

Youth Equity Stewardship Series

Student Survey Results

May 3, 2015

Judi Vanderhaar, PhD



Executive Summary

Background

The community school district provided a group of students a 2-day workshop series exploring issues of race, culture, bias, decision-making, respect for self and others, leadership, and civic engagement. The Youth Equity Stewardship Series (YESS) was designed to engage students to address relevant issues in a way that fosters human dignity, courageous leadership, cultural competence and stewardship.

Key Findings

- **Participation:** A total of 53 students and two teachers that represented four P-C schools attended the two day workshop series. All students were in high school, with the majority in 10th-11th grade.
- **Value of workshops:** Nearly all of the students (93%) rated their experience in the workshop as “very valuable.”
- **Impact on understanding:** The majority of students reported that the workshop helped them understand all key workshop concepts “a lot.” The highest degree of understanding reported were around (a) creating a more fair and equitable learning community, (b) increasing awareness of diversity and equity issues, and (c) student-student respect



“I HAVE HEARD THINGS AT SCHOOL THAT ARE OFFENSIVE AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. NOW I KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THE SITUATION WITHOUT LASHING OUT AT A PERSON.” -student

Table of Contents:

Background.....	2
Who participated?	3
Value of the workshop experience.....	3
Impact on student understanding.....	4
Student experience	6
Most important things learned.....	6
How will the learning be applied?	7
Areas for improvement.....	8
Recommendations.....	8

- **Most important things learned:** Students shared that self-awareness, reflection and learning how to respond (rather than react) to others and difficult situations respectfully and creatively were among the most important things learned. The students were also very clear about how they plan to apply what they learned to their everyday life – both inside and outside of school.

- **Recommendations:** Consider (1) forums/structures wherein students and staff can engage in this work together, (2) increasing exposure of the content and approach to more students (and whole schools), (3) communicate in the district vision

the important and valuable role that students play in helping reduce inequities and (4) increase involvement of student participants in terms of decision making and policy and the district and school leadership levels.




Background

In an effort to generate the systematic enhancement of cultural responsiveness and increased equity, the community school district provided a group of students a 2-day workshop series exploring issues of race, culture, bias, decision-making, respect for self and others, leadership, and civic engagement that compliments that reinforces the Deep Equity Training provided for teachers and administrators.

The Youth Equity Stewardship Series was designed to engage students to address relevant issues in a way that fosters human dignity, courageous leadership, cultural competence and stewardship. The workshops incorporate an arts-centered approach that facilitates building energy and momentum toward creative thought, collaboration, action, and leadership.


Methodology

A survey was developed to assess student perceptions of the value and impact of the YESS workshops experience. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Content analysis was conducted on the open ended responses to identify emerging themes.



"I LEARNED TO BE MORE RESPECTFUL TO EVERYONE. IT DOESN'T MATTER THEIR COLOR, RACE, RELIGION, SEXUALITY, OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION. IT MADE ME MORE CONFIDENT IN MYSELF"

-Student



"I know more people now and their story. You can't judge a person based on how they look. -I'll be using creative resistance against those unfair to me. -I have to be the change I want to see" - student

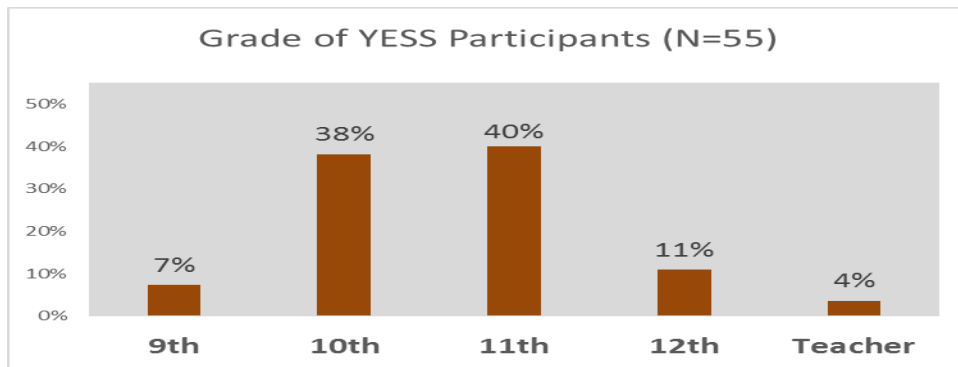
Who attended the YESS workshops?

A total of 53 students and two attending teachers completed a survey at the end of the workshop series. The students represented 4 schools.

As shown in the table below, the majority of participants came from the three high schools that represent the Education CenterOne teacher attended from Starkweather and one attended from the P-CEP.

School	N Students	% Students
A	20	38%
B	12	23%
C	12	23%
D	9	17%
E	53	100%

In terms of grade level, all students attend high school, with the majority in 10th-11th grade as illustrated below.



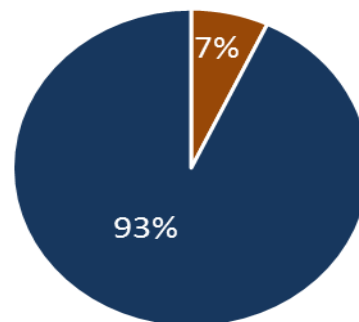
How valuable was the training for students?

Student responses demonstrate that they found their experience in the workshops as very valuable.

Not one participant reported that their experience in the workshop was “not valuable”.

How would you rate your experience in the YESS workshop?

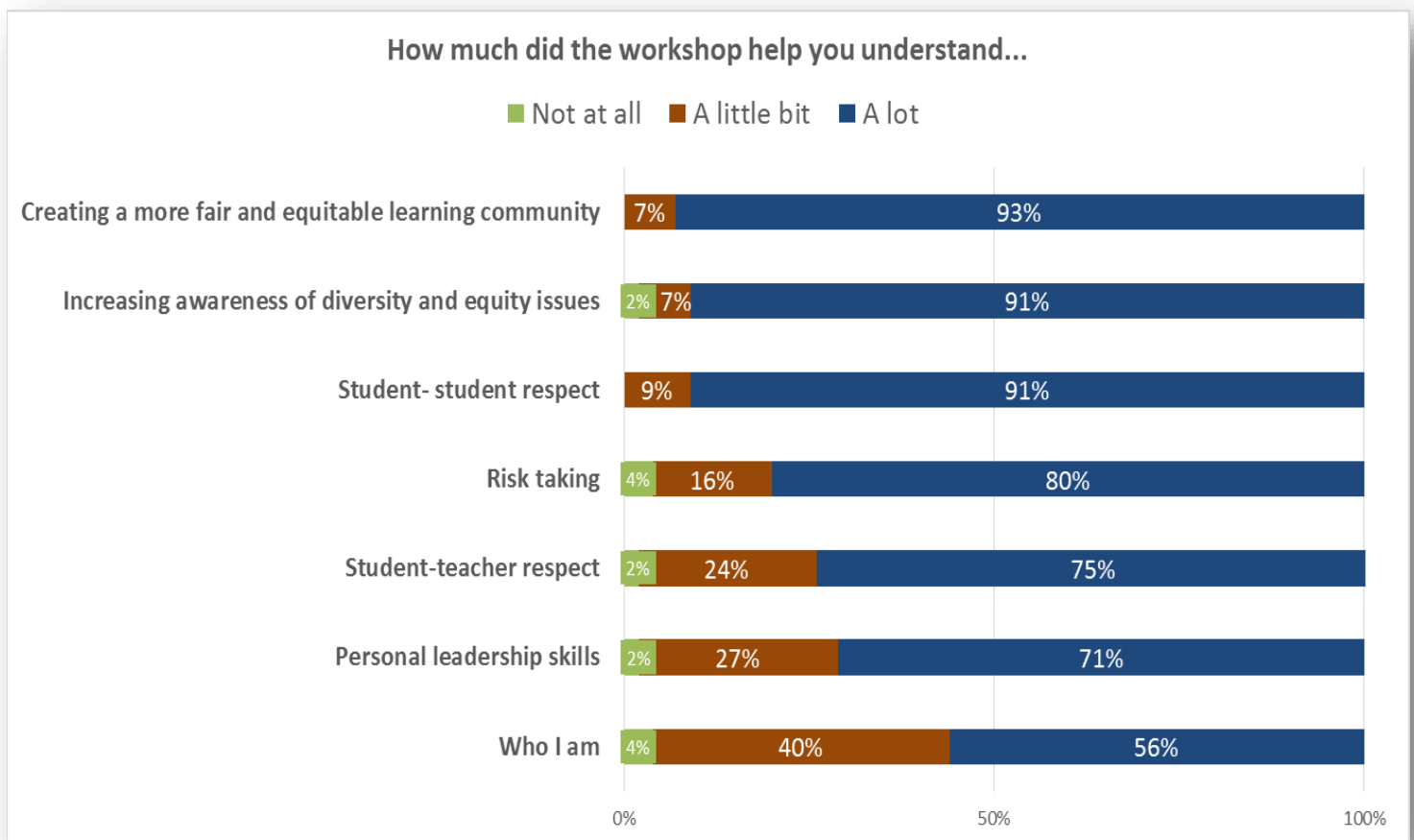
■ Not valuable
 ■ Somewhat valuable
 ■ Very valuable



To what extent did the training impact student understanding?

Participants were asked to share how much the workshops helped them understand some of the key components of the workshops. As shown below the majority of participants reported that the workshop helped them understand all key components “a lot”.

In particular the areas with the highest degree of understanding reported were (a) creating a more fair and equitable learning community, (b) increasing awareness of diversity and equity issues, and (c) student-student respect.



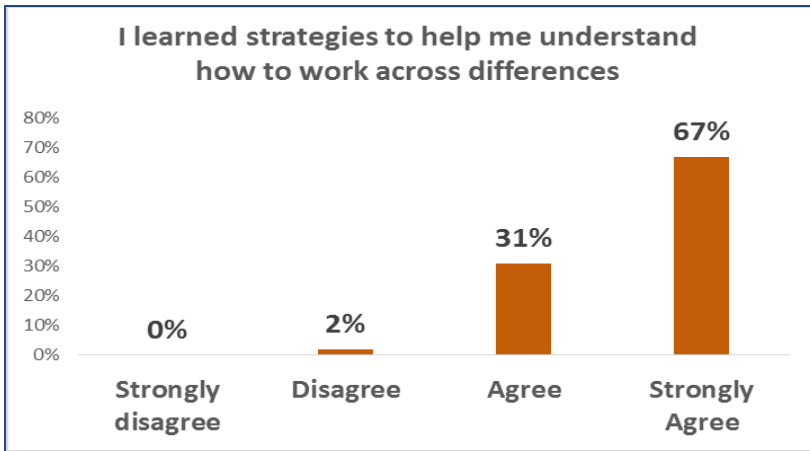
“Just hearing others' stories was helpful. These stories did two things: 1.They let me know that I am not alone. 2. They opened my mind to the inequality others face in a way nothing has done before.” -student

How did students feel about the experience and quality of the workshops?

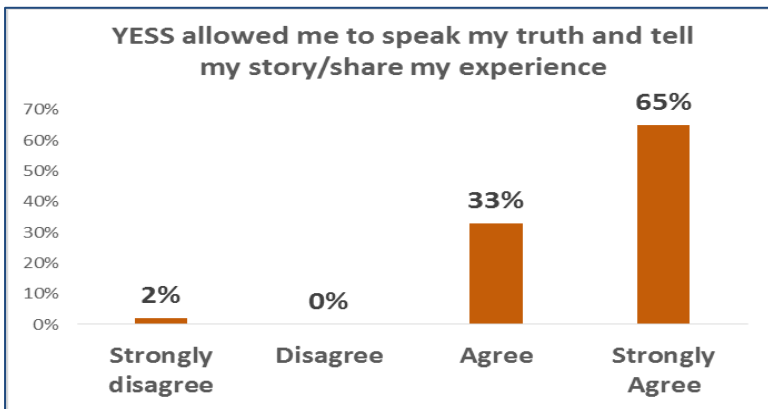
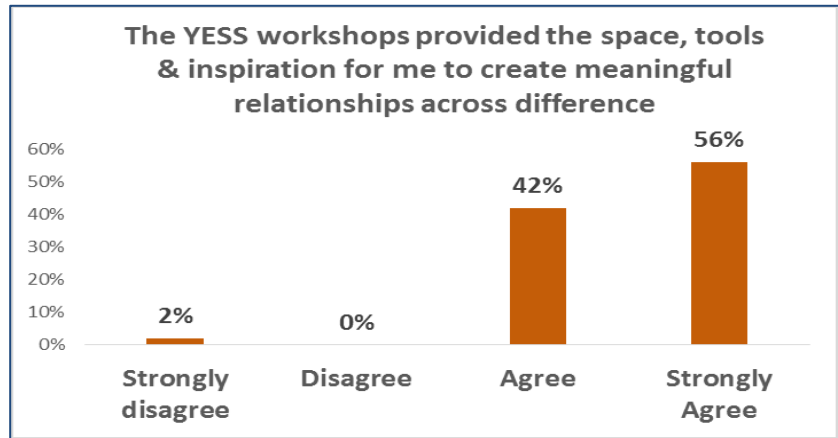
The students were asked to choose their level of agreement to four statements about their experience of the workshops from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The majority (67%) strongly agreed that they **learned strategies** to help them understand how to work across difference, and the vast majority (98%) agreed at some level they learned strategies.

98%

Agreed they learned strategies to help them understand how to work across differences.



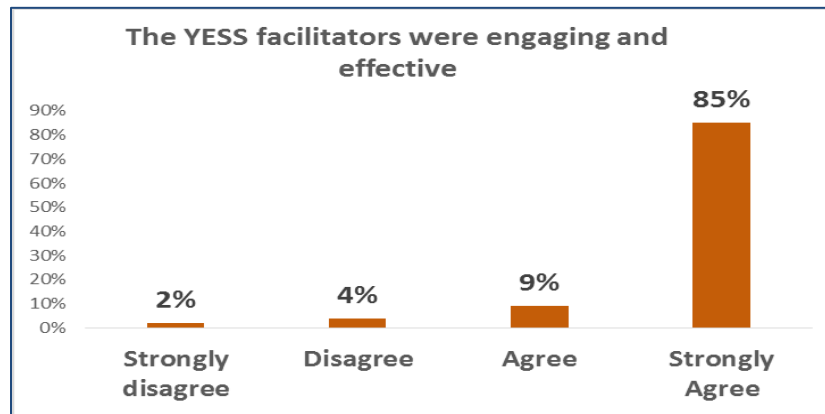
Over half of the students (56%) strongly agreed that the workshops provided the space, tools and inspiration for them to **create meaningful relationships across difference**, and the vast majority (98%) found agreement with this statement.



The majority of students (65%) strongly agreed that the workshops **allowed them to speak their truth, tell their story and share their experience** with their peers – and again 98% reported agreement with this statement.



In terms of the quality of the workshop facilitation and presenters, 85% strongly agreed that the facilitators were engaging and effective, while a very small minority (6 %) disagreed.



What were the most important things learned?

Students were asked to answer several open-ended questions. The first being about the most important thing they learned. The responses were very rich in detail, reflective and optimistic. Overall, responses suggest students learned a great deal of the key teachings as well as had the opportunity to reflect on their own knowledge, behavior and perspectives – which they were able to share with others. The primary themes that emerged from the responses are:

- Creative Resistance and how to respond rather than react to people and situations
- Self -awareness and the importance of self-regulation particularly with respect to interpersonal conflict
- Increased awareness of their own and others struggles, strengths and experiences

“The most important thing I learned from the YESS workshop past two days are that being respectful of other people and their differences makes a big difference (in a positive way), and also each and every person had the potential to win your heart if you just be optimistic”

- The importance of -and ways to- respect self and others
- Decision making skills
- Gaining a deeper understanding of situations and others through questioning
- Awareness of bias and how others are impacted
- The need for social change in the world and their own community

“I will apply the creative resistance in all aspects of my life with my family, friends, peers and teachers whenever they make me mad or offend me; will not just react I will actually think what I want to say before I say it.”

What do students think could improve the workshop?

Overall, the responses to this were very positive and many expressed how much they enjoyed and were engaged in the process and had no suggestions.

- Provide more sessions and provide this to a wider group of students in all schools
- Increase number of skill building activities/ physical activities/dance
- Structure more times students work with others they don't already know and more icebreakers
- Provide a handout/information sheet(s) they can take with them
- Share real examples of change in the local community as examples

“TO IMPROVE MY SCHOOL I THINK WE SHOULD HAVE MEETINGS ABOUT THESE TYPES OF THINGS OR SITUATIONS AND GET THE ADULT'S SIDE OF THINGS TOO.”

The workshops...“gave hope, happiness comfort and a new friend to people who needed it.” -Student

Recommendations

The findings from the student survey data reflect an overwhelmingly positive experience and self-reported outcomes in terms of understanding, motivation to apply what was learned, and fostering deeper connections with peers. Based on the results the following recommendations are offered.

- Consider ways/forums/structures wherein school staff and students can have dedicated time together so they can engage with and learn from each other through courageous conversation to increase mutual understanding.
- Consider ways to make the content and approach of the workshops accessible to the whole school.
- Consider communicating district-wide the valuable role that students play and the importance of their voice and actions in helping reduce inequities.
- Related, consider increasing involvement of student participants in terms of decision making and policy at the district and school leadership levels.
- Recommendations for the YESS facilitators are reflected in the “What do students think would improve the workshop” section above.