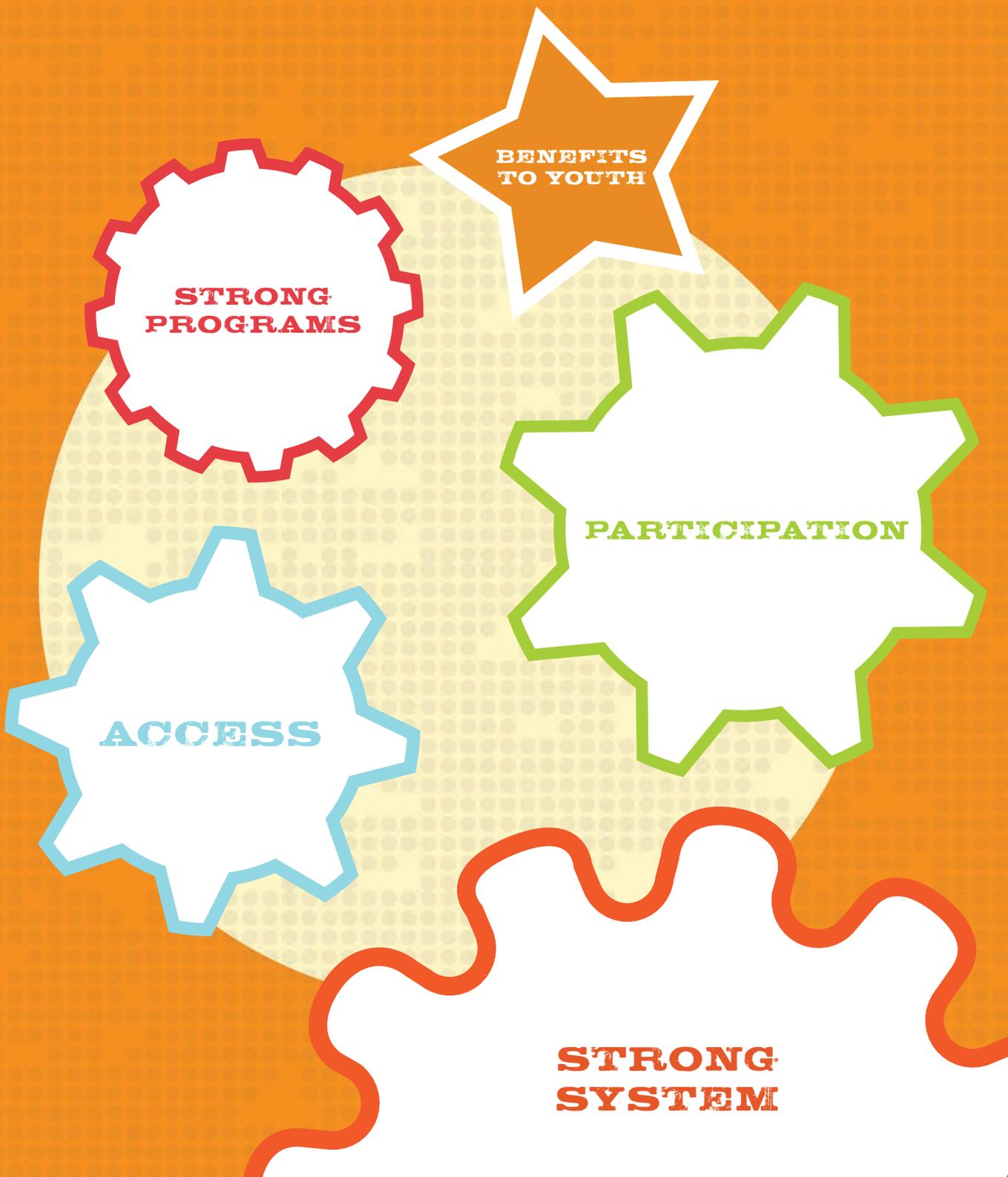




Mentors and mentees from YouthCARE's Young Women's Mentoring Program jump into a game during their retreat at Camp Sunrise.



# **BENEFITS TO YOUTH**



## ABOUT SPROCKETS

**Sprockets** is a network of many different afterschool and summer programs for youth in Saint Paul. It is a collaboration of community organizations, the City of Saint Paul, and Saint Paul Public Schools.

**Our vision:** All Saint Paul's youth will develop their abilities as learners, contributors, and navigators so they can recognize and achieve their greatest potential.

**Our mission:** Sprockets improves the quality, availability, equity, and effectiveness of out-of-school time learning for all youth in Saint Paul through the committed, collaborative, and innovative efforts of community organizations, government, schools, and other partners.



Youth at a Community Listening Session discuss what social emotional skills are most important for youth.

# AFTERSCHOOL = BENEFITS TO YOUTH

Sprockets' goal is to ensure that all Saint Paul youth develop their abilities as learners, contributors, and navigators so they can recognize and achieve their greatest potential – and we know that afterschool programs help young people thrive in many ways.

Out-of-school time experiences – including before- and after school and summer learning – **support academic success** and supplement in-school learning, as youth try new things, are exposed to new experiences, and discover what they're passionate about in a positive environment.

Afterschool programs provide consistent connections with caring and supportive adults, who serve as positive role models. Young people learn teamwork and leadership skills that will help them later in life. Youth develop social emotional skills like optimism, reflection, and perseverance – skills necessary for school, the workforce, relationships, personal well-being and overall success.

In addition, afterschool plays an important role in supporting working families and keeping youth safe.

The value of OST in cultivating academic success, caring youth-adult relationships, and a variety of skills is evident in the research<sup>1</sup>– but we also see it every day in the youth we work with, who learn and blossom through caring relationships and opportunities to explore new ideas. Even though we know participation in quality out-of-school time can lead to benefits for youth, these impacts can be challenging to quantify. How do we ensure that ALL young people are getting these benefits? It requires getting intentional and specific about that one skill.

*Free and reduced-price lunch students who regularly participate in MN 21st Century Community Learning Center programs are 10% more likely to score proficient on Reading MCAs, and 53% more likely to score proficient on Math MCAs than those who only attend a few times. Those numbers are even higher for limited English proficiency students.*

*- Minnesota Department of Education, 21st Century Community Learning Centers 2016-2017 school year data*

*Afterschool and summer learning programs play a role in closing the gaps that exist between the skills and competencies students possess, and the needs of employers— which range from communication and problem-solving skills to proficient technical skills.<sup>2</sup>*

*- Afterschool Alliance, 2018*

<sup>1</sup> Durlak, Joseph A., et al. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405–32.

<sup>2</sup> [http://afterschoolliaison.org/documents/issue\\_briefs/issue\\_workforce\\_readiness\\_70.pdf](http://afterschoolliaison.org/documents/issue_briefs/issue_workforce_readiness_70.pdf)

# THAT'S WHERE SPROCKETS MAKES A DIFFERENCE.



Youth from the American Indian Youth Enrichment summer program design the framework for their crane project.

We know that afterschool programs benefit youth. And we know these benefits depend on youths' access to programs, consistent engagement and participation, and exposure to high-quality opportunities. Sprockets supports young people at each step along the way:

Connecting youth and families to programs through the Program Finder. Highlighting gaps and needs across the city. Ensuring program staff are trained to provide quality opportunities. Assisting programs in using data to improve the quality of their programs. Sprockets supports programs to better serve Saint Paul's youth. All of these areas – access, participation, and quality – add up to benefits for the young people we serve.

But these positive outcomes for youth don't happen by accident. Afterschool programs should prioritize what skills or assets in young people they're going to develop, and then intentionally design their program activities and structure to focus on building those skills. Finally, they should measure their progress.

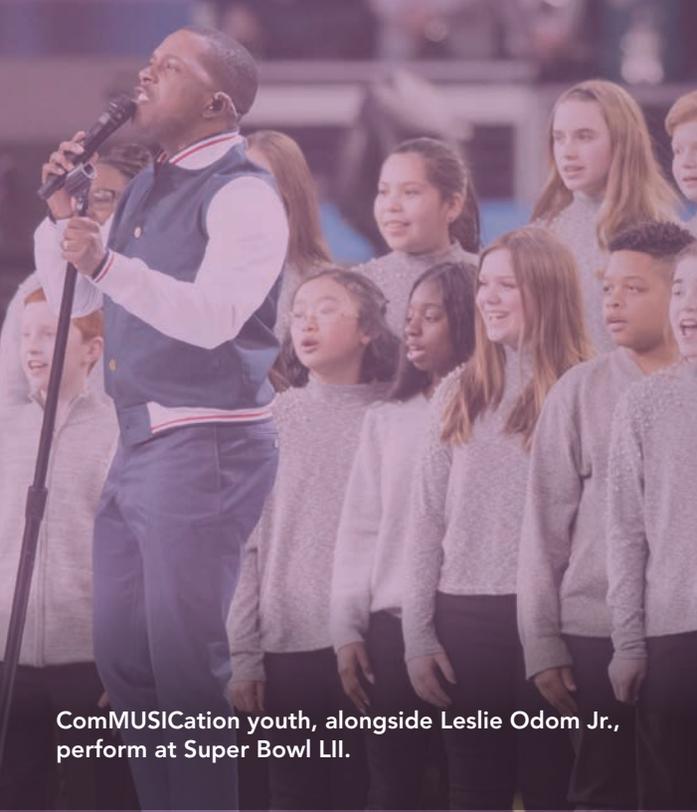
And that's where Sprockets comes in. We encourage programs to be intentional about the impact they want to have on young people through logic model development, access to trainings on how to create structured, high-quality programs, and access to outcome measurement tools.

Sprockets supports the use of several measurement tools to meet the varied needs of our partners. Our network is broad - serving different age groups, focusing on different activities, with different goals. Some programs focus on academic support through tutoring; others focus on leadership through civic engagement or sports. Some emphasize skills and experiences such as choir, gardening or technology. All work to positively impact the young people they serve through experiences that will build skills and foster success– but not all programs measure the same specific outcomes.

Sprockets partners can use the Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes to measure benefits to youth, and are able to see aggregate academic outcomes and school measures through the Sprockets Shared Data System. We've piloted SEL-specific measures, including the Holistic Student Assessment and a social-emotional learning-focused quality assessment tool (SEL PQA). These tools help our partners measure the impact of their programs on the young people who participate.

Because each program looks different – and focuses on different outcomes – it can be difficult to measure across our entire network to show our collective impact. But measurement of outcomes is integral to assure that all young people are benefitting from the programs they're participating in.

Here are some examples of evaluation tools that are used by organizations in our network to measure their impact – and how they're using data from those tools to improve their programs and tell their story.



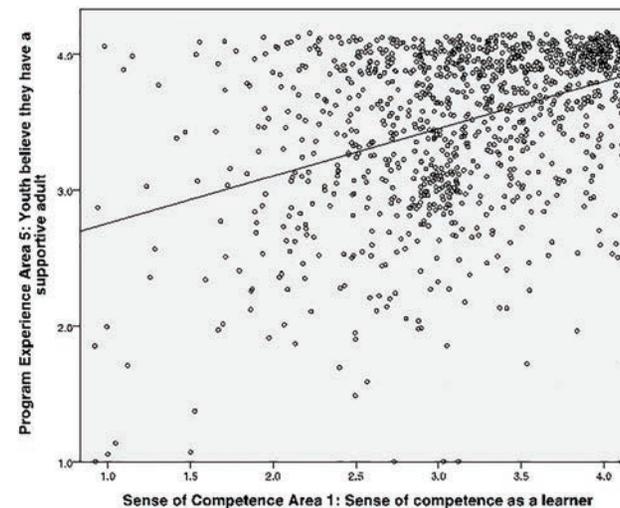
ComMUSICation youth, alongside Leslie Odom Jr., perform at Super Bowl LII.

## Measuring benefits to youth: SAYO

One tool that Sprockets partners use to measure youth outcomes is the Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes. The SAYO tools are reliable and validated staff, teacher, and youth surveys that measure selected OST outcomes. SAYO was developed by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST)<sup>3</sup>. Last year, seven Sprockets partners used the SAYO.

Data from the past three years of organizations in Sprockets using the SAYO shows a statistically significant correlation between a positive relationship with a supportive adult and a high sense of competence as a learner, indicating that strong relationships with supportive adults plays a role in boosting youth learning.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.niost.org/pdf/MeasuringSELwithSAYO.pdf>



**CONTINUED >**

## CASE STUDY #1: ComMUSICATION

At **ComMUSICation (CMC)**, young people learn skills that will empower them as a young person through learning how to make music together. As part of CMC choir and the flagship program, young people experience new opportunities through performance, including going on tour and singing at the SuperBowl.

Since CMC began in 2014, Sprockets' Activator Process has helped CMC establish explicit socioemotional skills for each facet of programming. They use the SAYO to measure youth relationships with adults and peers, communication skills, initiative, and engagement in learning. But that's not all. CMC staff have also developed additional measures to help show the benefits that young people receive from the CMC program. CMC created a self-made tool alongside the SAYO to measure skills like focus, leadership, impulse control, and how likely youth are to try new things.

*"One of the biggest things we do is create a sense of family for people, and that gives youth confidence. Performance is a positive risk-taking opportunity, and it gives families and young people a chance to see themselves doing something they didn't know they could do."*

— Sara Zanussi, ComMUSICation Executive Director

According to CMC data, 95% of their participants said that CMC helped them **make new friends, feel better about themselves**, and have a **positive, caring adult** with them whom they could trust. 85% reported that CMC helped them with homework, **doing better in school**, and trying harder in school.

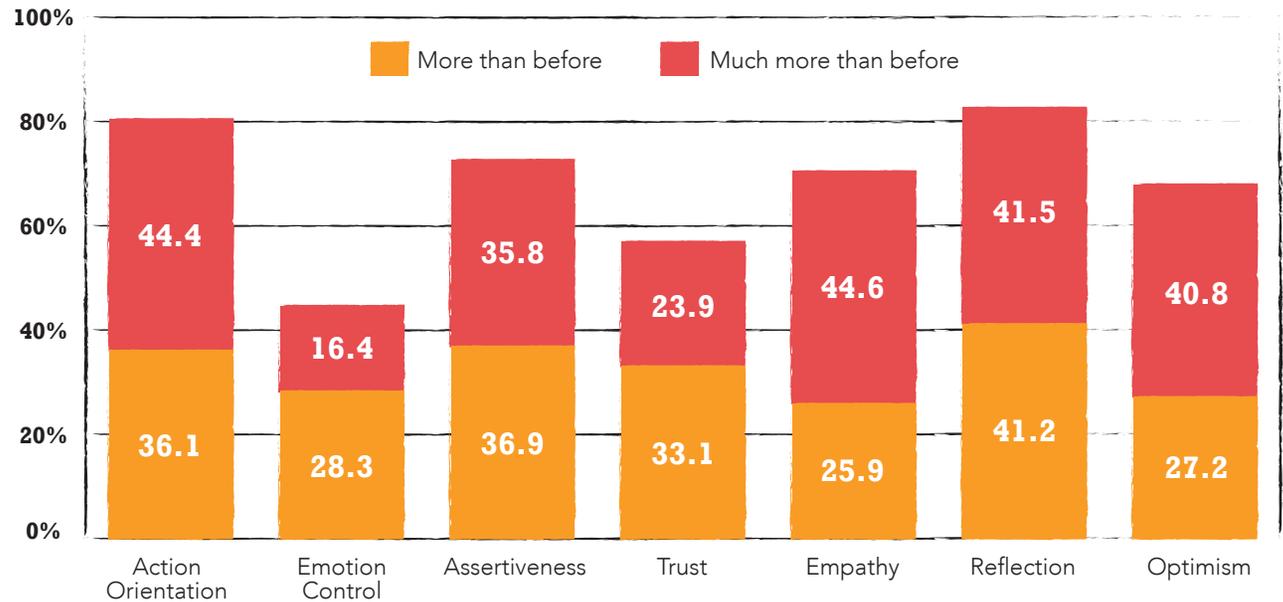
iMagine possibilities  
 Understand each other  
 Sing your song  
 Inspire your community  
 Create harmony

ComMUSICation is committed to empowering young people and their communities through music

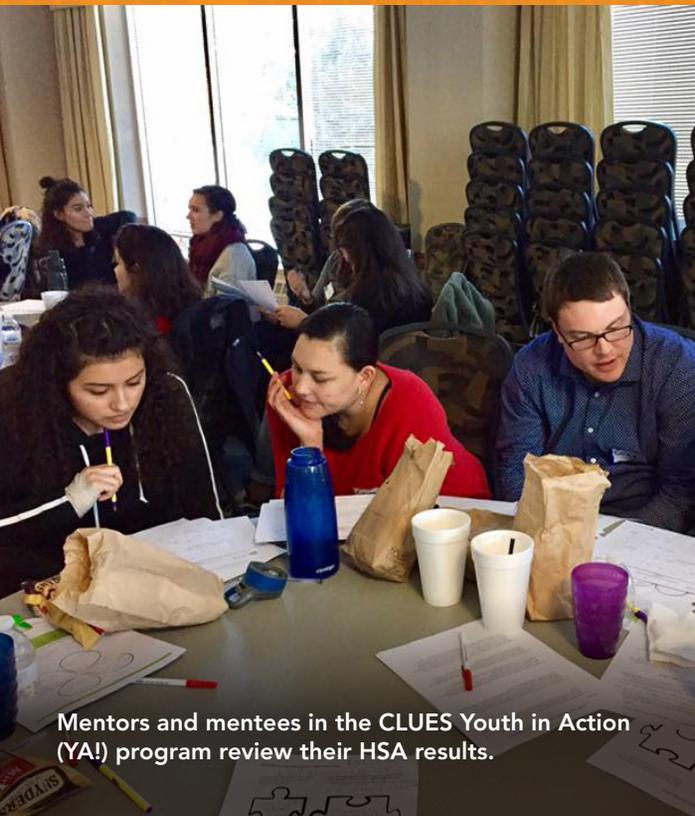
Being able to measure these outcomes helps CMC measure their impact, set clear benchmarks and goals for program improvement, and ensure they're realizing their mission—empowering youth with life skills through music, service, and community.



## Resiliencies: Percent Positive Change



The figure above shows the percentage of students report improvements (i.e., 'more than before' or 'much more than before') across Resiliencies. After converting the means into 5 groups: (1) 'Much less than before', (2) 'Less than before', (3) 'About the same', (4) 'More than before', (5) 'Much more than before.'



Mentors and mentees in the CLUES Youth in Action (YA!) program review their HSA results.

## Holistic Student Assessment (HSA)

Over the past three years, Sprockets has piloted the Holistic Student Assessment (developed by the PEAR Institute) with a cohort of organizations in our network. The youth self-reported tool provides program staff and administrators with a social-emotional "portrait" of the unique strengths and challenges of each young person.

The 61-question instrument is based on PEAR's Clover Model, which describes child and adolescent development as a holistic interaction between four core developmental needs: Active Engagement (engaging the world physically), Assertiveness (expressing voice and choice), Belonging (social connection and relationships) and Reflection (thought and meaning-making).

The data reported here represents shifts from the HSA portraits taken at the beginning of the program, and the HSA-Retrospective, taken at the end of the program. This shows that across the Sprockets cohort over two years, young people reported significant gains in SEL resiliencies, particularly Action Orientation and Reflection (82.7%).



## CASE STUDY #2: YOUTH LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE, WILDER FOUNDATION

*"I used to think, and others have told me, that I am an over thinker but now I have learned that being a critical thinker is my strength. The key for me is going to be how to be intentional about this skill of mine."* -YLI Participant

*"This public purposeful reflection was helpful. I didn't use to care about what others thought and after YLI I now can empathize with others. It is a reminder that I am growing."* -YLI Participant

The **Wilder Foundation's Youth Leadership Initiative** serves high school students, and is designed to help youth develop strong, effective leadership skills to work in diverse community settings. The work of preparing these extraordinary leaders is grounded in the following core beliefs:

- Everyone has the capacity to lead, regardless of age, position or experience.
- Leaders should be reflective of the communities they serve.
- Effective leaders understand who they are and are clear about their purpose and values.
- Young people should be co-creators of the programs they are a part of.
- It is imperative that leaders understand how to live and work in diverse communities.
- Authentic collaboration between youth and adults can produce powerful intergenerational spaces of learning.
- Quality programming requires intentional, responsive, and relevant curriculum design.

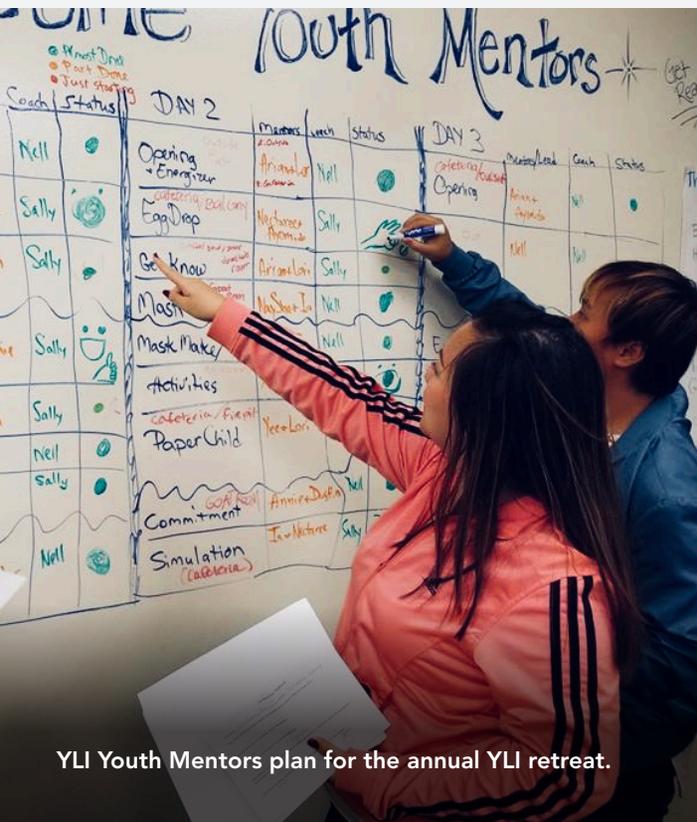
YLI offers weekly programming from October – May and assists youth in learning about themselves, working with others, and engaging in meaningful action. YLI's program goals are:

- Youth increase their leadership, voice, and action, and feel better prepared to be effective leaders for the multicultural world in which they live.
- Youth deepen their understanding of themselves and develop self-confidence by grounding themselves in their own culture.
- Youth develop skills and resiliencies to work effectively with others and discover the attributes needed for effective leadership in multicultural environments.

The Holistic Student Assessment has helped YLI staff and participants reflect on their leadership and culture. YLI staff have participated in the HSA cohorts for three years, and have worked to incorporate the Clover model into their program.

They've also worked to engage young people themselves in their own SEL assessment. YLI participants have the chance to see their own HSA portraits and reflect on their strengths and challenges.

YLI has used HSA - Retrospective (HSA-R) data alongside qualitative interviews to look at how they are impacting overall SEL skills of their participants. HSA-R data have indicated that as a result of YLI, youth have increased in assertiveness, empathy, trust, and optimism.



YLI Youth Mentors plan for the annual YLI retreat.



Members of the Propel SEL Cohort role play scenarios as part of a larger conversation on how to support youth development through a racial equity lens.

## **FOUR KEY SUPPORTS FOR SEL**

**Youth Worker Expertise**

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**Program Intentionality**

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**Program Environment**

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**Assessment**

# **WHAT'S NEXT? FOCUSING ON SEL**

As the case studies show, there are multiple ways to measure the impact that afterschool programs have on young people. Sprockets partners use a wide range of measures, from homemade surveys to validated tools. There's no one formula that works perfectly for program, but it is important that programs become intentional on how they want to impact young people.

Sprockets continues to explore flexible tools and supports that will serve a wide variety of programs. We've learned a lot from our work with programs to support SEL: We've explored the Clover Model and dived deep into SEL, culture, and trauma with the PEAR Institute piloting the Holistic Student Assessment. This year we've been a pilot site for the Weikart Foundation's Thrive SEL Demonstration Project, using a new SEL-focused PQA tool that assesses program environment and provides training for staff.

In addition, we are working with a cohort of five Saint Paul organizations, alongside partners from Minneapolis, Brooklyn Center, and Ignite Afterschool, to deepen their understanding of SEL, promote staff training and strengthen reflection around which SEL skills their programs impact. This Propel SEL initiative will help us learn which SEL supports best improve our network.

These tools will help our partners improve their work, tell their story, and better serve the young people who participate. But this will also help us tell the Sprockets story – of how our network as a whole impacts Saint Paul youth.

So what skills does your program build for youth? And how do you measure it? Whether you focus on persistence, empathy, or academic skills, it's important to envision and measure your impact. We know that we're having an impact. We know our programs benefit young people – we hear success stories every day. But if we want to keep telling our stories and mobilizing funding to support our work, it's important for us to get clear about how our programs change the lives of youth.

