



CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Youth Participatory Action Research: Engaging the Local Community in a Virtual Context

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Youth Participatory Action-Based Research (YPAR)

Drawing on YPAR, this project focuses on the implementation of a youth-led research course that is positioned as year one of a four-year research sequence at Campus International High School. This project invites all 9th graders to identify, research, and act on a challenge in the community. The course takes place over the course of one academic year.

Students learn about research as they conduct their own participatory action research projects. Students learn to work as a team to identify an issue, formulate a research question, conduct a literature review, and successfully complete data collection/ analysis and present the finding's implications at a conference, co-hosted by CSU, in May for the Greater Cleveland community.

Why YPAR Matters

Oftentimes, young people do not see clear ways to engage in community issues, much less work to change them as part of their work in school. This project intends to change that. This project aims to ensure that youth know the city is theirs, from museums to City Hall, and they have the power to make a change. Using YPAR, students have developed the research and presentation skills required to amplify their voices. To foster this civic engagement, this project has engaged 9th graders in year-long, student-driven inquiries around issues they identify as important. As students have investigated the concepts of community and social change, they have developed research skills to use now and in the future as they continue on in their education.

A critical component of this work is creating opportunities for students to engage directly with the local community. This includes site visits to neighborhoods and interactions with community members and local organizations. **A significant challenge in the COVID-19 era** was figuring out how to engage the community and community partners in a meaningful and substantive way through an exclusively virtual teaching and learning context.

- ❖ How would we create ways for students to learn about local efforts from community partners without any in-the-field opportunities?
- ❖ How would we co-create a community with community partners and a class of 9th graders who had not met one another or the teachers? in person?

Milestones and Successes This Year

- The course was designed as a virtual, synchronous Zoom-based course.**
- Roughly 80 students and 3 adult facilitators met on Zoom for 40 minutes twice a week, every week of the school year
 - The class typically met in one large Zoom room and utilized breakout rooms for groups to work on their individual projects
 - The chat was used liberally for questions, conversation, and debate
 - Google Classroom was used as the portal for resources, assignments, and more

In Phase 1, students were introduced YPAR and began by exploring the various topics of interests they felt passionate about being involved in. This included the following:

- Being introduced to YPAR and what action-based research is
- Building trust and setting goals with their groups
- Identifying issues and assets in the community
- Learning about research that drives change

In Phase 2, students developed a research plan including information regarding:

- Issue identification
- Hypothesis development
- Influential factors
 - Methodology
 - Goals and objectives - Target audience
 - Data collection
 - Data analysis

In Phase 3, students will share their work and take an action step:

- Students are preparing their presentations to present on May 6-7.
- As virtual meeting has become the standard way of meeting, Hopin.com will be used as a platform to simulate an in-person experience! There will be breakout rooms and time for discussion and takeaways to share with their peers, faculty, and community in Cleveland. We hope you'll join us.



CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY & CAMPUS INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

Attend the 4th Annual Campus Conference:

A Youth Research Symposium RSVP here: bit.ly/YPAR21

Speaker Spotlights

Engaging the Local: Co-creating community in a Virtual Context

- Key to our success with introducing students to the complexities of community and creating opportunities for young people to hear from and interact with community members working hard to address the issues they (the students) identified was regular guest visitors and "virtual field trips"
- Here, we want to name a few of the speakers that have made this year in YPAR so special and unique. Organizations in Greater Cleveland have provided opportunities for the students to "virtually attend" fieldtrips.
- The guest selected were invited because students wanted to learn more about the topic- leveraging and building on students' interests
- Many of the students used the information shared from the speakers, as well as sought out ways how to get involved.
- This "space" provided by many organizations brought real-life experiences and information that these students repeatedly report being grateful for! The following are a few of the organizations that had the students for a virtual fieldtrip in the Zoom classroom.

- Ohio Domestic Violence Network
- The Cleveland Print Room with artist Ruddy Roye
- Campus District with Rachel Oscar
- Edwin's
- Healthy Cleveland
- Ohio Coalition Against Gun Violence

Co-Creating our Community

This project includes experiences that are focused on developing ways for youth to engage the city of Cleveland as their campus, complete with real challenges, community stakeholders, and authentic audiences. In and through this collaborative work and inquiry, we expect that this diverse team will deepen their understandings of one another, but also identify specific ways they can address and overcome the various social inequities, accessibility challenges, and power dynamics that may be uncovered.

In summary, the class community's commitment to learning more about issues they care about, the adult facilitators' commitment to bringing the community partners into the Zoom room, and the students' resiliency and flexibility to work and persevere in this moment, is represented in their work that they passionately worked on!

Contact Angela (A.L.fant@vikes.csuohio.edu) or Molly (m.buckley67@csuohio.edu) if you are interested in joining our conference this year!