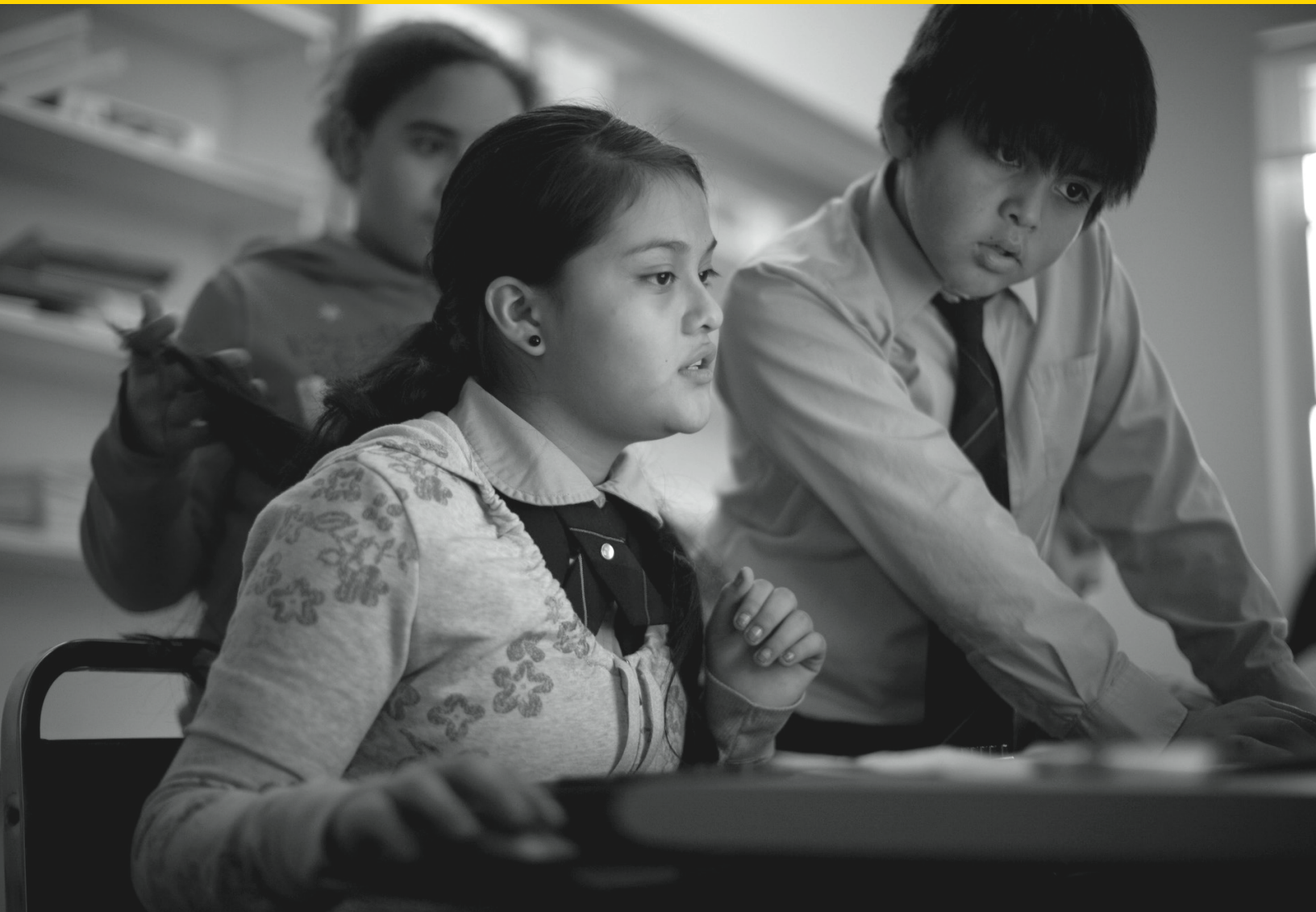News Corp

ALGORHYTHM

YOUTH INC
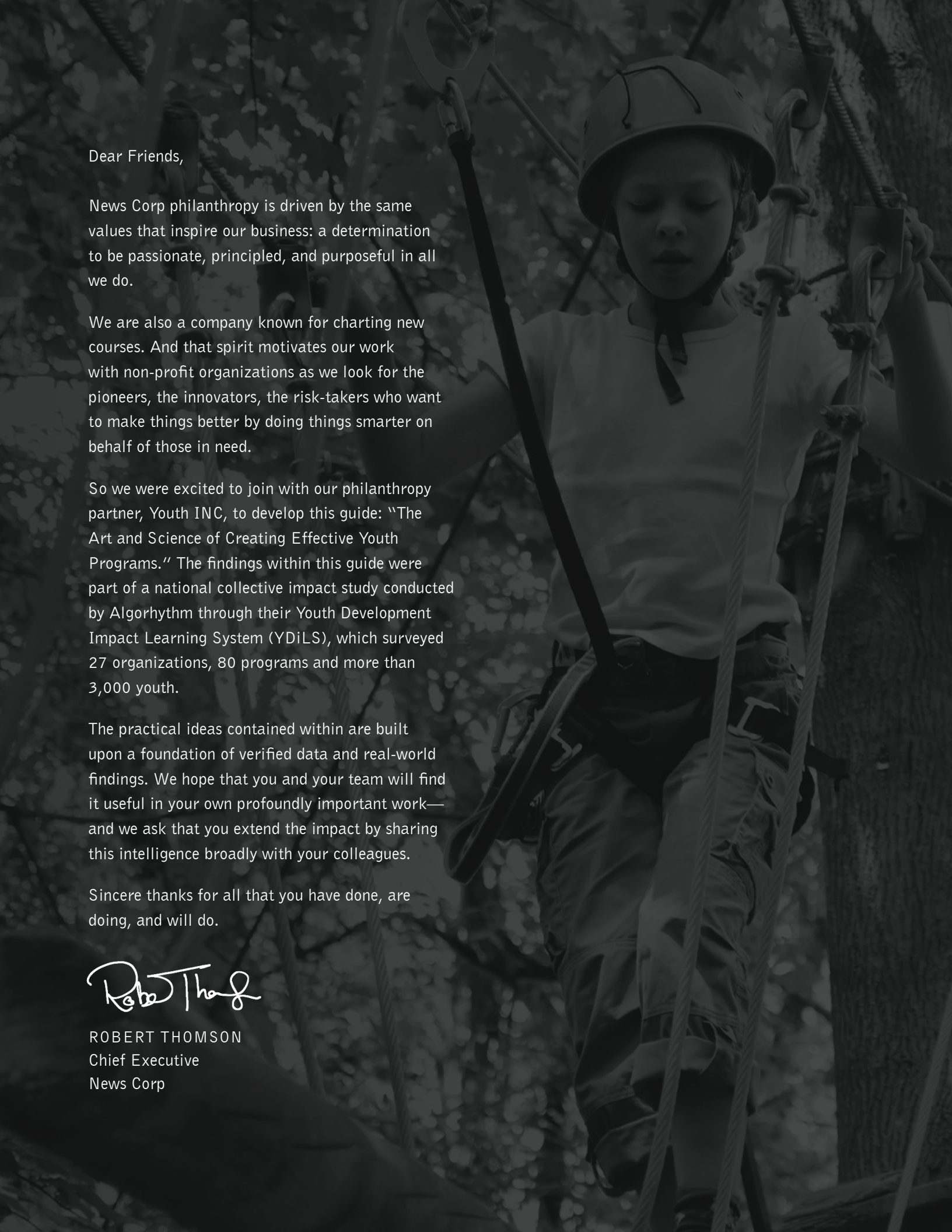
THE ART & SCIENCE
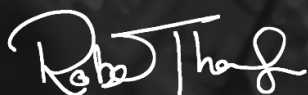## OF CREATING EFFECTIVE YOUTH PROGRAMS

Dear Friends,

News Corp philanthropy is driven by the same values that inspire our business: a determination to be passionate, principled, and purposeful in all we do.

We are also a company known for charting new courses. And that spirit motivates our work with non-profit organizations as we look for the pioneers, the innovators, the risk-takers who want to make things better by doing things smarter on behalf of those in need.

So we were excited to join with our philanthropy partner, Youth INC, to develop this guide: "The Art and Science of Creating Effective Youth Programs." The findings within this guide were part of a national collective impact study conducted by Algorhythm through their Youth Development Impact Learning System (YDiLS), which surveyed 27 organizations, 80 programs and more than 3,000 youth.

The practical ideas contained within are built upon a foundation of verified data and real-world findings. We hope that you and your team will find it useful in your own profoundly important work— and we ask that you extend the impact by sharing this intelligence broadly with your colleagues.

Sincere thanks for all that you have done, are doing, and will do.

ROBERT THOMSON
Chief Executive
News Corp

> This is my invariable **ADVICE TO PEOPLE:** Learn how to cook— try new recipes, learn from your mistakes, BE FEARLESS, and above all have fun!
>
> — JULIA CHILD —

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Why are some chefs better than others? What makes their food extraordinary? On some cooking shows, multiple chefs even make *the exact same dish*, and yet one chef's dish outshines the others. What's different about that chef's approach? Some think it's their mastery: their fine-tuned technique and knowledge of food science. Others think it's their passion and creativity: you can taste it in their food. Many would argue that it's *both*.

A highly skilled youth worker is, in many ways, like a 5-star chef. Their programs, or "kitchens," are also full of deep concentration, cooperation, risk-taking, and creativity—a sort of coordinated chaos. The clockwork precision of activities and transitions are mesmerizing: a seamless symphony of independent work, fearlessness, and collaboration. These youth workers also have an unending enthusiasm for and commitment to their work. Most importantly, they are loved and respected by those around them: peers, youth, and parents/guardians.

What's their secret? Recent findings from a large-scale, national collective impact study conducted by Algorhythm, with the support of Youth INC and News Corp, show that their success is, in fact, like cooking: part passion, part technique.

THE SECRET'S IN THE SAUCE

To learn more about the secret "recipe" behind effective youth programs, News Corp and Youth INC commissioned Algorhythm to mine the data of more than 3,000 youth across 27 organizations and in 80 programs who participated in our Youth Development Impact Learning System (YDiLS). The YDiLS is an online evaluation tool through which youth complete pre and post "surveys" that measure their growth in six, research-based "Social and Emotional Learning" (SEL) capacities proven to be foundational to long-term success in life:

1. **Academic Self-Efficacy:** A youth's motivation and perceived mastery toward positive school performance (i.e., academic success) and their general sense of hope in their capacity to attain academic success.

2. **Contribution:** Contribution encompasses a youth's positive engagement with family, community, and society.

3. **Positive Identity:** A youth's positive identity is their internal sense of self-worth and self-efficacy.

4. **Self-Management:** A youth's ability to regulate their emotions and behavior, take positive risks, and persist through life's challenges.

5. **Social Capital:** A youth's positive bonds with people and institutions (e.g., school, community center, youth-serving organization).

6. **Social Skills:** A youth's ability to take others' perspectives into account. Developing a sense of caring, and empathy are essential to the development of social skills.

All programs and organizations who participate in the YDiLS do so because they want to learn more about their outcomes and how to improve their programs. Their participation in the system is completely voluntary and motivated by their desire for ongoing learning and growth.

The SEL Opportunity

Mounting research in the area of SEL and associated outcomes such as "21st century learning skills," "critical thinking," "life skills," "grit," and "growth mindset" has begun to shape a new conversation about youth "success," which broadens our understanding to include: a youth's ability to fulfill his or her goals in life; strong connections and the ability to understand and work with others; and having the agency and competencies to influence the world around them.

Indeed, evidence shows that when youth develop these types of social and emotional competencies, they are more likely to: do well in school (graduates have higher test scores); be better prepared for the workforce; and have the types of lives that they want in the future (thriving).[1] These findings offer youth development professionals new ways to understand and speak about their outcomes. Never before has the field had a North Star that so clearly speaks to the impact of developing the "whole child."

1 Read Resource Section below.

Algorhythm uses cutting-edge predictive and prescriptive analytics to understand the various recipes that predict a youth's success and then "prescribe" actions that increase the odds of a positive outcome. Algorhythm's analysis of the YDiLS data revealed something truly exciting: thirteen amazing organizations significantly outperforming their peers—with twice the gains on SEL outcomes across all of their programs in the YDiLS! We lovingly called these organizations our "positive deviants."

At first glance, these organizations and their programs seem quite different from one another: their activities range from video production to baseball to camping. But a closer look, and deeper analysis of the data, revealed four key areas of practice that drove SEL outcome gains at more than twice the rate of other organizations within the system: effective youth engagement, peer-to-peer engagement strategies, coaching youth through goal management, and staff engagement.[2] Moreover, looking at each of these practice areas revealed key ingredients that were the secrets to their success.

To learn more about how these "secret ingredients" create effective youth programs, we spoke to the "chefs" who knew them best: the staff and youth workers at our "positive deviant" organizations.

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2 For more information about the Algorhythm study go to www.algorhythm.io/yd

ABOUT THIS "COOKBOOK"

This manual shares what we learned from our data mining process and our case studies with seven[3] positive deviant organizations and programs (see Appendix A). Each section looks at a specific data-driven and promising practice, outlines its key ingredients, and then illustrates the practice in action by sharing "Stories from the Kitchens" of our case study organizations. At the end of each section, starting with this one, you'll also find:

- Reflection questions designed to help you assess your current work with youth and identify new staff practices to grow your program's impact; and

- Additional resources to help you continue to develop positive youth development skill sets and promote high levels of social emotional learning.

Our goal is to provide you with the data, language, tools, and authority to double-down on your positive youth development practices and help youth grow their SEL outcomes.

Last but not least, we encourage you to write down your reflections, and any other questions that come up, and post them on our Facebook page @ YDiLearning so we can continue the conversation. And we look forward to learning more about your practice!

"The description of this paper as a "manual" immediately signaled for me an opportunity to use it as a teaching and planning tool. The steps and key ingredients to successful youth work, supported by actual examples of NYC youth-serving agencies, provide a road map for program design and implementation. The quotes from program staff brought to life the actual voices of youth workers in the trenches: not overly theoretical or didactic, but definitely representative of real people doing important work on behalf of our city's youth. As a long-time "practitioner" and trainer/teacher in the youth development field, I find this document to be an exceptional planning tool and resource! It has utility in the classroom and workplace. What more could a manager ask for?"

—FELIX URRUTIA, YOUTH DEVELOPMENT LEADER

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3 While there were more than seven positive deviants in our data mining process, several chose not to engage in the case study process.

News Corp   ALGORHYTHM   YOUTH INC

REFLECTION PROMPTS

1. **Take a moment to review the definitions above. Think about how your organization talks about and measures these outcomes. Write down the words that you use within your organization to talk about each outcome area. Check off all the SEL outcomes that your program intentionally promotes:**

  ○ SELF-MANAGEMENT   *If you use a different word for this, write it here:*

  ○ SOCIAL CAPITAL   *If you use a different word for this, write it here:*

  ○ ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY   *If you use a different word for this, write it here:*

  ○ SOCIAL SKILLS   *If you use a different word for this, write it here:*

  ○ CONTRIBUTION   *If you use a different word for this, write it here:*

  ○ POSITIVE IDENTITY   *If you use a different word for this, write it here:*

2. **Reflect on the following questions:**

  • Which SEL outcomes resonate the most for you? Why?

  • How do your program activities offer youth opportunities to learn/practice SEL skills?

  • How are you and/or your staff supporting young people's development of these capacities?

3. Based on your responses to prompts 1 and 2, complete a "Plus/Delta" reflection:

What are you doing well? How do you know?	What could you improve at? What would you do differently?

Resources

Read
- *Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework* | The Wallace Foundation
- "Nonacademic Skills Are Key to Success. But What Should We Call Them?" | NPR-Ed
- *Preparing Youth to Thrive Promising Practices for Social & Emotional Learning:* A Field Guide | Susan Crown Exchange (SCE)
- *Supporting Social & Emotional Development Through Quality Afterschool Programs* | BEYOND the BELL at American Institutes for Research

Watch
- The Power of Social & Emotional Learning | Susan Crown Exchange (SCE)
- Reed Larson on "Youth programs as powerful settings for social & emotional learning" | YouTube

Tools
- How Afterschool Programs Can Support Employability Through Social & Emotional Learning: A Planning Tool | BEYOND the BELL at American Institutes for Research
- Social & Emotional Learning Practices: A Self-Reflection Tool for Afterschool Staff | BEYOND the BELL at American Institutes for Research
- Social & Emotional Learning (SEL) Toolkit | ACT for Youth Center of Excellence

PRIORITIZE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Did you know youth who enroll in your programs are already predisposed to engage or resist your activities and staff? I'm sure you've seen this in action. Some youth arrive ready and motivated to work, while others seem disinterested and disconnected. It's no surprise that staff have a difficult time building positive relationships with these youth. Yet some staff are able to bridge the distance. Not only that, these staff help youth achieve more than twice the outcome gains of their peers. How do they do it? Read on...

KEY INGREDIENTS

In our study, programs that excelled at Youth Engagement had four "ingredients" in common:

1. **Staff focused on building relationships with youth.** Staff were curious about the youth in their programs and worked to learn more about who they were. They took every opportunity to informally interact with youth and asked questions about their lives, hopes, dreams, and even worries.

2. **Staff worked hard to discover what the youth were interested in.** And when the youth seemed to have NO interests, they gave them numerous opportunities to explore new things and stretch themselves. They also gave youth new roles and responsibilities within the program: encouraging them to challenge themselves and learn new skills.

3. **Staff provided youth with opportunities to make decisions about what they wanted to do *and* how they wanted to do it.** Staff treated youth as equals—as unique individuals who had their own creative ideas, opinions, and experiences to contribute to the program experience.

4. **Staff communicated high expectations for youth.** Staff let youth know they believed they had something to offer and could accomplish their goals.

Sound powerful? It is! According to our research, this recipe drives *twice* the social emotional outcome gains for youth.

EVEN COFFEE BREAKS COUNT

1. Focus on Building Relationships.

At **Harlem RBI**, building relationships with youth and families is at the core of staff's work. Staff work hard, through informal and formal structures, to "make sure youth feel supported and part of the Harlem RBI community. It is our mission to create really strong bonds" (staff member of Dreamworks). Staff at Harlem RBI build relationships during program activities, and they get to know youth in less formal "in-between moments:" before programs start or during transitions between activities. Staff intentionally use this informal time with youth to learn more about each youth's day. Staff are trained to actively listen to youth and to let them know that they care about them and what is going on in their lives. Every month staff also check in one-on-one with every youth to learn about their goals, strengths, challenges, and relationships with families and friends. Staff also have scheduled "team time" during which they engage in team building activities and talk about current events or any other issue the group thinks is important.

> " *The relationships that we build with our youth, as program coordinators, are key. We are available to them all of the time. Sometimes we are there for them beyond program hours. They text us at all hours and we respond. Sometimes when we don't respond, they get upset about it.*
> —DREAMWORKS PROGRAM STAFF MEMBER

Steve's Camp at Horizon Farms is very focused on ensuring "descriptive representation" where staff demographics reflect those of the participating youth. The majority of staff were originally campers and/or counselors. Because they have similar backgrounds as the youth, the youth connect with them faster and more deeply. As one staff member observes: "They see me like a big brother versus someone who is completely removed from their life."

2. Discover Youth's Passions & Interests.

As they produce their films, each youth at the **Educational Video Center (EVC)** begins to find their unique strengths and roles on the team. Youth take ownership of different aspects of projects: from narration, to music, to interviewing, to sound, to video. As one staff member observed: "Every part of the documentary is representative of a personal accomplishment that their family members can view, value, and appreciate."

Longacre Leadership Camp engages youth in a journey to discover their spark or passion. They offer seven different types of activities for youth to explore: build, explore, work, play, rest, care, and create. And each activity area requires different strengths, tapping into youths' multiple intelligences. Staff also encourage youth to contribute their own ideas, create new activities, and then lead them! As one staff person noted: "We see people's passions and learn more about people when they might get to lead a new activity… they were so excited, then I was too."

3. Engage Youth in Decision-Making.

At **Longacre Leadership Camp**, youth are encouraged to make big and small decisions each day and are encouraged to think about the impact their decisions have on the rest of the group. To support the camp community, youth are assigned a crew to work with, along with daily responsibilities or tasks, but they are not specifically told how to complete those tasks. Together, each crew works out its own plan and strategies to achieve its goals. Or in the words of one youth: "The staff do not tell you how to do something. They let you figure it out or ask for help."

At Harlem RBI youth choose their team colors for their jerseys, and they nominate captains and Youth Leadership Council members who provide feedback directly to Harlem RBI about programming. Youth also have "choice clubs" that give them the opportunity to participate in a range of other activities. For example, a community service club invites youth to decide what kinds of changes they would like to make in their communities. Another important way Harlem RBI engages youth in decision-making is by having staff work with youth to develop group norms and expectations. These norms are agreed upon by everyone and are reviewed and discussed during every session, and youth are expected to hold each other to these norms.

> *We really value youth voice and youth choice here. If we have more flexibility to give them an option and let them choose, we always do that. It makes them feel like they are learning with us. They are not just passive recipients of the materials that we present.*
> —TEAM BUILDERS PROGRAM STAFF MEMBER

Staff say that they "step back and ask the youth what they think we need to talk about as a team. We let them run it. They are in control of what they talk about and what they do with their team... We try to make sure that they feel that they are active participants in choosing what they are learning."

The staff at **Steve's Camp at Horizon Farms** described the way they support youth engagement as "functioning under flexibility." While there is a core philosophy and methodology, there is also great flexibility within their structure to support the needs and ideas of the incoming campers. Every day, staff come to camp with topics scheduled but also elicit feedback, revisit goals, and adapt to the input they receive from youth. "Despite what we planned, we picked new interest areas that would better stimulate these youth. [They were] totally happy with the restructuring because we listened and heard them... we were responsive... the message of 'being on a journey' was heard— that we, too, are on a journey and equally working through it with them."

4. Communicate High Expectations.

At **EVC's Documentary Workshop**, youth are related to as professionals and their work is taken very seriously. The program staff provide each youth with a business card bearing the title of "Youth Producer." A staff member explains: "They aren't students anymore; they are producers. It doesn't look like a school. This is a place of work, creativity, and unity. I want them to feel like they are not amateur students making a product." EVC works hard to create a professional atmosphere. Even within their school-based programs, their space looks and feels like a professional media production company, with carpet, rolling chairs, tables, video equipment, editing stations, and so on. The program space feels very different from a classroom: young producers, artists, and intellectuals debate, discuss, and create together in small groups and pairs.

Similarly, in the **New Heights' Arts and Culture** program, staff treat youth as artists from day one. They encourage the youth to perform as professional artists and set high expectations for them.

At **Queens Community House's Access for Young Women** program, the girls are expected to build and hone their skills with the final goal of teaching a community workshop. The staff relate to the girls as active leaders and have high expectations that they will succeed. The result? As one program director observes: "The girls are aware that everyone is pulling for them. It plays out in the classroom."

REFLECTION PROMPTS

1. Take a moment to complete the following mini-survey:

In your program, how often do staff…	Never		Sometimes		Always
Ask youth what they're interested in?	1	2	3	4	5
Create opportunities for youth to share about themselves?	1	2	3	4	5
Create opportunities for youth to explore new hobbies/skills?	1	2	3	4	5
Encourage youth to challenge themselves and take risks?	1	2	3	4	5
Ask youth to make meaningful decisions?	1	2	3	4	5
Let youth know you think highly of them/have high expectations?	1	2	3	4	5

2. Imagine yourself in the shoes of a young person in your program, and ask yourself:

- Do you believe program staff are interested in you? Why?

  —What kinds of questions do they ask you? How does this make you feel?

  —How open are you with your answers? Why?

- Do you know what program staff expect of you? How?

  —Do they hold you accountable? Do they create opportunities for you/your peers to hold each other accountable? What does this look like?

  —Do they acknowledge and support your successes? Do they create opportunities for you/your peers to acknowledge and support your successes? What does this look like?

3. Based on your responses to prompts 1 and 2, complete a "Plus/Delta" reflection:

What are you doing well? How do you know?	What could you improve at? What would you do differently?

Resources

Read
- *Being Y-AP Savvy: A Primer on Creating & Sustaining Youth-Adult Partnerships* | Center for Nonprofits, University of Wisconsin-Madison & 4-H Youth Development, University of Wisconsin-Extension
- The Developmental Relationships Framework | Search Institute
- *PAR Guide: Promoting the Participation, Learning and Action of Young People* | UNICEF
- What is Youth Engagement, Really? | ACT for Youth Center of Excellence

Watch
- 6 Ways to Build Better Relationships with Youth | The Family & Youth Institute
- Peter Benson - Sparks: How Youth Thrive | TEDxTC

Online Tools
- *Being Y-AP (Youth-Adult Partnership) Saavy: A Primer on Creating & Sustaining Youth-Adult Partnerships* | Center for Nonprofits, University of Wisconsin-Madison Jessica Collura 4-H Youth Development, University of Wisconsin-Extension
- The Road Map: Figure Out Where You're Going | Road Trip Nation - Define Your Road in Life
- Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation | The Freechild Project

FACILITATE PEER-TO-PEER ENGAGEMENT

Programs that were highly impactful also supported youth by working alongside peers who were different than them. These programs intentionally integrated group processes as core learning opportunities, focusing on youth's personal experiences and the positive challenges of learning how to collaborate with peers. In several cases, they intentionally brought together youth from different communities, backgrounds, ethnicities, and with different life experiences to work on projects. These projects were designed specifically to allow youth to share their unique stories and celebrate their differences. Rather than shying away from conversations about race, class, gender, ethnicity, and religion—these programs used these discussions to develop videos, community service projects, workshops, and advocacy campaigns. Through these interactions with one another, youth discovered more about themselves, how they relate to the world(s) around them, and how to work with and across differences.

KEY INGREDIENTS

Programs that excelled at Peer-to-Peer Engagement had two "ingredients" in common:

1. Programs rooted learning opportunities in group work/processes.

a. Staff intentionally brought together diverse youth—from different communities, backgrounds, ethnicities, and life experiences.

b. Staff taught youth to rely on and learn from one another—encouraging youth to see each other as resources, allies, and leaders, and to own their work together.

c. Staff coached youth through solving problems together—stepping back to let youth grapple with difficult issues, or, when necessary, gently mediating conversations to remind youth of agreed upon rules for engagement.

2. Programs created safe spaces for youth to take risks, reflect on their work, and share personal experiences.

a. Staff encouraged youth to listen to each other's perspectives without judgment or critique and encouraged youth to support each other's process and growth.

b. Staff helped youth see the strength of their personal experience—how it could provide the raw material for discussions, activities, projects, performances, and even campaigns!

BRING YOUTH TOGETHER LIKE PEAS IN A POD.

1. Prioritize group work/processes when designing learning opportunities.

Educational Video Center's Documentary Workshop intentionally brings youth together from different communities to work on a video project over the course of 15 weeks. They specifically aim for a balance of low-income youth from around the city working alongside youth who tend to be "more college bound." To ensure the video project is meaningful to the group, staff engage youth in an inquiry process that sheds light on their backgrounds, ethnicities, communities, and life experiences. Together, they discuss the issues that youth struggle with today and develop a film that incorporates their personal stories.

EVC's executive director specifically built the organization's programming to align with sociocultural learning theory, which advocates for mixing ages and skillsets within a group to help youth challenge themselves in new ways that promote development. This practice intentionally creates what is known as "zones of proximal development (ZPD)," or environments that support development by leveraging and building upon the multiple capacities of the group.

" *Peers talking about college are working alongside others who may not be going. Kids learn from other kids. They discuss issues that some of the kids are struggling with. This helps develop balanced, empathetic humans. Because their video project is about a social issue, they work intimately with one another, having frank conversations about their differences, learning from one another about economic disparity amongst themselves, the difference between private versus public school. It helps them build with youth who are not like them.*

—EVC STAFF MEMBER

Harlem RBI takes a slightly different approach to bringing youth together. There, youth are from the same community, and many already share cultural norms and understandings, even if they have attended different schools. For Harlem RBI, the notion of being a "team" is key. Teams are formed when youth first come into Harlem RBI. These groups function both as actual baseball teams and as cohorts that move through the program together over time. Youth travel together as a team, study together, do health education together, and so on. "It is a really powerful thing! It is not like any baseball or softball team. Everything we do, we do as a team! They feel comfortable; they feel safe." (Dream Works Program Staff Member)

The **Queens Community House's Access for Young Women Program** engages youth from different cultures and backgrounds to work on shared interests and issues important to them and their communities. Youth learn to share their stories with one another and create community workshops through which they're able to share their life experiences and issues of concern. As a group, youth learn how to creatively and effectively share information and solutions with a broad audience. Staff also pair more seasoned youth with newer youth to help support and guide them through the program. They build a sense of mutual aid: the ability to rely on one another. As the program director states: "You can have a great purpose and the best activities, but if participants don't have the sense that they can really rely on someone who has gone through something just like them, then the group just doesn't work."

To help youth learn how to teach and coach one another, the staff at **New Heights** do not repeat instructions. Instead, they rely on other youth—especially returning youth (youth repeating the program)—to show or share what they heard and to coach their peers through activities. The camping programs of **New Heights**, **Steve's Camp**, and **Mayhew**, to some degree, intentionally mix youth to ensure new learning opportunities. For example, they avoid placing youth in the same group with familial relationships and/or those who attend the same schools. As a staffer at **Mayhew** noted about the assigned cabin crews, "Like in life, you don't get to choose your family; you have to figure out ways to make it work or deal with it." And they try to spread returning youth out amongst different groups. Leveraging the great outdoors, each of these programs also facilitates activities (ropes courses, hiking trails, canoe trips) that—by design—require youth to problem-solve together and rely on one another.

2. Create safe spaces for youth to take risks, reflect on their work, and share personal experiences.

A hallmark of **Longacre Leadership Camp** is the way in which they support peer-to-peer communication through regular opportunities to provide feedback and practice a growth mindset. "Group" is held four nights a week, for two hours, and is a dedicated

time for the whole community to gather and reflect on the day, recognize hard work and good deeds, and resolve conflicts. Youth are taught the "Johari window" concept to help them understand more about themselves and opportunities for growth. They are encouraged to share what others don't know about them (the "hidden window") and to understand what they are blind to (the "blind window"). Longacre Leadership Camp also shares tools with youth that they can use to interact with each other, including basic sentence stems like "I" statements. For example:

> *I feel ____ when you ____." Or: "When I see ____, I feel ____." "I" statements provide youth with a constructive way to share advice or feedback. Youth are also asked to reflect on and support their peers with sentence stems such as: "I appreciated ____ when you ____", or "I admire ____ for ____."*

At **Queens Community House's Access for Young Women Program**, staff begin every group with an activity designed to promote self reflection. For example, the girls might go around in a circle and share one high point from the week (something they're proud of, or something that went really well for them) and one low point. The girls begin group by discussing these experiences, celebrating their successes, and working through their challenges together. Then there's an icebreaker activity. For example: Two Truths and One Lie, or Personal Bingo. Icebreakers are specifically designed to create opportunities for girls to share their personal experiences and stories. Finally, the group engages in a brainstorming session about the topic of the day: they talk about what they know, what they don't know, and what they want to learn.

On the last day of **Steve's Camp**, youth are brought together in their last community circle, and the program director asks them to count off (for example, from 1 to 5). All of the 1's are invited to step into the circle and face inward (a mini circle of 1's) with their eyes closed. Then the program director asks the remaining campers a question like: "Who has inspired you? Tap that person on the shoulder." Youth in the circle receive this affirmation from their community (staff and youth), but they don't know who is tapping them on the shoulder or why (because they're facing inward). Instead, they're invited to reflect on the program director's statement and the taps they receive. The process is then repeated for the other number groups so that everyone has an opportunity to be affirmed. Steve's Camp staff report that youth always comment on how important and loved they feel after this activity.

In the **New Heights' STEM** programs, staff teach the engineering process of "failing fast and often," which encourages youth to experience failures as learning opportunities. And staff also model this for youth. Even though the program includes a competition, staff emphasize that winning the competition isn't the only definition of success. Rather, the way in which each youth learns and grows, and their individual accomplishments, are also signs of success that they should be proud of.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

1. Take a moment to complete the following mini-survey:

In your program, how often do staff…	Never		Sometimes		Always
Engage youth in group work?	1	2	3	4	5
Intentionally bring diverse youth together?	1	2	3	4	5
Encourage youth to rely on and learn from each other (vs. staff)?	1	2	3	4	5
Step back and let youth solve problems without staff direction?	1	2	3	4	5
Encourage youth to listen to each other?	1	2	3	4	5
Highlight youth's personal experience as a strength?	1	2	3	4	5

2. Reflect on the following mini-survey:

- What tools/processes do program staff make available to young people to navigate the communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution involved in group work?

- What are some proactive and reactive ways staff maintain the program as a "safe space"?

  —Reactive strategies include addressing behaviors that undermine the trust of the group or highlighting how one student has supported another.

  —Proactive strategies include, for example, inviting youth at the start of your program to write a collective Group Agreement that identifies the positive behaviors/values you want to see each other contribute to the program.

3. Based on your responses to prompts 1 and 2, complete a "Plus/Delta" reflection:

What are you doing well? How do you know?	What could you improve at? What would you do differently?

Resources

Read
- "Active Listening: Hear What People Are Really Saying" | MindTools
- Diana Baumrind's Parenting Typology | Wikipedia
- Bruce Tuckman's Stages of Group Development | Wikipedia
- "I" Messages/Statements | Wikipedia
- Johari Window | MindTools
- Ramapo for Children's WOW Conflict Resolution Process (What's Up? / Own Up... / What Now?)
- "Zone of Proximal Development" | Simply Psychology

Watch
- Hip-Hop(e): Roberto Rivera | TEDxGrandRapids
- Rita Pierson: Every Kid Needs a Champion | TED
- Youth programs as powerful settings for social and emotional learning | Lisa Bouillion Diaz

Online Tools
- Project Implicit

COACH YOUTH THROUGH GOAL MANAGEMENT

When you hear the term goal management, you may immediately think of S.M.A.R.T. goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time Bound). While staff in our exceptional organizations did indeed help youth develop S.M.A.R.T. goals, they went further by helping youth learn all the steps needed to successfully manage individual and group goals. Within these programs, youth learned how to create strategies to achieve their goals, try multiple avenues, monitor and reflect on their successes and challenges along the way, and shift gears when a strategy or specific goal just wasn't working. The secret recipe and creative techniques that drove twice the outcomes gains are listed below.

KEY INGREDIENTS

Programs that excelled at goal management had two "ingredients" in common:

1. Programs supported youth to both set *and* manage goals.

a. Staff helped youth to clarify and set goals. They helped them visualize goals by asking what they would look like or feel like when achieved. They made sure youth were emotionally attached to goals (i.e., really wanted them). If youth set group goals, staff took time to talk through the connections between their individual goals and the group goal so they could understand how group work supported their personal aspirations.

b. Staff helped youth break big goals down into mini goals or "baby steps." Often youth shared long-term goals. In these cases, staff helped youth understand all the smaller steps they would have to take to achieve the long-term goal. Together, youth and adults broke the goal down into a series of smaller/shorter-term tasks that the youth could work on one-by-one, building confidence as they moved forward.

c. Staff created opportunities for youth to reflect on successes and challenges. They regularly discussed how each mini goal was moving them toward their big goal.

d. Staff helped youth adjust goals when necessary. They held youth accountable for regularly monitoring their progress and helped them adjust their plan when needed.

2. Programs encouraged a growth mindset.

a. Staff re-framed challenges as learning opportunities. When youth hit roadblocks, staff helped them see these as steps in the learning process (rather than end points). Staff understood, and were able to share, that the ability to identify which approach works and which doesn't is an important part of problem-solving. They were also able to help youth see challenges as opportunities to learn something new. When youth related to challenges as opportunities, they were more likely to succeed.

b. Staff provided youth with feedback about their effort: problem-solving, persistence, learning, their ability to seek help (vs. talking about talent, identity, or

GOT LEMONS? MAKE LEMONADE!

1. Support youth to both set *and* manage goals.

At **Harlem RBI**, staff work with youth to set goals at the beginning of each year. They support youth in setting achievable and realistic academic and personal goals. And they let youth choose where they want to be by the end of the year. For example: What GPA they would like? Do they want to go to college? Next, staff work with youth to identify the action steps needed to meet their goals. Staff check in monthly with youth to review their progress, reflect on successes and challenges, and help them make changes to their action plan when necessary. Staff and youth also discuss goals informally, on the ball field, or prior to workshops. And staff aren't afraid to have tough conversations with youth about identifying alternative options, just in case a goal ends up being too big or unachievable.

" *If something seems outlandish, we would never say that they cannot achieve their goal. We urge them to consider their other options. We are careful not to over step and tell our students what they should or shouldn't do. [...] We want them to realize these things on their own. And through our program, they do come to these realizations. A lot of that comes from active listening by our staff and talking through things. Also from strong relationships. That is why we value that so much. If we have strong relationships, we can leverage that. They know we are adults who care, and they are going to listen to us, if we have those strong relationships.*

—DREAMWORKS STAFF MEMBER

At **Queens Community House's Access for Young Women Program**, youth create mission statements, vision boards, and mantras that they use throughout the year. This activity is also used to introduce the agency's mission statement and to explore how it connects with youth's personal mission statements. Staff begin by asking youth what they envision for their lives. Youth can draw these visions, collage symbols from magazines, or draw anything that helps them define their passions and interests. Often, girls already have something in mind. All of this thinking comes together in a vision board that girls can bring home. And staff reference this vision board throughout the year, using it to help them illustrate how the girls' work is helping them progress toward their goals. The girls also develop a personal mantra — connected to personal goals represented by their vision board — that they can recite as a constant reminder of who they are becoming. Program staff meet with girls monthly to review their goals, and they also chat informally with girls about their goals in between monthly meetings. Finally, girls' visions and goals fuel the community workshops the girls design as part of the program. Staff work with girls to make sure the topics they choose for their workshops have real meaning for them. Through frank discussions, staff help girls craft workshops that reflect things that matter to them and speak to their unique journey.

Once a week, staff at **Mayhew** help youth identify tangible personal goals and action steps toward achieving those goals. Youth write their goals down on paper and reflect on them regularly, which includes sharing their goal with the rest of the group. This creates "social buy-in" where youth feel accountable to one another to help achieve their own goals and to help one another. In their Adventures program, staff lead nightly reflections about what happened during the day and how youth made progress toward achieving their goals.

2. Encourage a growth mindset.

The staff at **EVC** model learning for youth and help youth see learning as a lifelong pursuit. They believe there is always something more that can be done to make projects even better, and they work with youth to provide both warm (positive) and cool (constructive) feedback. Staff model giving and receiving this type of feedback, and students are also trained to help each other improve by giving warm and cool feedback. Moreover, when youth share their final projects with outside guests, those guests are also taught how to provide youth with warm and cool feedback to help improve the project. All of this allows for strong open dialogue and frank discussions that support youth's development.

> *Video work can feel very challenging. We take an approach that is encouraging to inspire kids to get to the finish line. However, there needs to be someone there to see the value of the kids' work and not praise them in a false way. Cool feedback is a gift to help you get better. So much of the documentary comes from their creative ideas or vulnerabilities. You have to be positive to have them share, but you have to be honest to help them improve.*
> —DOC WORKSHOP STAFF MEMBER

At **Longacre Leadership Camp**, staff members create a safe space to help youth give and receive uncomfortable feedback with an awareness of Bruce Tuckman's stages of group development (forming-storming-norming-performing). Both Longacre Leadership Camp youth and staff deliberately promote the importance of self-awareness and working to understand others. Youth are coached to give and receive both positive and not-so-positive feedback to one another. The receiver is coached to listen to and really hear the person who is giving the feedback. They are invited to sit with their immediate reaction and reflect on the feedback before responding. When they do respond, they are asked to speak from their feelings and how the feedback makes them feel. When giving feedback, youth speak directly from their own experience, sharing how they are feeling without blame. As a youth participant observed: "Group makes me conscious, and I think a lot about what I'm doing, how I can expand and improve… You hear what people notice and see that a lot of little things don't go unnoticed."

REFLECTION PROMPTS

1. Take a moment to complete the following mini-survey:

In your program, how often do staff...	Never		Sometimes		Always
Help youth clarify and set goals?	1	2	3	4	5
Help youth break big goals down into mini goals or "baby steps"?	1	2	3	4	5
Create opportunities for youth to reflect on successes and challenges?	1	2	3	4	5
Help youth adjust or adapt their goals (when necessary)?	1	2	3	4	5
Re-frame challenges as learning opportunities?	1	2	3	4	5
Provide youth with feedback about their efforts?	1	2	3	4	5

2. Reflect on the following questions:

- How do your program activities currently incorporate goal-setting?

- When youth set goals for themselves, how do staff record them? How often do youth revisit these goals? What opportunity is there for youth to revise or adapt them?

- When youth struggle with challenges, how do staff usually respond?

- What opportunities do program staff have to give youth personalized feedback/coaching?

3. Based on your responses to prompts 1 and 2, complete a "Plus/Delta" reflection:

What are you doing well? How do you know?	What could you improve at? What would you do differently?

Resources

Read
- The "3 Rs": Risk, Responsibility & Respect
- "8 Habits of Thinking Learned from Artists" | Tcher's Voice Blog
- DIM: Discover Their Needs, Introduce Ideas & Make a Plan
- "*The GPS Way to Thrive* | Thrive Foundation
- "Nudges That Help Struggling Students Succeed" | New York Times
- PIE: Plan, Implement & Evaluate
- Studio Thinking 2: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education | Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education

Watch
- Ardeene's Story | Project GPS
- Carol Dweck: The Effect of Praise on Mindsets
- Carol Dweck: A Study on Praise and Mindsets
- Don't Eat the Marshmallow! | TED
- Project GPS

Online Tools
- MindsetMaker Growth Mindset Feedback Tool | MindsetWorks
- MindsetMaker Growth Mindset Framing Tool | MindsetWorks
- The Tuning Protocol: A Framework for Personalized Professional Development | Edutopia
- The Tuning Protocol | National School Reform Faculty

ENCOURAGE STAFF ENGAGEMENT

The level of staff engagement with—and commitment to—youth was a key factor in the success of the positive deviant programs and organizations we studied. And successful staff were defined by their passion and willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty to support youth: showing up when it mattered and doing whatever it took. Staff spent time with youth on weekends, in the evenings, and during school hours. They both encouraged youth to have a growth mindset and modeled it themselves (taking risks, persisting, challenging themselves, and shifting gears when the going got tough)—all while maintaining a positive attitude. Successful staff were more than mentors to the youth; they were also coaches and role models who saw youth as very capable of achieving their dreams.

Positive deviant organizations were those organizations that used the YDiLS with multiple programs, all of which were positive deviants. The difference between positive deviant programs and positive deviant organizations was a level of commitment to consistent staff development. In each of these extraordinary organizations all staff were trained using the same positive youth development practices as those mentioned above. And there was strong consistency and quality across all programs within an organization. In these organizations, all staff engaged in team building and open critical discourse about their programming, continuously exploring how to best serve youth. Staff met regularly to discuss their personal goals, reflect on their successes and challenges, and support one another's growth (again, directly modeling the behaviors they encouraged in youth).

Additionally, all of these organizations used data to continuously guide staff development and program improvement. They reflected on qualitative and quantitative data and used their YDiLS results to better understand youth's assets and challenges, which allowed them to tailor program activities to their unique needs. Staff also worked together to make meaning of their YDiLS data and had a deep hunger to learn more about how they could continue to improve youth's experiences in programs. Through this staff commitment, entire organizations began to embody a growth mindset.

KEY INGREDIENTS

Programs that excelled at staff engagement used the exact same positive youth development practices to grow staff, creating a vibrant culture of learning and support. The PYD practices most used by positive deviant programs include:

1. Tapping into staff interests to help shape programming and professional development;

2. Creating safe spaces for staff to take risks, reflect on their work, and share personal experiences;

3. Matching staff with other staff from whom they could learn; and

4. Encouraging staff to embody a growth mindset and use data to support their ongoing learning, program planning, and improvements.

Organizations that used these approaches to manage and support their staff saw extraordinary gains in all of their programs — not just one. Within these organizations, the culture of positive youth development was integrated seamlessly into the fabric of the work.

GO AHEAD, EGG EACH OTHER ON!

One of the ways that **EVC** ensures their staff are leading with a similar approach and set of values is that they themselves have created a strong culture of ongoing learning and reflection. While they have a codified curriculum, staff are supported in "making the curricula their own," while holding true to a core philosophy about respecting youth. The values and philosophy of EVC are "living" — they have ongoing staff meetings and quarterly study groups in which staff discuss theory and share findings from their own self-driven action research projects. After each roundtable, staff discuss their ability to create an empathetic environment and they also get warm and cool feedback from their peers about the content and process of the work with their group. Staff also have numerous ongoing and regular, informal dialogues about how to put their theory into practice.

At **Harlem RBI**, they focus on the development of the team — the staff team in this case. All staff are considered to be part of a team: they even play softball together, have team dinners, and have formal and informal conversations about the youth. They go out often to celebrate their work. There are ongoing trainings that focus on team building for staff. There are also opportunities for staff to observe and learn from one another. At Harlem RBI, more than one staff person leads each workshop: they are co-facilitated.

> *We try to pair new staff with people who are well respected in the program. If the kids see that the staff trust them, then they come to trust them too*
> —STAFF MEMBER

The Executive Director of **Steve's Camp** clearly communicates to all staff members that they are both staff and participants. He states that he "wants staff that can talk about their own growth so that they're credible, believable, and have a great, authentic voice." To truly live the experience, all staff trainings mirror the same activities in which youth engage. Staff practice what they preach: growth mindset, creating a safe space to share, intentional listening, etc.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

1. Take a moment to complete the following mini-survey:

In your program, how often do staff…	Never		Sometimes		Always
Incorporate their personal interests into program activities?	1	2	3	4	5
See their personal interests reflected in professional development?	1	2	3	4	5
Take risks and try new things?	1	2	3	4	5
Take time to reflect on their work?	1	2	3	4	5
Have the opportunity to learn from other staff?	1	2	3	4	5
Have the opportunity to coach/support other staff?	1	2	3	4	5
Practice a growth mindset for themselves?	1	2	3	4	5
Use program data to support program planning/improvements?	1	2	3	4	5

2. Reflect on the following questions:

- What are your personal interests? How could you incorporate them into your program?

- If you feel able to try new things at work, what makes you believe you can do this? If you don't feel able to, what's stopping you?

- If you were to choose a colleague for a peer learning exchange, who would you choose? Why?

- If you're not using data to support program planning/improvements, what's stopping you?

3. Based on your responses to prompts 1 and 2, complete a "Plus/Delta" reflection:

What are you doing well? How do you know?	What could you improve at? What would you do differently?

Resources

Read
- "7 Habits of Highly Effective Mentors" | Stanford Social Innovation Review
- "How Microsoft Uses a Growth Mindset to Develop Leaders" | Harvard Business Review
- "What Having a 'Growth Mindset' Actually Means" | Harvard Business Review

Watch
- Adopting a Growth Mindset in Performance Management | Human Capital Institute: The Global Association for Strategic Talent Management
- Margaret Heffernan: Forget the pecking order at work | TED Talk
- Simon Sinek: Why Good Leaders Make You Feel Safe | TED Talk

BON APPÉTIT!

Now that you have the ingredients necessary to become a "positive deviant," we'd love to invite you to join our learning community and connect with youth development organizations across the country who are exploring new ways to help youth thrive!

Here are three easy ways to get involved:

1. Join our mailing list at algorhythm.io! We promise not to bombard you with meaningless emails. Instead, we'll help you stay up-to-date on new tips and strategies.

2. Like the Youth Development Impact Learning System on Facebook at @ YDiLearning! Post your personal reflections and questions to the group and continue the conversation about creating effective youth programming with peer organizations and Algorhythm staff.

3. Or if you're ready to take the plunge, **join Algorhythm's Youth Development Impact Learning System (YDiLS)!** Our low-cost assessment, planning, and evaluation tool will help you:

- **Gain Pre-Program Insights:** Easily assess youth's social and emotional strengths and needs. Make better use of scarce time and resources by acting on these insights before a program even begins.

- **Evaluate Youth Outcomes:** View rigorous program evaluation findings on demand. Understand exactly how many youth have improved, the cost to achieve outcomes, and what strategies had positive effects.

- **Communicate Your Success:** Share statistical proof of the outcomes your programs achieve. Organizations using the YDiLS see their programs achieving outcomes for 75–95% of the youth they serve.

For more information about the Youth Development Impact Learning System (YDiLS)—including our "Pre-for-Free" Plan—check out: algorhythm.io/youth-development.

Good luck with your youth programs. We look forward to staying in touch!

POSITIVE DEVIANT ORGANIZATIONS

YD ORG	LOCATION	CONTENT	ORG TYPE/MISSION
Educational Video Center	NYC	Video/Media	Nonprofit media organization dedicated to teaching documentary video as a means to develop the artistic, critical literacy, and career skills of youth, while nurturing their idealism and commitment to social change.
Harlem RBI	NYC	Holistic, team-based YD support	Nonprofit wrap-around service provider for inner-city youth, providing youth with opportunities to play, learn, and grow. Harlem RBI uses the power of teams to coach, teach, and inspire youth to recognize their potential and realize their dreams.
Longacre Leadership Camp	Newport, PA	Residential summer camp	Family-owned business with nonprofit foundation to support camp scholarships for underserved youth. Their goal is to prepare youth for long-term success with a focus on an intentional growth experience, especially through communication skills.
The Mayhew Program	Bristol, NH	Residential summer program and school-year mentoring for at-risk boys	Nonprofit focused on at-risk New Hampshire boys, providing year-round support for boys to believe in themselves, work well with others, and find their best. Mayhew combines a residential summer program and school year mentoring for at-risk boys, tuition-free, through high school graduation.
New Heights	Portsmouth, NH	Year-round programs with focus areas in Arts & Culture, STEM and Adventure	Nonprofit focused on developing New Hampshire youth in grades 5-12 by helping them find the path to their true potential, particularly by exposing them to new and powerful learning experiences. New Heights is committed to preparing today's youth to become tomorrow's inspired citizens.
Queens Community House	Forest Hills, NY	Comprehensive, place-based programming	Nonprofit focused on enriching the lives of Queens residents through comprehensive YD programming as well as programs for adults. Queens Community House's goal is for its youth to be able to adjust to and handle life's challenges and to be meaningful contributors to their community.
Steve's Camp at Horizon Farms	Brooklyn, NY	Residential summer camp	Brooklyn-based nonprofit that empowers youth to develop healthy bodies, hearts, and minds, especially through its residential summer camp. During the school year, campers deepen these skills to emerge as leaders and prepare for fulfilling lives after high school.

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City youth through our unique venture
philanthropy model that empowers the
nonprofits that serve them.