

# THE REACH YOUTH PROGRAM LEARNING TOOLKIT



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# Acknowledgements

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# Background

In 2006, Sierra Health Foundation launched the REACH Youth Program to support the healthy development of youth in the Greater Sacramento Region. The REACH Program focuses on increasing youth participation in quality programs, providing opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills while contributing to their communities, and helping communities take action for youth. Sierra Health Foundation awarded Community Action grants to youth-adult coalitions in seven communities, and later awarded grants to two additional coalitions. Committed to sharing the REACH Program's successes and challenges, the foundation and its program partners produced two valuable resources: 1) *Engaging Youth in Community Change: Outcomes and Lessons Learned from Sierra Health Foundation's REACH Youth Program Evaluation Report*, and 2) the *REACH Impact Documentary*. These resources contribute to the body of knowledge that supports effective youth development and community building, and serve as a resource to others engaged in or considering similar efforts.

## Introduction to Toolkit and Content

Believing in the value of using video documentaries and data as learning tools, members of the REACH technical assistance team collaborated to develop this **REACH Youth Program Learning Toolkit**. The learning toolkit was designed using and/or incorporating components of the *Engaging Youth in Community Change: Outcomes and Lessons Learned from Sierra Health Foundation's REACH Youth Program Evaluation Report* and the *REACH Impact Documentary*.

The **REACH Youth Program Learning Toolkit** is divided into three sections: 1) Youth As Change Agents: Youth Voice and Leadership, 2) The Promise of Equity: Access, Resources, and Intentionality, and 3) The Promise of Equity: Understanding Youth Demographics. Each section includes resources, an activity, and discussion questions for critical thinking.

Resources or materials that came from specific individuals and organizations are given proper attribution whenever they appear.

## Resources:

Campbell, D., Erbstein, N., Carrasco, L.C., Fabionar, J., and Wilcox, W. (September 2010). *Engaging Youth in Community Change: Outcomes and Lessons Learned from Sierra Health Foundation's REACH Youth Program*. Sacramento, CA: Sierra Health Foundation

See the REACH Impact Documentary online at <http://www.vimeo.com/18089252>  
Produced by the Center for Multicultural Cooperation's Sacramento Youth Empowerment Studio (SacYES), 2011.



# Youth As Change Agents: Youth Voice and Leadership

## WHY IT MATTERS?

Youth voice is far too often missing from decision-making processes that have a direct impact on youth themselves and their community. Creating opportunities to promote youth voice and leadership in community change efforts requires alternative approaches to how youth are viewed. Critical to youth voice and leadership is viewing youth as change agents who have the potential to play an essential role in transforming toxic conditions in their communities (Ginwright, Cammarota, Noguera, 2005). Active youth voice and leadership can positively affect the community in which they live in addition to transforming young people's sense of power to affect their own lives and the lives of others.



## VIEW REACH IMPACT DOCUMENTARY VIDEO:

Start at 00:00 End at 02:35

## CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING:

According to the documentary, youth voice and leadership play a critical role in the successful outcomes achieved by each coalition. What are examples from the documentary that you heard in which youth voice/leadership played a role toward a community change effort?

## EMPOWERING DISCUSSION QUESTION:

In what way(s) is youth voice encouraged in decision-making processes in your community as a result of REACH coalition efforts?

In what way(s) are leadership opportunities provided within the coalition for youth who are often seen and/or considered marginalized youth in your community?

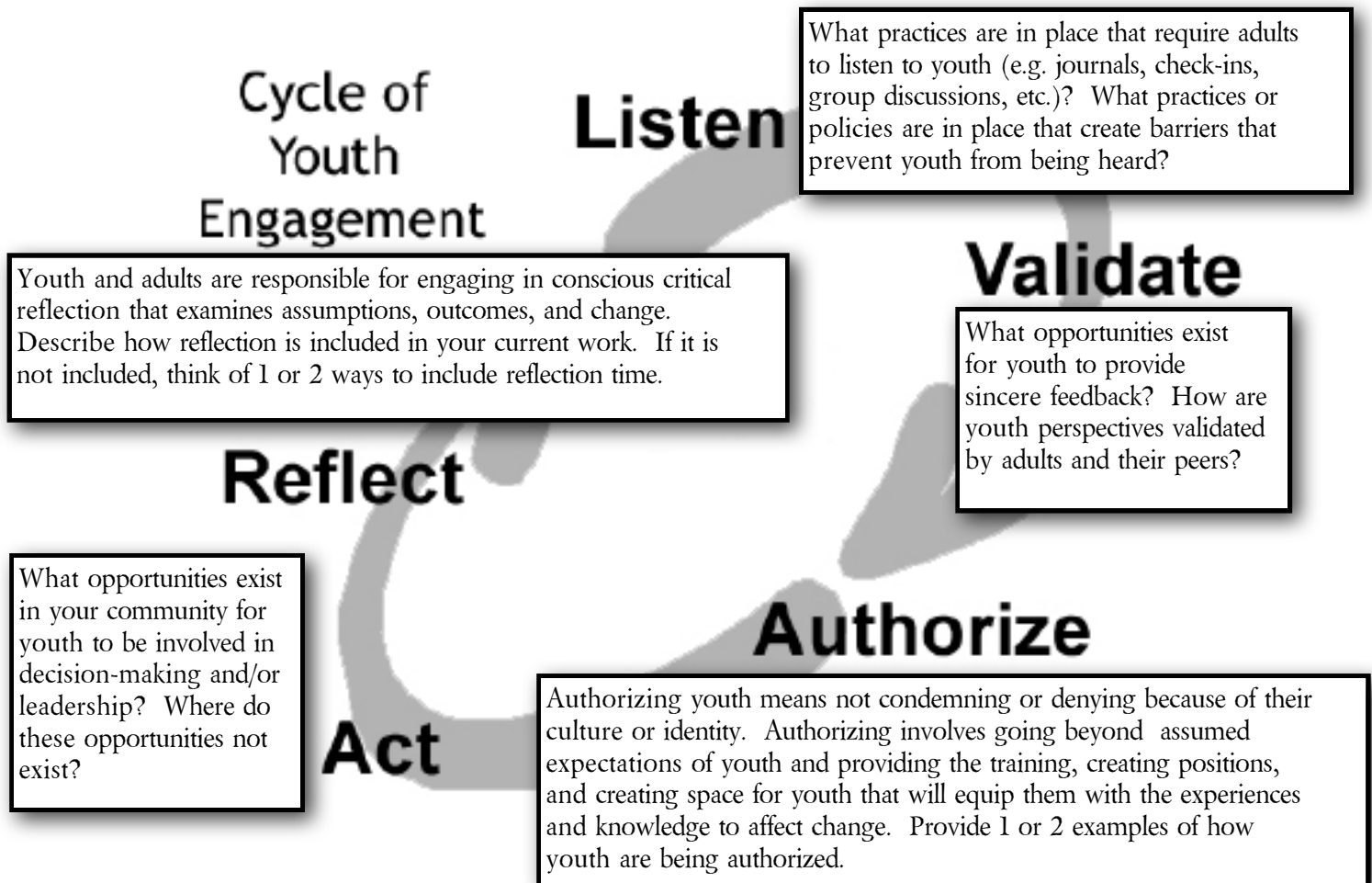
# Youth As Change Agents: Youth Voice and Leadership

## ACTIVITY: CYCLE OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

1. Individually or as a group, discuss youth voice, leadership, and power. Use the following questions as a guide (capture responses on a flip chart for group discussions):

- What do youth voice and youth leadership mean?
- What does power mean? Who do you usually see in positions of power?
- Who has more power in your community, youth or adults? How do you know?
- Who has more access to decision-making and leadership opportunities, youth or adults? How do you know?

2. Use the Cycle of Youth Engagement exercise to understand and explore the culture of Youth Voice, Leadership, and Power in your current coalition efforts.



3. Why is being able to understand the culture of youth voice, leadership, and power important to the current work that is going on in your community? What are some examples of successful practices (current or previous) based on the Cycle of Youth Engagement discussion? What might be incorporated and/or done differently based on the discussions from the Cycle of Youth Engagement exercise?

Adapted from The Cycle of Youth Engagement, Created by Adam Fletcher for CommonAction, 2006.

# Youth As Change Agents: Youth Voice and Leadership

## **RESOURCES:**

Ginwright, S. & James, T. (2001). *From Assets to Agents of Change: Social Justice, Organizing and Youth Development*. *New Dimensions for Youth Development*. No. 96, Winter 2002.

Adam Fletcher and Joseph Vavrus, (2006). *The Guide to Social Change Led By and With Young People*. CommonAction, Connecting Young People and Adults Together for Democracy.

# The Promise of Equity: Access, Resources, and Intentionality

## **WHY IT MATTERS?**

Youth well-being is tied to a community's ability to get and keep resources required by youth. Those resources include quality time with adult allies, regular and intentional support to build skills and relationships, including flexible timelines and funding. In particular, whether or not your community's most vulnerable youth have access to essential resources--summarized as networks, ideas and experiences – reveals much about how we value young people (Ginwright and Cammarota 2007). Dedicated time to connect youth with adult and peer networks, particularly for youth living without healthy adult relationships, is necessary to build a history and future of trust. Support to build skills and knowledge about community change processes, such as community research and organizing, may be challenging but are even more critical for youth who are disengaged from more traditional support systems. Organizing human and financial resources in creative, flexible ways that allow vulnerable young people to experience healthy opportunities and options is worthy of our attention and focus.

## **CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING:**

What were some examples of youth resources revealed in the REACH Impact Documentary that illustrate quality relationships among youth and adults or efforts to build youth skills and knowledge?

## **EMPOWERING DISCUSSION QUESTION:**

Who are the most vulnerable youth in your community? How easy or difficult is it for these youth to access consistent resources? How does the lack of access impact these youth in particular?

Think about one example of one group of vulnerable youth. What support systems are available to this group of youth? What role can/does your REACH coalition play in creating and enhancing the ability of vulnerable youth to access these support systems and resources?



# The Promise of Equity: Access, Resources, and Intentionality

## ACTIVITY: MOBILIZING COMMUNITY RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUTH

This activity helps youth and adult allies better understand areas of impact on young people's lives by working to turn stressors into resources.

1. The following chart lists areas that are potentially positive or negative in young people's lives, depending on their circumstances. As a group or individually, have your coalition think about each topic, decide whether it is a stressor or a resource in their life/community and explain why. Note: There may be multiple, even contradictory, answers per topic.

Resources	Stressors
	Quality Education
	Safety
	Healthy Relationships
	Work Opportunities
	Physical Health
	Leadership and Contributions
	Skill Building
	Safe Transportation
	Healthy Food
	Healthy Housing
	Others???

2. As a group, share thoughts about the results of your discussions. What patterns or themes do you hear/observe? How do you feel about this snapshot of your youth? How might results compare based on different groups of youth? What does it NOT capture?
3. Together, pick a few stressors to discuss. Brainstorm ideas for how each might be turned into a resource. How might you use existing resources in other areas to accomplish this? What opportunities exist to mobilize youth and adult partners into action?
4. Now pick a few resources and ask, what makes the existence of these resources possible? What might make these resources less available or accessible? How can they be sustained or further developed? What actions might strengthen and protect them?

# The Promise of Equity: Access, Resources, and Intentionality

## **RESOURCES:**

Ginwright, S. & James, T. (2001). *From Assets to Agents of Change: Social Justice, Organizing and Youth Development*. New Dimensions for Youth Development. No. 96, Winter 2002.

Forum for Youth Investment, [www.forumforyouth.org](http://www.forumforyouth.org).

# The Promise of Equity: Understanding Youth Demographics

## WHY IT MATTERS?

Demographic data are used to describe the characteristics of a population. Commonly used demographics include gender, age, income, and race. This information is usually easy to access through public education, health, juvenile justice/law enforcement and youth development records. For example, the 2010 Census provides an interactive tool to search for information about race, age, sex and housing status (<http://2010census.gov>).

A demographic profile provides enough information about the typical member of a group to create a mental picture of the larger group. One interesting thing about demographics is that they are constantly changing. Another interesting thing about demographics is that the closer you look, the more you can learn about the similarities and differences between groups of people. This knowledge can help create the types of safe, supportive and meaningful settings that youth need to succeed.



## VIEW REACH IMPACT DOCUMENTARY VIDEO:

Start at 10:07 End at 10:55

## CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING:

As shown in the video, Vacaville youth are working on a project to improve safety on the bike trails. Can you think of any demographic factors that might help explain why this issue is important to youth in Vacaville? Describe any factors (e.g. policies, environmental surroundings, etc.) that you think might contribute to safety concerns at one bike trail over another.

## EMPOWERING DISCUSSION QUESTION:

What does your neighborhood look like? If you had a map, could you mark the areas where higher populations of youth live?

In what way(s) are leadership opportunities provided within the coalition for youth who are often seen and/or considered marginalized youth in your community?



# The Promise of Equity: Understanding Youth Demographics

## ACTIVITY: A CLOSER LOOK AT YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS

A good starting point for understanding the similarities, differences, and disparities of youth well-being within the REACH region is to look at youth demographics through the lens of: median income, race/ethnicity, high school dropout, juvenile felony arrests, foster care, teen birth, and housing (ES09 Index of Youth Vulnerability. Geraghty, E., Erbstein, N. and Greenfield, T. 2010). Although these indicators are descriptive in nature and do not necessarily carry equity implications on their own, they highlight how demographics can create unique vulnerability to different types of inequity in the region. For example, because of their age, homeless youth have few legal means by which they can earn enough money to meet basic needs, often suffer from severe anxiety and depression, poor health and nutrition, and low self-esteem, and face difficulties attending school because of legal guardianship requirements, residency requirements, improper records, and lack of transportation.

Use the Coalition Profiles on the next two pages to answer these questions:

1. Which Coalition has the most diverse student population and which has the least diverse student population?
2. Which Coalition has the lowest median income and which has the highest median income?
3. Can you tell which of the Coalitions might have youth who need to rely on public transportation to get where they want to go? Why did you pick these Coalitions?
4. The median income for the Galt Area Youth Coalition is \$30,000 to \$73,000. What are some reasons for why there is such a large difference in this range of numbers?
5. Do you think that youth living in rural, suburban or urban communities have the same access to recreational opportunities?
6. What are some of the different challenges that youth living in rural, suburban, and urban communities might have to deal with on a daily basis? Are there any challenges for youth that might be the same even if they are living in very different communities?

# The Promise of Equity: Understanding Youth Demographics

## ACTIVITY: A CLOSER LOOK AT YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS

### REACH Coalition Profiles

Data note: School Ethnicities represent the percentage of four major racial/ethnic groups in area public schools (from California Department of Education, 2005-2006 school year; Median Incomes are from the 2000 census (when a range is presented it represents the low and high range among multiple zip codes included in the coalition footprint area).

#### Cohort 1

##### Galt Area Youth Coalition

Location:	City of 28,000 and surrounding unincorporated communities south of Sacramento	
School Ethnicities:	White	46%
	Latino	46%
	African-American	2%
	Asian-American	2%
Median Income:	\$30,000-\$73,000	
Lead Agency:	Galt Joint Union Elementary School District	
Coalition Model:	Activity hub for students from multiple schools	
Strategic Focus:	Developing youth master plan, service learning	

##### Rancho Cordova Children, Youth and Family Collaborative

Location:	Newly incorporated city of about 53,000 just east of Sacramento	
School Ethnicities:	White	50%
	Latino	23%
	African-American	16%
	Asian-American	6%
Median Income:	\$46,000	
Lead Agency:	Folsom Cordova Community Partnership (service agency)	
Coalition Model:	After-school youth group tied to pre-existing collaborative	
Strategic Focus:	Youth safety	

##### Sacramento ACT Meadowview Partnership

Location:	Large urban neighborhood of about 37,000 in Sacramento	
School Ethnicities:	White	5%
	Latino	32%
	African-American	24%
	Asian-American	33%
Median Income:	\$29,000-\$35,000	
Lead Agency:	Sacramento ACT (faith-based community organizing network)	
Coalition Model:	Community organizing	
Strategic Focus:	High school graduation rates, workforce development	

##### South Sacramento Coalition for Future Leaders

Location:	Large urban neighborhood of about 73,000 in Sacramento	
School Ethnicities:	White	14%
	Latino	36%
	African-American	15%
	Asian-American	30%
Median Income:	\$27,000-\$32,000	
Lead Agency:	Sacramento Mutual Housing Association	
Coalition Model:	Adult and youth committees on priority topics	
Strategic Focus:	Youth arts, safety, mentoring, jobs	

##### Vision Coalition of El Dorado Hills

Location:	Growing suburban community of 30,000 east of Sacramento	
School Ethnicities:	White	84%
	Latino	4%
	African-American	1%
	Asian-American	3%
Median Income:	\$92,000	
Lead Agency:	Vision Coalition of El Dorado Hills	
Coalition Model:	Hub for collaboration, grant-seeking and regrating	
Strategic Focus:	Drug and alcohol abuse prevention	

##### West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition

Location:	City of 40,000 just west of Sacramento	
School Ethnicities:	White	39%
	Latino	40%
	African-American	6%
	Asian-American	9%
Median Income:	\$27,000-\$36,000	
Lead Agency:	CommuniCare Health Centers (nonprofit health care provider)	
Coalition Model:	Youth group connected to youth/adult coalition	
Strategic Focus:	Increase youth voice in local governance	

##### Woodland Coalition for Youth

Location:	City of 52,000 just northwest of Sacramento	
School Ethnicities:	White	36%
	Latino	56%
	African-American	1%
	Asian-American	4%
Median Income:	\$37,000-\$47,000	
Lead Agency:	Yolo Family Resource Center	
Coalition Model:	Youth group connected to youth/adult coalition	
Strategic Focus:	Teen pregnancy prevention, youth advocacy	

# The Promise of Equity: Understanding Youth Demographics

## ACTIVITY: A CLOSER LOOK AT YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS

### Cohort 2

#### Vacaville Youth Roundtable

Location:	Bedroom community of about 96,000 midway between Sacramento and San Francisco	
School Ethnicities:	<u>Vacaville USD</u>	
	White	53%
	Latino	28%
	African-American	9%
	Asian-American	3%
	<u>Travis USD</u>	
	White	42%
	Latino	20%
	African-American	16%
	Asian-American	5%
Median Income:	\$58,000	
Lead Agency:	City of Vacaville	
Strategic Focus:	Promote the physical, emotional and social well-being of all youth by advocating for policies and systems changes	

#### Youth Development Community Action Coalition of Yuba-Sutter

Location:	Two rural counties approximately 50 miles north of Sacramento	
School Ethnicities:	<u>Yuba County</u>	
	White	48%
	Latino	32%
	African-American	5%
	Asian-American	8%
	<u>Sutter County</u>	
	White	43%
	Latino	35%
	African-American	2%
	Asian-American	13%
Median Income:	Yuba County	\$41,000
	Sutter County	\$48,000
Lead Agency:	Friday Night Live	
Strategic Focus:	Adult and youth partners working to change community conditions that will promote youth development for the long term	

Note: Since the release of the Engaging Youth in Community Change: Outcomes and Lessons Learned from Sierra Health Foundation's REACH Youth Program Evaluation Report, the West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition has been incorporated as a 501(c)3.



# The Promise of Equity: Youth Demographics

## **RESOURCES:**

<http://www.equity.lsn.net/data-demographics-statistics> The Legal Services of Northern California: The Race Equity Project demographics webpage provides easy access to a number of data sources.

<http://www.californiatomorrow.org> California Tomorrow uses data in many different ways: to arrive at shared understandings of the nature of the inequity around us; to predict the implications of demographic changes for young people, schools, the workforce, and governments in California and the United States; and as a springboard to conversations about which strategies will best lead to organizational effectiveness and greater social justice.

<http://www.mappingregionalchange.org> Mapping Regional Change provides access to maps developed by the UC Davis Center for Regional Change that illustrate various indicators of regional youth well-being.

## **COALITION PROFILES ARE PROVIDED BY:**

Engaging Youth in Community Change: Outcomes and Lessons Learned From Sierra Health Foundation's REACH Youth Program Evaluation Report, November 2010.

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