



# YOUTH ENRICHMENT SERVICES

Community News, YES Updates, Spotlights, & more!

January 2025

## YES' vision for 2025: There's more work to be done



The quiet, maybe ignored, elephant in the room is that the country will embark on a new administration that, by its own admission, plans to be disruptive. By the time you read this, the new set of executive orders which has promised to be shocking, may have already transformed what we believe as priorities to build a quality of life for all through a democracy we have grown to defend, and at times, challenge. However, we have been gifted this democracy from many generations of folks who fought to make it better and more effective.

So be that as it may, regardless, we know there's more work to be done. This winter has been the coldest in 3 years, and one thing I noticed about parents of young children is how many have not invested in a sturdy winter coat. With temperatures in the teens and wind chill factor in single digits, this is extremely concerning. Either we send them out without proper dress including coats, hats and gloves, or we keep them at home where they miss out on educational opportunities. This is just one example of the notion that there is more work to be done.

Additionally, Covid-19's long coat tails continue to affect so much of the

health, social interactions, and general economic vitality of our community. As health insurance continues to spike, and more uncertainty about the overall healthcare landscape leaves our youth without health insurance, we accept that there is more work to be done.

In other news, recent data suggests that crime is down among youth ages 18-34. And for this, we are extremely grateful as an agency YES has invested in keeping our youth from as much potential harm as our capacity allows. In spite of these lower statistics, we know there is more work to be done.

In recognition of more work needing to be done, YES will pursue 4 main objectives this year, and will do so relentlessly with passion, determination, and excellence.

We aim to codify, develop curriculum, and create a comprehensive portfolio showcasing our work. YES operates across four domains which we will formalize into curriculum-based instructional strategies.

### **Peer Mentoring Program**

YES' peer mentoring program focuses on effectively communicating impactful messages to youth. It outlines our principles and strategies for mentoring, including the how, why, where, and to what effect of our work. What is YES's formula for mentoring success? How do we measure its impact? These questions drive our efforts in this domain.



### **Juvenile Justice Initiatives**

Our work in juvenile justice has touched the lives of countless young people, many of whom become entangled in the system for reasons they do not fully understand. We address this through three tailored avenues.

- **Diversion:** Developed in collaboration with the Allegheny County Juvenile Court, Diversion 2000 (D2000) is a 24/7 monitoring and mentoring program offering juvenile offenders with an alternative to detention.
- **Extended Diversion:** Extended Diversion Services (EDS) offers former justice-involved youth with extended, holistic, and individualized support services.
- **Diversion Prevention:** Diversion Prevention proactively identifies at-risk youth and offers support before ever entering the system.

Each program is designed to meet the needs of young people referred to us through juvenile court judges, law enforcement, and other partners.

### **Workforce Development and Career Enhancement**

Our most extensive work to date focuses on economic mobility, a cornerstone of YES's mission. As students overcome challenges and achieve academic success, our goal is to prepare them for independence and professional success. Our track record in workforce development is strong, and we are committed to codifying these efforts to ensure ongoing success in 2025.



### Violence Prevention Initiatives

YES has been fortunate to receive grant support in order to build a robust framework to address youth violence, particularly community-based violence between groups. This multifaceted approach includes youth symposiums, teen council initiatives, sport for development programs for early intervention, and collective impact work.

These initiatives span state, county, city, and local communities. While our approach may seem all hands on deck, it is grounded in science-based, professionally led models. Our goals are to identify violent hotspots, equip students with conflict resolution skills, and prevent violence before it begins.

Additionally, students serve on forums and attend national conferences to present their perspectives on violence prevention. Their work reflects the lived experiences of their peers, addressing issues like trauma, generational displacement, lack of transportation, limited access to fresh food markets, and systemic neglect of underserved communities.



So this is our 2025 challenge. We have kicked off this effort with our 2-day professional development workshop on January 23rd and 24th held at the Rivers Club. We see this as the beginning of a fruitful endeavor for our agency - and we will approach with our greatest effort!

Dennis Jones, PhD

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### Strengthening Education and Community Support Through PPS Community Schools: A New Chapter for YES and Arsenal

At Youth Enrichment Services (YES), our mission is to provide socially and economically at-risk youth the opportunity to achieve success through participation in mentorship, education, and enrichment programs. Our approach has positioned us to extend our reach of students. We are thrilled to announce our partnership with Pittsburgh Arsenal's Community Schools Initiative, a collaboration that will help us provide greater support to students and their families!

Community schools are more than just a program; they represent a strategy designed to go beyond traditional education by offering support services to students and their families. This support includes academic help, mental health services, after-school programs, and community involvement. This partnership will allow us to offer even more avenues to help the youth we serve thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. There are currently nine Community Schools in the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) School District, including Pittsburgh Arsenal, Lincoln, Westinghouse, and Langley, to name a few.



YES leverages local connections and resources to Arsenal students, offering them even more enrichment opportunities. To spearhead this endeavor, we have hired Maurice Weathers as our Community Schools Site Manager. He works with Pittsburgh Arsenal K-5 & 6-8 alongside LeAna Creighton, Coordinator of Community Schools at Pittsburgh Public Schools. Our goal for this partnership is to continue our mission of empowering young people through offering resources and opportunities for their enrichment and advancement just as we have done over the past three decades.

We are excited about this new chapter in the YES Story and the positive impact it will have in the lives of students and their families. With the support of Maurice, LeAna Creighton, Pittsburgh Public Schools, and our community partners and resources, we are confident that together, we will make a lasting, positive impact in the lives of others, both now and in the future.

## STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

### Madison Chavis: How YES Helped Me Achieve My College Dreams and Build Essential Life Skills



"I am Madison Chavis. As a senior soon to graduate, being involved in the YES program has assisted me profusely in preparation for my future. By getting connected with people who work at my desired college, I was recommended for the PACT program which will give me guaranteed admission into University of Pittsburgh. This was my educational plan before I knew of such an opportunity, and YES was able to help me find a way to do so.

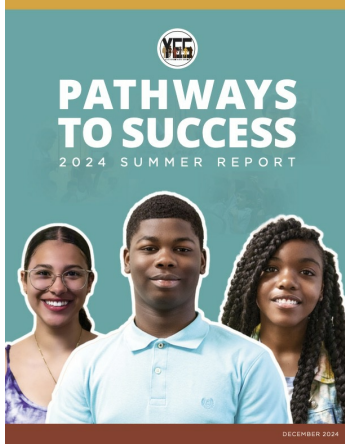
Furthermore, YES has helped me by providing internships and classes and teaching me work ethic, research, and other crucial life skills to navigate the world with more ease. As a YES student, I also have the opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school, which is a great personal benefit to me as I get a head start on my college education.

Last but not least, YES has helped me remove the financial burden by providing a stipend for class and student activities; I put the money I earn toward my savings for future needs like emergencies and college expenses.

I am forever grateful for having the chance to be a part of YES; they are a wonderful program to help youth succeed in their futures. For this reason, I am more prepared for my future."

## General YES Updates

### 2024 Summer Report: Celebrating Highlights, Milestones, and What's Next



Look into our **2024 Summer Report**, where you will find summer standout moments, highlights of impactful program activities, and successes of this past summer. As we gear up for yet another fulfilling summer with Learn & Earn, our team is hard at work preparing enriching opportunities for our students. We are currently interviewing potential interns, establishing relationships with potential worksites, and designing meaningful opportunities. This report illustrates our commitment to delivering high-quality workforce programming and the dedication and hard work of our students, staff, and stakeholders!

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