

Engaging Youth for Positive Change: Impacts and Outcomes

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Paper Submitted to the Midwest Political Science Association Annual Conference,
Chicago IL, April 6-8, 2017

The Engaging Youth for Positive Change Program is generously supported by a
grant from the Bureau of Positive Youth Development, Department of Human
Services, State of Illinois

Introduction

Bringing about positive change in their own community may be one of the most valuable experiences a young person can have. Active engagement in local community advocacy teaches youth that positive change is both possible and real. In addition, such an experience can provide youth with the information and skills necessary for a lifetime of active participation in civic life.

This article presents a multi-method, multi-level evaluation of the impacts and outcomes of Engaging Youth for Positive Change, a program which guides junior high and high school age youth through the process of adopting a local ordinance and thereby making positive change in their community. Designed by the Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, this evaluation was designed to provide feedback on the program's potential for success.

The evaluation summarizes data relying on both qualitative and quantitative sources at different levels using different methods including program-level evaluation to assess program implementation, participant-level evaluation to assess the program's potential impacts on participants, and community-level evaluation of the program's broader impact.

Program Overview

EYPC has the primary goal of adopting a local ordinance by a governmental decision-making body (ie: city council, county board, school board or park district board). To do so, the EYPC program progresses through four modules over the course of several weeks or months, and the modules collectively represent the basic components of an advocacy campaign. The program refers to these four modules as the "4 D's": Define the Issue during which youth research their policy proposal; Determine Decision-Makers during which they learn about their local government or the political body they are seeking to influence; Discover Data, when they gather data to support their advocacy effort and Deliver the Message when they prepare and formally present their proposal to decision-makers and their community. Each module is comprised of 6-8 hands-on, real-world advocacy activities which are themselves essential components of any advocacy strategy. The program consists of 28 suggested activities in all.

During the program, youth meet public officials face-to-face, including local elected officials and community leaders. They visit their local city council. They gather data about their community using different methods, including observation, interviewing, and survey techniques. Youth also organize a community forum and present their findings to the community or in many cases, directly to their city council.

In 2013, EYPC was adopted as the required program model of the Illinois Department of Public Health's Reality IL youth anti-tobacco program. Between the fall of 2013 and summer of 2015, 32 sites implemented the EYPC program. These 32 sites are the subjects of this evaluation.

Theoretical Impacts

Participant Impacts

The need for political awareness and knowledge regarding local government is strong. The authors of one study state that "Local government, after all, is the only layer of government that is truly accessible to students. It should not be overlooked." (Clark, Croddy, Hayes & Philips, 1997). In addition, youth should be engaged in more than classroom instruction about their local government. Real projects in their local community allow youth to see the public impact and to experience their own ability to influence local

policy (O'Donoghue, Kirshner, & McLaughlin, 2006). This program accomplishes this by engaging youth in advocating for public policy change at the local level.

Youth engagement can improve young people's ability to work and think as part of a team, promotes leadership, enhances self-esteem, improves youth's relationship with their community, increases political involvement, and creates more favorable political attitudes.

Teamwork

By working together with others to accomplish a jointly shared goal such as adopting a local ordinance, youth can increase their sense of working more effectively as part of a team. Genuine teamwork helps to increase a sense of helping others while learning from them as well. It can also reinforce and build trust, especially as other team members show their commitment to the team through hard work and engagement with other members. Organizing and planning skills connected to goal attainment are also an essential component of teamwork.

Leadership

Leadership means having the respect of one's peers as well as having the confidence necessary to speak up in front of peers and in front of adults. Participating in youth civic engagement activities can build leadership skills by creating opportunities for expression and speaking in front of peers and adults. In addition, leadership skills can be enhanced by enhancing a sense of self-efficacy; that is, building one's confidence in the ability to make positive change in one's community or neighborhood.

Self-Esteem

Youth increase self-esteem by participating in rewarding activities with other peers and concerned, caring adults (Yates & Youniss, 1996). Self-esteem is connected to a feeling of empowerment, or having some control over one's environment (Zimmerman, 1995; 2000). The degree to which youth are empowered and committed to civic actions is related to their perception of the meaningfulness of their involvement (Andolina, et al., 2002).

Community Bonding

Opportunities for meaningful youth involvement and recognition for their involvement creates bonds with one's community (Zaff & Michelson, 2002). In addition, youth engagement has a reciprocal effect on the community. Not only do the youth benefit, but youth can have a significant impact on the organization they are a part of and the larger community as well (Zeldin, et al., 2000). Studies of youth development continue to demonstrate that youth are a valuable asset for building healthy communities (Zeldin, et al., 2000; Haid, et al., 1999; Zaff & Michelson, 2002).

Political Attitudes

Working with local government on policy change can improve political attitudes such as internal political efficacy, external political efficacy and trust. Internal efficacy refers to an individual's sense that they have the knowledge and skills needed to effectively communicate with government. In contrast, external political efficacy refers to "beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities to citizen demands" (Craig, Niemi and Silver, 1990). Trust is the perception that political officials are generally honest and will not abuse their public responsibilities. Together, these concepts are at the core of healthy political attitudes as well as a healthy civic community (Craig, et al., 1990).

Research suggests that bringing youth together to work on policy change efforts can change these political attitudes. For example, programs such as "Kids Voting USA" informs youth about civics and has significant positive influence on participants' sense of efficacy and trust in the motives of elected officials

(McLeod, et al., 1997). External efficacy is particularly increased by direct involvement with public officials (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006).

Community Impacts

Youth-led policy change campaigns raise the profile and awareness of the chosen issue in the community and can change constituent's sentiments regarding proposed changes. It can also change adult perception of youth participation in the policy process

Simply having youth take a leadership role in these kinds of initiatives can help to assure its passage. Youth involvement has been important in several different efforts to strengthen local tobacco regulations McGranaghan, et al. (1995), cite the significant role of youth when adopting anti-tobacco ordinances during the Community Intervention Trial for Smoking Cessation (COMMIT). Youth were the driving force behind adoption of tobacco regulations in three cities in Contra Costa County, California (Pratt & Freestone, 2000). Youth involvement was also central to adopting clean indoor air ordinances in two Southwestern cities (Rogers, 2003) and in tobacco ordinance adoption in many communities that were part of nationwide study (Hays & Hays, 2002).

In addition, assuming the youth are successful, adopting an ordinance which would make positive change in their community by making it a better and healthier place to live, work and play is an accomplishment for anyone, much less a committed group of young people.

Evaluation Methods

As mentioned, the EYPC evaluation was designed to assess program implementation, participant outcomes and community-level impacts.

Program implementation was monitored by facilitators completing an online "facilitator log" after every meeting. Facilitators reported the number of youth in attendance, the activities implemented at the session, and rated each activity implemented with a closed-ended rating scale and open-ended comments.

Participant outcomes were assessed with the EYPC Program Survey, a closed-ended attitudinal and behavioral survey that was implemented at the beginning and again at the conclusion of programming. Differences in item-level and scale scores were assessed. The survey protocol allowed individual pre-surveys to be matched with post-surveys. The survey includes scales to assess self-reported attitudinal changes in seven areas: teamwork, leadership, self-esteem, community bonding, internal political efficacy, external political efficacy, and political trust. It also measures political involvement with a series of items measuring political attentiveness and a series measuring political participation. All evaluation protocols were reviewed and approved by the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board.

Finally, community-level impacts were documented with final contacts from facilitators through an open-ended report submitted at the end of their EYPC implementation. Community impacts were also documented with other sources such as reports in the local press. The cycles of EYPC implementation included in this evaluation began in the Fall of 2013 and continued through the mid-summer of 2015 and include 32 complete implementation cycles of the programⁱ.

Program Implementation Results

Activities Implemented by Site

Figure 1 shows EYPC program implementation by site, with sites ordered by the total number of activities implemented. The most activities implemented at any single site was 22, or 78.5% of the total 28 activities. The least was 5, or 17.8% of the 28 activities. The average number of activities completed by all 32 sites was 12.2, or 43.5% of the 28 activities described in the manual. ⁱⁱ No site completed all of the 28 EYPC activities listed in the program manual. One site - #32 – implemented the program (as documented during a post-completion interview) and the youth presented to their local council, but the facilitator did not complete any facilitator logs.

The dots on Figure 1 depict the specific activities chosen by each site. Reading across the rows illustrates a high level of diversity among specific activities implemented across different EYPC sites. Reading down the columns also shows diversity in how frequently individual activities were implemented. In all, there was a high level of diversity in EYPC program implementation.

Given that fewer than half of the activities were implemented on average (43.5%), simple counts of activities implemented cannot differentiate among sites that may have chosen very different activities to implement. The activities that an individual site chooses to implement can impact implementation quality.

To measure implementation quality, we created an “Implementation Index” consisting of: the quartile (1-4) representing the total number of activities implemented at the siteⁱⁱⁱ; the actual number of the final activity implemented, with activities numbered sequentially by module (1-4) and for the specific activity within it (ie: 2.3 is the number of the third activity in the second module); and activity dispersal representing the total number of modules (1-4) for which at least two activities were implemented. To achieve the highest score on this last component, sites would have to have implemented a minimum of 8 activities - two in each of the four modules. These three numbers were then multiplied together to yield the implementation index. Each of these numbers is depicted in Figure 1, along with each site’s implementation index score.

The lowest implementation index was 14.4 and the highest was 76.8. The average was 50. This index discounts sites that implemented a greater number of activities, but did not spread these activities out across the program. For example, site #9 implemented 14 activities and scored a top score of 76.8 while site #10 implemented the same number of activities and scored only a slightly below average 49.2. This was because site #10 did not get as far in the program and only completed a single activity in Unit 4. The key evaluative question then becomes whether programs achieved outcomes at these levels of implementation. This implementation index score will be used as our measure of program implementation in further analysis below.

As mentioned, summing down the columns in Figure 1 also shows the frequency of implementation for each activity. Despite implementing only 43% of the program overall, all activities were implemented at least twice, suggesting there were not any particular activities uniformly rejected by facilitators (activity names are listed in Table 1).

Unsurprisingly since it is the beginning module, more activities were delivered in module 1 than other modules, with the first two activities implemented most frequently. Other than module 1, module 4, the final module including the council presentation, had the second greatest number of activities implemented overall.

Site ID	Program length mos.days	Define the Issue							Determine Decision Makers						Discover the Data								Deliver the Message								# of activities implemented	Quartiles: # of activities implemented	Final A ety	Dispersal	Implementation Index
		1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7					
1	8.1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	22	4	4.7	4	75.2		
2	2.9	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●		●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	21	4	4.8	4	76.8		
3	5.4	●	●		●	●	●		●			●			●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	20	4	4.8	4	76.8		
4	3.2	●	●		●	●	●	●		●	●		●			●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	20	4	4.6	4	73.6		
5	8.1	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	19	4	4.3	4	68.8		
6	1.7	●	●	●	●			●		●	●		●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	17	4	4.8	4	76.8		
7	7.3	●	●	●	●			●	●		●		●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	16	4	4.8	3	57.6		
8	7.7	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		●		●			●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	15	4	4.7	3	56.4		
9	4.6					●							●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	14	4	4.8	4	76.8		
10	2.9	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		●		●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	14	4	4.1	3	49.2		
11	6.5		●	●	●			●	●			●			●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	13	4	4.8	4	76.8		
12	6.5	●		●				●		●	●		●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	13	4	4.7	4	75.2		
13	7.4	●	●	●	●			●				●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	12	3	4.6	4	55.2		
14	7.2	●	●	●	●		●	●		●			●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	12	3	4.7	3	42.3		
15	7.6	●						●		●		●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	11	3	4.8	3	43.2		
16	7.3	●		●		●									●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	11	3	4.7	3	42.3		
17	2.0	●	●	●		●		●		●		●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	10	3	4.7	4	56.4		
18	2.9	●	●			●		●		●	●		●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	10	3	4.8	3	43.2		
19	7.5	●	●	●	●	●	●			●		●			●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	10	3	3.6	3	32.4		
20	7.4	●	●		●			●							●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	9	3	4.8	3	43.2		
21	6.4					●	●		●		●		●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	9	3	4.7	3	42.3		
22	2.1					●			●		●		●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	9	3	4.1	2	24.6		
23	9.7	●	●							●	●		●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8	3	4.8	3	43.2		
24	3.2	●		●					●		●		●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8	3	4.8	3	43.2		
25	6.6	●		●				●							●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8	3	4.6	3	41.4		
26		●				●				●		●		●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8	3	4.8	2.0	28.8		
27	4.1	●	●	●	●	●		●		●		●		●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8	3	2.4	2	14.4		
28	7.1	●	●												●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	7	2	4.4	3	26.4		
29		●						●							●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	7	2	4.3	3	25.8		
30	7.3	●	●					●							●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	7	2	4.8	2	19.2		
31	8.1	●	●												●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	5	2	4.8	2	19.2		
32*	2.6																																		

* Implementation data unavailable

Figure 1. Program Implementation

The “*Orientation*” (Activity 1.1) was the most frequently implemented activity. The second most frequent activities were both “*Advocating for our Policy*” (1.2), which is an early activity involving learning about the policy youth will be working on and “*Survey skills and data collection*” (3.6) which involves surveying the community to gather opinions on the issue and was also one of the most frequently implemented single activities. Other frequent activities were “*Developing Advocacy Message*” (4.1) and “*Getting Organized*” (4.2) both early activities preparing for the final presentation.

Activities implemented less frequently include “*Local Government Quiz Show*” (2.6) an interactive group quiz on basic facts about their local government or community; the “*Ordinance Adoption game*”, (2.3), a city council meeting simulation; and “*Prepare for the Event*” (4.5), which gets the group ready for their culminating event. Finally, “*Policy Debate*” (1.6) involves staging a formal debate of the policy issue. Each of these activities share that they are all ‘in-classroom’ activities and they all place a heavier burden of preparation on facilitators.

Activity Rating

Table 1 shows activity ratings by activity. The N in this table can differ from Figure 1 because a single activity (counted once in Figure 1) for various reasons may have been implemented multiple times in a single site and rated each time; we counted each time the activity was implemented and rated. The two primary ratings reported measured how successful facilitators felt the activity was and how attentive youth were during the activity. The average success rating across activities was 3.17 or, between successful and very successful. The average youth attentiveness rating across activities was 3.49, between attentive and very attentive. No activities were rated “unsuccessful” on average nor were there were any activities in which facilitators rated their youth as “distracted”. This suggests that overall all activities were successful and well-received.

Table 1. Activity rating

			Activity Rating			
			N	Overall Rating	Attentiveness Rating	
Define the Issue	1.1	Orientation	44	3.07	3.45	Overall, this activity was: 1= Not at all successful 2= Somewhat successful 3= Successful 4= Very successful
	1.2	Advocating for our Policy	29	3.07	3.48	
	1.3	Community Mapping	21	3.05	3.48	
	1.4	What Good Is Government?	19	3.11	3.37	
	1.5	Ordinance Review	16	2.94	3.50	
	1.6	Policy Debate	8	3.13	3.13	
	1.7	Policy Advocate Guest Speaker	15	3.47	3.73	
	1.8	Policy Quiz Show	14	3.43	3.57	
Determine Decision Makers	2.1	Mapping Your Reps	12	3.25	3.33	During this activity, most students were: 1= Distracted 2= Somewhat Distracted 3= Somewhat Attentive 4= Attentive
	2.2	Local Government Structure	17	2.94	3.29	
	2.3	Ordinance Adoption Game	3	3.00	3.67	
	2.4	Council Meeting Observation	14	3.07	3.57	
	2.5	Council Member Guest Speaker	10	3.40	3.80	
	2.6	Local Government Quiz Show	2	3.00	3.00	
Discover the Data	3.1	Trustworthy Data	15	3.27	3.47	
	3.2	Taking Stock	12	3.50	3.58	
	3.3	Existing Data Collection	14	3.36	3.57	
	3.4	Observation Data	11	3.45	3.45	
	3.5	Stakeholder Interview	10	3.20	3.60	
	3.6	Survey Skills and Data Collection	22	2.91	3.36	
	3.7	Data Analysis	12	3.25	3.42	
	3.8	Data Presentation	7	3.00	3.43	
Deliver the Message	4.1	Developing Advocacy Message	19	3.32	3.68	
	4.2	Getting Organized	20	3.05	3.45	
	4.3	Develop the Presentation	20	3.05	3.35	
	4.4	Promote the Event	6	3.33	3.67	
	4.5	Prepare for the Event	5	3.60	3.80	
	4.6	Presentation Rehearsal	21	3.19	3.48	
	4.7	Celebrate!	8	3.25	3.63	
	4.8	Alternate	19	3.37	3.58	
TOTALS			445	3.17	3.49	

Among the most successfully rated activities were “*Prepare for the Event*” which focuses on planning for the final group presentation (also rated the highest on “attentiveness”); “*Taking Stock*” where youth review what they’ve learned and plan for data collection; and “*Policy Advocate Guest Speaker*” in which a local policy supporter speaks to the group (also highly rated on “attentiveness”).

Other successfully rated activities included “*Observation Data*” where youth practice and plan collecting data by observation out in the community such as collecting cigarette butts in public parks; the “*Policy Quiz Show*” an interactive group quiz on the policy issue; and “*Council Member Guest Speaker*” who speaks to the group (ranked as highest on youth “attentiveness”). These successfully rated activities share that they involve teamwork, interaction, or having outside influential guests come and talk with the group.

The lowest relative success rating for any activity (2.91; still only slightly below “successful”) was the “*Survey Skills and Data Collection*” activity, mentioned above as being adopted very frequently. This suggests that this activity was challenging, but necessary for the program. Collecting community survey data is essential to building an effective advocacy strategy. Other activities rated relatively lower than others on success include “*Ordinance Review*”, an activity where youth review ordinance language; and “*Local Government Structure*”, where youth research and learn basic facts about their local government (also rated low on “attentiveness”). These activities share that they are more instructional activity that risk feeling more like classroom instruction.

As for attentiveness, in addition to those mentioned above, among the more “attentive” activities were those that involved the youth in preparing for their final presentation. These included “*Developing Advocacy Message*” and “*Promote the Event*” along with the final presentation. The relatively lowest rated activity on attentiveness (3.00 - “attentive”) was the “*Local Government Quiz Show*” but it was only attempted and rated twice. As mentioned above, this activity requires a good deal of prep from facilitators and could be challenging to do well. The “*Policy Debate*” was also rated low, but this activity requires a good deal of research by the youth themselves to present and defend arguments.

The general success of all activities, coupled with the fact that no activities were poorly rated overall and none were not adopted by any facilitators, supports a recommendation of continuing to offer a smorgasbord of activities from which facilitators can choose rather than reducing the number of activities in the program.

Activity Comments

In the Facilitator Log, facilitators were asked what they themselves found most and least effective about the activities in that session and what youth seemed to like best and least. They were also free to leave other comments. Here we report selected comments for selected activities:

During the “*Orientation*” activity students are introduced to the program and complete their pre-program survey. Facilitator responses to what participants liked best show that the Orientation generated an impressive level of interest and enthusiasm for what was to come in the program:

[Youth liked] that they will get to have speakers at their meetings to learn about city government, and that they will get to attend a city council meeting.

The enthusiasm of the students was very positive and they were all very interested in tobacco prevention in their community.

I think [youth] were surprised that they were going to learn so much about local government and that their efforts could make a difference.

Participants expressed excitement for program and some level of amazement that they could potentially make such change in their community.

Yet open-ended comments suggest some level of dissatisfaction resulting from pre-program survey administration during the orientation. The following comments were responses to what youth liked least:

The teens were overwhelmed by all the paperwork, and signatures that were required to participate in the survey. They were distracted during the surveys, and I think there were some challenges of some teens being able to adequately read the surveys.

Spending a significant amount of time on the surveys at the beginning and taking time away from our discussion since the meeting was only about 1.25-1.5 hours to begin with.

Participants seemed to be least interested in the survey since it was kind of long for them to complete, especially at their first meeting, when they were hoping to learn more and interact with the group.

Importantly, this was not a problem for all sites and overall, youth participation in the pre-program survey was high despite the noted challenges. This will be discussed further below.

Guest speakers were generally well received and these activities were generally highly rated. The following was a typical positive comment for the “*Policy Advocate Guest Speaker*”:

The guest speaker inspired the teens and gave them the information they needed to begin their campaign. [Participants liked] that the guest speaker liked their ideas and learning that people value teen's ideas in enforcing rules/laws.

The “*Ordinance Review*” is more of a classroom activity and was rated relatively lower, but is nonetheless a crucial part of advocacy. Here one facilitator speaks both to the activity's success and its importance:

The ordinance review was the most successful activity completed. It gave the teens an idea of the tangible item we are working to create and pass when they speak with the Board of the Park District.

A key goal of the “*Policy Debate*” activity is for participants to role play – and begin to understand and refute – the opposing arguments for their chosen policy. This activity was less frequently implemented, but one site that did reported:

The debate went really well and the students seemed interested for the most part. [Participants liked] taking the other side of the issue and arguing against what has been taught.

“*Local Government Structure*” involves learning the basic political facts about one's local government and is a crucial component of successful advocacy. This was a lower rated activity involving “classroom”-like learning, but when the activity goes well, sites report experiences such as the following:

Youth were surprised to learn some of the people that were on the [their local] City Council. They realized they had connections with these community leaders, one of which was their friend's parent and they were unaware of it until the activity!

The “*Council Member Guest Speaker*” classroom visit is a crucial experience for the program since most youth have never been in a situation to directly interact with a local council member, and would probably never otherwise get such an experience until adulthood. Generally, the activity yielded comments from facilitators similar to the following:

Having the council member speak to the students helped them see that their voice could be heard and got them more excited about the presentation.

Yet, this activity still depends heavily on the personality of the speaker, as captured in this follow-up comment by the same facilitator:

At times they were distracted during the council member's speech. It's tough to hold an 8th grader's attention when talking about local politics.

Like the council member guest speaker, the “*Council Meeting Observation*” is also a crucial and unique experience for youth in this program. Most participants seemed to have gained from the experience and several facilitators reported very positive experiences such as the following:

Some of the council members stayed after the meeting to talk to the group and expressed how happy they were the kids were taking an interest in local government. This made the group of students feel welcomed and valued as part of the community.

[Youth liked] Being able to observe an actual council meeting and envision what it will be like when they present their own proposal.

However, this could be a tedious experience for the youth, as reflected in the following comments on what the youth liked least:

Possibly the length of the meeting, since it was about 2 hours.

The length of meeting and topics discussed

Some dry material that the students seemed a little confused on.

They had to dress up and travel to the board meeting

“*Data Analysis*”, where youth spend time ‘in session’ tallying and summarizing data they collected from their own community is another activity that risks feeling like schoolwork. But it was sometimes well-received as described in the following comment:

[Youth liked] that it was their work they were reviewing. They had worked hard to get the surveys out and educate the community about their cause. Being able to show the survey results to the group showed them that the community does support their initiative.

However, sometimes, results reveal something the students didn’t want to discover:

I think the students were surprised at the overwhelming disinterest of the general public when it came to tobacco related instances.

In fact at this site, this survey result derailed implementation of their program.

“*Develop the Presentation*” involves youth preparing their final presentation. Comments often reflected that youth enjoyed pulling together their information and preparing for the presentation, as reflected in the following comment:

The youth were excited about everything they've learned thus far and really wanted to showcase it in their presentation. The youth had fun but still accomplished a lot. They are finally getting to the point where they can see all the work they've done throughout the year pay off.

Overall, these selected facilitator comments point to the success of – and reinforces the importance of - each of these activities, including activities that were less well-rated or less frequently implemented.

Participant impacts

Participant attendance and attrition

Table 2 shows various statistics regarding EYPC implementation by the numbers of participants. Twenty-eight site facilitators reported youth attendance by session over time in their Facilitator Logs. Among the 28 sites reporting this data, there were 287 youth attending as programs began and 192 youth completed the program. Across the 28 reporting sites, average attendance at the start of programs was 10.2 and average attendance at the end was 6.8, yielding an average attrition across sites of 3.9, which might be perceived as acceptable for a program focusing on older mostly high school age youth. Closer scrutiny shows an even better result. There were 3 ‘outlier’ sites with attrition rates greater than 20 (occurring mostly in initial sessions at sites that recruited broadly and may have still been self-selecting the most engaged participants). Excluding these sites yields an average attrition rate across the remaining sites as .8; fairly impressive for a program with older youth. Within programs, EYPC groups were not large with minimum average attendance over time of 2.2 and a maximum average attendance of 10.2. The average of the over-time attendance by site was only 8.1.

Table 2. EYPC implementation by the numbers

PROGRAM ATTENDANCE AND ATTRITION	
Sites reporting attendance data:	28
Total Youth attendance, fist sessions:	287
Ave starting attendance (n=28):	10.2
Total youth attendance, final sessions (n=28):	192
Minimum average program attendance over time:	2.2
Maximum average program attendance over time:	10.2
Average average program attendance over time (N=28):	8.06
Ave attendance, final sessions, (n=28):	6.8
Ave attrition (n=28):	3.9
Ave attrition (n=25; deleting three outliers):	0.8
PROGRAM SURVEY PARTICIPATION	
Sites returning pre-program surveys (out of 32 sites):	29
Total pre-program surveys returned:	242
Sites returning post-program surveys (out of 32 sites):	15
Total post-program surveys returned (from 15 sites):	99
Matched pre and post program surveys (from 15 sites):	54

Participant evaluation participation

The lower half of Table 2 shows youth participation in the EYPC evaluation. Overall, pre-program survey completion was high with 29 of the 32 sites returning pre-program surveys for 242 total youth respondents. However, only 15 sites returned post-program surveys for only 99 completed post-program surveys; a 59% reduction. Moreover, of these, only 54 post-program surveys could be matched with pre-program surveys.

Difficulties in implementing post-program surveys typically resulted from meeting planning and timing issues as programs wound down near the end of the school year. During this time, sites were trying to schedule presentations before governing bodies that meet only once or twice per month, and still convene youth again to complete post-program surveys.

The only apparent explanations for the large number of unmatched surveys would be either respondent error or participant turnover within programs, although facilitators were instructed not to administer post-program surveys to youth who had not taken the pre-program survey. In either case, unmatched surveys were excluded, so we do have the best data available. But since we have a low response rate at this point in our evaluation, our analysis presents the data while setting aside measures of statistical significance. We offer that the data remain suggestive rather than conclusive; readers are free to form their own substantive conclusions after reviewing the findings.

Pre-Post results

Figure 2 shows the demographic overview for the 55 EYPC youth that were included in the pre/post analysis. For all of these sites, 61% of EYPC youth were in high school and between 15 and 18 years of age. 38.4% were middle schoolers between 12 and 14. Over two-thirds of participants were female (67.3%) and just over half were white (51%). The next largest group were Latino/Latina (37.2%) and 9.8% were African-American. Asians comprised 7.8% of EYPC youth. EYPC youth are high achievers with 88.5% reporting that their “average grades” are A’s or A’s and B’s. (40.4% of EYPC youth reported “Mostly A’s”). Self-reported attendance at post shows that 88.7% attended “usually” or “always”. Thus EYPC youth were more likely to be older, ethnically diverse, and much more likely to be female high achieving students.

Question	Category	N	
How old are you?	12-14	20	 38.46%
	15-18	32	 61.54%
What grade are you in?	Middle School (6th-8th)	15	 28.85%
	High School	37	 71.15%
What is your gender?	Female	35	 67.31%
	Male	17	 32.69%
What is your race or ethnicity?	White	26	 47.27%
	Hispanic	19	 34.55%
	African American	5	 9.09%
	Asian American	4	 7.27%
	Native American or American Indian	1	 1.82%
Which of the following best describes the average grades you get in school?	Mostly A's	21	 40.38%
	Mostly A's and B's	25	 48.08%
	Mostly B's and C's	6	 11.54%
Who do you live with MOST OF THE TIME?	Parents	37	 71.15%
	Mother only	14	 26.92%
	Father only	1	 1.92%
How often have you attended this program?	Always	23	 43.40%
	Usually	24	 45.28%
	Sometimes	3	 5.66%
	Rarely	3	 5.66%

Figure 2. Participant demographics

The next few figures and tables compare pre/post mean differences for all sites and then compare results for “high” and “low” implementation sites. This allows us to determine whether – as might be expected – relatively more positive participant outcomes were attained by higher implementation sites. To equalize the number of participants in both groups, we classified 4 sites (combined n=28 participants) as “High” implementers with Index scores of 75.2 and above and 10 sites (combined n=26 participants) as “low” implementers with implementation scores of 56.4 and below. All mean comparisons are between these two subgroups. In separate analysis using all pre-test data, all scales were found to have alpha reliabilities above .6.

Table 3 presents the matched-case mean survey response comparisons among program participants before and after participating in the program for the four personal attitudinal scales: Teamwork, leadership, self-esteem and community bonding. In all cases, differences were small and due to low sample sizes, statistical significance tests were not performed. Nonetheless, as anticipated if the program is having the desired effects on youth, the means increase in the predicted direction for all four of these scales with all sites in the analysis. For the implementation sub-group comparisons, the scale scores increase for the self-esteem scale for the high implementation group with no measurable change for the low implementation group. However, for the teamwork and community bonding scales the low implementation group registered an increase with no change for the high implementation group. There was no difference in the magnitude or direction of change between the two sub-groups for leadership.

Table 3(pt. 1): Teamwork and Leadership

	14 Sites (n=54)		4 High Imp. Sites (n=28)		10 Low Imp. Sites (n=26)	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
	TEAMWORK					
Team work scale	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.5
SCALE ITEMS						
I trust my ability to solve new and difficult problems	3.2	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.1	3.5
I like to organize people to do positive activities	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.6
I like to set a good example for other young people	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.8
I enjoy helping others through life's challenges and problems	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.5
I can work with a group that pulls together to accomplish a goal	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.8
I find it easy to trust my friends	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2	<i>3.1</i>
I learn a lot from my friends and peers my age	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.1	<i>3</i>
I am a helpful member of my team or group.	3.9	<i>3.8</i>	3.9	<i>3.8</i>	3.8	3.8
LEADERSHIP						
Leadership scale	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.4
SCALE ITEMS						
My peers consider me a leader	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.3
I have the skills and ability to communicate and express my opinions to adults	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.6
I am not afraid to voice my opinions to older youth or adults	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.5	3.4	3.5
I am comfortable speaking in front of an audience	3	3.3	3	3.3	3	3.2
I have the ability to make change in my neighborhood	3.3	3.3	<i>3.4</i>	<i>3.2</i>	3.2	3.3
I have the skills and ability to communicate and express my opinions to my peers.	<i>3.6</i>	<i>3.5</i>	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5
1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Agree 4=Strongly Agree						

Table 3 (cont'd): Self-Esteem and Community Bonding

	14 Sites (n=54)		4 High Imp. Sites (n=28)		10 Low Imp. Sites (n=26)	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
SELF-ESTEEM						
Self-Esteem Scale	3.5	3.7	3.5	3.7	3.6	3.6
SCALE ITEMS						
I am able to do things as well as most other people	3.5	3.7	3.5	3.8	3.5	3.6
I feel that I am a person of worth--at least on an equal plane with others	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.8	<i>3.7</i>	<i>3.6</i>
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.6	3.5	3.5
I take a positive attitude toward myself	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.5	3.5
I feel that I have a number of good qualities	3.6	3.7	<i>3.7</i>	<i>3.7</i>	<i>3.6</i>	3.7
COMMUNITY BONDING						
Community Scale	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.3
SCALE ITEMS						
My community is a good place to live	3.2	3.3	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4
I recognize people who live in my community	3.1	3.4	3.1	3.3	3.2	3.5
Adults in this community pay attention to the opinions of youth	2.7	3	2.7	3	2.7	3.1
I get along with people in my community	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.4
I care about what people in my community think about my actions	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.2
I feel at home in my community	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.5
The youth in this community can influence local government	3.1	3.1	3	3	3.2	3.3
A group of people working together can make changes in my community	3.5	<i>3.4</i>	3.5	<i>3.4</i>	3.4	3.5
I am hopeful that change can be a reality in my community	3.6	<i>3.4</i>	3.6	<i>3.4</i>	3.7	3.5
It is very important to me to live in my particular community	2.9	2.9	3	<i>2.9</i>	2.9	2.9
I share the same values as people in my community	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3	3

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Agree 4=Strongly Agree

The item-level analysis is also presented in Table 3. Mean increases are in bold-type and decreases are italicized. The table shows the vast majority of item-level changes in the predicted direction. For these items, there appears to be no clear, predictable pattern of differences between the high and low implementation groups. Overall, the direction of positive change among all items suggests that the program may be having positive impacts on youth personal attitudes. The consistency of the positive changes in the predicted direction across a variety of measures lends support to the idea that EYPC is potentially having the desired impact on youth participants and there appear to be few consistent differences between higher and lower implementation groups suggesting that outcomes may be attained regardless of implementation levels.

Table 4 shows “political attentiveness” - a series of items designed to measure change in the ways youth might follow politics in their daily lives. The items were a 5 point Likert-type scale of frequencies from 1 = “never” to 5 = “daily”. As anticipated if the program were stimulating youth interest overall, most of these items (7 of 10) increased from pre to post for all sites. A notable exception is “discuss politics and government with others” which went down slightly. But overall, participants in EYPC may be slightly

more attentive to news –and in particular political news – after participating in EYPC. Moreover, there were few consistent differences between high and low implementation groups.

Table 4. Political attentiveness

	All Sites (n=54)		High Implementers (n=28)		Low Implementers (n=26)	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Follow what is happening in local government	3	3.1	2.9	3	3	3.2
Discuss politics and government with others	3	2.8	2.8	2.7	3.1	3
Watch news reports on tv	3.6	3.6	3.8	3.6	3.5	3.7
Watch political or news commentary programs on TV	2.8	3.1	2.7	3.1	2.8	3.2
Listen to news reports on the radio	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.9
Listen to political or news commentary programs on the radio	2.4	2.5	2.2	2.4	2.5	2.5
Read news reports on the internet	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.4
Read political or news commentary on the internet	2.8	3.2	2.8	3.2	2.8	3.2
Read news reports in the newspaper	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.6
Read political or news commentary in the newspaper	2.1	2.3	2	2.1	2.2	2.4

Figure 3 depicts items asking about political participation and action. For these items, responses were dichotomous: “No, I have not engaged in this activity” or “Yes, I have engaged in this activity”. The bar charts display the raw number of survey respondents answering “yes” to each item before and after participating in EYPC. For all of these items, the numbers reporting they have engaged in the activity increased from before the program to after the program. Note that only the first item “contacting a public official to express your opinion” is an actual part of the EYPC program. Political activities described in the other items go beyond activities engaged in as part of the EYPC program. No clear patterns are depicted between the two different levels of implementation.

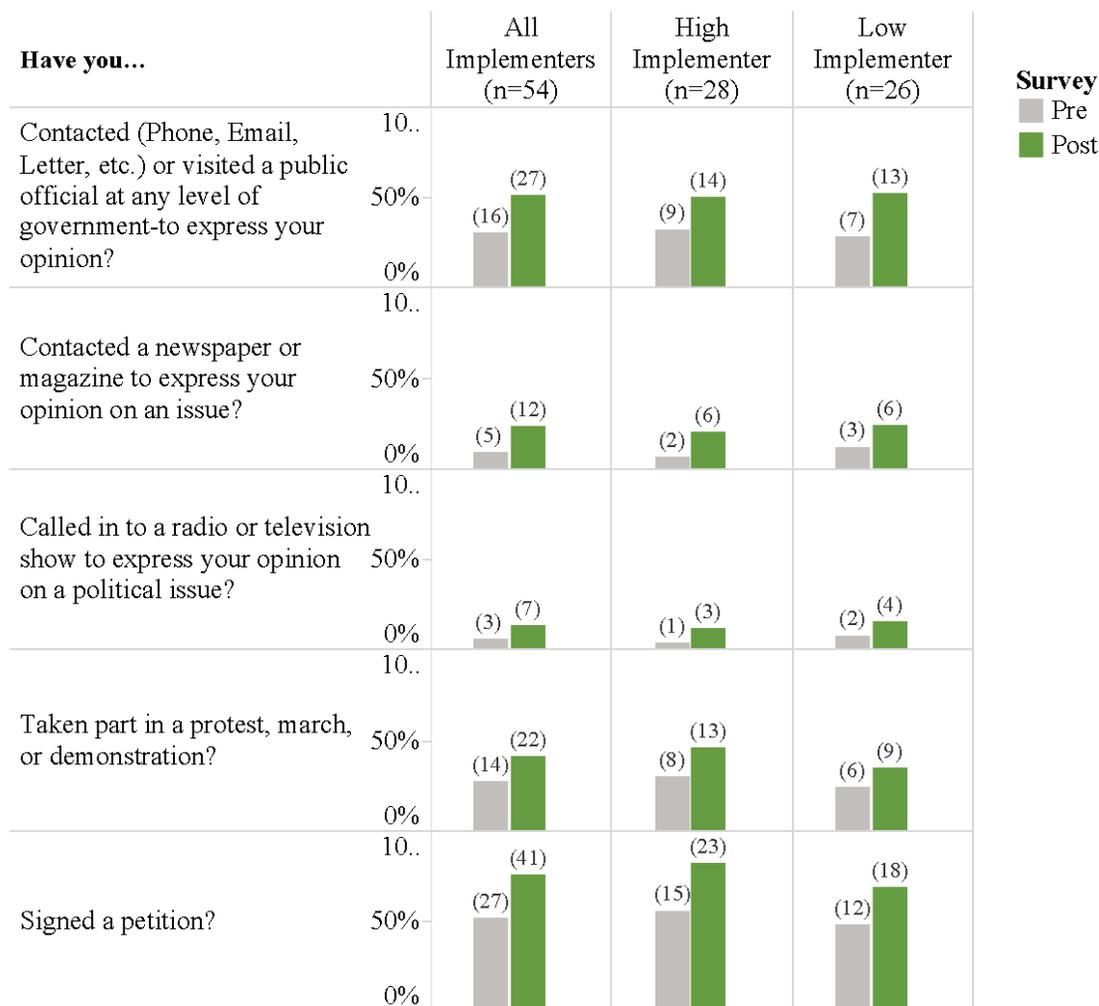


Figure 3. Political participation

Finally, Table 5 reports changes in three different political beliefs: internal efficacy, external efficacy, and trust. For all respondents, the only scale item measuring any positive change is ‘internal efficacy’, that is, one’s own confidence that they have the knowledge to affect government. This is a very important outcome for EYPC. Importantly, the implementation subgroup comparison shows positive change for high implementers but no change for low implementers. Moreover, the item-level analysis shows nearly all positive changes for the high implementers and nearly all negative change for low implementers. This suggests that to change internal efficacy, implementation matters. Importantly, two key items “I have a good understanding of political issues facing our community” and “I have a good understanding of the ways I might influence government” both register positive change for all respondents and for those in both high and low implementation groups. This is an important result because understanding political issues and the ways youth might influence government is a key outcome for EYPC.

Table 5. Political beliefs

	14 Sites (n=54)		4 High Imp. Sites (n=28)		10 Low Imp. Sites (n=26)	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
INTERNAL EFFICACY						
Internal efficacy scale	2.6	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.6	2.6
SCALE ITEMS						
I have a good understanding of the political issues facing our community.	2.5	2.8	2.5	2.8	2.6	2.7
I have a good understanding of the ways I might influence government.	2.5	2.8	2.5	2.8	2.6	2.8
I could do as good a job in public office as most other people could.	2.7	2.9	2.5	2.9	2.9	2.8
Politics and government often seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on. R	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.3
People like me have no say about what the government does. R	2.8	2.9	2.9	3	2.8	2.7
I feel confident when talking with other people about politics and government.	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.6
Other people seem to have an easier time understanding complicated issues than I do. R	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.5
EXTERNAL EFFICACY						
External efficacy scale	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.9	2.7	2.6
SCALE ITEMS						
Most public officials are truly interested in what the public thinks.	2.6	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.8
Public officials are not interested in hearing what people think, and there is really no way to make them listen. R	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.1	3	2.7
Public officials don't care about what people like me think. R	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.9	2.7
Elected officials lose touch with the public quickly. R	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.3
TRUST						
Trust scale	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8
SCALE ITEMS						
Whatever its faults may be, the American form of government is still the best for us.	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.9	3	3
There is not much about our form of government to be proud of. R	3	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.1	2.9
You can generally trust the people who run our government to do what is right.	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.7
When government leaders make statements to the American people on television or in the Newspapers, they are usually telling the truth.	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.6	2.7

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3= Agree 4=Strongly Agree

External efficacy, the belief that government will be responsive to requests for change, another key outcome of the program, shows some interesting results. The Table shows no change for the full group. However, the Table shows a positive change among high implementers and mostly negative change among low implementers. Like internal efficacy, this suggests that implementation levels may make a difference in affecting external efficacy.

The program would not seem to have much effect on political trust, and what effect it does have would appear to be negative. Item level analysis shows few changes pre to post and there are few differences as anticipated between high and low implementation groups. Perhaps building political trust is not something EYPC can change, or that the measures of trust in the survey are overly broad and not specific enough to change as a result of particular EYPC activities.

Overall, while these results remain suggestive rather than conclusive due to the low response rate for matchable pre and post program surveys, they indicate that EYPC may be having effects on youth in the anticipated theoretical directions, particularly for internal and external political efficacy, but also for political attentiveness and participation and for changing personal attitudes. Notably, positive changes in internal and external efficacy were demonstrated to be stronger among the high implementation sites. The level of implementation did not appear to differentiate among the other measures. To increase the number of cases in the analysis, recruiting more sites would be helpful, but retaining youth in the program, getting youth in active programs to complete post-surveys and carefully completing match codes all would have significantly increased our analytical power for the participant evaluation in this round of implementations.

Community Impacts

Community impacts and outcomes were examined with final, follow-up contacts with sites via email or telephone. Other information used to assess community level impacts were site level reports, local press about the activities of EYPC youth and (in one case) taped council meeting presentations.

Policies

The pie chart in Figure 4 depicts the distribution of policies focused on by the various sites. Due to reporting difficulties, we were unable to determine the policy focus of two implementing sites, therefore 30 sites are included in the figure. 27 of these 30 sites (90%) focused on tobacco policy. This was a result of nearly all EYPC sites during this period having been funded to work on tobacco policy through the Illinois Department of Public Health. Two-thirds of EYPC during this implementation year, 18 of the 27 tobacco policy sites (66%) focused on policies that would make local outdoor parks smokefree. The other third focused on a variety of other tobacco policies. Two sites worked on alcohol policy and one presented on the EYPC program generally to middle school youth (not generally considered a goal of the EYPC program).

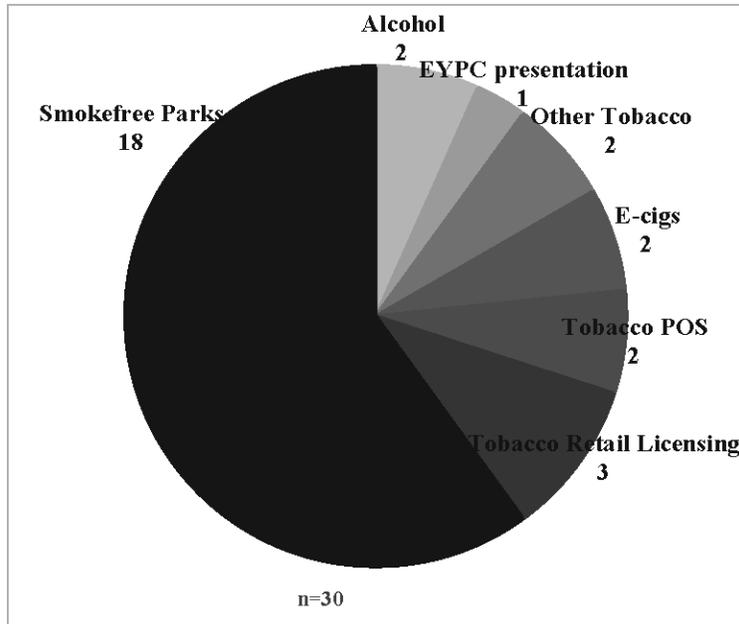


Figure 4. Policy focus

Culminating Events & Policy Outcomes

EYPC’s two key community-level outcomes are first, the “culminating event” which typically involves delivering a presentation before their local city council or other relevant governing body. The second outcome is the governing body’s decision.

Table 6 summarizes EYPC’s culminating events and the policy outcomes. At 25 of the 32 sites, the culminating event was a presentation to a local governing body (city council, county board, park district board, etc) or decision-maker (ie: principal, police chief). This alone illustrates a crucial success of the program: getting youth to appear testifying before a group of city officials and the public with arguments and data that they themselves own; that they collected, analyzed, organized and assembled into a presentation is a significant accomplishment in and of itself.

Table 6. Implementation by outcome

Culminating Event	N	Outcome	Ave Imp Score
Council/Board presentation	9	Passed	56.2
	12	Pending	52.6
	4	<i>Failed</i>	37.8
Total	25		
Alternate event	3	N/A	41.6
No event	4		41.1
Total	7		

For various reasons, seven sites had no formal presentation as their culminating event; Three had an ‘alternate’ culminating event and 4 had no culminating event as the program, although completed, was unable to schedule or implement their culminating event. Typically, these other outcomes occurred due to uncontrollable circumstances. For example, at one of these sites with no culminating event, the facilitator related the following series of unfortunate events:

We met with 4 or 5 councilmen/women, did site visits, did a survey, started a petition, spoke informally with the parks and rec committee, met with the mayor and city clerk, and constructed a presentation. Unfortunately, the city elections were in early April. The turnover was tremendous and it killed the schedule. There was a new mayor, city clerk, 6 new aldermen, and most importantly the parks and rec chair was made vacant by the turnover. Due to the vacancy, the committee did not hold any more meetings until middle summer. While we didn't accomplish our goal, the kids learned a great deal, had fun, and became much more empowered.

This can be the unfortunate result of a program such as EYPC whose implementation can be directly affected by local politics.

Policy Outcomes

After presenting to a governing body or to decision-makers, policy decisions are then up to that body or decision-maker. Although many extenuating factors affect such decisions, another measure of EYPC success is a favorable policy decision. Among the 25 EYPC sites presenting to their governing bodies, 9 of these governing bodies ultimately passed ordinances or policies based on the initiative of EYPC youth, for a 36% rate of success. 6 of these successful policies made local parks (or areas in parks) smokefree. Two of the successful policies covered e-cigarettes and one site unanimously passed an ordinance making their local annual community festival smokefree.

Considering that policy advocacy efforts commonly fail, particularly on a first attempt, a 36% overall success rate by youth in their policy efforts may be seen as an additional measure of EYPC success. In only 4 sites was there a recorded “no” vote. The policy decision remained “pending” at the other 12 sites through the end of the 6-8 month follow-up monitoring period.

One key evaluative question is whether a more robust implementation of EYPC is associated with greater policy success. Table 5 also depicts the average implementation score for each of the various possible policy or programmatic outcomes. The data show that among the 9 sites whose boards passed ordinances, the mean implementation scores were slightly higher than other sites. Sites with outcomes pending as of the followup period were slightly lower, and the failed sites scored much lower on their implementation index (37.8 on average). The sites with alternate events or sites that did not complete culminating events, implementation scores were lower, but still not quite as low as sites where the proposed ordinances were voted against. This lends strong support for the idea that – despite the fact that policy outcome votes by local boards are largely out of the direct control of youth in EYPC programs - the level of EYPC implementation nonetheless would seem to contribute to successful policy outcomes

Community Impact Comments

Comments about the final community impacts of EYPC were gleaned from local press reports and recorded meetings where they were available. These comments reflect high praise for the efforts of EYPC youth. The following is from a newspaper article at a site where youth successfully approached the council regarding making the small town’s outdoor annual festival smokefree:

[The youth] made sure they had all of their ducks in a row before approaching the council. They compiled medical information about the dangers of secondhand smoke and conducted a survey to

gauge community support for [an outdoor annual festival] smoking ban. The results showed 86 percent of survey respondents favored limiting smoking in public places at [the outdoor annual festival].

According to the article, students sought advice from a police sergeant and the City Attorney in crafting the bill and the City Administrator offered advice on gaining council support. The City Administrator said:

This was a very engaged group of students. It was just fun to work with them. It was cool to see a group of kids take interest in their local government and help improve their community.

In the article, one of the participating youth related:

People complain about the government all the time, but they don't do anything. I finally did something so I can say, 'This is a bad policy, and this is a good one.' I feel like an active citizen.

In an article from another site where youth successfully worked to pass a smokefree parks ordinance, one of the youth reported:

I feel great. To think that we worked so hard on creating the ordinance and meeting with certain people, and trying to get it done. The fact that it all pulled off, it's really satisfaction.

According to another student:

I was jumping in my chair when I got the news. Something that I worked so hard on actually was approved. It's really important because a lot of times people smoke in parks and there are little kids there.

In press reports and from meeting recordings, council members seem to beam with pride for EYPC youth. According to the mayor in the town where youth worked for a smokefree annual festival:

They were great debaters. They are great young men and women, and they show a lot of potential, and [our town] should be proud.

And according to one of their council members:

I thought they gathered a lot of information, facts and figures, and did a great job.

The following transcribed comments were from a recorded meeting of a council member addressing youth who had just completed their smokefree parks presentation:

I would say thank you first of all because it sounds like you've done most of the work for us, and I would say that I'm shocked to hear that we're the only one in [our area] that doesn't have this. I 110 % support it, I am just beaming with pride of the ... High School students that came to our meeting to present this. I am impressed and that you took the initiative to do this. I support it fully. So thank you for taking the time to do what you did, and thank you for continuing to work with the Key Club.

Ordinance Rejection

As noted, in 4 instances, despite youth efforts, local governing bodies voted down their proposal. While this could be a disheartening experience, comments by facilitators suggest that even in rejection, there may be a critical learning opportunity for youth:

In this county, the final vote was 13-9 against the students' proposal for local tobacco licensing.

[Most effective]: The opportunity for the students to speak/advocate for policy in front of the full County Board.

[Least effective]: The students did very well, but were disappointed that the policy initiative did not pass.

[Youth liked]: Experiencing the workings of the county board meeting.

[Youth liked least]: The outcome of the vote. The board members unfortunately are not concerned about health in the county and the students learned this hard fact.

Further comment:

The students did attempt to reach out to individual board members, but did not really receive many replies. This is not a failure of the program, but of the apathy of the elected officials.

And at a different site where youth experienced a negative vote:

[Most effective:] The Reality Group's message to the city council was clear, organized and professional.

[Least effective:] The city council was not receptive to the proposed ordinance regarding point of sale restrictions.

[Participants liked best:] The ability to participate in a city council meeting.

[Participants liked least:] The failure on the part of the council to see the importance of their proposal.

Further comment:

The [youth] group did an excellent job developing a realistic proposal and backing it up with empirical evidence. They had no control over the city council's lack of interest. The exercise itself was still an excellent learning experience and may pave the way for changes in the future.

Overall, these comments show that youth would seem to have made a strong positive impression on local officials. Moreover, reports reveal that the experience of going before their local governing body – regardless of the outcome – made a strong and impactful impression on youth.

Conclusions

At the program level, we found that sites on average implemented fewer than half (43%) of the activities included in the program manual. The key question became whether sites implementing EYPC at this level could achieve program outcomes. In fact, the evaluation has documented that at this level of implementation, the program demonstrates positive change at the participant and the community level. And while this could point to a need to reduce the overall number of activities comprising EYPC, the activity evaluation found that no single activity was systematically rejected by all sites and facilitators who implemented the various activities indicated a high level of satisfaction with all of them. In addition, having more activities available as part of the program allows facilitators to 'pick and choose' among activities those which are most suitable for their sites.

At the participant level, survey response rates were disappointing, yet mean-comparison results among participants for whom we had matched pre and post-program surveys suggest that EYPC's impacts appear promising. Pre-post mean comparisons registered positive changes in scales designed to measure teamwork, leadership, self-esteem and community bonding. Most items also registered positive change and these changes did not differ across levels of program implementation. Political action seems to have also registered an increase and there were changes recorded in internal and external political efficacy, but in many cases, reductions were recorded in political trust. More thorough program implementation registered relatively greater increases in efficacy and trust. And while traditional significance tests were not performed due to low response rates, both the number of scales and items changing in a direction consistent with theoretical expectations offers evidence that EYPC is perhaps having the desired impacts on youth.

At the community level, policies were changed, and several Illinois communities will hopefully become healthier places to live as a result of the efforts of EYPC youth. In addition, the extent of EYPC program implementation would seem to affect the ultimate votes of local government officials, with stronger implementations yielding a greater likelihood of successful outcomes. Equally as important, local leaders were left with a very positive impression of their community's youth. Also, in nearly all EYPC sites, even where policies were not changed, EYPC youth appreciated and gained from the unique and potentially life-altering experience of speaking directly and persuasively before their government body.

While the number of sites and the number of subjects participating in the evaluation remains relatively small, convergent findings across data sources and methods of analysis collectively offer evidence of EYPC programmatic success. Together, the positive results reported here indicate that EYPC can have the desired effects the program hopes to achieve. We hope – and anticipate - that further analysis will reinforce these promising findings.

Implications

This report has presented an evaluation of EYPC relying on data from qualitative and quantitative sources, using different evaluation tools and compared across multiple sites and at different levels (program, participant, and community) to examine the program's overall impacts and outcomes.

Overall, the results of EYPC's evaluation suggest great promise demonstrating potential impacts on youth and on their communities. These could be further and more convincingly documented if the program can be expanded to a broader scale. As the state of Illinois moves toward implementing a heightened civic education standard across all public schools, EYPC would seem ideally poised as a program schools can implement to help meet that requirement.

In addition to assessing the EYPC program, this study illustrates the execution, implementation, reporting and the value of conducting an evaluation relying on multiple evaluation methods and approaches. Using multiple data sources at multiple levels and relying on both qualitative and quantitative data has proven to be a very useful evaluation approach, informing and cross-validating a variety of different evaluative conclusions. Any single aspect of the evaluation standing alone may have been far less convincing or persuasive.

In the end, we reiterate that bringing about positive change in their community may be one of the most valuable experiences a young person can have. Youth in EYPC learned that engagement in local policy change is both possible and real. While it remains to be determined whether this experience provides youth with what they need for a lifetime of active participation in civic life, early indicators suggest that this program has the possibility of putting them on a brighter path toward a more fully engaged civic life.

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ⁱ an implementation cycle refers to one complete implementation. Four EYPC sites each implemented two EYPC cycles during this time. 22 additional sites initially requested EYPC startup materials but did not complete the program. Most of these sites failed to recruit or retain youth.

ⁱⁱ Follow up contacts with several low implementing sites revealed that four sites, each providing examples of “successful” EYPC implementations as determined by follow-up or other information, did not complete any Facilitator logs. Two other “successful” sites were found to be very limited in Facilitator Log reporting.

ⁱⁱⁱ *sites in the first quartile with fewer than 5 activities were not considered to have implemented the program and are not included in this analysis