

***City of Cambridge ✦ Agenda for Children
21stcc--Young People's Project (YPP)
Survey Highlights
May 2004***

"YPP introduced our youth to the fun side of math-- and why it is important to our lives."

SPECIAL NOTE: Low Response Rate:

There are seven sites participating in YPP with one or two staff persons participating per site. Site Administrator surveys were received from only 3 sites and Co-Teachers surveys were received from only two staff persons, one of which was a Site Coordinator. Given the very small sample size, coupled with many items having "no response" from participants, it is likely that the findings do not reflect the experiences of all YPP participants. Therefore findings should be viewed as trends for further discussion, only.

Overall Perceptions of YPP

- Overall, the five participants responding to the survey see YPP positively, and are able to identify some programming, staff and particularly youth benefits from the project.
- Site Administrators have found YPP to be between worthwhile and extremely worthwhile. Given the lack of adequate representation from participating staff, it is not possible to know whether these high levels of enthusiasm is true for all staff.
- Overall, the responding participants have found YPP strategies for building skills in staff and in youth to be fairly effective and appear to be generally satisfied with the project design.

Perceived Effectiveness of YPP Components and Supports

- Overall, responding participants have found YPP strategies to be fairly effective in building skills in youth. Participants' experiences with YPP may vary, however, with some finding its strategies more or less effective than others.
- The "types of math activities and games (YPP curriculum) offered to youth" appears to be the strategy perceived to be the "most effective" with youth (3.58 where 4=extremely effective). Other strategies are perceived to be "fairly effective".
- Overall, responding participants found YPP strategies to be only between "somewhat and fairly" effective in building **staff** skills--ratings slightly lower than perceived effectiveness in building youth skills.
- Given a number of missing responses to the question "how effective are specific YPP strategies in building skills in staff", it is not clear whether any one strategy is perceived to be more "effective" than others. The three key strategies: *YPP Orientation sessions*, *Observing YPP Math Literacy Workers interacting with youth*, and *Math games & activities provided to staff by YPP*, all received similar ratings in the "fairly effective" category.

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- When asked whether aspects of the project were “just right” or “needed adjustment” responses indicate that many aspects of the project are working well for responding participants. The one area that received fewer “just right” responses was “the amount/type of support I receive from my organization” with only 2 of the 5 respondents expressing the opinion that this was “just right”. An assortment of other suggestions for strengthening YPP were offered, such as: more time to meet with YPP director, or increasing the duration or frequency of YPP strategies.

Perceived Staff Benefits

- When asked what is the most important benefit you (or your staff) have derived from their participation in YPP, Site Administrators did not respond with any identified staff benefits. Those responding to the Co-Teacher survey, however, cited changes in their teaching philosophies related to math. “I learned that if you teach a child with a fun activity, then they will want to be involved.”, “I learned new ways of teaching math.” Respondents had varying levels of confidence as to whether staff benefits are “sustainable”, with some feeling very confident, and some less confident.
- Ratings of 8 potential staff benefit areas indicated that responding participants believe that it is between “somewhat true and true” that desired staff skills are being developed through YPP. Several questions received “no response” by participants, perhaps indicating a lack of knowledge or recognition that the skill was being developed. Many items received ratings from only three of the five respondents making it very difficult to generalize ratings.
- There was variability in ratings across potential staff benefit areas. The staff benefit area receiving the highest average rating was: “*Staff communicate a “can-do” attitude about math to youth*”.(average rating of 3). Staff benefit areas receiving positive but more modest ratings, perhaps indicating that these skills are just “emerging”, included: “Staff are more interested and comfortable with math”, “Staff have a more positive attitude towards math”, and “Staff are more comfortable answering youth’s questions about math”.
- The staff benefit items describing staff’s abilities to sustain YPP-type activities received lower average ratings-(average of 2/somewhat true). “ Staff have the skill to facilitate youth’s engagement in math activities”, “Staff are more confident and motivated enough to facilitate youth’s engagement in math activities --on their own”, “Staff are able to help guide youth’s mathematical thinking and investigations”.

Perceived Youth Benefits

- Responding Site Administrators report that they feel YPP has strengthened their capacity to support youth's math skills, "YPP has allowed us to offer more extensive academic enrichment", "YPP is helping us improve the math skills of our young people."—however, there were mixed views as to whether these site benefits are "sustainable" with some expressing a lot of confidence and some expressing little confidence.
- When asked "what is the most important benefit you feel youth have derived from their participation in YPP", all respondents were able to identify benefits. A range of desired benefits were cited, including: "Youth have gained more confidence in math", "Youth have more self-confidence, they realize that they have the ability to understand and solve math problems", "youth have learned math in a fun way which makes it more interesting to them", "They learned team work." "YPP introduced our members to the fun side of math and why it is important to our lives."
- When asked whether they felt that youth benefits would endure over time, consistent responses indicate that participants believe it is "likely" that youth benefits are sustainable.
- Ratings of potential youth benefits received fewer "no response" answers than did ratings of staff benefits.. Average ratings suggest that responding participants believe that it is between "somewhat true and true" that youth are gaining desired skills and attitudes related to math.
- The youth benefit areas that received the highest ratings included: Youth have an increased sense that math is part of everyday life. (average rating=3), and Youth have an increased sense of mathematical competence.(average rating of 2.75) All other potential youth benefit areas appear to be emerging, with "youth's increased interest in math" showing a somewhat stronger emergence.

Sustainable Benefits for Programs

- When asked whether respondents agreed with the goal that YPP should help staff learn how to better facilitate youth's engagement in math activities and mathematical thinking, four of the five respondents answered "yes". When asked whether it was "realistic" for this goal to be achieved in one year, only one respondent agreed that this was possible in one year.
- Respondents' perspectives on the need for more time to build skills, fits with other findings. Ratings of potential staff and youth benefit areas related to more positive attitudes towards math and beliefs about math's relevance suggest that these "early outcomes" may be emerging for staff and youth participants of YPP. In contrast, ratings of more concrete skills and abilities received lower ratings, suggesting that perhaps these desired longer-term benefits have not yet been developed through YPP.
- Given that ratings of project strategies often fell into the "somewhat effective to effective" range, it is not yet clear whether the current project design will ultimately lead to these more "sustainable" benefits for staff and youth.

Potential Next Steps/Suggestions for YPP

- Staff are gaining some of the "early" outcomes related to the project, (e.g. more positive attitudes, increased comfort and awareness), but may not yet be developing the skills needed to facilitate and build youth's skills in math. If having staff be able to independently be able to offer YPP-related strategies on their own is an important goal of the project, consider adding more explicit coaching and instruction to staff members to strengthen their abilities to implement YPP approaches on their own.
- To strengthen the benefits for youth, the project should help participating sites and staff identify and focus on contributing to a small number of modest and appropriate "outcomes" for youth (The Youth Benefit section of this survey could serve as a starting point for discussion). Mechanisms for tracking and measuring progress in meeting these outcomes should be considered in order to demonstrate positive results of the project.
- Many sites and staff participating in YPP are also involved in other Agenda projects such as the Literacy Enrichment project, Leading for Quality and Kits for All. While YPP participants feel that they are currently making good use of resources and supports, it is suggested that YPP sites also consider identifying shared skill-goals and training across projects.

"Youth have more self-confidence, they realize they have the ability to understand and solve math problems"