

LONG BRANCH COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR YOUTH



Long Branch Collective Action for Youth (LBCAY) is a community initiative supporting positive youth outcomes funded through Montgomery County





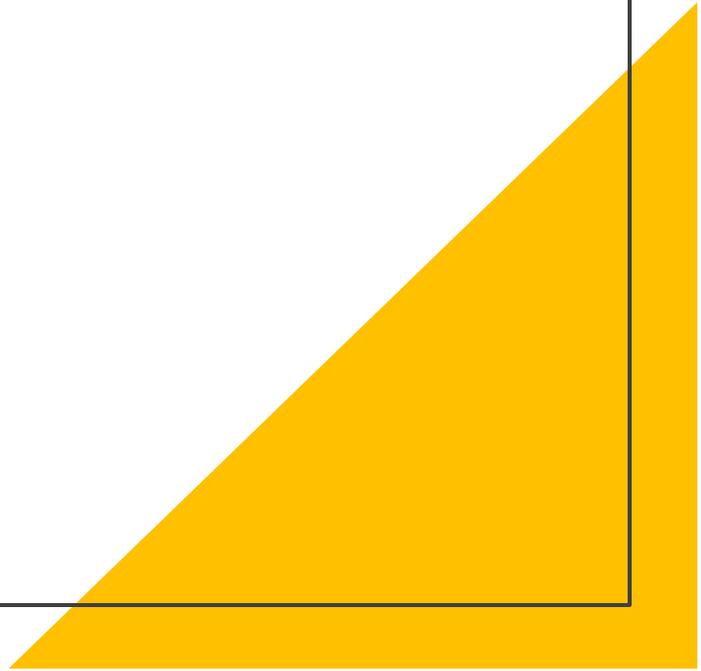
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WhitworthKee Consulting

YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS

NOVEMBER 2020



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Background

- Two focus groups were conducted with Ethiopian ($n=5$) and Hispanic/Latino ($n=6$) Youths in November 2020.
- The goals of the focus groups were to get youths' perspectives on:
 - Ways community-based organizations can provide educational support;
 - How best to serve and get more youths involved in afterschool programs;
 - Most effective medium for sharing community happenings and resources;
 - Recommendations

Procedures

- Focus groups were conducted using Zoom:
 - 50 – 60 minutes;
 - Audio-recorded
- Audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim by a professional translation company
- Transcripts analyzed for emergent themes using Dedoose Qualitative Software

Findings

- Findings are organized and presented based on analysis of youths' general perceptions of:
 - Schooling
 - Afterschool Program
 - Communication
 - Recommendations

SCHOOLING: Help Needed to Be Successful In School

Youths identified several factors that would help them be more successful in school

(1) Having quiet space to do their classes

*For me, I need to be in the room. Nobody around me. . . A quiet space [Participant 1EATBH]
“need to work without distractions.” [Participant 3ECTDH]*

(2) Need for textbooks or print materials

I think I'm more like a hands-on learner. Everything is on the computer these days. And I like to write things down. So I think textbook or stuff would help because everything is online. And I like to write stuff down to understand them. [Participant 2EBTCH]

(3) Need to reduce procrastination and increase their organizational skills

Not procrastinate ‘till the last second, like on the day that we got to turn [assignments] in . . . Maybe being more organized. [Participant 10HEIFS]

(4) Need for tutors

SCHOOLING: Assistance Received With School/Education

Youths had mixed perception regarding the help they have and continue to receive.

(1) Availability of optional zoom meetings

One thing I like about my school is that on Wednesdays there's a lot of Zoom sessions. It's optional. If you need help, you can go to it. That's very nice." [Participant 5EETFH]

Despite the availability of these optional meetings youths expressed some limitations and additional stress

Sometimes when I have a question for a teacher, it's like once in a week and sometimes like on Wednesdays we have to go to the Zoom. It feels like too tight, like you can't have a question after that. [Participant 3ECTDH]

I would say that sometimes during online school, the workload is stressful sometimes. . . Sometimes you get confused about [schoolwork] . . . you can't personally ask your teacher - Is this due? what is the deadline for this? It gets stressful sometimes. It's stressful to do school virtual. [Participant 2EBTCH]

SCHOOLING: Assistance Received With School/Education

(2) Need for teachers and staff to be more communicative and responsive

Well personally, I think the teachers need to . . . communicate more, because for me personally, I emailed some of them and they haven't even responded. [Participant 7HBICS]

I also think counselors too, because sometimes I have questions about colleges and it's hard to reach out to them. [Participant 6HAIBS]

Limited communication and responsiveness appeared to be hampered by the teacher/student ratio

We have like a virtual . . . checking-in . . . and most times the teacher will just give you an assignment and tell you to do it, and then you go to the virtual check-in and you would ask a question and . . .they don't hear you or they . . . answer somebody else and then you try [to] ask them a question [again]. . . There's not enough . . . there's only one teacher and there's like 20 students. And then you would email her and [not get an] answer until like four days. [Participant 10HEIFS]

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS: Programs Youths Participate In

- Youths indicated that they participate in a range of afterschool or volunteer programs
- Their participation were, however, affected as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

“because COVID we can't really go volunteer and stuff.” [Participant 2EBTCH]

PRE-COVID-19		DURING COVID-19	
Afterschool Programs	Volunteer Activities	Afterschool Programs	Volunteer Activities
1. ACE Academy	1. SJA	1. ACE Academy	1. New Hampshire Elementary School
2. Community Bridges	2. NHS	2. Online Programs (e.g., Border Collie, Tech-Squad; Digital Learning)	
3. Soccer Club	3. Tutoring		
4. Arts Program (e.g., dance, reading, crafts)			

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS: Reasons for Participating in Afterschool Programs

(1) Educational Support

- Many Ethiopian youths highlighted that they received educational support from participating in ACE Academy

They help you with your homework. [Participant 1EATBH]

They help you with more reading and writing skills. [Participant 3ECTDH]

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS: Reasons for Participating in Afterschool Programs

(2) Community Support & Flexibility

*Wanting to be involved in the community, my local community and helping out others
[Participant 7HCIDS]*

For community bridges, I joined because it was something for me to do and also it was interesting, and it would help me with college too because they help with colleges and stuff. But for food distribution, I . . . joined [because] I wanted to help out with my community. [Participant 6HAIBS]

I liked the environment so much. It was really so welcoming and everything. So I decided to stay there. And do my SS hours while having fun with the kids and stuff. . . [and] because it was flexible, the hours and stuff. I could go anytime of the week I was comfortable. My cousin introduced us to it. Just the hours were comfortable. Everything was suiting [including the] staff.” [Participant 2EBTCH]

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS: Reasons for Participating in Afterschool Programs

(3) Interest Match with Afterschool Program

I just like stuff about computers, so I just wanted to get into like a club that would entertain me. [Participant 8HCIDS]

One youth who did not participate in any afterschool program indicated that . . .

Personally, I don't find any of them interesting. [Participant 11HFIGS]

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS: Afterschool Programs Needed

Youths indicated a need for afterschool programs in the:

- Arts (e.g., dance)
- Sports (e.g., soccer, gymnastics)
- Technology (e.g., gaming, coding)

The need to make the programs more specific was also indicated by one youth who shared:

I think there should be more clubs that are specified on one thing, because a lot of kids are interested in coding and stuff. There should be a club just for that. I know there's other places where they have a combination of everything but there should be more of the specific [activity] so they can focus on it. [Participant 2EBTCH]

COMMUNICATION: Medium Used to Obtain Information

Youths indicated the many ways in which they obtained information including:

- **Social Media Platforms**

- Instagram and Snapchat were the most frequently reported

- **Information sharing between family, neighbors and school**

[We get information from] our neighbors [and] especially family - people you know. Since they come from different places and stuff, they have other information mentioned that you might not know about. And also what [name redacted] said, when I go to other buildings around my neighborhood. Even in my apartment building, there's posters and boards, and stuff like that. Also . . . at school, they pass [out] a lot of stuff like that. [Participant 2EBTCH]

- **Use of flyers, posters and notice boards**

In my building, we put up flyers up on the elevators and stuff like that. [Participant 3ECTDH]

COMMUNICATION: Best Ways to Share Information

Youths shared two overarching ways to share information to community members:

(1) Social media, emails, text messaging

- Facebook was the most reported social media platform to share information

Flyers, emails, text messages and Facebook . . . Probably Facebook, [is the best one] . . . not going to lie, it's probably Facebook. [Participant 8HCIDS]

(2) Forming partnerships with individuals and schools

Partner with... the school and get them to like... inform the parents [of community happenings and other resources] because not everybody watches the news . . . or has Facebook. And if you want to get [to] the parents, the kids go to school so get the school [to be more involved]. [Participant 10HEIFS]

COMMUNICATION: Additional Information Needed

Older youths indicated the need for information related to college application and career advice

Information like... on going to college. So like, how to get scholarships, how do I apply, what to do. . . which colleges are good and stuff like that. Especially when you are in high school . . . Or people who don't want to go to college [they need] career advice and stuff. There are things at school that they don't teach us that we need for the real world. [Participant 2EBTCH]

Younger youths needed information on the environment and community bonding

I guess [we need information about the] environment too, and also, I feel like... I guess bonding of the community in a way.” [Participant 7HBICS]

RECOMMENDATION

1. Need to increase communication with young people

I guess if you want to get people in a program . . . you have to talk to young people, like us, to see if there's any chance you can make up a program [that they have an interest in]. [Participant 6HAIBS]

Maybe asking them what their interests are and then just trying to find a program that fits them, and that they'll be interested in going to. But you have to keep in contact with them so they just don't forget. [Participant 8HCIDS]

RECOMMENDATION

2. Increased advertisement of afterschool programs

I think definitely let people know [about the afterschool program]. . . try [and] get information out there, because I know a lot of people who are . . . willing to go to afterschool or volunteer but they just don't know where to start or what to do. [Participant 2EBTCH]

I think sometimes people don't even know that there's certain programs around. So I feel like reaching out to people who might be interested is kind of a good idea to get people aware of what's happening. [Participant 9HDIES]

RECOMMENDATION

3. Need for more specificity about afterschool programs

They say there's programs available if you want to get in, but they don't say there's a program like art or sport. Because if they just say there's a program, you're not really going to look into it . . . but if you hear of a program that you like or you want to do, you might investigate or try [and] get in. But if you just say programs . . . you don't look into it more . . . you don't know it's there and that doesn't make you want to check. Like if you don't check, you won't know. [Participant 10HEIFS]

RECOMMENDATION

4. Increase support for youths

ACE Academy always open their gate from 1 through 5. These organizations could open from maybe like 6 to 12 for people that need a little bit more help. [Participant 3ECTDH]

Yeah. I agree. I know a lot more about younger kids having support, which they obviously need. I think the older kids through middle school and high school should be included too. They also need the support and the help. [Participant 2EBTCH]

Conclusion

- Youths indicated the need for quiet space, print material/textbook, tutor, and need to work on their procrastination and increase their organizational skills as important for their success in school
- Majority of youths participated in some afterschool activity, except for one person
- Ethiopian youths mostly participated in the ACE Academy afterschool program, while others volunteered or participated in other programs, including online
- Various mediums were used to obtain information including social media, information sharing between individuals and schools, and the use of flyers, posters, and notice boards

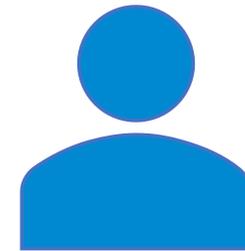
Conclusion, Continued

- The best way to share information was through social media – especially Facebook, emails, text messages and forming partnerships with individuals and schools
- Youths would like to get additional information about college applications and career advice, in addition to the environment and community bonding
- Recommendations centered around the need to increase communication with young people, advertisement, and support for youth as well as the need to be more specific about afterschool programs

FOR MORE
INFORMATION
ON LBCAY



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