Using Student Research to Promote School Change

2019 NYSAIS Assistant Heads, Division Heads and Afterschool Directors Conference

- **Initial Assessment**—What do we already know? What do we want to know?

  o Local level-- Your school community
  o Societal level-- Larger social trends connected to the issue of concern

- **Research Approaches**—Who is doing the research?

  o YPAR-- Student level
  o PAR-- Faculty & colleagues
  o Outside researchers/consultants

- **Data Collection Methods**—How are we going to get more information?

  o Interviews & Focus groups
  o Observations
  o Climate Surveys and gender audits

- **Data Analysis**—How are we going to make meaning of the data?

  o Who is analyzing the data?
  o What is important for us to look for? What is not as important?
  o What trends, patterns, and outliers do we see in the data?

- **Action, Implementation & Evaluation**

  o What are our action steps as a result of the research?
  o Who needs to be involved in the planning and implementation of the action steps?
  o How are we going to evaluate the impact of the action steps that we implemented?

Activity: Bringing research into your schools

Choose 1 area of the school ecosystem (classroom; faculty/staff/colleagues; school culture)
- What are 1 or 2 issues/norms/practices/policies you would you want to dig into to learn more about?

- What questions do you have?

- What types of data would you want to collect to help you to answer those questions?

- How would the perspectives from students contribute to learning more about these questions?

Key Steps to the Inquiry Process

STEP 1 UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF RESEARCH

What is social science research and how is it useful in creating change?

STEP 2 IDENTIFY COMMUNITY PROBLEMS AND ASSETS

What is our community like? What are the advantages or challenges of living in our community?

What are the most important issues for youth in our community?

STEP 3 CHOOSE A TOPIC AND DEVELOP RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is the problem or issue that you want to address and/or change in your school or community?

What are your goals for addressing this issue?

STEP 4 IDENTIFY POTENTIAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

What specific kind of information might you need to solve or address the problem?

Whose ideas, perspectives, and knowledge do you need to better understand this issue?

STEP 5 DECIDE ON RESEARCH METHODS AND DEVELOP RESEARCH TOOLS

How are you going to get this information? What tools will you use to collect it?

How are you going to get people to answer your questions and be involved?

STEP 6 COLLECT DATA

How will you make sure your research is complete?

Who is responsible for doing what? By when?

STEP 7 ORGANIZE AND ANALYZE DATA

What are the major trends or themes that your data show?

STEP 8 DECIDE ON RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRODUCTS

What are your main recommendations based on the evidence you gathered?

What types of products will make these recommendations accessible?

STEP 9 TAKE ACTION

Who should know about these findings and recommendations?

How are you going to share the information and get your message out?

STEP 10 CELEBRATE

What have you achieved? What successes do you want to celebrate?

Who do you want to include in your celebration?

YPAR Team Research Design Memo

YPAR Team Member & Advisor(s)	
Date	
Description of Topic and Goals In 1-2 sentences please describe the overall topic and potential goals of the study	
Relationships to YPAR Principles Describe how the project examines topics related to issues of power and social dynamics in school such as race, age, gender, class, and/or sexuality	
Guiding Research Questions Include the primary research questions	
Relevant Literature What existing literature, theories, and/or resources will the team consider and review?	
Data Collection Where will the data come from? What methods will be used? Be as specific as possible.	

Data Analysis What processes will you use to analyze the data?	
Action Plan Where does your team see potential for action? Think about audiences for your research, including the student body, committees, faculty, etc.	
Roadblocks to Change Are there any roadblocks or challenges that might make action/change difficult?	
Potential Impact Where might your project have an impact? On students/teachers? On the school? Related to a specific policy?	
Timeline Overview Broadly, when will data collection be complete? When will you analyze your data? What other key dates should your team should be aware of?	

Additional Resources

- Anderson, G. L., Herr, K., & Nihlen, A. S. (2007). *Studying your own school: An educator's guide to practitioner action research*. Corwin Press.
- Cahill, C. (2007). Doing research with young people: Participatory research and the rituals of collective work. *Children's Geographies*, *5*(3), 297-312.
- School Participatory Action Research Collaborative website: https://sparc-csbgl.org/
- Stanford Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) Curriculum: https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu

- Stoudt, B. G., Cahill, C., Torre, M. E., Lopez, J., Belmonte, K., Djokovic, S., ... & Rosado, J. (2016). Participatory action research as youth activism. *Contemporary youth activism: Advancing social justice in the United States*, 327-346.
- YPAR Hub at University of California Berkeley: http://yparhub.berkeley.edu/

Presenter Contact Information

Charlotte E. Jacobs, Co-Director, Penn Independent School Teaching Residency Program

Email: chjacobs@upenn.edu