



Starting Youth Participatory Action Research at Your School: Things to Consider

2019 NYSAIS Assistant Heads, Division Heads and Afterschool Directors Conference

Personnel Roles in YPAR

- **YPAR Advisor(s)**-- They serve as the advisor to the YPAR team, and are also responsible for maintaining contact with the School Head about the progress of the YPAR project.
- **YPAR Team**-- A group of 5-8 students who ideally come from different social locations (race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, etc.) and have different roles/positions within the school community, and are interested in making a change in their school culture.

SPARC Necessary Conditions for Successful YPAR Practice

School Level Conditions

- **Time and space** -- Faculty members need the time, recognition, and freedom to commit to and engage in the YPAR process.
- **Supportive and informed leadership** – Successful YPAR teams require the sustained support of administrative and faculty leaders in the school. This legitimizes the presence of the YPAR team in the school community and creates conditions for action steps to have a far-reaching impact.
- **Broad coalitions** -- Involving a wide range of school stakeholders in all phases of the research process creates an environment in which a large number of community members understand and believe in the importance and efficacy of YPAR at the school.

Research Team Level Conditions

- **Risk taking** -- Members of YPAR teams feel that they are in a safe environment where risk taking is supported and encouraged, where difficult topics can be addressed, and where failure is seen as an opportunity to learn.
- **Reflexive inquiry stance** – YPAR teams actively reflect about the meanings of their findings. A reflexive stance commits researchers to ask the school team and themselves what the data are telling them about boys' and girls' experiences within their schools.

- **Action orientation** – Research findings result in practical outcomes that matter to the people involved (students, teachers, administrators, parents), including potential changes to curriculum, policy, and practices.
- **Theoretical and methodological rigor** -- School-based research teams ask questions in ways that can be answered and in ways in which the answers themselves can be empirically verified.
- **Democratic practice** – The YPAR approach works to dismantle hierarchical power relationships by emphasizing group consensus and encouraging all participants’ voices to be equally heard.

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