

# Bay Area and Ohio Student Voice Convening

Lessons Learned & Looking Ahead

**YouthTruth**

— STUDENT SURVEY —

A NATIONAL NONPROFIT

# Group 1: Lessons Learned

During your time in this initiative, what has been the biggest highlight for you?

- The opportunity to allow students to speak for themselves and the desire on the part of adults to listen closely. We have had some great facilitated conversations/fish bowls that have been the basis for leadership work at our high school.
- We added middle school last year and this gives us a broader range of information about the “what” and “when” of student experiences in our schools.
- High participation - meaningful data because we’re hearing from such a large percentage of our students
- Really focused questions leading to really powerful findings

What is an important lesson that you have learned from listening to your students?

(What are some of the “conditions for success” that have helped you engage in this work effectively with others? What obstacles did you have to overcome to be successful in this work?)

- Creating safe places for conversations to happen in person as part of the survey process. Empathy interviews alongside other data.
- Marginalized and underserved students will speak if given the opportunity and a safe, uninterrupted space to share their experiences. Without the safe container, many students just won’t speak. Adults need to SIT DOWN.
- We have to be ready and willing to hear the honest responses

# Group 1: Looking Ahead

Although the initiative is coming to a close, what do you hope to continue in the future?

- Continue to survey groups to compare pre and post-pandemic
- Continue to use surveys to minimally target our district initiatives
- Using student fishbowls to go deeper
- Surveying multiple groups for comparison data (i.e., middle and high school)

When it comes to listening to students, what is something new that you would like to try?

- Cloverdale's fishbowl activity with our San Rafael students!
- Allowing students to facilitate their own conversations, design questions, review the data and see what they uncover that adults have missed
- Have conversations between adults and students that are true collaborations and listening (training adults to be better listeners)

# Group 2: Lessons Learned

During your time in this initiative, what has been the biggest highlight for you?

- The convenings - mixture of educational leaders from different school districts and being able to collaborate and build a network x2
- See practical examples of how institutions use data to shape what they do; intentional space for foundation leaders to work in partnership with schools and YouthTruth - how was the survey used
- Having additional data points to feed understanding of how district is doing to serve students and community; broader set of information and maybe more helpful than Healthy Kids Survey

What is an important lesson that you have learned from listening to your students?

(What are some of the “conditions for success” that have helped you engage in this work effectively with others? What obstacles did you have to overcome to be successful in this work?)

- Illuminates work we need to do locally with our ability to learn from student experience - the data suggests more learning and digging deeper
- Communities brought together intentionally - Value of networks/community - schools get to interrogate data with other like or bigger/smaller institutions; foundation partners - worked best when organizational structure exists regarding partnerships, parts of initiatives, part of a regional focus, etc. with a guiding question
- Understanding that students have clarity around needs, etc. Perceptions of students may not align with what school is thinking

## Group 2: Looking Ahead

Although the initiative is coming to a close, what do you hope to continue in the future?

- Schools will want to keep surveying students to build knowledge over time and to keep getting more student voice - implement responses to what students tell us; want to continue collaborations to break outside the bubble!
- Use survey - keep giving it; multi-year data with similar questions can help see change or not over time
- Regional networks continue moving forward...build on momentum;

When it comes to listening to students, what is something new that you would like to try?

- Really dig into demographic sections of reports to (new feature!) see who is responding by demographic to see what voices are missing in the data and who we are not reaching...and how this might lead to new approaches to getting those voices represented in the data so it is more comprehensive
- Hear more from students - empathy interviews - focus groups - have students add more qualitative comments to answers; convene students on a larger scale to get more depth in feedback to support the data
- Student voice collaborative existed in past and groups of students had a chance to share feedback, etc. more regularly; bring back a chance for students to be part of a collaborative group to shape district learning

# Group 3: Lessons Learned

During your time in this initiative, what has been the biggest highlight for you?

- The opportunity to just collect the data.
- The evolution of the project to the point that we can see that we can dedicate funding to address what we're learning.
- To see that the data is being used to inform school leaders and reflect on their practices
- Power of a single datapoint to bring attention: there was one datapoint that captured the attention of media, it was front page a couple of times, that really elevated the need for more emotional and mental health for Sonoma County youth.
- How responsive during the pandemic that YouthTruth was during this time.
- Started small and it's grown: Embedded in the community in a way that we did not initially imagine.
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What is an important lesson that you have learned from listening to your students?

(What are some of the “conditions for success” that have helped you engage in this work effectively with others? What obstacles did you have to overcome to be successful in this work?)

- Partnership: we can't do this work alone. Finding and nurturing partnerships has been essential.
- Willingness and bravery: Systems need to be in a place to take in the information and act on it.
- Funding

## Group 3: Looking Ahead

Although the initiative is coming to a close, what do you hope to continue in the future?

- Continue to use YouthTruth protocols (love the 4Ds, too!)
- Continue to use the data (both local and the aggregate reports that YT produces)
- Would like to get more comfortable with being uncomfortable (example: new YouthTruth demographics questions)
- Opportunities for shared learning: who are the top quartile schools in the YT data? What can we learn from them?

When it comes to listening to students, what is something new that you would like to try?

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# Group 4: Lessons Learned

During your time in this initiative, what has been the biggest highlight for you?

- Community Engagement in 2021 - bringing youth-serving organizations together to learn about the initiative and invite them to see and utilize the data.
- Student Voice panels
- The holistic nature of the survey highlighting so many aspects of the community
- Just a shout out to YT for making the whole process so doable for our schools - flexible, quality support, exceptional dashboard, quality data
- Truly collecting student voice- qualitative comments are so incredibly valuable, too
- The extensive breakdown of the data

What is an important lesson that you have learned from listening to your students?

(What are some of the “conditions for success” that have helped you engage in this work effectively with others? What obstacles did you have to overcome to be successful in this work?)

- Not to underestimate how important the school experience is for them - the impact it has on their lives.
- What we think students want and need is not actually what they want and need and that student perception is often different from staff
- To put aside personal biases - don't assume to know what the student experience is - ASK and engage.
- That we need to do a better job of embracing, acknowledging and including the cultural wealth of our students
- We have to close the loop and bring students into solution-seeking - ask them to help break down the data and participate in intervention development.
- And close the loop with solutions



# Group 4: Looking Ahead

Although the initiative is coming to a close, what do you hope to continue in the future?

- Continue to use the data!
- Deepen engagement with educators and students both to get behind the data and create solutions that will move the needle.
- Deepen engagement with community partners - bring them into the solution-seeking process as well; they can bring resources to bear on our greatest challenges.
- Our community partners still stand beside us in Sonoma County to continue the work
- Continue with empathy interviews, focus groups, and improving the learning environment for students
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When it comes to listening to students, what is something new that you would like to try?

- Students as part of the solution development and even part of implementation
- Students as part of the promotion of the survey- when they see that their responses mean something and does effect change, they will be more willing to participate
- Something that will help us identify students who did not participate and find a way to include to them