

Hanna Ahn
Camille Chesley
Kristin Lodolce

Ask:

What are the positive outcomes of engaging students with youth media initiatives?

Investigate:

Since our semester work was based on quantifying interviewee responses, the interview transcripts were an essential resource for our project. Kimberlie Kranich, the director of the WILL Youth Media Workshop, also provided us with several documents that helped to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the Workshop itself. Dr. William Patterson, co-director of the Youth Media Workshop, informally lectured on foundations of the Youth Media Workshop during a meeting on October 31, 2008. In this lecture, Dr. Patterson explained to us that the idea behind the Workshop was to empower the African-American youth population through media. The Workshop's goals were to teach these youth to have an active role in the production of media, rather than assuming a passive role as a consumer; and to positively impact their own communities by using media as an outlet through which they could showcase their own community histories.

Bibliography

Kranich, Kimberlie, and Dr. Will Patterson. "Hook 'Em with Technology, Keep 'Em with Relationships." Youth Media Reporter (2008) . 9/16/2008.

Kranich, Kimberlie, and Dr. Will Patterson. Youth Media Workshop: Program Goals and Outcomes.

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More than a Bus Ride: Desegregating Champaign Schools. Dir. Kranich, Kimberlie. Prod. Franklin Middle School girls with guidance from WILL-AM. DVD. 2005.

Our Journey: Stories of School Desegregation and Community in Champaign-Urbana. Dir. Kranich, Kimberlie. Prod. Franklin Middle School girls with guidance from WILL-AM. VHS. 2004.

Patterson, Will, Dr. Interview with Dr. Patterson, 2008.

Create:

Our task was to take questions and responses from 60 pre and post interviews that the Youth Media Workshop (YMW) directors conducted with participants and organize the information into themes. The themes, along with verbatim comments from the interviews, were then compiled by evaluator Holly Downs and her team and made into a preliminary analysis. From this analysis, we can begin to see trends in how the program has impacted participants, their families and their communities.

Since the analysis contains names of interviewees, the document has been classified as an internal document. In order to help WILL begin to share the data publicly, our team wrote an "executive summary" of the analysis by pulling out the most significant findings of the analysis and omitting the sensitive data. YMW will be able to post this document to their Web site and use parts of it for marketing and development activities.

In addition, YMW asked with our help in formulating standard questions to be used for future pre and post interviews. In the past, the interview format has not been standard across interviews, making it more difficult to find meaningful trends in the data. This set of questions will help YMW become more consistent in their data-gathering, and enable them to report program data in a more systematic manner. They were derived from consistencies found across current interview questions and the stated goals and outcomes of the YMW program (See appendix A for the executive summary and set of questions).

Discuss:

From working on this project, I have learned about the impact that youth programs like YMW can have on young people, their families and their communities. The students participating in this program came out with more confidence, a better understanding of their families and communities, and a sense of agency. This is really powerful stuff. Reaching out to youth in this way is important to fostering civic engagement. Before you can engage with your community, you have to know about and have an awareness of your community; you have to have confidence in yourself and know that you bring something to the table; and you have to believe that your actions can impact the entire community. Community engagement is something that can be taught and should be part of every kid's education. KL

Working on this project was an eye-opening experience for me; each interview I read for the Youth Media Workshop expanded my understanding of this area. Even though I grew up in Champaign, I never fully realized the kinds of divides that exist here: racial, economic, educational. What I found so inspirational was that the Youth Media Workshop teaches young people from these diverse communities to be agents of change. In these workshops, participants used different forms of media (radio, film, the Internet) to document and communicate their own community histories. From their involvement with the workshop, these youth have a better understanding of their own communities, and this awareness can be a motivating factor in building better communities. Because of this, I feel that the Youth Media Workshop is a highly effective means of promoting civic engagement amongst the youth population of Champaign-Urbana. HA

I was really struck by one of the YMW's goals: to empower young people to be active producers of media, to tell their own stories through radio and television and archive their community as experienced by themselves and their families, rather than be passive consumers of media. When I was going through the interviews, one of the things I noticed was how very conscious all of the participants were of the media and the perceptions of African Americans in the news or on TV. It looked like a few of the kids had noticed a discrepancy between what they were learning about the Drum Corps and some of the images and messages they were seeing on television. From my own personal experience growing up as an African American, it can be a struggle to parse the sometimes conflicting images of Blacks in the media. To me, that was why community engagement is so crucial, it implies an active partnership, rather than a one-sided dialogue. Rather than telling students about their community, YMW taught them how to engage history and media on their own terms, a lesson that will stay with them. CC

Reflect:

One of the central dilemmas that one faces with service learning projects is: what happens with the semester ends, and the students have their grades? Throughout the process, one of our main concerns was the issue of sustainability. We knew we only had a semester to work with the WILL Youth Media Initiative, but we wanted to make sure that we created a lasting product that was fluid enough to evolve with the next evaluator and the next set of students. The data that we created will serve as a foundation, enabling the next evaluator to build off of our documents and expand the report written by Holly.

Our team also came up with a preliminary set of pre- and post-interview questions for WILL based on common threads in the data we produced. For our project, we worked to impose an interview protocol after the fact, and we wanted to leave a set of questions that were informed by our immersion in the raw data. Each of us had worked with interviews from different projects or different sessions so we felt confident that we came up with a set of basic questions. A few of the questions follow:

- What do you hope to learn from the Youth Media Workshop?
- Do you feel that education is important? If so, why?
- What have you learned from participating in the Youth Media Workshop?
- Have you learned anything from the Youth Media Workshop that you feel you wouldn't have learned in school?
- Has this experience changed the way you view your school and your community?
- Has this project changed the way you view media? If so, how?