AURORA CENTRAL: YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Summary of Findings 2019

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INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH

During the 2018–2019 academic year, Joining Vision and Action (JVA) began working with the Asian Pacific Development Center (APDC) to assist in evaluating the outcomes of student participation in the Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) at Aurora Central High School.

JVA's evaluation included the use of pre-/post-program surveys (i.e., administered during fall and spring semesters, respectively) as the main tool to reach students of YLA, along with a post-program survey that was completed by students' families.

Overall, results of the 2018–2019 YLA evaluation suggest that the program has areas of strength and areas for potential improvement. Strengths include students' positive attitudes toward the program, a high interest in continuing education beyond high school, and a student participant population that avoids being in trouble at school. Areas for potential improvement include family and student perceptions on whether participation has improved students' leadership and engagement skills.

Importantly, the small sample size in Year 1 limits the extent to which conclusions about the effectiveness of YLA can be drawn. Thus, the findings included in this report should be interpreted in the context of this limitation.

Student Survey Description and Participation

The student survey was designed to gather perceptions of the impact of participating in YLA, including the impact participation has had on school and home life outcomes. YLA staff facilitated surveys and entered the data collected.

To examine student outcomes, the following summary presents findings stemming from:

- Unique data collected at pre-program (n = 39) and post-program (n = 21); i.e., change overall in pre-program to post-program survey responses by all students

- Data collected *AND* matched based on student unique identifiers for within-subjects analyses (i.e., change from pre-program to post-program survey within individual students; n = 9).[1] However, given the small sample size, any results should be interpreted with caution.

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[1] Several survey responses were removed either because a match could not be reliably identified (e.g., respondent completed the pre-program survey but not the post-program survey) or because the unique identifier had more than two surveys associated with it.

Demographic Information

Students[2] were asked to indicate their ethnicity (could select all that apply). Of those responding, 66.7% reported their ethnicity as either Hispanic or Latino/a/x (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Student Ethnicities (Frequency of Responses)

Please note: Response options that received no responses are not included in this chart.

When participants were asked to indicate how long they have lived in the United States, 71.4% (n = 15) reported that they were born in the United States. Students were also asked how many years they had participated in YLA. The most common responses were that this was their first year participating (47.6%) followed by that this was their fifth year participating (42.9%).

Students were asked to indicate what might prevent them from coming to YLA (could select all that apply). Of those that responded, the most common reason was family responsibilities (71.4%; Figure 2).

Figure 2. Factors Preventing Participation

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[2] To best understand the sample at post-program, demographic information is shared for the 21 individuals completing the post-program survey.

Students were asked to also indicate which programs they were participating in at post-program (could select all that apply). All but one respondent (95.2%) indicated that they were currently participating in YLA, and one student indicated participating in chess club.

Family Survey Description and Participation

Thirteen individuals responded to the family survey, which was administered in May 2019. Among those that responded, eight identified their ethnicity to include Latino/Latina/Latinx (61.5%; could select all that apply); three identified as Mexican American; and one each as black/African American, white, Asian American, African and Japanese. Four respondents noted that they were born in the United States and three indicated having moved to the United States 25 years ago or more. Of the remaining, two indicated moving in 1999, two in 2001, one in 2004 and one in 2005.

None of the respondents indicated having participated in any APDC activities, and when asked if they would be interested in participating in activities offered by APDC or Aurora Mental Health, seven (53.8%) respondents indicated that they were not interested, five (38.5%) indicated potentially being interested and one indicated definitely being interested.

When participants were asked how APDC could better support them with regard to their students, among those that responded, job training (54.6%) was the most commonly selected way (could select all that apply; see Figure 3 for frequencies).

Figure 3. Ways APDC Could Support Families with Regard to Students

Category	Value
Parenting classes	3
Language/ESL classes	1
Mental health support/therapy	4
Citizenship classes	2
Computer literacy classes	1
GED classes	1
Job training	6
Victim's advocacy	1
Clinic visits	3

RESULTS

The following sections present the feedback gathered through the YLA student surveys comparing 1) all unique pre-program survey responses with all unique post-program survey responses, and 2) responses for matched participants (pre- to post-program within-subjects survey comparisons). The first approach provides an analysis of *potential* change over time (i.e., assumes that there are different people at each time point and offers a less reliable understanding of impact of program participation). The latter approach provides an analysis of how students may have changed from the first semester to the second as they participated in YLA over time (importantly, the small sample size for Year 1 limits reliability and validity of these findings).

Perceptions of YLA Participation

Student Feedback

Students were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with three statements designed to assess attitudes toward and perceived impact of YLA on leadership skills and community engagement abilities (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree).

Between-Subjects Comparisons. Responses reveal a marginally significant difference on report of liking coming to YLA, such that respondents at post-program tend to more strongly agree that they enjoy YLA.[3] No significant differences were seen when comparing pre- and post-program survey responses (see Figure 4 for means and Table 1 for pre- and post-program response frequencies[4]).

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[3] t (58) = -1.73, p = .08

[4] Note: For this table and all subsequent tables, those responding with "strongly disagree" and "disagree" were grouped, as were those responding with "strongly agree" and "agree." Those indicating "neither agree nor disagree" are not reflected in these counts.
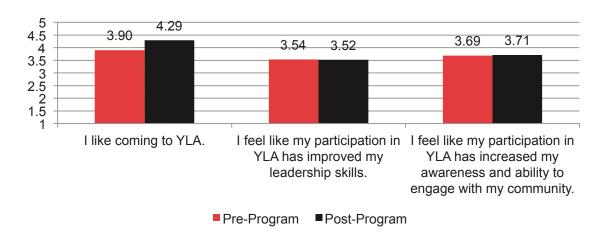
Figure 4. Mean Pre- to Post-Program Perceptions of YLA Participation (Between Subjects)

Table 1. Student Perceptions of YLA Participation (Frequencies)

Item	% Disagree (Pre)	% Agree (Pre)	% Disagree (Post)	% Agree (Post)
I like coming to YLA.	2.6%	66.7%	0%	90.5%
I feel like my participation in YLA has improved by leadership skills.	5.1%	51.3%	0%	47.6%
I feel like my participation in YLA has increased my awareness and ability to engage with my community.	2.6%	59.0%	0%	61.9%

When asked if their participation in YLA has prompted them to make changes in their lives at post-program, 38.1% reported not having made any changes. However, the students that did share indicated the following impacts:
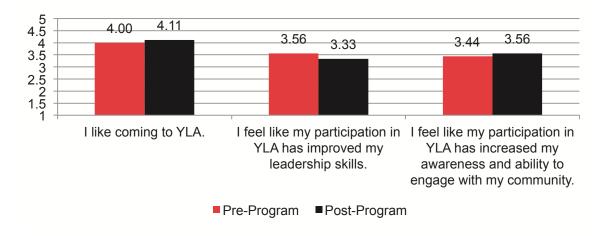
- Opening up more/talking more to others/better communication/being more social

- Trying harder in school

- Improving a skill (e.g., drawing, writing)

When asked if any changes could make YLA better, five students indicated they were happy the way it is, and nine students responded with substantive suggestions, including:

- More activities/being more active

- A bigger room

- Offering more during the summer/more days for the club to meet

- More communication/being more present within the clubs/engaging more

Within-Subjects Comparisons. Results of within-subjects analyses reveal non-significant differences over time. In other words, the responses of the nine participants whose pre- and post-program surveys were matched do not statistically differ (Figure 5).
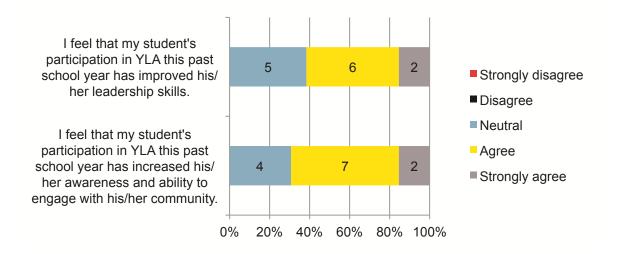
Figure 5. Mean Pre- to Post-Program Perceptions of YLA Participation (Within Subjects)

Family Feedback

Individuals responding to the family survey were similarly asked to indicate whether they felt that their student's participation in YLA had increased his/her 1) leadership skills and 2) awareness and ability to engage with his/her community (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). Feedback was somewhat mixed, with five and four respondents indicating that they were neutral on the respective items (Figure 6); however, none indicated disagreeing with these statements.

Figure 6. YLA Participation: Family Feedback (Frequencies)
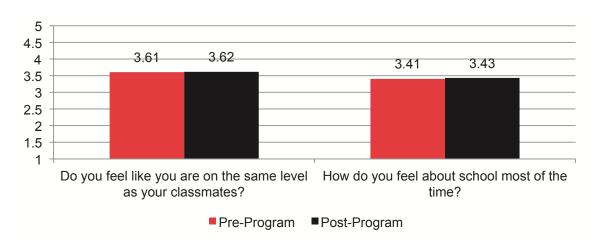
Perceptions of School and Home Life

Student Feedback

To understand the impact of student participation in the YLA program, students were asked a number of questions about their school and home lives.

School Performance Attitudes

Between-Subjects Comparisons. Participants were asked to indicate how they felt they compared with their classmates (where 1 = I'm way behind most of my classmates and 5 = I'm way ahead of most of my classmates), as well as their attitudes toward going to school (where 1 = I really do not like going to school and 5 = I really like going to school). Responses reveal no significant differences between pre-program and post-program responses (see Figure 7 for means and Table 2 for frequencies).
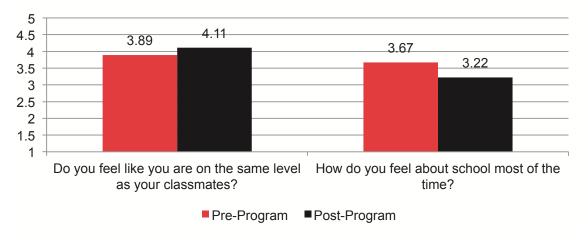
Figure 7. Mean Pre- to Post-Program School Attitudes (Between Subjects)

Table 2. School Attitudes (Frequencies)

Item	% Behind (Pre)	% Ahead (Pre)	% Behind (Post)	% Ahead (Post)
Do you feel like you are on the same level as your classmates?	7.9%	52.6%	0%	52.4%

Item	% Do not like (Pre)	% Like (Pre)	% Do not like (Post)	% Like (Post)
How do you feel about school most of the time?	8.1%	35.1%	0%	28.6%

Within-Subjects Comparisons. Comparing matched responses over time reveals no differences in pre- to post-program feelings about being on the same level as classmates but a significant difference between reported attitudes toward school, such that there is a significant decline in attitudes toward school over time[5] (Figure 8).
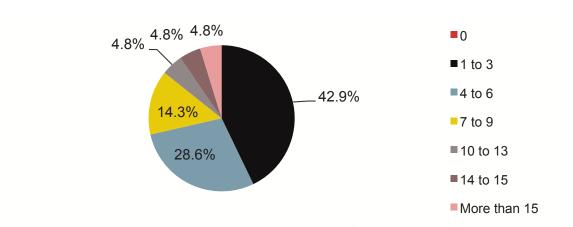
Figure 8. Mean Pre- to Post-Program School Attitudes (Within Subjects)

School Attendance and Behavior

When asked how many days of school they missed during the school year through the post-program survey, most students (71.4%) reported missing six days or fewer (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Days Missed During Past School Year

Students were also asked to comment on the number of times they have gotten in trouble in school over the last school year. Nineteen respondents (90.5%) indicated they

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[5] $t(8) = 2.53$, $p < .04$

had not been in trouble that year, and two students indicated having been in trouble once (9.5%).

Relationships with Teachers and Family

Between-Subjects Comparisons. When asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with feeling comfortable talking to teachers or other staff (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree), there were no significant differences when comparing pre-program with post-program survey responses. Additionally, students were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "I get along with my family," and there were no significant differences between pre- and post-program surveys; however, both items seem to be trending in the positive direction when comparing pre- and post-program responses (see Figure 10 for means and Table 3 for frequencies).
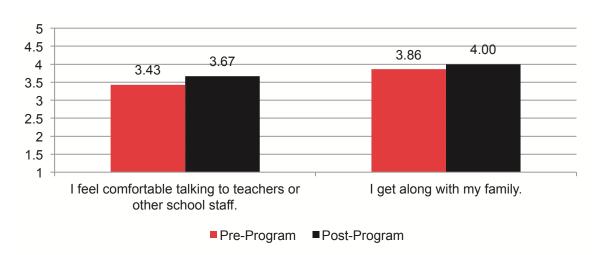
Figure 10. Mean Pre- to Post-Program School Attitudes (Between Subjects)

Table 3. Relationships with Teachers and Family (Frequencies)

Item	% Disagree (Pre)	% Agree (Pre)	% Disagree (Post)	% Agree (Post)
I feel comfortable talking to teachers or other school staff.	13.5%	40.5%	0%	52.4%
I get along with my family.	5.4%	24.3%	0%	81.0%

Within-Subjects Comparisons. Comparing the nine matched participant responses reveals a marginally significant decrease over time of reported comfort with talking to teachers or other school staff, and no significant difference from pre- to post-program responses on reports of getting along with family (Figure 11).
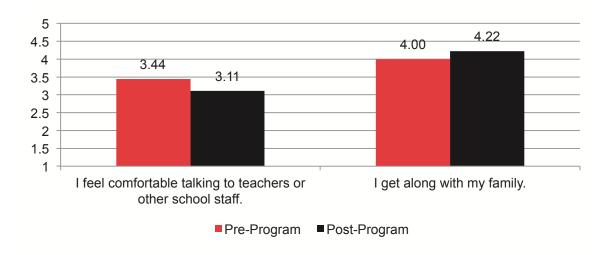
Figure 11. Mean Pre- to Post-Program School Attitudes (Between Subjects)

Post-High School Plans

Lastly, students were asked to report on what they *thought* they would be doing after high school, as well as what they *wanted* to be doing after high school (students could select all that applied; see Figure 12 for post-program survey responses). At post-program, the majority of students (52.4%) reported that they thought they would be attending a four-year university, which is aligned with reports of what they would like to be doing, with 57.1% indicating that they would like to be attending a four-year university.
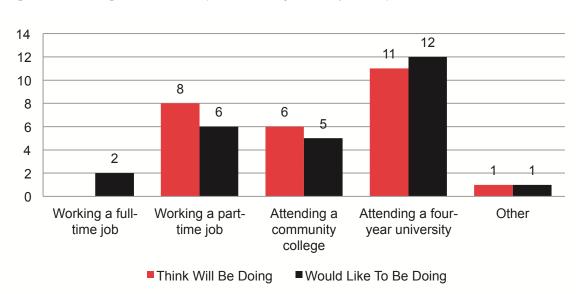
Figure 12. Post-High School Plans (Between-Subjects Frequencies)

Family Feedback

Individuals responding to the family survey were asked to respond to items designed to assess perceived student performance and attitudes toward school, as well as perceived impact of YLA participation on relationships with family and overall wellbeing.
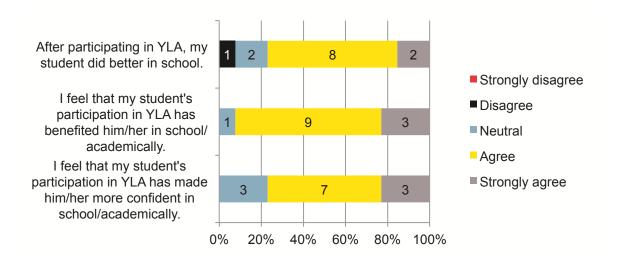
School Performance and Attitudes

Families responded to three items to assess perceived impact of YLA on school performance and attitudes (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree):

- After participating in YLA, my student did better in school.

- I feel that my student's participation in YLA has benefited him/her in school/academically (grades).

- I feel that my student's participation in YLA has made him/her more confident in school/academically (grades).

Feedback reveals general agreement about the positive influence of YLA participation on school performance and attitudes (Figure 13).

Figure 13. School Performance and Attitudes: Family Feedback (Frequencies)

Relationships with Family

Finally, individuals completing the family survey were asked to respond to three items designed to assess perceived impact of YLA on family relationships and overall wellbeing (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree):

- After participating in YLA, my student gets along better with our family.

- I feel my student's participation in YLA has benefited him/her in his/her social and home life.

- My student seems happier after participating in YLA.

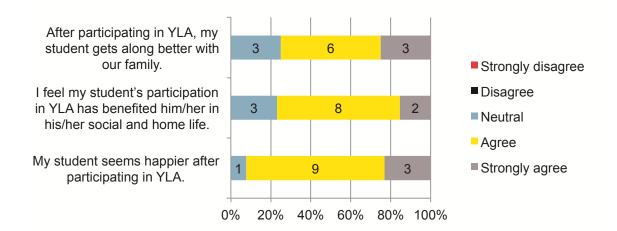Responses tend to reveal the positive influence of YLA (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Relationships with Family: Family Feedback (Frequencies)

Involvement

Student Feedback

Students were asked to comment on ways they stayed involved with the school and/or community (students could select all that apply). The most frequent response at post-participation survey was that they stay involved through school clubs (52.4%), followed by caring for younger siblings (38.1%) and through the library (33.3%).

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, Year 1 findings demonstrate that students enjoy YLA and that there may be positive trends related to perceptions of school performance and to getting along with family—both of which are also largely echoed by family members. That said, there were limited, mixed or negative changes on reported impact on leadership skills and ability to engage with community. These findings suggest the following potential recommendations[6] for APDC to consider in Year 2:

- Examine ways to augment learning opportunities around the development of leadership skills and community engagement

- Identify methods to help improve student attitudes toward school

- Continue to foster the positive environment that students note as contributing to their enjoyment of YLA

- Focus on collection of pre- and post-program data from the same students to increase reliability of findings in Year 2

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[6] The following recommendations should be interpreted within the limitations of the sample size.