

Back With a Vengeance:

Youth Enrichment Services Summer 2021 Report



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Foundations & Government

Allegheny County Department of Human Services
Allegheny County Health Department
The Grable Foundation
Pittsburgh Public Schools
PACE
The Pittsburgh Foundation
PNC Charitable Trust
POISE Foundation
Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board
RK Mellon Foundation
City of Pittsburgh Housing Authority
United Way

Institutions & Organizations

University of Pittsburgh
Bridging the Gap
School of Social Work
Homewood Community Engagement Center
West Virginia University
Allegheny College
Community College of Allegheny County
Robert Morris University
Tickets for Kids

Partners & Affiliates

Partner4Work	Carnegie Learning
Whole Foods Market	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Western PA Diaper Bank	East End Cooperative Ministries
Citizens Bank	Fitish Nutrition
Huntington Bank	Homewood Children's Village
Remake Learning	Lincoln Lemington Consensus Group
PA Humanities Council	Mentoring Partnership of SWPA
Alcosan	Motor Mouth Media
Allegheny Front	Mount Ararat
APOST	Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
Banished Rascals Design and Marketing	Small Seeds
Bookminders	Technology Rediscovery LLC
Buchanan Ingersoll Rooney Law Offices	YMCA Y Creator Space
Cameron Counseling and Consulting Services	

History of YES



Beginning in 1994, Youth Enrichment Services was created to paint portraits for youth from urban communities of themselves as successful, empowered, and confident leaders. With a research-driven programming model and youth-centered focus, YES has created a lasting legacy of preparing youth for their academic, career, and overall futures. Through strong relationships with a variety of community entities, YES allows youth to realize their goals and interests through empowerment, experiential opportunities, academic enrichment, and summer employment.

Mission

To provide socially and economically at-risk youth the opportunity to achieve success through participation in mentorship, education, and enrichment programs

Vision

Empower communities to become their own best resource

Ethos

Every students matters and there are no throw away children

Executive Summary



Summer 2020 was dynamic and magical in its own right. We created new virtual realities, pushed students beyond their known capacities, and transcended our own expectations. Although the COVID-19 pandemic stopped us from our traditional summer programming, we accomplished what we could and vowed to return stronger the following year. As our new year approached, we began reimagining our summer operations and considering what our students needed after a year of social isolation and virtual engagement. This inquiry led us to multiple conversations about our 2021 summer theme. We knew we had to come big and correct! This year was one of resurgence, of rebooting, of noise making in the community. After much thought, we settled on the idea of “ReActivate” to get students to reconnect with society and re-establish healthy habits. The mantra “Getting Active” - physically, politically, academically, financially, and socially - directly challenged students’ stagnation and reignited their commitment to their health, communities, academics, personal finances, and social relationships.

Students responded positively to our charge - they reactivated their health through Camp FeWi and Wellness and Wellcare Days, their communities through their youth participatory action research projects, their academics through enrichment opportunities, their personal finances through financial literacy sessions and account management, and their social relationships through weekly pro-social engagement and field trips.

Students' accomplishments are evident in the successes and outcomes achieved. A snapshot of these results are included below. The remaining sections provide deeper insight into YES' summer program model, student outcomes, and summer reflections.

Key Findings

YES' summer program model is effective in providing leadership development, employability preparation, and academic enrichment. Combining these tenets with peer mentorship and wellness-driven programming provide students with a multi-level approach to their enrichment and employment experiences. The data show that this comprehensive, robust model is key to YES' programmatic and participant successes. Students' growth and positive learning outcomes are captured in their high supervisor ratings, post-assessment knowledge gains, expanded leadership capacities, enhanced hard and soft skills, and increased self-efficacy ratings.

By the Numbers

- 95 participants (98% completion rate)
- 50% first-time participants
- 60% of program participants engaged in their first formal work experience
- 80% of participants were 14-17 years old
- 70% of students attend PPS Schools
- 12,600 work experience and training hours were completed
- \$90,000 distributed in work experience and training wages



YES believes young people are its greatest asset.

During the summer, YES invests in, nurtures, and supports young people's unique capacities, skills and abilities to help them reach their life's potential. Within weeks, YES witnesses student growth and transformation in productive and powerful ways.



Shakyia is one of many students who experienced an impressive transformative journey over the summer. Like many of her peers, Shakyia came to YES quiet, reserved, and unsure of herself. As time progressed, Shakyia quickly broke out of her shell and developed into a major leader inside and outside of the classroom.

Being at YES ignited a flame in Shakyia that could not be extinguished. She demonstrated stellar leadership and research skills all while overcoming teenage adversities.

With the help of her friends and the YES community, Shakyia cultivated a space that allowed her to be authentic, transparent, and open. Shakyia is a positive influence in her friend groups and is the definition of resilient. Shakyia's spirit lights up and commands any room. YES saw tremendous growth in this young scholar's hunger for learning, critical thinking, community engagement, and difference making. YES has high hopes for her future.

This is one of many stories that highlights the transformative nature of YES programming. The subsequent sections give life to similar success stories and illustrate the programming model that facilitates growth and meaningful summer experiences.

Introduction



Summer employment is beneficial for young people's professional, academic, and personal development. Through early work experiences, students explore their career interests, identify strengths, and increase their workplace knowledge (Sum et al., 2014). Summer employment helps students establish work experience and employer connections that can aid future job searches and career choices. As students build professional networks and refine their soft and hard skills, they also expand their current and future economic capacity and improve their financial literacy.

Additionally, summer employment benefits students' academic trajectories. Research suggests that students' involvement in summer employment may increase school attendance, decrease dropout rates, reduce school suspensions, and increase school engagement (Engaging Youth in Work Experiences, 2011). One study, in particular, found that students who engage in early work experiences are more likely to pursue post-secondary education or obtain employment than their non-engaged peers (JPMorgan Chase, 2016). It has also been well-documented that youth progress successfully into adulthood when they engage in early work (Sum et al., 2014). At the core of these experiences are opportunities for personal student growth. As young people participate in early work, they assess their skills and qualities, build their capacity, and maximize their potential for future employment.

Overall, early investment in skill-building, economic opportunity, and career exposure can positively impact students' developmental needs and position students for productive long-term employment.

Introduction



Recent research highlights the importance of summer work experiences that are grounded in transformational practices (National Summer Learning Association, 2014). While some summer work experiences are transactional in nature – where students show up, complete work assignments, and receive compensation – researchers found that programs providing students with diverse and enriching opportunities to hone their skills, build their professional networks, and generate a future path are most useful, value-laden, and transformative.

Transformational summer work experiences embody catalytic environments that foster autonomy, nurture student assets, contribute to students’ holistic well-being, and support students’ academic, career, and personal pursuits (Modestino, 2019). These are particularly important components for summer work programs seeking to significantly influence student outcomes.

Youth Enrichment Services, YES, goes beyond traditional employment experiences and creates transformative student opportunities. It is with this understanding that YES’ summer framework was crafted. YES’ summer goals and objectives nicely complement its overall mission and vision, which seek to empower youth to become their own best resource through targeted enrichment and employment programming.

Program Design



Program Model



As a Learn and Earn [1] service provider, YES has developed a comprehensive summer program model that offers youth more than an employment opportunity. YES' summer program model comprises socio-cultural leadership development, employability preparation, and academic enrichment not only to prepare youth for future employment, but to also stimulate their academic acumen, and to deepen their commitment to their peers and communities. YES integrates Learn and Earn's goals [2] into its model to further ensure youth develop skills that transcend their summer employment experiences. These program tenets function interconnectedly, are reinforced by relevant literature, and inform YES' program structures. The figure below provides visual representation of these elements.

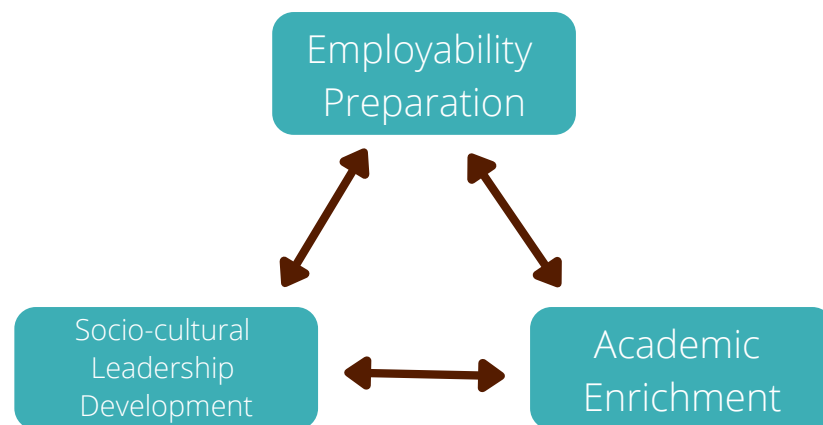


Figure 1. YES Summer Program Tenets

[1] The Learn and Earn Summer Youth Employment Program is a summer opportunity that provides disadvantaged youth, ages 14-21, with employment around the city of Pittsburgh. Learn and Earn students work in diverse jobs and occupational areas to gain professional experience, technical skills, and knowledge of employer expectations, as well as exposure to possible career paths. In addition to developing valuable work experience, youth also earn wages and contribute to Pittsburgh's tax base and economic growth.

[2] The goals of Learn and Earn are to prepare youth to understand appropriate workplace behaviors, the rigors of the workplace, job survival skills, and to challenge youth to explore career interests and opportunities.

Program Pathways



YES embeds socio-cultural leadership development, employability preparation, and academic enrichment opportunities into every YES students' experience. These program tenets move beyond the narrow emphasis on workforce development and maximize students' holistic summer experiences. This allows students to drive their learning and engagement through their respective cohorts.

YES intentionally and strategically positions students to engage in three program pathways: Summer Scholars, Advanced Summer Scholars, and YES Veterans. Using six years of summer data, YES has developed programming pathways to align with students' academic, employment, and personal needs.

As such, YES' Summer Scholars program is designed for youth with minimal work experience seeking experiential learning opportunities, peer development, and career exposure. YES' Advanced Summer Scholars program builds on this foundation and is structured for upperclassmen with previous work experience. This program pathway helps students deepen and master their technical skills, build their leadership capacity in employment settings, and stimulate their intellectual curiosity through research. The YES Veterans' and Alumni program pathway is newly crafted and is developed for college-bound youth who have engaged in YES programming for three or more years and are seeking high-level leadership positions or independent internships within YES or at local institutions.

Program Pathways



Summer Scholars

(14 year olds; pre-high school)

Employability Preparation:

- Pre-Employment Training
- Summer Work for Success
- Summer Apprenticeships

Academic Enrichment:

- Summer Magic

Cultural, Social, Leadership

Development:

- Wellcare Wednesdays
- Trip Thursdays

Advanced Summer Scholars

(15 - 17 year olds; high school)

Employability Preparation:

- Pre-Employment Training
- Summer Work Placement

Academic Enrichment:

- Summer Study for Success
- Youth Participatory Action Research

Cultural, Social, Leadership

Development:

- Wellcare Wednesdays
- Trip Thursdays

YES Veterans

(18-21 year olds; college and career)

Employability Preparation/ Academic Enrichment

- Project/ Internship Management Training
- Career/ College Focused Internship

Cultural, Social, Leadership Development:

- Wellcare Wednesdays
- Trip Thursdays



YES provides youth the opportunity to develop and harness critical leadership skills through its summer programming. Inherent to YES' model is the belief that all young people possess leadership capacity. Privileging a sociocultural lens, YES supports youth in achieving their full leadership potential through targeted activities and experiences that help them assess their own skill sets, capacities, strengths, and weaknesses. Recognizing learning and leadership development as cultural processes, YES ensures students prioritize their socially situated and culturally valued ways of knowing, being, and acting to inform their leadership development and apparatus (Nasir, 2014). Sociocultural leadership centers individuals' home cultures, languages, and practices as important factors in developing expertise and skills (Esmonde and Booker, 2016). This is done in an effort to include the lived experiences and cultural practices of all individuals, especially those who are traditionally marginalized and excluded.

Consistent with the research is the need to provide youth with developmentally appropriate training, resources, and opportunity structures to grow into dynamic leaders. Using mentorship as a catalyst and framework, YES strategically and intentionally creates this space through its summer programs to empower the next generation of leaders who will lead themselves, others, and their communities.



YES hones students' mentorship and leadership capacity through a variety of different mechanisms and summits, however, most notably through its Pre-Employment and Leadership Training. Figure 2 provides an overview of YES' Pre-Employment and Leadership Training, with greater emphasis on its structure, goals, and outcomes in upcoming sections.

Prior to Learn and Earn, YES invests in young people's capacity to adequately prepare them for their summer enrichment and employment experiences. YES' Pre-Employment and Leadership training introduces students to YES' framework, program structure, and expectations in addition to broader work-readiness content. Pre-Employment and Leadership Training is a vital component of YES' summer program and is designed to connect Summer Scholars and Advanced Summer Scholars with resources to build their leadership skills and capacities as they navigate their workplaces and beyond.



Figure 2. Overview of Pre-Employment and Leadership Training

Wellness Initiatives



Wellness is an integral part of YES' summer model and was especially reinforced as a large priority due to COVID-19. Connected to the larger program tenet of sociocultural leadership development, YES created wellness opportunities through Wellcare and Wellness Wednesdays. YES' wellness initiatives were guided by the model of well-being developed by the Human Resources Department at the University of Michigan and supported by the following principles:

- Students deserve equitable access to wellness,
- Everyone's wellness is connected,
- Holistic wellness is important, and
- Every student's path to well-being is unique and complex



Source: Human Resources Department, University of Michigan



Wellcare Wednesday

Wellcare Wednesday was designed in response to the increased concern for teens' psychological welfare during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the academic year, students expressed feeling disconnected from their peers, which resulted in a decreased desire to connect. However, according to Eric Erickson, developmentally, students need peer-to-peer interaction to help facilitate their identity development. Identity development is an important component of this lifespan development model. In an effort to create environments for authentic and relevant identity development, Wellcare Wednesdays were divided into various wellness experiences for young women and men.

Wellness Wednesday

YES also created a space for students to prioritize their health and wellness by engaging in Wellness Wednesdays. This opportunity, held at the esteemed Rivers Club, centered students' physical and nutritional health and wellness needs.

Trip Thursdays

A major component of YES' overall programming model is to foster prosocial youth engagement through a myriad of YES' cultural and social activities. These activities promote opportunities for social wellness, positive social interaction and cultural awareness, and focus on building group cohesion, expanding a sense of togetherness, and upholding mutual respect. YES intentionally planned weekly socio-cultural activities on Thursdays to supplement its academic, career, and work-related programs. Through these opportunities, students develop positive peer relationships, gain exposure, and obtain unique cultural experiences. This year, most of these outings occurred at the Highland Park Pool and nearby pavilions, given COVID-19 limitations and safety concerns, however, they traditionally include a variety of unique opportunities.

Employability Preparation



YES embeds employment opportunities into its summer program infrastructure to provide students with career exposure and skill development. In a climate where demand for youth employment is traditionally higher than supply, YES provides youth with critical early work experiences to master technical skills, to develop knowledge of employer expectations, and to solidify career interests (JPMorgan Chase, 2016). Through such offerings, YES scholars learn acceptable workplace behaviors, understand the rigors of the work environment, and develop job survival skills. In addition to cultivating valuable work experience, youth earn wages in which they can contribute to Pittsburgh's tax base and economic growth and invest in their own futures, communities, and families. Research substantiates the value of early work experiences, and as such, these opportunities remain integral to YES.

Employability preparation is a key component of YES' program model. Irrespective of students' program pathway, students refine their technical and targeted skills in a variety of ways. The next section describes the programs that facilitate students' employment experience.

Employability Preparation



Summer Work for Success (SWFS) provides employability skill building through workshops and activities. Students engage in a series of sessions to explore careers, develop interpersonal and decision-making skills, and navigate workplaces with the appropriate etiquette. As students move through the program, they gain an understanding of work documentation, create resumes and cover letters, and complete job applications. At the program's end, students participate in a simulation experience, during which they interview for apprenticeships, detailed below, and apply etiquette skills in a formal fine dining experience.

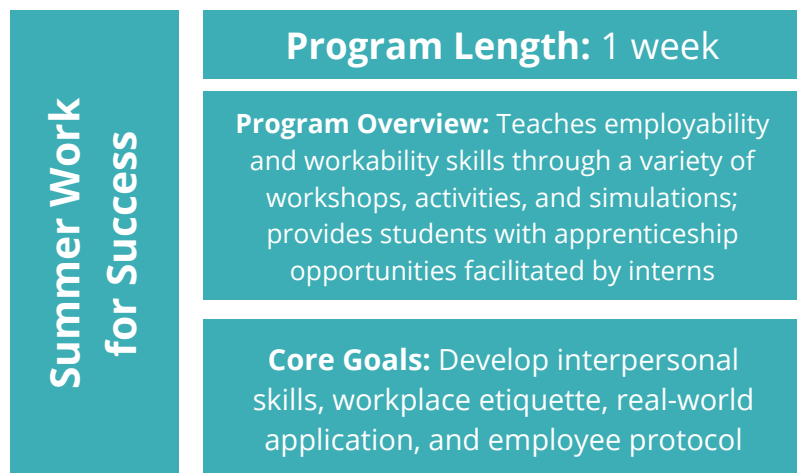


Figure 3. Overview of Summer Work for Success

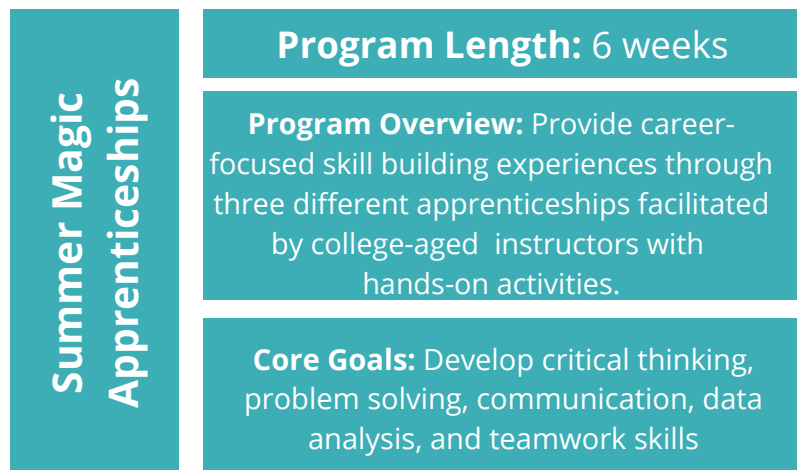


Figure 4. Overview of Summer Magic Apprenticeships

Employability Preparation



YES provides Advanced Summer Scholars with diverse work opportunities to explore their newly minted employability skills. These worksites are secured through existing, and newly established, YES partnerships. Advanced Summer Scholars spend three to five days each week at their individual worksites, engaging in a myriad of job responsibilities. Students are monitored by adult supervisors and are expected to fulfill their contractual work obligations. Students traditionally work 18 of their 25 hours at worksites, which allows for quality experiential learning opportunities and immersion into their respective workplaces. The timeline for Summer Work Placements is detailed on the following page.

Summer Work Placements	Program Length: 6 weeks
	Program Overview: Encompasses ten plus external and corporate employment opportunities for advanced summer scholars
	Core Goals: Understand workplace etiquette, rigors of the workplace, job survival skills, and to challenge youth to explore career interests and opportunities

Figure 5. Overview of Summer Work Placements



Section 1: Interview

Students engaged in a 30-minute student-staff interview.



Section 2: Job Placement

Students are placed in external and corporate work environments within a week of the interview; students' placements are based on preference, pre-employment training performance, and staff considerations.



Section 3: Training

Individual worksites provide job training; however, YES supplements this training with mini-sessions throughout 6 weeks.



Section 4: Work Experience

Students work at their sites for 3-5 days per week throughout the 6-week program.



YES provides veteran and alumni youth with opportunities to develop independent projects or internships. Leveraging their own agency and autonomy, YES veterans and alumni carve out 6-week projects or internships that align with their career, academic, or personal interests. Students engage in an early ideating process that culminates in a project management training where students detail their project and internship goals, weekly expectations, and outcomes. YES youth pitch their projects and internship ideas to YES staff and proceed with plans once approved. While students' efforts are largely independent, YES staff also provide thought partnership and project management support as needed.

Summer Internships & Independent Studies	Program Length: 6 weeks
	Program Overview: Provides students with interest and career driven opportunities to develop internship experiences or direct their own inquiry through independent projects
	Core Goals: Explore career and personal interests through project-driven discovery; Cultivate students' project management and accountability skills

Figure 6. Overview of Summer Internships & Independent Studies

Independent Study



With oversight from YES Staff, and through regular project management meetings, YES Veterans and Alumni develop independent study projects based on their career and academic interests. Participants follow the structure below throughout the summer.

Project Planning

12 hours of training and project development

Project Implementation

25 hours of project engagement

Symposium

Research Symposium during which students present final project outcomes

Academic Enrichment



YES rounds out its summer program model by incorporating opportunities for academic enrichment and college preparation. YES' incorporation of academic enrichment is fueled by the well-documented literature on summer learning loss (Gonzalez, 2016; Cooper, 2007; Alexander et al., 2007). Summer learning loss, the phenomenon where inactive young people lose academic skills over the summer, disproportionately affects low-income students (Afterschool Alliance, 2010; Von Drehle, 2010; The Wallace Foundation, 2010; Wongkee, 2010; National Summer Learning Association, 2009; Miller, 2007). Several researchers conclude that this disproportionate impact stems from inequities in students' summer learning experiences—in which low-income students are often left isolated, inactive, unstimulated, and vulnerable during a critical time for learning (National Summer Learning Association, 2016; Blazer, 2011).

YES recognizes the value of summer enrichment and the connection between education and employment, and as such, prioritizes opportunities to expand students' learning through hands-on activities, project-based curricula, technology engagement, and enrichment (McCombs, Augustine, Schwartz, Bodilly, Mcinnis, Lichter, & Cross, 2011). Such approaches not only counter the pedagogical deprivation unique to many schools serving low-income students, but they also help improve students' academic aptitude and connectedness to learning.

Academic Enrichment



Students' summer enrichment experiences are critical to their holistic development and transformative experiences. They transcend the summer program and prepare students for their school year. Students' enrichment experiences are actualized through Summer Magic and Summer Study for Success.

Summer Magic is a creative learning laboratory that amalgamates academic, enrichment, and work-related experiences for young people. Through Summer Magic, students expand their knowledge and harness their critical thinking skills in small classes during which the emphasis is on exploring, thinking, risk-taking, and enrichment. As participants in exploratory classes and hands-on work experience, students build life skills, explore real world issues, engage in youth participatory action research, and apprentice. Students end the program by completing apprenticeship and course projects, along with conducting a culminating, student driven community-asset project addressing a community challenge.

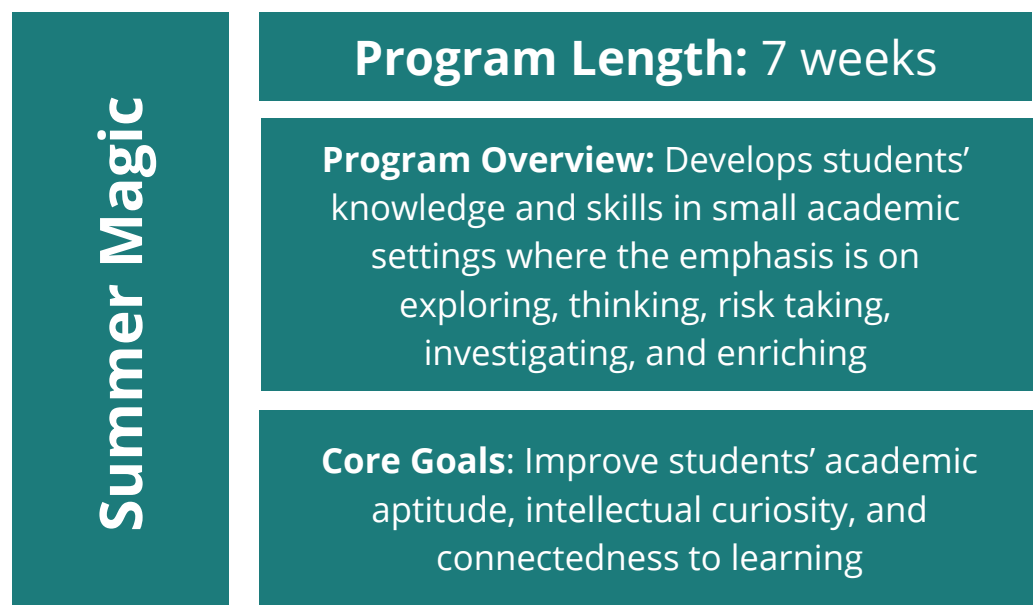


Figure 7. Overview of Summer Magic

Youth Participatory Action Research



Youth Participatory Action Research, YPAR, is an innovative approach rooted in social justice and community development principles (*Youth Participatory Action Research*, 2020). This research apparatus positions youth as knowledge producers, decision makers, and invested stakeholders to generate social, cultural, and political transformation. YPAR is an epistemic paradigm shift that values young people’s wisdoms and knowledge and challenges the traditional, adult-centered research regime. Through concerted and power-sharing efforts, young people, adults, and community members collaborate to conduct and lead systemic research to improve their lives, their communities, and the institutions intended to serve them. The YPAR process honors relationships and builds community trust by establishing mutual reciprocity and respect between researchers and the community.

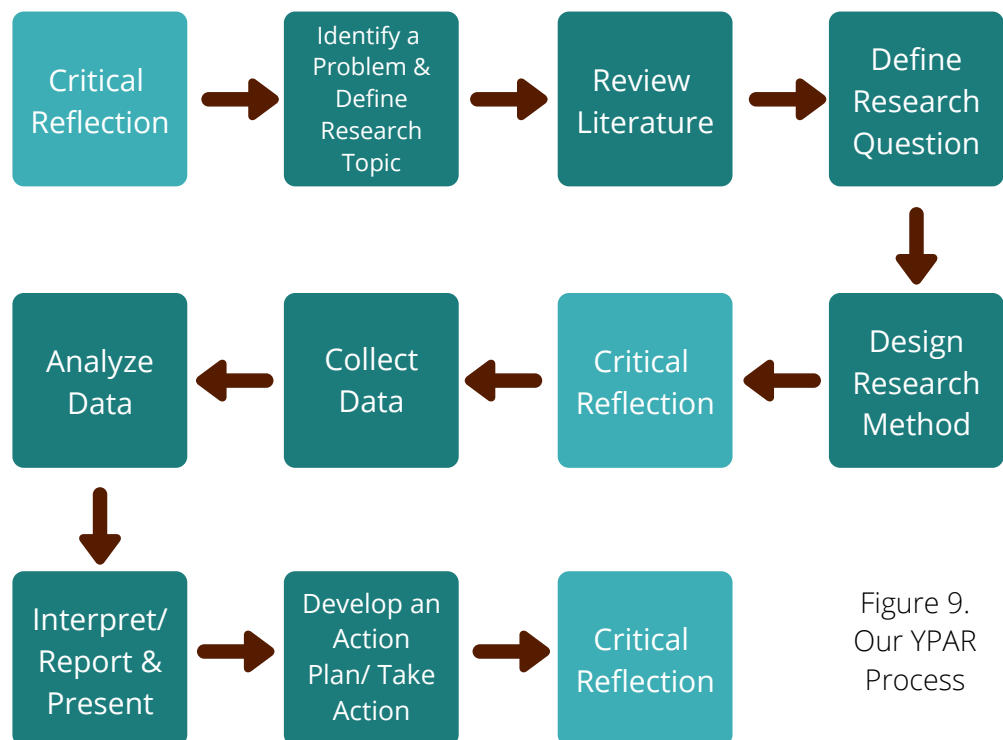


Figure 9. Our YPAR Process



Summer Study for Success (SSFS) is the pinnacle of YES' summer program and is the most comprehensive, competitive, and intensive academic opportunity for youth. This program exposes students to research and career exploration, alongside practitioners and experts in the fields of: Business and Entrepreneurship, African American Studies, Culinary Arts and Nutrition, Latin American Culture, and Black Feminism. SSFS is designed to enhance youths' research, critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills. Students attend Thursday exploratory courses and Friday research development workshops to learn research methodology and advance their own research questions, hypotheses, data collection methods, and survey protocols. Students extrapolate their findings, synthesize their results into poster presentations and present their work in a research symposium. Students' community-based research projects are supplemented by their weekly experiential learning content, facilitated by practitioners.

Summer Study for Success

Program Length: 7 weeks

Program Overview: Exposes students to research and career exploration, alongside practitioners and experts in a variety of field

Core Goals: Enhance youth's research, critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills

Figure 8. Overview of Summer Study for Success

Summer Study for Success



In order to achieve the core goal of enriching the academic lives of participants, Summer Study for Success is divided into three key focus areas throughout the 7-week program.

Experiential Learning Courses

2-hour enrichment sessions held weekly on Thursdays (Detailed on the following pages)

Research Sessions

3-hour research development sessions exploring research design and methodology

Symposium

Research Symposium during which students present research findings

Program Demographics



Program Demographics



95
Program Participants

50%
first-time program participants

First formal work experience for
60%
of program participants

80%
of program participants
14-17 years old

Nearly
70%
of program participants
attend a Pittsburgh
Public School

Program Demographics



Training
8.2%



Work Experience
91.8%

Program Demographics



Training
5.8%



Work Experience
94.2%

Program Specifics



Pre-Employment Training



Participants:

Summer Scholars, Advanced Summer Scholars

Components:

- 4 professional and career-based workshops
 - Career and Identity
 - Communication
 - Ethics & Integrity
 - Work Skills

Supervision:

YES Staff facilitated training.

Assessment/Evaluation:

- Pre- and Post-Training Survey

Student Outcomes:

- Session products
- Work-related documentation

Program Highlights:

Students enjoyed the healthy debates, leadership opportunities, real-world scenarios, and the facilitator's approach to content dissemination. Students appreciated learning with and from their peers.

Program Challenges:

Although the training was executed artfully and skillfully, the virtual context posed challenges to student engagement and attendance. Students from various pathways attended the same session, this also made it difficult to tailor the content developmentally.

Pre-Employment Training



More than

75%

of program participants strongly enjoyed the pre-employment training

What Elements Did You Enjoy Most?

1. Topics and Themes
2. Activities
3. Instructor Teaching Style

What Did You Learn?

1. Monthly Budgeting
2. Personal vs. Professional Identity
3. Communicating at Work

*Most Common Answer Themes

Summer Work for Success



Participants:

Summer Scholars

Components:

- Workshops
 - Identity Exploration
 - Application Exploration
 - “Polishing” & Preparing
 - Business Etiquette
- Interviews
- Formal Dining Experience

Supervision:

Sessions were facilitated by Summer Scholars Staff.

Assessment/Evaluation:

- SWFS Pre- and Post-Assessments

Student Outcomes:

Students created a variety of employment-related products including job applications, resumes, cover letters, and business cards.

Program Highlights:

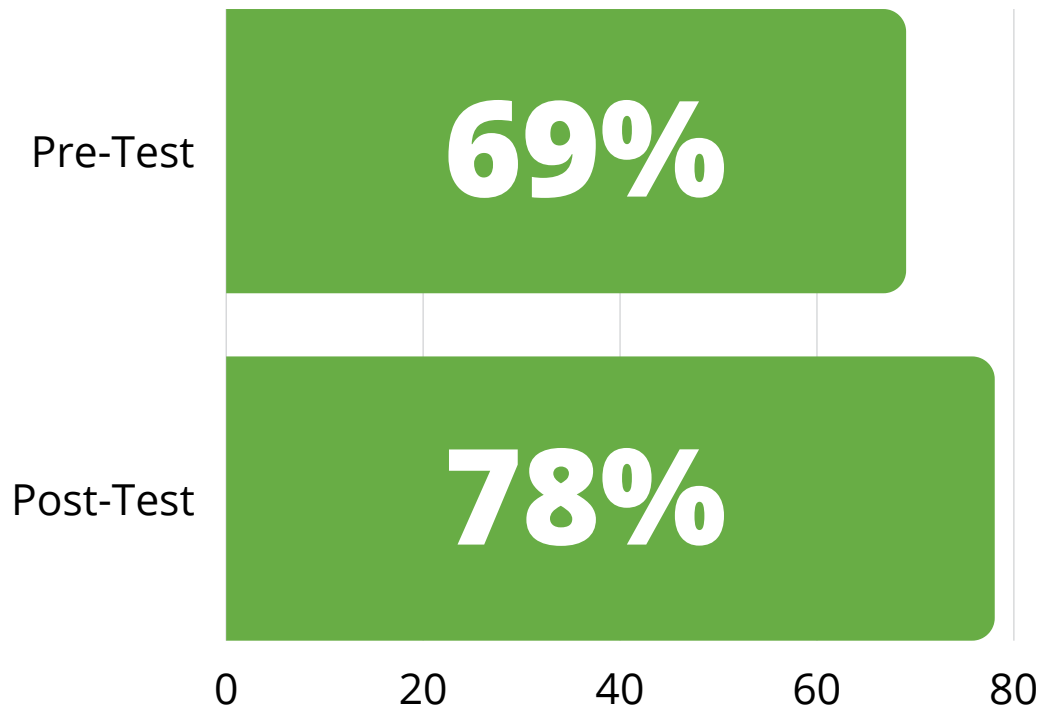
Summer Scholars engaged in a dynamic week of workshops and enriching conversations. Students particularly enjoyed formal business attire shopping, apprenticeship interviewing, and fine dining at S & S Sanctuary.

Program Challenges:

While the workshops were extremely informative and insightful, the workshop length fatigued some students. Because of this, engagement waned at times.



Average Pre & Post Program Assessment Scores



Over
70%
demonstrated
percentage point
growth on post-
assessment

More than half
of respondents
increased their
scores by
10+
percentage points

Summer Work Placement



Participants:

Advanced Summer Scholars

Components:

- Orientation
- Interview
- Training
- Selection
- Work Experience

Supervision:

Students report to supervisors at their respective worksites, from whom they receive feedback, direction, and instruction.

Assessment/Evaluation:

- Learn and Earn End of Summer Evaluation
- Self-efficacy Assessment
- Worksite Survey

Student Outcomes:

Job-specific assignments and products

Program Highlights:

Students worked in diverse contexts and garnered unique hard and soft skills. Some students earned their first checks, traveled the city for the first time via public transportation, met friends from unfamiliar neighborhoods, and opened their first bank accounts. Overall, students enjoyed investing in young people's lives, supporting camp operations, sustaining small businesses, centering their fitness needs, and gathering produce in community gardens.

Program Challenges:

COVID-19 created unique challenges for students' work experiences and environments. Students navigated employment the best they could in often unknown and uncertain territories.

Summer Work Placement



YES offers 10+ Student Work Placements, each with unique job responsibilities and training guidelines. Prior to students fulfilling their work duties, they must complete work-readiness training and adhere to their worksite's individual training curricula.

Camp FEWI

Fit - ish

East End Cooperative Ministry

A.S. Wee Care Daycare

Mount Ararat Community Center

Mount Ararat Church

Learning to Learn Daycare

Alcosan

S&S Sanctuary

Project Love Coalition Farm

Mount Washington Recreation Center

YES Food Service



Participants:

Summer Scholars

Components:

- **Daily Icebreakers** reestablish lost social connections
- **Skills Spotlights** develop life skills related to adulting
- **Special Content Courses** allow participants to dive into topics they are interested in and feed into the research component of the summer program
- **Apprenticeships** provide career-focused skill building experiences that develop critical thinking, problem solving, communication, data analysis, and teamwork skills
- **Youth Participatory Research Projects** develop research and academic skills that lend themselves to future academic endeavors

Supervision:

- YES Staff
- University of Pittsburgh Bridging the Gaps Interns

Assessment/Evaluation

Course Specific Assessments



Student Outcomes:

Summer Scholars gained a number of hard and soft skills related to employability preparation through special content courses, skill spotlights, and apprenticeships. Aiding this experience, students wrote advocacy letters, solved health mysteries, fostered plant growth, and develop marketing campaigns, among others.

Program Highlights:

This Summer Scholars' cohort was extremely engaged and involved in every aspect of YES' program structure. They consistently attended organizational events and created an engaging space for their peers. Upon the program's completion, the group formed into a cohesive unit that remains in tact today.

Program Challenges:

Transportation and supervision presented significant challenges this summer as many Summer Scholars were engaging in programming for the first time by themselves. Often they required staff supervision to travel to off-site locations and complete assignments at these locations.

Summer Magic



Skills Spotlights were held daily and taught adult life-skills through engaging activities. The spotlights were developed and facilitated by Bridging the Gaps Interns.

Week 1 <i>Self-Care</i>	Origami
	Meditation & Radical Acceptance
Week 2 <i>Food Safety</i>	Introduction to Kitchen Tools
	Cooking Tutorial (Pancakes)
	Creating Balanced Meals
Week 3 <i>Team Building</i>	Escape Room
	Survivor-Style Obstacle Course
	Bird Box Challenge
Week 4 <i>Financial Literacy</i>	Packing a Suitcase
	Budgeting 101
	Life Board Game Activity
Week 5 <i>Code Switching</i>	What is Code Switching?
	How Do Languages Relate?
	Reading the Room



Apprenticeships

Disease Detective

Students served as disease detectives and utilized skills acquired through sessions to solve a case study. An outbreak of unknown disease has occurred in Pittsburgh this summer causing many people to feel unwell. It was the job of the students to solve the case and then identify ways to prevent it and intervene before more people became sick.

Plant Whisperer

Students learned about starting, maintaining, and harvesting from a garden. This included learning about different kinds of plants, understanding different situations needed to grow plants, and how to properly support the well-being of a living thing. Students engaged in hands-on experiences that allowed them to grow a plant and keep it alive.

Marketing Magnet

Students gained knowledge in skills related to presenting themselves on social media. This included discovering their best selves, basics of human psychology, and attention-grabbing techniques for social media. Students used the skills and knowledge gained to improve both their personal and YES' social media accounts.



Special Content Courses

In partnership with the Western PA Diaper Bank, YES piloted a Period Advocacy Project through its special content course for Summer Scholars. The course aimed to raise awareness for period poverty, end the stigma around periods, and educate young people about the power of advocacy.

The course was facilitated by a YES staff member, met three times a week over the 6-week summer program and included a variety of lessons, discussions, activities and field trips. Participants created final advocacy projects about course-related topics they were passionate about.

The following are responses to the post-course reflection survey:

10 of 11 respondents strongly agreed that they learned new information about periods, menstruation, and other women's health matters.

7 of 11 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that after participating in the Period Advocacy Project they feel more comfortable talking about their periods.

7 of 11 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that that the Period Advocacy Project pushed them to discuss uncomfortable topics.

**Participants:**

Summer Scholars

Components:

Throughout the 8-week program, Summer Scholars engaged in weekly sessions pertaining to a different realm of the YPAR process. These sessions included group and independent work.

Supervision:

Sessions were facilitated by YES Staff.

Assessment/Evaluation:

- YPAR Pre- and Post-Assessment

Student Outcomes:

- Developed research papers and poster presentations
- Established YPAR Framework

Program Highlights:

Students explored various research methodologies while also engaging with their communities through data collection and a walking survey.

Program Challenges:

It was difficult to complete all of the necessary sessions within the summer timeframe. This, in turn, led to issues with pacing of content. Students also had difficulty finding time to interact with community residents.

Youth Participatory Action Research



As a part of their Academic Enrichment, Summer Scholars created participatory research projects in small groups. The schedule is included below. The topics and research questions for each group are included on the following page.

Week 1 <i>Established Research Framework & Defined YPAR Process</i>	Sources, Citations, & References
Week 2 <i>Explored Community, Identified A Problem, Developed Questions, and Reviewed Literature</i>	Problem Statement & Introduction
Week 3 <i>Established an understanding of research methods and survey development</i>	Literature Review & Hypothesis Development
Week 4 <i>Finalized research methods protocol</i>	Methods Section
Week 5 <i>Collected Data</i>	Results Section
Week 6 <i>Interpreted & Analyzed Data</i>	
Week 7 <i>Created Posters</i>	Conclusion & Recommendations
Week 8 <i>Presented & Disseminated Findings</i>	



Summer Scholar YPAR Projects

Gentrification in East Liberty

Does Gentrification affect younger and older Black community members of East Liberty differently?

Community Presentation & Violence in Larimer

How does the presentation of the Larimer community influence violence happening in the neighborhood?

Repurposing Abandoned Buildings in Homewood

In what ways can Homewood residents help make abandoned buildings more useful in the community? How can they improve the overall community's appearance?

Senior Resident Accessibility in Garfield

How can Garfield become more accessible to senior residents?



Through SSFS, Advanced Summer Scholars attended weekly Experiential Learning Courses in a variety of subjects taught by field experts as part of their summer academic enrichment. The courses, along with their outcomes, highlights, and challenges are detailed below.

African American History & Culture

Main Objective:

Introduce students to the African American experience in the city of Pittsburgh post-emancipation and pre-civil rights era.

Student Outcomes:

- Family Trees
- Pittsburgh Journey Maps
- My Pittsburgh History Projects

Course Highlights:

Students had the opportunity to visit a number of Pittsburgh landmarks related to course content and have conversations with Pittsburgh historical figures.

Course Challenges:

Consistent and engaged attendance by program participants was a continual challenge for the course throughout the summer.



Black Feminist Thought

Main Objective:

Historically analyze the complexity of what it means to be a Black woman in America while investigating what Black feminism looks and feels like in today's society.

Student Outcomes:

- My Identity Presentations
- Defining Black Feminism Projects
- Black Shero Projects

Course Highlights:

Throughout the course, students engaged in lively class discussions and debates. Additionally, students kept Empowerment journals throughout the summer that also proved quite successful and useful for their own reflection.

Course Challenges:

Consistent and engaged attendance by program participants coupled with connecting effectively in the virtual setting was a continual challenge for the course throughout the summer.



Business & Entrepreneurship

Main Objective:

Ideate on new products and services while learning about the components of a profitable business.

Student Outcomes:

- Developed business and marketing plans
- Prototyped business / product ideas

Course Highlights:

Students engaged in debates around the viability of entrepreneurship, had conversations on financial literacy, and developed tangible mechanisms to manage money.

Course Challenges:

Students had difficulties connecting with the course instructor in a virtual setting. This challenge often hindered class attendance.



Culinary Arts & Nutrition

Main Objective:

Explore the culinary arts, food preparation, and hospitality operations while developing the skills associated with various cuisines and knowledge of the culinary industry.

Student Outcomes:

- Culinary Demonstrations
- Food Journals
- My Recipe Projects (Building flavor profiles)
- Menu Analyses

Course Highlights:

Students dispelled myths about culinary arts and had discussions around the impact of COVID-19 on the culinary field. Additionally, participants toured various restaurant spaces.

Course Challenges:

It was difficult to access a large, commercial-grade kitchen to use for this course and attendance by program participants was impacted.



Latin American History & Culture

Main Objective:

Expose students to Latin American culture through examinations of Latin American history, geography, traditions, people, music, sports, and language.

Student Outcomes:

- Class presentations on cultural dimensions of Latin America
- Video journals on cultural understandings of Latin America
- My Connection to Latin America Project

Course Highlights:

Students conversed with Native Latin Americans and took virtual tours of Latin American landmarks.

Course Challenges:

The physical distance between instructor and participants forced the course to meet virtually which caused a number of virtual connectivity challenges that impacted course dissemination.

Summer Study for Success Projects

What contributes to Black teens' lack of awareness of Latin American Culture?

From the perspective of Black teens, what does an equal and just world look like?

How did Black teens' video gaming behavior change during COVID-19?

How are the performances of high school athletes impacted by their eating habits?

How do people's mental health statuses impact their eating habits?

Does Pittsburgh provide Black single parents with the benefits and resources they need to be successful?

What do Black teens think about Olympic drug rules? How have the Olympic drug rules historically affected Black runners?

How do the environmental changes in Latin America affect communities and regions?

How do Black college athletes maximize their earning opportunities?

How does anime/manga connect to members of the Black community?

How have small Black retail businesses in PA been affected by COVID-19?

Why are Black women receiving unequal pay in Pittsburgh in comparison to white women? What is contributing to this and how can white women take an active role in addressing it?

Is there a pay gap between Black and white female professional athletes?

What resources are most important to Black single fathers in raising their children and supporting their development?

How does the beauty industry empower Black female entrepreneurs?

What inspires Black women to pursue entrepreneurship?

How do Black feminists protect their mental health from daily obstacles and racism?

Participants:

YES Veterans and Alumni

Components:

- Concept Building and Ideation
- Project Management Training
- Project and Internship Pitch
- Project Implementation/ Internship Experience
- Research Symposium

Supervision:

YES staff provide thought-partnership and support as requested by Veteran and Alumni youth.

Assessment/Evaluation:

- Project Management Evaluation

Student Outcomes:

- Internship Products
- Project Products
- Research Symposium Presentations
- Summer Portfolios

Program Highlights:

Students enjoyed developing summer experiences based on their personal, academic, and career interests. Some students conducted research on mental health and social isolation during COVID-19, while others created marketing campaigns to address community health issues within their respective communities.

Program Challenges:

Veteran and Alumni youth have the autonomy and agency to direct their summer experiences. While a valuable opportunity, this feature created some challenges for less self-directed students who needed more structure and oversight than the program affords.

Wellness Initiatives



Throughout the summer, students participated in a number of supplemental activities, including weekly Wellcare Wednesday sessions. These sessions were gender specific; the schedule is included below.

Week 1 <i>Social Well Being</i>	Thrifting & Entrepreneurship Shoes & You
Week 2 <i>Physical Well Being</i>	Crafting & Jewelry Making Ride in a Slingshot & Benz
Week 3 <i>Emotional Well Being</i>	Spa & Movie Day Boxing & Kickboxing
Week 4 <i>Environmental Well Being</i>	Photoshoot in the Park Space Jam 2 Movie Day
Week 5 <i>Financial Well Being</i>	Trap Yoga Karate & Self-Discipline Class
Week 6 <i>Intellectual Well Being</i>	HBCUs vs. PWIs Discussion Divine 9 Organizations Panel

Post-Participation Survey



Over
60%
of respondents reported
feeling prepared for their
assigned job duties.

On a scale
from 1 to 10, almost
50%
of respondents rated
their work experience
a 9 or 10.

- What Did You
Learn This Summer?**
1. Research Process
 2. Employment Preparation
 3. Time Management
 4. Financial Management
- *Most common answer themes

Post-Participation Survey



Below are the percentages of respondents who answered "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to the respective statement.

About

70%

The work experience helped me think about my future career choice.

About

60%

I had the chance to help people in the community.

About

70%

Staff challenged me to do my best.

75%

Staff said something nice to me when I did something good.

Over

70%

I felt like my opinion mattered.

Over

75%


I felt respected by staff at my worksite.


Self-Efficacy Assessment




At the beginning and end of the program, participants completed a Self-Efficacy Assessment. The following are the statements that saw the largest percentage increases of respondents who "strongly agreed" with the statement from pre- to post-test.

I can figure out anything if I try hard enough.  14.7%

When I am struggling to accomplish something difficult, I focus on my progress instead of feeling discouraged.  13.1%

If I practice everyday, I could develop just about any skill.  14.7%

I think that no matter who you are, you can significantly change your level of talent.  13.5%

I can change my basic level of ability considerably.  14.6%

Discussion & Wrap-Up



Discussion & Conclusion



For many summers, YES has successfully provided youth with employment experiences through larger Learn and Earn programming. In this role, YES has extended beyond the traditional responsibility of summer employment and created transformational experiences for program participants in three core areas: employability preparation, academic enrichment, and socio-cultural leadership development.

Summer 2021 presented a challenge to maintain the continued success YES has found in its role as a Learn and Earn provider. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, social isolation in particular, were impacting youth in myriad ways. YES was challenged to maintain its excellence as a provider of transformational summer experiences given these many challenges. As the report suggests, YES rose to the challenge.

YES staff and stakeholders effectively wove an overall theme of reactivation into existing core program tenets to ensure prioritization of youth social interaction with one another while also continuing to provide academic enrichment, employment, and leadership opportunities.

Given the difficulties everyone has faced over the last year and a half, the successful completion of Summer 2021 felt especially monumental. During the short 8-week program, YES staff witnessed youth enter and leave the program as seemingly different people. Youth engaged with one another, program staff, and community stakeholders in both informal and formal interactions that reinvigorated their academic, social, and overall spirits.

YES' Summer 2021 presented unique opportunities to engage with young people after a year plus of social isolation. These opportunities were accompanied by equally unique challenges to ensure all program participants and stakeholders were safe and finding success. In sum, Summer 2021 was a reactivating experience that planted seeds of excitement for the upcoming academic year.



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This report is the thought work of YES staff, students, and stakeholders alike and the intellectual property of YES.



I. Full Program Curricula

II. Pre-Employment and Leadership Training

III. Camp Fewi

IV. Period Project

V. SSFS Courses

VI. SWFS (& Apprenticeships)

VII. YPAR

In an effort to create an accessible and concise product, the detailed appendices for YES' 2021 Summer Report have not been included in this document. The appendices are comprised of full course curricula for each of YES' program components. Interested parties should contact YES' Office Administrator, Olivia Kelley, at okelley@yespgh.org for a copy of the report with appendices included.