

# Work-Based Learning through Civic Engagement



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The Center for Cities and Schools (CC&S) is an action-oriented think tank that works to promote high-quality education as an essential component of urban and metropolitan vitality to create equitable, healthy and sustainable communities for all.

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## Introduction

Work-based learning (WBL), an important part of the 1990s “School to Work” movement,<sup>1</sup> is a core component of the Linked Learning strategy which is now shaping efforts to improve secondary education in California<sup>2</sup> and around the nation in cities such as Detroit, New York and Philadelphia. WBL can include not only classic internships and “co-op” placements but also school-based enterprises and other activities in which students produce goods or provide services for other people.<sup>3</sup> The National Academy Foundation, in collaboration with other organizations involved with Linked Learning, has described a continuum of WBL experiences, including a “career practicum” that complements academic and technical coursework to prepare a student for both college and careers.

However, discussions to date have not fully recognized the particular importance of the civic sector as a site for WBL. The civic sector, including public agencies and nonprofit organizations, is vital to both a strong economy and a healthy democracy. The aim of this paper is to explain the idea of WBL in the civic sector and offer an in-depth look at a model of civic WBL — the Y-PLAN — in action.

## The Case for Civic Work-Based Learning

The civic sector is large; it offers unique opportunities for all students to acquire concepts and skills for civic engagement; and WBL in the civic sector can directly empower students from low-income communities of color that tend to be less involved in civic affairs. Because of its size and diversity of job offerings, the civic sector also offers possible future employment for many students. In 2007, nonprofit organizations employed approximately 9 million people.<sup>4</sup> In 2011, government agencies employed 22 million, of whom 14 million worked for local governments.<sup>5</sup> Together, government and nonprofits thus account for about 24 percent of all 131 million non-farm jobs in the United States. Clearly this sector is too big to ignore.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see D. Stern, M. McMillion, C. Hopkins, and J. R. Stone III, “Work Experience for Students in High School and College” (*Youth and Society*, 21(3): 355-389, March 1990).

<sup>2</sup> California Department of Education, *Multiple Pathways to Student Success: Envisioning the New California High School* (Sacramento, 2010). Available at [http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/mpstudy/downloads/Multiple\\_Pathways\\_Report\\_2010.pdf](http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/mpstudy/downloads/Multiple_Pathways_Report_2010.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> S. Darche, N. Nayar, and K. Bracco, *Work-Based Learning in California: Opportunities and Models for Expansion*. San Francisco: The James Irvine Foundation, 2009.

<http://www.irvine.org/images/stories/pdf/grantmaking/workbasedlearning.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> A. Butler, “Wages in the Nonprofit Sector” (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: *Compensation and Working Conditions* April 15, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *The Employment Situation — April 2011*.

Whether or not a student is interested in future employment in this sector, WBL in public and nonprofit agencies provides opportunities for all students to develop career-readiness skills such as critical analysis of complex problems, collaborative teamwork, and communication. Unlike work experience in other sectors, WBL in the civic sector can increase students' awareness of the institutions and processes of government and collective action. Education for citizenship has long been considered one of the principal purposes of compulsory public education in this country. Jefferson famously wrote in 1786, "...our liberty can never be safe but in the hands of the people themselves, and that, too, of the people with a certain degree of instruction. This is the business of the state to effect..." The U.S. Supreme Court affirmed in the 1954 *Brown* decision and again in its 2003 *Grutter* ruling that "education... is the very foundation of good citizenship." A 2000 Gallup poll showed that these statements are in accord with public opinion: the most frequently affirmed goal for public schools is "to prepare people to become responsible citizens." Yet the 2010 NAEP assessment of students' knowledge of civics found only 24 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders scored proficient or advanced — down from 26 percent in 1998 and 27 percent in 2006 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). One of the five areas of knowledge tested by the NAEP assessment is "What are civic life, politics, and government?" Another is "What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?" Students finishing high school evidently have not mastered ideas necessary for responsible and competent participation in civic matters.

Work-based learning experiences in civic sector organizations offer unique opportunities for students to acquire knowledge of and skills for civic engagement.

Engaging in civic WBL has been found to improve students' knowledge in these areas. Accumulating evidence shows that service learning, which mainly takes place in the civic sector, can develop students' skills, knowledge, and commitment to participate in addressing collective problems in the community and society (Billig, Root, & Jesse 2005; Kahne & Sporte 2008; David 2009; Levinson 2009). Leaders in the field of civic education have endorsed this kind of engagement as one of several ways schools can help to develop competent and responsible citizens (Gibson & Levine 2003). Levinson (2009, p. 35) emphasizes the importance of the experiential component: "Civic education at its heart must be about active participation, not passive observation." At the same time, Kahne and Westheimer (2003, p. 36) caution that effective education for democracy must be "more than good deeds." It also must include knowledge of governmental institutions and opportunities to analyze and debate collective issues. Kahne and Sporte's study of high school students in Chicago found that gains in students' civic commitment was strongly associated both with classroom discussion of civic issues and with participation in active service learning projects.

In particular, civic WBL can engage students with the basic concept of a shared or collective good.<sup>6</sup> This concept is fundamental to understanding the

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<sup>6</sup> What defines shared or collective goods is that benefits received by one person do not diminish benefits for other people, and excluding anyone from these benefits would not be feasible. Categories of collective goods include:

- Environment — protection or improvement of air, oceans, climate, natural landscapes, and other aspects of the environment.
- Infrastructure — roads, bridges, parks, sanitation systems, national defense, law courts and other such physical and institutional infrastructures are all collective goods when they are not congested.

role of government and nonprofit enterprise in relation to the private sector and for-profit business. Conventional economic theory says that private goods can be efficiently provided through market exchange, but ordinary markets are not efficient in providing or protecting common goods such as clean air. Some kind of collective action, usually through government, is required to produce efficient allocation of shared or public goods. (We use the terms “shared,” “public,” and “collective” goods interchangeably.)

Civic work-based learning experiences engage students with the basic concept of a collective good, and can address persistent racial and socioeconomic differences in civic participation.

Despite the prominence of this idea in standard economics and political science,<sup>7</sup> high school students seldom learn it. According to a study by Walstad and Rebeck (2001), market failure and the role of government were the least well understood microeconomic concepts assessed by the Test of Economic Literacy. Public debates on these issues are often complex, contentious, confusing, and driven by ideology rather than informed discussion. Because many political issues have to do with how best to provide collective goods and the proper role of government relative to the private sector, a clear understanding of what is and what is not a shared good is essential.

Finally, civic WBL can address persistent racial and socioeconomic differences in civic participation. Voting, volunteering and other kinds of civic participation are less frequent among low-income minority groups. As in 1998 and 2006, the 2010 NAEP civics test found African American and Hispanic students scored lower than White and Asian students in grades 4, 8, and 12 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Students whose parents had completed less schooling also scored lower on the NAEP civics test. Differences in attitudes and participation show similar patterns as differences in civic knowledge. Levinson (2009) reports that, among young people age 15-25, Latinos and African Americans are less likely than whites to agree that “I can make a difference in solving the problems of my community.” Hispanic young adults (ages 18-24) in particular have much lower rates of voter registration and community involvement than their white and black peers.

Instead of narrowing these gaps, the prevailing pattern of educational opportunity tends to widen them. Kahne and Middaugh (2008) conducted a survey of 2,366 California high school seniors, and found that African American students had fewer civic-oriented government classes, current event discussions, and experiences in an open classroom climate than white students. Latino students reported fewer opportunities to participate in community service, simulations, and open classroom climates than white students. Kahne and Middaugh also summarized results from the IEA Civic Education Study of civic learning opportunities, which surveyed a nationally representative set of classrooms from 124 different schools throughout the country. The IEA found students in classes with higher average SES levels were: 2.03 times more likely than students in classrooms with average SES

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- Public health measures – prevention of communicable diseases or promotion of practices that preserve health.
  - Culture — preservation and advancement of science, art, and other cultural achievements.

<sup>7</sup> The prevailing definition of collective goods in economics was first formulated by Paul Samuelson (1954); for a more recent exposition, see Joseph Stiglitz (2000). Samuelson was the first American to win a Nobel Prize in economics, Stiglitz shared the Nobel in 2001. The 2009 prize was awarded to political scientist Elinor Ostrom in large part for her research on efficient allocation of shared resources (for example, see Ostrom, 1990).

scores to report studying how laws are made; 1.89 times more likely to report participating in service activities; and 1.42 times more likely to report having experiences with debates or panel discussions in their social studies classes. Differences in current civic learning opportunities evidently mirror the racial and socioeconomic differences in the larger society. Providing civic WBL as part of Linked Learning would begin to offset this perverse pattern of civic educational opportunity.

## Y-PLAN: A Model of Civic WBL for California and the Nation

*Y-PLAN turns schools inside out; communities become a text for learning and students become agents of social change.*

Over the past decade, the award-winning Y-PLAN (Youth – Plan, Learn, Act, Now) initiative has been implemented in the Bay Area and across the nation. Y-PLAN engages young people as agents of change in authentic planning and community development projects linked to their school work. Y-PLAN centers on shared places as a public good – this is central to the field of city planning and community development. Questions from civic leaders focus on efforts that enhance the physical and social spaces in communities, such as creating safe and inviting community parks and recreations centers. Though this process, Y-PLAN bridges the worlds of city planning and public health with civic engagement and academic development to foster on-the-ground change that promotes health and well-being for all residents. Y-PLAN provides a vehicle for civic leaders to ask young people for feedback on pressing community challenges, for educators to use these questions to engage students in civic projects, and for young people to develop innovative solutions that address a public good.

Y-PLAN operates as both an in-class and out-of-school time educational model and has traditionally worked with low-income communities of color, groups that are typically left out of conversations about the physical and social transformation of their communities. Participants in Y-PLAN are supported by a range of professional advisors – faculty from local universities, civic and business leaders, professional practitioners – representing many professional disciplines and working together to solve real world problems.

To date Y-PLAN has engaged over 1,000 young people as agents of change and over 100 educational and civic leaders as adult allies and client partners in efforts that revitalize local neighborhoods and build community connections in diverse places. Y-PLAN has facilitated and supported these communities of practice as they plan for real changes in their schools, neighborhoods, and cities. Y-PLAN projects have ranged from the revitalization of neighborhood parks to overcoming tense intergenerational neighborhood relationships to master planning for housing redevelopment to creating youth-friendly walking tours of hidden neighborhoods. Today, Y-

Y-PLAN bridges the worlds of city planning and public health with civic engagement and academic development to foster on-the-ground change in public places.

PLAN is recognized as exhibiting all of the characteristics of high quality WBL programs as defined by the Linked Learning movement.<sup>8</sup>

<b>Characteristics of High-Quality WBL Programs</b>	<b>Y-PLAN</b>
Meaningful engagement in the workplace	✓
Connection between workplace experience and classroom learning	✓
Structured opportunities for critical reflection and exploration	✓
Careful assessment of learning to validate benefits and ensure ongoing innovation	✓

### **Meaningful engagement in the workplace**

Y-PLAN participants engage directly in the field of community development as young urban planners; they tackle many of the issues and utilize diverse tools that go into professional planning and “placemaking” – the process of “looking at, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work and play in a particular space...to create a common vision for that place.” Y-PLAN action projects and proposals capture both short term implementation ideas and long term strategies that ultimately “bring benefits to public spaces and the people who use them.”<sup>9</sup> Students engage with their community to address local challenges and policy questions and develop innovative solutions as engaged civic actors. Authentic community problems engage diverse stakeholders including local elected officials, government agencies, planners, neighborhood residents, teachers, and young people. Often, Y-PLAN leads to deeper volunteer or employment opportunities, such as serving on citywide youth councils or working as interns in the public agency or a non-profit organization that served as their client partner during the Y-PLAN process.

During a Y-PLAN process, students engage with their community to address local challenges and policy questions and develop innovative solutions as engaged civic actors.

### **Connection between workplace experience and classroom learning**

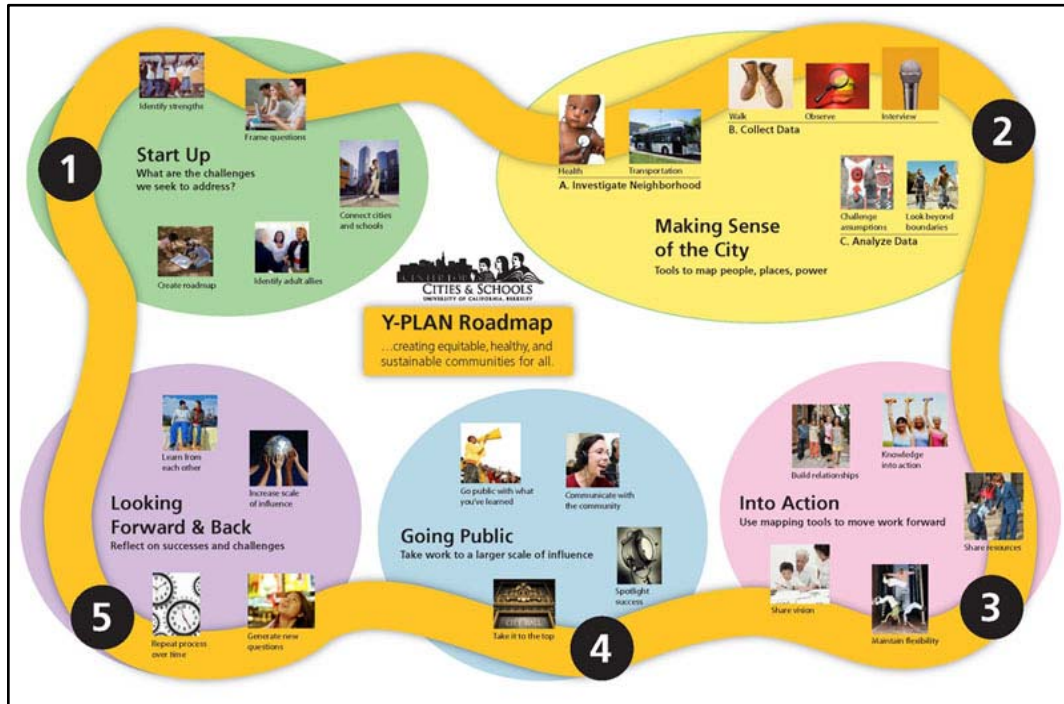
Educators’ role in Y-PLAN is to connect planning projects and processes to classroom teaching – across a range of curriculum – working with real-life civic projects and leaders in public and non-profit agencies. Developed from years of collaborative work and partnerships with leading teachers, administrators, and policy makers, the Center for Cities & Schools (CC&S) has developed a pedagogical framework and a set of tools that guide school districts and communities through a 5-module inquiry process that yields simultaneous academic development and community change. Y-PLAN has proven to be a very flexible tool adaptable to a wide range of academic curriculum from social studies and economics to career academy and pathway elective courses in technology, hospitality and tourism, and finance.

<sup>8</sup> <http://irvine.org/grantmaking/our-programs/youth/linked-learning/>; CDE. *Multiple Pathways to Student Success, Envisioning the New California High School 2010*

<sup>9</sup> Project for Public Spaces, *What is Placemaking?*  
[http://www.pps.org/articles/what\\_is\\_placemaking/](http://www.pps.org/articles/what_is_placemaking/)



The Y-PLAN 5-module inquiry process aligns with rigorous, scientific method and basic research practices:



- **Module 1: Start Up:** Learn about each other, the Y-PLAN framework, individual and team strengths and “client” project questions and milestones and create a roadmap for work ahead
- **Module 2: Making Sense of the City:** Conduct community mapping activities to identify assets and challenges in the community and consider relationships between people and places; work together to understand project questions through additional research and data collection; and create final posters “telling the story of the community”
- **Module 3: Into Action:** Get inspired by learning about other models and projects; identify and understand a variety of stakeholder perspectives; create a vision and plan of action for the project; and create a plan of action for the future
- **Module 4: Going Public:** Create a public, multi-media proposal presentation; present ideas publicly to a panel of project stakeholders and policy makers; receive feedback for future action
- **Module 5: Looking Forward, Looking Back:** Evaluate personal participation and prepare reflective essays; follow up with “clients” on utilization plans for proposals; and outline next steps for sustained engagement

The Y-PLAN tools serve as an agreed-upon learning plan where all educators and civic partners identify how different aspects of the curriculum will support both academic development and the production of meaningful projects and urban planning proposals.

## Structured opportunities for critical reflection and exploration

Critical reflection is a key component of the Y-PLAN process enabling students to make direct connections between their engagement on civic challenges and their academic work. With Y-PLAN, learning is no longer a function of knowledge-acquisition, but rather of knowledge-production by both young people and adults (McKoy and Vincent 2007). This reciprocal and iterative process – *learning to plan, planning to learn* – takes the form of the 5-module inquiry process that guides participants through their projects and ensure that students understand what they have done and how it relates to both their education and the community at large. Following each module, young people engage in individual and collective reflection through writing and discussion. Critical analysis focuses on both project questions and the Y-PLAN process, allowing for real-time adjustments if needed. Ultimately, young people stand out as innovators and critical thinkers able to directly inform the process by which they engage in improving the communities where they live, play, and learn.

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## Careful assessment of learning to validate benefits and ensure on-going innovation

Authentic assessment is a key aspect of Y-PLAN. One of the most powerful components of Y-PLAN is the culminating event at the end of each planning process where students present their final proposals to their client partners and a panel of civic and educational leaders. Using an agreed upon assessment rubric, civic leaders provide teams of Y-PLAN students with feedback on a range of core competences including expression of team work, creativity, connection to core curriculum, critical analysis of data, and understanding of community context.

Y-PLAN rests on the foundational principle that all participants work together in a community of practice; adults share decision making with young people, valuing their input and giving them a noticeable role in outcomes sharing expertise and deep knowledge – likewise, young people share their insights and knowledge of the places they live, work and learn. Y-PLAN assessment also focuses on the role and learning of educators and client partners to ensure that the process meets key classroom learning goals of teachers and supports the placemaking work of client partners.

## Civic WBL in Action: 3 Cases of Y-PLAN in the San Francisco Bay Area

In 2011, six cities across the country are utilizing Y-PLAN with the support of organizations such as the University of California’s Office of the President, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and National Academy Foundation. These yearlong initiatives in Richmond, Oakland, San Francisco, Dallas, New York City, and Detroit represent a diversity of partnerships and demonstrate the power of Y-PLAN as an adaptable pedagogy for implementing civic WBL.

Following are detailed descriptions and analyses of three recent Y-PLAN projects. Each illustrates innovative civic WBL practices designed to reinforce classroom learning, connect students to postsecondary institutions, engage

teachers and other community leaders, and develop positive change for the public good.

## Nystrom United ReVitalization Effort (NURVE), Richmond, CA

### Project Background and Community Challenges

Nestled in Richmond, CA is a small, historically underserved community called Nystrom that today is undergoing significant transformation under the banner of NURVE, the Nystrom United ReVitalization Effort. NURVE aims “to create a safe, diverse and thriving place, where kids walk to quality schools, people of all ages use the parks and community facilities, and a variety of housing options meet the needs of local residents.” Launched in 2001, NURVE emerged from the conviction that changes in the built environment are key to a community’s revitalization and transformation. NURVE partners are aligning the planning and implementation of four large capital development projects:

- Modernization of the Nystrom Elementary School by the West Contra Costa Unified School District
- Renovation of the Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Park by the City of Richmond
- Rehabilitation of the Nystrom Village housing development by the Richmond Housing Authority
- Historic preservation of the Maritime Center, part of the Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park by the National Parks Service and in partnership with a local non-profit, the Richmond Community Foundation

While each of these projects poses distinct development challenges, civic leaders recognize that they all required a high level of public participation to ensure they met the needs of local residents. Because of high rates of youth violence and lack of opportunities for youth in Richmond, adults in the community are particularly interested in creating a vibrant neighborhood that would provide activities, enrichment, and support for youth. Leaders also believe that engaging the public in the planning and design of these places would foster a sense of pride, ownership, and stewardship among residents, young and old, once the projects are built.

Since 2008, Y-PLAN has served as a vehicle for civic leaders to structure an inclusive process, and for teachers at Kennedy High School to engage students in civic WBL. Working with school site leadership and as part of the Architecture, Construction, Engineering Technology (ACET) career academy, Y-PLAN has supported over 150 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students build core college and career skills, connect with civic leaders, and cultivate an identity as engaged civic actors contributing to the broader community.

The Y-PLAN client partners include the leadership from the range of civic sector agencies involved in NURVE: City of Richmond City Manager and Mayor, West Contra Costa Unified School District Superintendent and Facilities Manager, Executive Director of the Richmond Housing Authority, and key staff from the Richmond Community Foundation. Together, these adult leaders sought to pose very real and pressing questions to the young

*“Through Y-PLAN, I learned that I can manage my time well, and that I am able to contribute ideas to the project. Through the project I became more hardworking and detail-oriented.”*

*- Y-PLAN student*

people. For example, in 2008, the focus of inquiry was on the MLK Park, and specific questions included:

1. What recreational needs do youth have?
2. What amenities would encourage youth to spend more time at MLK Park?
3. What strategies do youth have for ensuring that MLK Park is safe and free from vandalism?
4. What design and programming elements will support multi-generational use of MLK Park?

### **Students' Visions for a Vibrant MLK Park**

In February of 2008, over 30 11<sup>th</sup> grade Kennedy High School students embarked on a 12-week Y-PLAN process. After meeting their clients and digesting the specific questions, Y-PLAN students engaged in community-based research, mapping the assets, challenges, and opportunities near the MLK Park and the in the Nystrom neighborhood. Working with their U.S. History teacher, students connected their personal experiences and investigation with their classroom learning – bearing witness to the legacy of Richmond’s significant World War II contributions. Students examined demographic data and discovered that while Richmond has a rich African-American history, the city was rapidly changing, and now home to many Latino and other new immigrant families. This research reflected the students’ class demographics back to them, and allowed for their teacher to draw important connections between their individual experiences and broader societal changes and city dynamics.

The students’ final proposals/urban plans integrated their personal experience, classroom learning, and community-based research into innovative, original ideas that addressed the client questions. Students worked in small teams, and debated their design proposal priorities, coming to consensus, and crafting PowerPoint presentations and three-dimensional models. Students also wrote essays

In a final presentation to over 40 civic leaders, parents, and community stakeholders, students called for greater amenities and services for themselves and their families. Students articulated the connections between the built environment and the social amenities they need to support their personal and collective aspirations. These young planners proposed new ideas for safe pathways and recreational fields with a network of “blue light” telephones for quick access to police services. They asked for adult English-language classes and job training for their families and bilingual tutoring assistance for their peers. They suggested historical markers that honored the legacy of their neighborhood as home to “Rosie the Riveter” and brought beauty into their lives today. They identified spaces that could meet the needs of young children, such as a tot lot, adjacent to benches and tables for the elders that watch the children during the day.

### **The Public Good Realized**

Immediately following the final presentations, participating adult allies — including the Mayor, City Council members, City Manager, and others —

adapted their understanding and the vision of the NURVE project priorities and needs accordingly. Residents and families feel more confident in the neighborhood planning process, which has been ongoing for nearly a decade. As the Executive Director of the Richmond Children’s Foundation noted, “It is largely the visible role of young people that has kept all parties coming back to the table and accountable to each other.” As a result, residents and stakeholder group leaders are motivated to move forward because they agree that the future of the community depends in large measure on supporting the next generation of residents.

Through Y-PLAN, young people learn that “change takes time.” Understanding the balance between short- and long-term change, a core group of Y-PLAN students formed the MLK Youth Advisory Council, to provide some immediate activities for youth to get involved with and to stay involved in the NURVE processes. The Youth Council found a home at the Richmond Community Foundation, where many of the members received stipends and additional professional development training. The Youth Council members served as facilitators at a number of public meetings concerning the design and development of the park, and their innovative design ideas were incorporated for discussion among the broader community. As of 2011, the original members are still engaged, while attending community college and working nearby.

On May 6, 2011, the fourth Y-PLAN cohort from Kennedy High School presented their vision for a new linear park, the Richmond Greenway to the City Manager, Mayor, and Superintendent of schools. City Manager Bill Lindsay, inspired by these new designs, reassured the group that he and his staff were and are listening closely. The next day, on May 7, 2011, civic and community leaders, residents, and youth participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony at MLK Park, which included a number of the design elements envisioned by that first Y-PLAN cohort in 2008.

## **The Center of Community Life, Emeryville, CA**

### **Project Background and Community Challenges**

For the past decade, the City of Emeryville and the Emery Unified School District (EUSD) in California have come together on a number of initiatives out of a shared commitment to provide comprehensive services to young people in the city. The development of the city’s Youth Services Master Plan in 2002 launched a joint city and school district visioning process, laying the foundation for the ongoing planning processes and attendant strategic plans. These efforts culminated in the vision for Emeryville Center of Community Life (ECCL), an innovative multi-purpose, joint use facility that will house Emeryville’s K-12 public schools along with a childcare facility, a recreation center offering both indoor and outdoor activities, an arts center for visual and performing arts, and a forum that will provide community services focused on wellness, health, and other areas. According to project publications, the ECCL “creates a new framework for a 21st-century urban place where we will play, learn, grow, and come together as a community. By offering a variety of educational, recreational, cultural, and social opportunities, as well as services and programs that support lifelong learning

and healthy lifestyles, the Center will transform the quality of life of all Emeryville citizens.”

From 2006 through 2009, Y-PLAN served as a vehicle for civic leaders to structure an inclusive planning process, and for teachers at Emery Secondary School to engage students in civic WBL. Working with key teachers and district staff, Y-PLAN has supported over 75 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students build core college and career skills, connect with civic leaders, and cultivate an identity as engaged civic actors contributing to the broader community.

The Y-PLAN client partners included the EUSD Superintendent and architect, City Manager, and City parks and recreation staff. Together, these adult leaders sought to pose very real and pressing questions to the young people, as the vision for the ECCL was first evolving. Specific questions included:

1. What recreational, health, and social service needs do youth have?
2. What kinds of places would youth spend time after school?
3. What indoor and outdoor design and programming elements will support multi-generational use of the Emeryville Center of Community Life?

### Student Visions for the Emeryville Center for Community Life

In January 2006, the first Y-PLAN cohort at Emery Secondary School began their inquiry process into the conceptualization of the ECCL. These 10<sup>th</sup> grade students conducted community-based research, talking to peers and investigating their surroundings. They gathered demographic data on Emeryville and their school community and identified diverse needs. Their history teacher successfully connected broad concepts of World History to the local dynamics; for example, she tied issues of capitalism to Emeryville’s history as an industrial center of the Bay Area.

Y-PLAN students identified top priorities as safe “hang out” spaces, nursing and counseling services, healthier cafeteria food, and more sports facilities. Students highlighted the alienation they often felt from local businesses and suggested specific ways that the ECCL could foster a welcoming environment, including specific signage, public art, and youth-run businesses. Students also focused on outdoor spaces, identifying areas for community gardens, outdoor classrooms, sports facilities, and public art. In addition to providing input on the design of and programming for the ECCL, students advocated for a long term and sustained voice in the planning and development process.

### The Public Good Realized

The intensive youth participation in the planning and visioning of the ECCL has served to open up city government to a broader cross-section of the community. The Mayor and City Council members recognized that the first Y-PLAN presentation in City Council chambers in 2006 marked a turning point: For the first time the council chambers room was filled with families of color. Y-PLAN served an important role in opening up formal policy-making processes to an underrepresented constituency of residents and stakeholders.

*“I learned that I can work with a group well, and if something needs to be done just asking in a nice manner will make my team feel good, and we can do what needs to be done.”*

*– Y-PLAN student*

In the short term, EUSD responded to the student's ideas around additional nursing and counseling services by partnering with local universities that placed students in nursing and social work on campus. EUSD also incorporated comments about healthy and tasty foods in their food service planning. Further, in response to student interest, the City and EUSD have restructured several working committees to include youth representation. This transformation mirrors the work City and District leaders have undertaken on joint decision-making and governance in general. The City-Schools Committee, made up of all school board and city council members, meets monthly and is an operating committee fielding all partnership and joint decision-making issues. A student representative now sits on the City-Schools Committee, selected through an application process jointly managed and mentored by school and city staff.

Finally, the planning process for the ECCL continues. Now, five years after that initial Y-PLAN cohort put pen to paper on designs, the City and EUSD have had two conceptual plans developed and in 2010, a bond measure passed allocating funding to the actual construction of the ECCL. The 2006 and subsequent Y-PLAN cohorts engaged in planning meetings, presented their ideas to consultant teams and civic leaders, and crafted recommendation memos to ensure that their youth perspective persisted in the designs.

## **Galileo High School, Academy of Hospitality and Tourism, San Francisco, CA**

### **Project Background and Community Challenges**

Tourism is one of San Francisco's major economic engines. The global recession hit the otherwise resilient Bay Area, however, January 2009, visitors to the city and local hotel revenue were at an all time low. While many think of big hotel chains and airlines as taking a hit, local independently owned neighborhood businesses also suffer when tourism is down, impacting San Francisco residents and the vibrancy of those neighborhoods. San Francisco Travel (formerly the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau) is the non-profit organization responsible for ensuring that visitors to San Francisco have information about key activities, restaurants, and other destinations of interest. San Francisco Travel works closely with city agencies to ensure that the city is clean, safe, and welcoming for the over fifteen million worldwide visitors each year.

From 2004 through 2009, the San Francisco Unified School District utilized the Y-PLAN methodology across ten career academies in five high schools. In 2008, the Y-PLAN client, San Francisco Travel, asked Galileo High School's Hospitality and Tourism Academy to identify innovative hotspots for tourists. These adult leaders sought innovations from young people that would directly impact the economy and vibrancy of neighborhoods and San Francisco as a whole. Specific questions included:

1. What neighborhoods have opportunities for tourist traffic?
2. What places and activities would appeal to young people visiting San Francisco?

3. How can San Francisco Travel make getting around diverse neighborhoods interesting and easy for tourists, particularly focused on attracting families and young people?

### Student Visions for a Dynamic City of Neighborhoods

In the Fall of 2008, the cohort at Galileo High School began their inquiry process into the options for tourists in the neighborhood. The 11<sup>th</sup> grade students conducted community-based research, talking to peers, current tourists, local business owners, and investigating their surroundings. They gathered demographic data on visitors to the city and on the local neighborhoods, and conducted surveys of nearby businesses and tourists. They reviewed industry data and other pre-existing tours provided from their client. Their math teacher connected their survey analysis to core curriculum and analyzed local statistical patterns of visitors to the targeted neighborhoods, and they worked with a technology teacher to realize their final project by creating a series of powerful multimedia presentations and more.

*“They’re looking at San Francisco through eyes that are much younger and a mind that is much more open. That’s a really beautiful thing to share a young person’s perspective about San Francisco; it’s going to be different than other people.” - Y-PLAN Client Partner*

Y-PLAN students determined that something that San Francisco lacked was an easy, free way for tourist to experience various “niches” of San Francisco life. Students also wanted to showcase things that would attract youth and families. They decided to create “niche tour” podcasts. Working in teams, they each identified a specific topic area, and then conducted additional topic-specific research. They crafted a script, honed their mapping skills, and recorded a walking tour of dynamic and often unseen elements of San Francisco.

### The Public Good Realized

Students’ niche tours included: the *Hidden Gem* (Hayes Valley neighborhood), *Golden Gate Park Scenery Tour*, *Family Fun*, and *Live Like a True San Franciscan*. The podcasts each have an accompany map with walking tour, and students created exit surveys to get critical feedback from users. The tours highlight local businesses and youth- and family-accessible locations. In January of 2009, students presented their tours to leaders at San Francisco Travel and other city and school district leaders. The podcasts and maps are available for free download at from Galileo High School<sup>10</sup> and have been enjoyed by many and students also garnered the attention of local media<sup>11</sup>. The Y-PLAN project was considered a great success and win-win for everyone involved. As one client partner said, “They’re looking at San Francisco through eyes that are much younger than mine, and a mind that is much more open and that’s a really beautiful thing to really share a young person’s perspective about San Francisco; it’s going to be different than other people.”

<sup>10</sup> <http://galileoweb.org/aoht/audio-tours-of-san-francisco/>

<sup>11</sup> [http://abclocal.go.com/kgostory?section=news/local/san\\_francisco&id=6632375&rss=rss-kgostory-article-6632375](http://abclocal.go.com/kgostory?section=news/local/san_francisco&id=6632375&rss=rss-kgostory-article-6632375)



## Conclusion and Call to Action

Civic WBL as part of Linked Learning initiatives is a win-win proposition: civic organizations can pursue their missions by offering high quality WBL experiences; educators can connect civic engagement to core academics and their students' communities; and young people have meaningful access to a vital part of the economy and a functioning democracy.

In this paper, we have developed this proposition by

- Showing how civic WBL can be used to address the growing civic education gap - creating and reinforcing critical relationships between students, families, and entire communities to public and non-profit leaders and institutions
- Offering the Y-PLAN as a proven example of what works in civic WBL, thereby addressing the important nuts-and-bolts concerns of implementing civic WBL experiences
- Documenting where a growing number of students and communities, who would otherwise be left on the margins of our educational, civic, and workforce sectors are drawn to Y-PLAN initiatives that empower them to make a tangible difference in their communities

Today, the Linked Learning approach is itself a unique opportunity for California and states across the nation to effectively support students as they establish a solid foundation for success in college and careers. With the renewed focus on civic WBL advocated here, Linked Learning will be better positioned to realize its full potential of preparing students to succeed in school, work, and civic life.

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