning of their program,” and uses a 7-point scale (1 = Much less than before to 7 = Much more than before). Average scores above 4 indicate positive change.

On the SAYO-Y, youth indicated no change or declines in their sense of competence as a learner (Figure 15). This contradicts data reported above and may be a result of multiple factors. As described above, there were only 12 youth who completed both a pre and post survey and this is the only survey that is a traditional pre/post rather than a retrospective survey that is completed at the end of the program year. Similar to the other SAYO-Y subscales, 75 percent felt competent as a learner at the beginning of the program, meaning there was not much room for change.

15. Youth sense of competence as a learner, SAYO-Y average scores

	Total		Matched pairs (N=12)	
	Pre (N=34)	Post (N=26)	Pre	Post
I like to give new things a try, even if they look hard	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.3
In school, I'm as good as other kids	3.0	3.3	3.1	3.0
I'm good at solving problems	2.9	3.1	3.1	3.1
I'm as good as other kids my age at learning new things	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.1
When I can't learn something right away, I keep trying until I get it	3.2	3.1	3.3	2.8
Total for subscale	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.1

Youth rate themselves on a 4-point scale on the SAYO-Y where 1=no and 4=yes. The higher the average score, the more agreement youth had with the statement.

Teacher ratings

Teachers completed a Federal Teacher Survey for 19 youth (Figure 16). On all of the items, over half the youth did not need improvement. The greatest percentage of students needed improvement in academic performance and volunteering in class. In regards to academic performance, 38 percent improved (56% of those needing to improve); however, two students' academic performance declined (11%).

For volunteering, a quarter (24%) improved significantly or moderately (half of those needing to improve). However, three students did not change and one declined. Results were similar for class participation, indicating some of the skills youth are learning in YLI related to speaking up may not yet be translating into the classroom for all youth.

Over three-quarters (78-84%) did not need to improve their attendance, behavior, or getting along with other students, indicating youth who chose to participate in YLI may not be struggling with attendance or classroom behavior.

16. Teacher rating of changes in classroom engagement, Federal Teacher Survey

N=17-19	Did not need to improve	Significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Slight improvement	No change	Decline
Academic performance	53%	11%	11%	16%	0%	11%
Volunteering	53%	12%	12%	0%	18%	6%
Participating in class	61%	11%	6%	0%	17%	6%
Turning in homework on time	63%	5%	5%	16%	0%	11%
Completing homework to teacher's satisfaction	68%	11%	16%	0%	0%	5%
Coming to school motivated to learn	68%	5%	0%	16%	5%	5%
Being attentive in class	68%	0%	5%	11%	11%	5%
Attending class regularly	78%	0%	6%	0%	17%	0%
Behaving well in class	84%	11%	0%	0%	5%	0%
Getting along well with other students	84%	0%	5%	0%	11%	0%

Youth taking meaningful action

The evaluation measures the extent youth take action. The Wilder-designed retrospective pre-post survey asks several questions about the extent to which their involvement in school and the community has changed. Though academics is not a focus of the program, the evaluation also measures the extent their school attendance and GPA is impacted, such that school performance is a measure of them taking action in their academic environments.

Community involvement

In the Wilder-designed retrospective pre-post survey, youth are asked about their level of engagement in various activities. Data are compared with Minnesota Student Survey data from 2013.

In comparison with other Ramsey County high school students, YLI students are much more highly engaged in activities outside of regular school days (Figure 17). Over half (62-65%) are involved in community or school sports, leadership activities, and school-sponsored clubs, and a quarter or more engage in these activities most days per week (3-7 days per week).

17. Youth self-ratings of their activity engagement compared with Ramsey County youth

During a typical week, how often do you participate in these activities <u>outside of regular school days</u> ?	YLI students (N=43)		Ramsey County, 2013 ¹	
	Any activity (1+ days)	High involvement (3 to 7 days)	Any activity (1+ days)	High involvement (3 to 7 days)
Leadership activities such as student government, youth councils, or committees	65%	37%	15%	3%
School-sponsored activities or clubs that are not sports, such as drama, music, chess, or science club	65%	24%	25%	9%
Club or community sports teams, such as park and rec teams, in-house teams or traveling teams	62%	36%	33%	17%
School sports teams	62%	27%	40%	33%
Religious activities such as religious services, education, or youth group	42%	16%	29%	3%
Tutoring, homework help, or academic programs	42%	14%	20%	3%
Lessons, such as music, dance, tennis, or karate lessons	32%	14%	22%	7%
Other community clubs and programs such as 4-H, Scouts, Y-clubs, or Community Ed	23%	14%	8%	2%

¹ All Ramsey County high school students completing the Minnesota Student Survey in 2013.

Over a half of youth (58%) report their involvement in the community has increased since joining YLI, and over a third (39%) report their involvement in school has increased (Figure 18). Youth’s open-ended feedback (described in more detail below) indicates YLI is contributing to youth’s increased involvement.

18. Youth self-ratings of their of the extent their involvement in their community and school has changed

Involvement has . . .	Involvement in school	Involvement in the community
Increased	39%	58%
Stayed the same	52%	40%
Decreased	9%	2%

Youth were also asked, “What community activities do you now want to be involved in as a result of YLI?” They responded with ways they want or have increased involvement in their school or community. The numbers in parentheses show the number of youth who responded this way.

- **Increased desire to become involved** (16): Youth are interested in becoming more involved in either clubs or sports to continue to be connected to peers, or in volunteering to contribute to the community.
- **Increased involvement at school** (11): Youth said they are asking more questions in class, focusing on their school work, and getting more involved or taking leadership roles in clubs. A few youth started culturally based clubs or activities for students at their school.
- **More awareness of the community** (6): Youth had increased awareness that they are part of the larger community and the issues facing the community.
- **Increased passion or purpose** (6): Youth have increased their passion or purpose to get involved in the community or address specific issues they care about.
- **Increased confidence in speaking up** (4): Youth reported they are “braver” about talking to strangers, teachers, or peers they don’t know and speaking up for themselves and their community.

School performance

Attendance

YLI participants generally self-reported fairly good school attendance in the 30 days prior to taking the Wilder-designed retrospective pre-post survey, with 71 percent indicating they had fewer than three unexcused absences, and half had none (Figure 19). In comparison with the Minnesota Student Survey, however, their attendance was slightly lower, as 84 percent of Ramsey County high school students did not skip or cut a full day of class in the 30 days prior to the survey; this may be in part due to the fact that YLI students are more highly engaged in activities that may keep them out of school than the average Ramsey County student (see Figure 17 above).

According to school records at the end of quarter/term 2, a quarter (26%) of students had not missed any school, and an additional 20 percent had missed just one or two days.

19. School attendance

Number of times you have skipped or cut a FULL day of school or classes without being excused in the last 30 days	YLI students (N=42)	Ramsey County, 2013¹
None	50%	84%
1 – 2 times	21%	11%
3 – 5 times	19%	4%
6 – 9 times	5%	1%
10 times	5%	1%
Missed school days through quarter 2/term 2²	YLI students (N=46)	
0 days	26%	
1 – 2 days	20%	
3 – 4 days	28%	
5 – 9 days	17%	
11 or more days	9%	
Average	4.1 (range: 0 – 36)	

¹ Minnesota Student Survey, 2013.

² Data obtained from Saint Paul Public Schools and Roseville Area High School.

Grades

Grade data are both self-reported and obtained from school districts. While 85-87 percent of YLI participants were averaging As and Bs, on an aggregate-level youth reported getting slightly higher grades than were indicated by school district data (Figure 20). This may be in part due to a time lag, in that GPA data from the schools were obtained in February 2016 whereas youth self-reported their grades in May. In addition, 11 students did not respond to the question about grades on the retrospective pre-post survey.

20. Grades and GPA

How would you describe your grades this school year?	YLI students (N=33)	Ramsey County, 2013	YLI students - GPA records (N=46) ¹
Mostly As (Average GPA >3.5)	52%	33%	35%
Mostly Bs (Average GPA between 2.5-3.5)	33%	38%	52%
Mostly Cs (Average GPA between 1.5-2.49)	15%	21%	11%
Mostly Ds/Es/Fs (Average GPA <1.5)	0%	7%	1%
Average			3.2

¹ Quarter 2 / Term 2 cumulative GPA (non-weighted) obtained from Saint Paul Public Schools and Roseville Area High School.

Program satisfaction

Program connectedness

All participants agree, with over 80 percent strongly agreeing, that they would recommend the program to others, they feel welcomed in the program, and that what they do at the program will help them in the future (Figure 21). All also agree that they belong here, and that the program has helped them get along with others. Just one student each disagreed that they get to have a say in the activities or that what they do in the program will help them be successful for school.

21. Youth self-reported feelings of connectedness to the program

N=43	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I would recommend this program to others.	88%	12%	0%	0%
I feel welcomed in this program.	84%	16%	0%	0%
What we do here will help me in the future.	84%	16%	0%	0%
I belong here.	79%	21%	0%	0%
This program has helped me learn how to get along with others.	67%	33%	0%	0%
I get to have some say in the program activities we do.	67%	29%	5%	0%
What we do here will help me be successful in school.	56%	40%	5%	0%
Total reporting “Yes” or “Mostly Yes” on all 7 items				88%

Program feedback

Ranking of program components

Youth were asked to rank the YLI components from most to least helpful (5 to 1). Overall retreats were ranked highest (average rank of 4), with action teams ranked second (average of 3) and College Success Initiative and cultural sessions ranked closely behind (average of 2.9). Peer mentoring was ranked least helpful (average of 2.0). It should be noted that many youth had difficulty responding to this question, rating rather than ranking the components, thus these data reflect just 24 valid responses (out of 44 completed surveys).

Challenges to attending YLI

The three day a week commitment was the main challenge youth had to attending YLI; 24 youth said they were challenged to meet that level of participation while also maintaining their school work and other commitments, such as sports, clubs, or volunteering. The main reason these youth kept attending was because YLI became like “home” or “family.”

Challenges I had attending YLI this year is what other activities I was involved in has made my schedule a bit messy. I kept coming because I felt like I had a purpose in my groups and that I would be learning things I wouldn't be learning at school, at YLI.

I did not have a lot of time to finish my homework so I stayed up all night or did it during other classes. I kept coming because I love it here and I feel like it is the most positive and helpful environment I have ever experienced.

Managing keeping up good grades with coming to YLI [was challenging]. However, what kept me coming was a drive to travel more into the unknown that was once a known area.

YLI is a three-day [a week] program which bothers my home schedule of wanting [to do] home work. I kept going because I didn't want to waste the staff and mentor effort to YLI.

Seven youth noted that they were apprehensive about attending YLI because of having to meet new people or talking in front of others. They kept coming because of the personal growth they were experiencing.

The challenges that I have faced would be speaking in front of a lot of people, sharing my personal story.

It was to get out of my shell and be more open. I keep coming because it gets more and more interesting to be there.

[I came] because of friends and stuff and learning. Challenge: meeting new people and learning new words.

Changes to YLI

When asked “What is one thing you would change about YLI?” many youth noted they would not change anything or the program was “amazing.” The most common response among those that provided feedback was that there should be more diversity among participants, mentors, and staff (7 youth). The data support that the program served a high percentage of Asian youth this year (76%). Four youth wanted to see more retreat days, one of which noted how critical the retreats were to bonding with each other. Four wanted to see more time for homework or tutoring or noted that by the time they got home after the program, there was little time left for homework. Two noted the need for improved

relationships with mentors, either that they wanted to get to know the mentors better or felt that the mentors were too exclusive and not connecting with participants.

YLI's uniqueness

When asked “How is YLI different from other activities/programs you are involved in?” youth described YLI the following ways:

- **Comforting, authentic, like family** (12): Youth noted the program feels like a family where participants can be their authentic selves. They “can be open and loud to talk about feelings, emotions and thoughts,” and “support each other and give each other hope.” Others said YLI is a “place where I can be authentic/my true self” and “open with my beliefs.” Another participant noted that “YLI is an oasis and an example that a world of authenticity, vulnerability and kinship regardless of our labels don’t exist.”
- **Take action & leadership** (6): Through the program, youth learn about leadership and take action. As one youth said, YLI “actually lets the youth take action and they listen to our voice. They also carve and shape good leaders.”
- **Real world skills** (5): Youth develop real world skills through the program. As such, youth noted that “YLI is the only program that helps me for future things I would need to do” or “YLI teaches you the things that school doesn’t, like making a resume.”
- **Youth-led** (5): Youth said that YLI “lets youth or participant lead activities” or “lets me choose what I want to do instead of just letting me participate.”
- **The structure** (5): The three days of programming a week, with a different topic each day of the week, is different from other programs. The breadth of experiences is unique to YLI: “We did a lot of critical thinking. We did a lot of preparing for college, interviewing, and other things, while the other programs is focused on one thing out of all those.”

Key findings and recommendations

YLI helps **youth develop leadership skills**. For example, 81 percent of participants better understand what it means to be a leader, and 73 percent feel more prepared to be a leader (Figure 22). In addition, all responding youth learned at least a little about leadership and teamwork skills, critical thinking, and goal setting.

YLI also positively impacts youth’s **awareness of self** and **social-emotional learning**. Seventy percent report increases in their confidence and awareness of their personal strengths (Figure 22). Regarding social-emotional skills, 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 also appears to be positively improving youth’s **ability to work with others**. Most (65-69%) report 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.

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



YLI helps some youth increase their **engagement in school and learning**. While the program may be helping some youth engage in school, many youth who chose to join the program are already highly motivated to do well in school. About half of youth (44%) indicate their motivation to be successful at school increased over the course of the program, and the PEAR Institute reported improvements in five areas related to learning abilities, such as learning interest, perseverance, and academic motivation. However, youth responses to the SAYO-Y subscale on their sense of competence as a learner did not change, and teachers indicated that over half of youth did not need improvement in their classroom engagement.

YLI also helps improve some youth's **involvement in their community and school**. 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

YLI should 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 positive impact.

In response to youth feedback to **increase diversity**, 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.

The program may also consider how to **address youth concerns** about meeting their commitment to YLI while also balancing schoolwork and other responsibilities.

Finally, continue to 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.

Appendix A: Data collection methods

Program staff enter data on attendance and demographics into **the Sprockets shared database** that is maintained by the Sprockets network of after-school and summer programs for Saint Paul youth. At the end of the year, data were extracted and sent to Wilder Research for analysis.

School data on GPA and attendance is provided by **Saint Paul and Roseville Public Schools**.

Holistic Student Assessment Retrospective (HSA-R), by The Partnerships in Education and Resilience Institute (PEAR Institute), is administered to youth at the end of the program year. As noted by the PEAR Institute:

The HSA-R contains a subset of the same 61-items and the same 14 subscales as the HSA with a modified response format. The HSA-R prompts students to “Think about how you feel today compared to the beginning of their program,” and uses a 7-point scale (1 = Much less than before, 4 = About the same, 7 = Much more than before) to rate the extent their thoughts and feelings have changed since the beginning of the school year.

The Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes (SAYO) measures eight areas of youth outcomes that research has shown leads to long-term positive youth development. YLI employs the SAYO for youth (SAYO-Y), which is completed online as part of the Sprockets database, and administered within the first few weeks of programming (pre) and at the end of the program year (post). Youth rate themselves on a 4-point scale: “no,” “mostly no,” “mostly yes,” or “yes,” in the areas of relationships with adults and competence as a learner.

An end-of-year program survey, developed by Wilder Research, is a paper survey that is distributed to youth participants at the end-of-year retreat. The survey includes a retrospective pre- and post-program assessment, which 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. This survey also asks students some questions similar to the Minnesota Student Survey; comparisons with 2013 MSS data from Ramsey County 9th- and 11th-graders are provided (total sample size of 7,891).

The Federal Teacher Survey, required by the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, measures youth’s improvement in academic performance and classroom behaviors. Program staff obtained release forms from parents to contact teachers to complete this survey.

Appendix B: Description of HSA measures

From the *Holistic Student Assessment (HSA) 2015 Administration Guide for Sprockets: Social Emotional Learning Pilot Series*, pages 5-6. Copyrighted by the PEAR - Program in Education, Afterschool, and Resiliency (2009-2015).

Resiliencies

- Action Orientation: Assesses the respondent's level of activeness, physical activity and physical engagement.
- Emotional Control: Measures the respondent's emotional control, self-discipline and self-control.
- Assertiveness: Examines the participant's level of comfort in advancing their own personality, beliefs, wishes or thoughts, and whether one has the confidence to stand up for what one believes is fair.
- Trust: Considers one's level of trust and vulnerability to the actions of others and one's confidence that others will support them when called upon.
- Empathy: Assesses the ability to recognize and share in the feelings of others, and one's initiative to help others and improve surroundings.
- Optimism: Measures one's level of positivity in their perspective about the world and the future.
- Reflection: Assesses the participant's sense of self, level of internal monologue and feeling of social responsibility.

Relationships

- Relationship with Peers: Assesses the respondent's relationships with friends and feelings of connection with her classmates.
- Relationship with Adults: Measures perceived level of support from adults and positive engagement with adults.

Learning and school/program engagement

- Learning Interest: Measures the respondent's interest in education and learning, in general, especially learning outside the classroom.
- Critical Thinking: Assesses critical thinking skills and the examination of new ideas, concepts and ways to adapt and solve problems.
- Perseverance: Evaluates one's willingness to work hard and solve problems despite obstacles and challenges.
- Academic Motivation: Assesses interest and motivation in academic success, without necessarily including interest in learning in general.
- School Bonding: Examines one's feeling of connection to school or program one's sense of belonging in relation to that school or program.

Appendix C: Summary data for funders

Youth Intervention Programs (YIP) grant – Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Justice Programs (OJP)

1.1 Provide youth with opportunities to develop a positive and supportive relationship with a caring adult

- 92% (24 of 26) indicated at the end of the program they have a supportive adult in their life.

2.1 Youth will develop decision making skills

- 70% (28 of 40) increased their self-confidence over the course of the program year, with 100% agreeing that they have self-confidence on the post survey (Figure 7).
- 68% (27 of 40) indicated increased agreement in knowing what they can do to make the community a better place, with 98% agreeing on the post survey (Figure 5).

2.2 Youth will gain an understanding of how their decisions impact others

- 58% (23 of 40) indicated increased agreement in appreciating the different experiences of people of other cultures, with 100% agreeing on the post survey (Figure 9).
- 58% (23 of 40) indicated increased agreement in thinking about what will happen as a result of their decisions, with 100% agreeing on the post survey (Figure 5).
- 46% (18 of 40) indicated increased agreement in the importance of listening and valuing the opinions of others, with 100% agreeing on the post survey (Figure 9).
- 100% (all 43) agree the program has helped them get along with others (Figure 21).

21st Century Community Learning Centers – Minnesota Department of Education

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

- 74% (50 of 68) were retained in the program (participated for 30 or more days of programming; Figure 2).

Increase participants' school and community connectedness

- 88% (38 of 43) students agreed with all of the elements of school and program connectedness (Figure 21).
- 92% (24 of 26) indicated at the end of the program they have a supportive adult in their life.

Increase participants' academic performance in core academic areas

- 61% (28 of 46) had an average GPA of 3.0 or above at the end of the 2nd quarter; 85% (28 of 33) reported earning mostly As and Bs this school year (Figure 20).
- On the Federal Teacher Survey (19 completed), 39% of youth needed improvement in class participation, and 11% (2) improved significantly, 6% (1) improved moderately, 17% (3) did not change; and 6% (1) got worse (Figure 16).

Out-of-school time programming grant – Greater Twin Cities United Way

- 74% (50 of 68) participated on a consistent, ongoing basis (participated for 30 or more days of programming; Figure 2).
- 87% (40 of 46) improved or maintained satisfactory school grades; they had a B average (GPA of 2.5 or above at the end of the 2nd quarter; Figure 20).
- 71% (30 of 42) improved or maintained satisfactory attendance at school; they self-reporting missing less than three regularly scheduled school days in the last month (Figure 19).
- 65% (28 of 43) improved or maintained a positive attitude toward school; they reported being involved in school sponsored activities or clubs (Figure 17).
- 100% (all 43) improved or maintained positive behavior/social skills in the program; they agreed that they are aware of their personal strengths, which was a 70% improvement over the retrospective pre-survey (32 of 40 improved; Figure 7).
- 100% (all 41) demonstrated a sense of mastery; they understand what it means to be a leader which was an 81% improvement over the retrospective pre-survey (33 of 40 improved; Figure 5).