

YOUTH/TEEN "SPARKS"



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

YMCA OF THE USA

101 N. Wacker Dr., Chicago, IL 60606

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ymca.net

NEWS AND RESOURCES FOR YOUTH AND TEEN PROGRAM LEADERS

Puget SoundOff at the Y



Today's youth are often referred to as digital natives for their familiarity and aptitude with technology, however a good number of teens lack access in their homes to empowering technologies. Unfortunately, those that do risk falling far behind their peers. Experiential learning

on the internet is a luxury that can't be replicated when students only have access to broadband technologies at the local library or at school. The **YMCA of Greater Seattle's site Puget SoundOff.org** <<http://PugetSoundOff.org>>. and its offline digital literacy programs for youth help bridge the digital divide by providing instruction on digital media creation, media literacy and social technology skills that are already imperative for success in higher education and the workplace.

Puget SoundOff.org was developed in 2007 by Seattle-area teens, for Seattle-area teens, as a forum for connecting, collaborating and taking action on issues affecting their lives and communities. Anyone with an email account can join the site and begin posting blogs, photos and videos. Even without registering, there's a wealth of resources to browse such as a digital literacy curriculum <<http://pugetsoundoff.org/get-started/digital-media>>. Like Facebook, Puget SoundOff members can create groups around causes they are passionate about, or initiate a digital dialogue by commenting on posts. Unlike Facebook and social media sites that often are a replication of a young person's offline peer community, users on Puget SoundOff feel comfortable voicing their opinions on subjects like police brutality, public education or religion.

Seattle city councilmembers and policy-makers are beginning to engage with young people on the site and youth serving organizations are increasingly turning to the site's built in audience to promote their work. PSO's most recent milestone was adding a jobs and program database <<http://pugetsoundoff.org/careers>> aimed specifically at teens and young adults interested in getting ahead and involved in the Puget Sound region.

Chris Tugwell, director of technology programs at the Y has been involved with the Puget SoundOff project since its inception. "The Y is involved in this project, but the true goal is to build a vibrant community that better serves our young people, and amplifies their voice on local issues," he says. Follow YTech's work at <<http://youthdigitalmedia.com/>>. Contact Chris at 206-839-8911.

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ENJOY THIS ISSUE?

Feel free to share this newsletter with anyone who you think may find it useful.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, IDEAS?

Contact Gayle Brock - Youth Development Specialist at gayle.brock@ymca.net or 513-221-3537

Developmental Asset ✓ Quick Check

How do you seamlessly yet purposefully incorporate asset building in your programming?

External Asset #21 Commitment to Learning

- Young person is motivated to do well in school.

Log onto the On-Line Community site on YExchange and share how your program helps motivate young people towards school.

Intense focus on 9th-graders pays off big in St. Louis Park

- Article by: [KELLY SMITH](#), Star Tribune



Justin Barbeau – Program Grant Writer

A once little-known local program is getting national attention for its success.

Nearly half of St. Louis Park High School's ninth-graders were failing at least one class -- a concerning number that was only rising. Alarmed, but lacking enough school funding to tackle the problem, counselor Angela Jerabek sought out her own remedy.

Taking cues from middle schools, she designed blocks that strategically track each student in ninth grade, often called the make-or-break year. Like doctors, a group of teachers team up to diagnose problems and prescribe solutions.

Nearly 14 years later, the success that the 1,400-student suburban school is seeing with the block meetings, combined with a larger-scale reworking, is prompting schools from Kentucky to Alaska and as far as Australia and Russia to visit St. Louis Park and copy it. This year, a major federal grant is funding an official test of the program in rural and urban schools in Maine and California. Even U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has taken note, encouraging Jerabek and others to lead high school reform.

"It was a risk on my part to say, 'We're going to do this high school in a brand new way,' " Jerabek said. "There wasn't anticipation or a goal that this would be a national model. It's a lot of pressure." In the 14 years of the program, substance abuse and truancy have declined while grades have gone up, prompting the closer look from other schools.

In the mill town of Sanford, Maine, site coordinator Martin McKeon said he was sold after visiting St. Louis Park, convinced of the program's worth "when you find a model that works in an area that isn't wealthy with a lot of resources. When we came back, the whole freshmen class wanted to get on board."

Seeing results

The program is being expanded to other schools by the Minneapolis-based Search Institute. In its Building Assets - Reducing Risks (BARR) program, three teachers meet three times a week with a social worker, counselor and dean to talk about each student's grades and struggles they've noticed -- from the girl caught with marijuana to a boy struggling to make it to class from a Plymouth shelter. ***It's a simple premise: more adults reaching out to a student to prevent them from slipping into anonymity, failing class and dropping out.***

"No student will be able to get by unnoticed," Jerabek said. For students struggling with serious issues such as depression or eating disorders, a social worker, psychologist and dean meet in a separate group to discuss how to intervene. Students also meet weekly in a class called iTime to talk about social issues like stress management.

"In most schools, there is a desire to meet kids' needs," civics teacher Brad Brubaker said. "I think the difference here is there's a purposeful structure." Initial skeptics who thought the program would just add work for teachers or was too "touchy-feely," Jerabek said, were won over when they saw the results.

Since the program started in 1998, the number of students in advanced classes has skyrocketed. Then, 44 percent of ninth-graders were failing one or more classes; last year, that fell to 20 percent.

Cigarette use was cut in half among ninth-grade boys. Attendance is measured differently, but Jerabek said anecdotally, truancy has declined. More teens even report liking school. Parents have noticed, too. Bonnie Carlson-Green was surprised last year when a teacher knew her son's grades and homework load in other classes. "It's kind of like an invisible safety net," she said. "Whether parents are aware of it or not, there are a lot of other people watching out for your kid in ninth grade."

Another sign of success: Among the competitive west-metro area schools, the school closed open enrollment for the first time this year and has a waiting list. "People looking for a school like us are finding us," Principal Rob Metz said. "We fill a niche in the world. We can't be Minnetonka, but we are who we are."

Filling a niche

Now, thanks to a federal grant, the Search Institute is officially testing the program in schools elsewhere to see if it works in smaller or larger settings. With a \$1.6 million four-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education last year, the program is being expanded throughout the high school in St. Louis Park and replicated in schools in Maine and California.

In California, suburban Los Angeles' Hemet High School started piloting the program this year and coordinator Sue Brown said she's already noticed it's created a network of support for teens at the 2,500-student school.

"Now you have all these people who have your back," she said. When Jerabek isn't traveling across the country to help other schools start the program, she's helping to expand it in St. Louis Park, adding student tracking next fall to the rest of the high school, thanks to the federal Investing in Innovation Fund, which former civics teacher Justin Barbeau coordinates.

"You really need to get the kids multiple adults in their lives who know them and they can go to," Barbeau said. "We're setting up a school to the students' needs. Shooting to the middle hasn't worked."

Copying colleges, they added a "learning lab" with everything from tutoring to career advice. Next fall, they'll launch two "academies" that most students will take part in, like college majors, finding an emphasis in electives updated for evolving careers. Advanced students will learn more independently while those who need it will get extra help.

Fourteen years after Jerabek first sat down to help St. Louis Park ninth-graders, her work is making a broader mark on schools worldwide. "The schools that innovate are going to be rewarded," Metz said. "You can feel like a victim in education. This is saying, 'We're going to control our own destiny.'"

For more information, contact Kelly Smith at 612-673-4141.

LATINOS IN HIGHER EDUCATION - TRENDS

On January 4, the **College Board** presented a one hour webinar program highlighting recently-released data from the Pew Hispanic Center. This webinar was extremely relevant to stakeholders such as YMCA youth and teen program leaders who recognize the importance of learning the latest information regarding Latino students in the US.

As our communities change, it is important that we as leaders in Youth Development keep abreast of trends to guide future strategies and programming that will benefit our YMCA community long term.

Areas Discussed Were:

- Data from the Pew Hispanic Center demonstrating an increase in Latino college enrollment
- How this increase affects higher education institutions nationally
- The factors contributing to this increase

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- The future trend of Latino college enrollment and its perceived impact on higher education institutions

Webinar Presenters Were:

- Introduction by Jim Montoya, Vice President, Relationship Development, The College Board
- Presentation by Mark Hugo Lopez, Associate Director, Pew Hispanic Center, and Research Professor, University of Maryland School of Public Policy

Please review the information which was presented as some of the most critical education issues affecting underrepresented communities. I invite you to reach out to partners in your educational community to work together to develop strategies in which you may affect a positive result for your youth.

Key Presentation Points:

- 37 is the medium age of Hispanics in the US
- Hispanics make up 16% of the US population. By 2015, it is estimated that Hispanics will make up approximately 29% of the population in the US
- 1 in 5 elementary school aged children are Hispanic
- In the 16-25 age range, 34% of the young people are immigrants.
- 37% Hispanics are born of immigrants
- 29% of Hispanics are 3rd generation immigrants. The 3rd generation Hispanics are a smaller group (compared to 1st or 2nd generation Hispanics)
- 1st generation Latinos are those who are more newly immigrated into the US. They are not as successful in accessing and/or graduation from college as others.
- 1st generation Latinos are more likely to be employed.
- 2nd generation Latinos are closer to doing well in school similar to native born Americans.
- 2nd generation Latinos, like other native born Americans make up the largest group of Latinos. The growth is more recent.
- 3rd generation Latinos are experiencing a 'slipping back' after the rate of progress of 2nd generation Latinos. Negative influences such as gangs and lack of motivation is cited.
- 3rd generation Latinos are more likely to be of Mexican origin compared to the diversity of immigrants today.
- CA and TX account for nearly ½ of the Hispanic population.
- There is growth of the Hispanic population in nearly every state. In GA, the Hispanic population has nearly doubled in the past 10 years. There are a lot of young families which translates into more children entering into the public school system.

Education:

- Hispanics are responsible for the large growth in US schools today
- 49% of Hispanic parents surveyed by the Pew Foundation said that education is important and is in fact one of their top issues
- Of parents of 16 – 25 year old Hispanics, 77% say it is important to go to college after high school
- Young Hispanics say a college education is important to success
- Of 18 – 25 year old Hispanics, 48% say they plan to get a BA degree. Many Hispanics in this age range migrated here to the US for the purpose of finding employment. So, even though they want higher education, employment has been the priority/reality.
- 33% of 18 – 24 year old Hispanics are enrolled in school. Most are enrolled in a 2 year college or technical school.
- Those Hispanics in the 18 – 24 year range who are not in school site the following reasons...
 - 1) Family Support
 - 2) Language barrier
 - 3) Do not like school
 - 4) Can't afford school
- Hispanics college enrollment has increased...32% in 2010. 38% in 2010 for African American

- Growth in Hispanic college enrollment is a result of more Hispanics completing high school at a rate of 71 – 73% completion
- There are more minority groups represented on college campuses now.
- Hispanics are more likely to enroll in a 2 year institute. 46% Hispanics enrolled in colleges are enrolled in community colleges.
- There is a 39-44% increase of Hispanics eligible to attend college.

Trends in College Completion

- 9.8% of African American college graduates graduate with a BA degree
- 8.1% Hispanic college graduates graduate with a BA degree (2009)
- Most bachelor degrees in African American and Hispanic groups are received by females. For Hispanics 61% of BA degrees received were by females compared to 39% received by Hispanic males.
- 1.8 million Hispanics are attending college. Of those, 800,000 attend a 2 year college. Many Hispanics attending a 2 year college stop there and do not transition to a 4 year college to obtain a bachelor's degree.

Even though there is a narrowing of the gap regarding accessing and completing college for Latinos and African Americans, the gap still remains.

Information Most Needed

How to navigate through colleges/universities is an area where students need support.

- Navigation relates to more than learning how to complete the financial aid application forms or knowing how to select a college. Navigation also refers to learning how to communicate with and interact with professors, teacher aids, etc. It is said that Latino students tend to be shy. Therefore, other than expressing polite greetings, students often do not take advantage of scheduling time to meet with a professor after class to ask for assistance if class topics are unclear and in general to make themselves known to their professors. There can be 'serious problems' for Latino students who did not develop a working relationship with their professor when references are needed for other programs or opportunities. "No one knows who they are..."
- Hispanic youth and their families need guidance regarding what can be done once a degree is achieved...i.e. the 'what's next in your life' talk is imperative. Parents may not fully understand the breadth of reach their child may achieve after obtaining a college degree and the multiple opportunities/choices available to them.

Anti-immigration legislation impact on college aspiration

- There are approximately 11.2 million undocumented Latinos in the US. Of those, 1 million are under the age of 18.
- It is important to have conversations with students about higher education opportunities available for them in their state.
- Students need to understand basic things such as SAT/ACT, FAFSA, etc.

For more information, log onto www.pewhispanic.org



Voices of the Middle Grades

What do students in the middle grades most need from their teachers? *What Kids Can Do* offers their answers in a sequel to their groundbreaking book *Fires in the Bathroom*—this time, listening to the voices of early adolescents. Talking in depth with 40 students in middle grades around the country, *What Kids Can Do's* Kathleen Cushman asked them questions like these:

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- * What helps you want to try hard in school—or keeps you from doing so?
 - * How can your teachers help you deal with social issues and pressures you face?
 - * What's fair in the classroom, and why?
 - * What helps you understand your challenging academic subjects?
 - * When it comes to your parents, what do teachers need to know and do?
 - * How can teachers prepare you for the transition to high school?

The first-person answers kids gave—piercing, funny, eloquent, and revealing—shed new light on teaching and learning in the middle grades. To interpret them, Cushman teamed with Laura Rogers, a developmental psychologist who has worked in middle schools for the past 13 years and now teaches at Tufts University.

MetLife Foundation made the project possible—and recently, the 2007 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher came out with new data on “the homework experience,” a crucial middle-school issue.

To bring the voices of middle grades students to that subject among others, What Kids Can Do offers below a sampling of what they say about “how to help us learn,” from ***Fires in the Middle School Bathroom: Advice for Teachers from Middle Schoolers***, by Kathleen Cushman and Laura Rogers (The New Press, April 2008).

Tips on Helping Us Learn

From binders to homework, what helps us stay with it.

Journey Over a Bridge

What makes us tick. What we know about ourselves.

“You Got a C?”

The impact of grades on our work. An exercise on grading for teachers.

What's Fair?

How classroom fairness, respect and conflict look to us. An exercise on fairness for teachers.

Food for Thought

Having our say about eating in school.

Just Another Way to Judge us?

What encourages to the risks involved in real learning

Share Your Story

If you would like to submit a story that can be placed in the next issue of the “SPARKS” e-newsletter, please send an electronic version of your story (you can send pictures too!) to gayle.brock@ymca.net. Please make sure you put the phrase “story idea” in the subject bar. Stories must be submitted by the end of each month for inclusion in the next issue.

Next deadline for submissions: February 20, 2012.



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

National Advocacy Days
February 13-15, 2012
WASHINGTON, D.C.

SAVE THE DATE!



February 13-15, Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C.

REGISTER NOW:

<http://events.SignUp4.com/advocacydays>

This year is more important than ever because it is a critical election year. We need you to lend your voice to help advance our cause.

Don't miss this opportunity to meet with your Members of Congress and their staff to tell your Y story and promote our legislative priorities to:

- Support ongoing funding at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that enables communities to build healthy environments and implement programs that prevent chronic diseases, especially diabetes and obesity;
- Support legislation to create a permanent, nationally-accessible and affordable FBI background check program for youth-serving organizations, like the YMCA; and
- Support the current tax deduction for charitable giving and oppose any changes or limits to the deduction.

>> Join YMCA advocates for three days of workshops, networking and advocacy. For more details, including an At-A-Glance Agenda, conference logistics and travel info, visit the registration site at <http://events.SignUp4.com/advocacydays>.

>> Don't forget to book your hotel room by today, January 20, in order to guarantee a room at the hotel and secure the lower rate. For reservations call: 1-800-468-3571 or the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel at 202-347-3000.

>> Receive Certification Credits for attending National and State Advocacy Days.