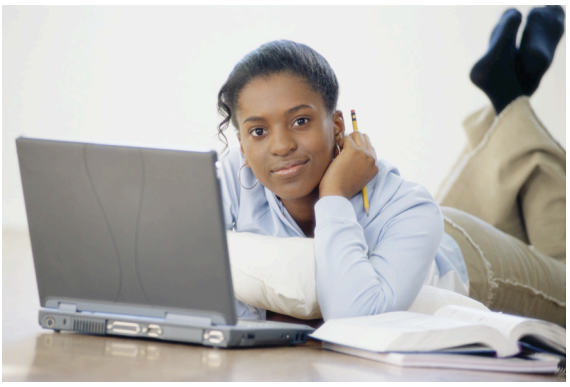

Youth Leadership Academy / Project GRAD Final Evaluation Report

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2005, with the support of Verizon Foundation, the National Urban Technology Center (Urban Tech) partnered with Project GRAD in the Newark Public schools to introduce a set of on-line instructional materials, The Youth Leadership Academy (YLA), into the educational experience of students attending Malcolm X Shabazz High School in the city of Newark, New Jersey. The goal was to enhance the life skills, motivation and educational achievement of these students in keys areas of their health, sexuality, educational planning and conflict resolution. The project was implemented in two phases: Phase I (pilot year) included 9th grade special education students in the Spring '06 semester (February- June, 2006); Phase II included both a second cohort of 9th grade students the following academic year plus a returning cohort of 10th graders who had experienced the YLA modules as 9th graders the previous year.

This Executive Summary highlights the major findings of a comprehensive evaluation conducted in the Spring of '06 on YLA's impact on project participants and their teachers. The evaluation had two primary objectives. First, to establish the extent to which YLA had a positive net effect on participants by comparing performance on a number of behavioral outcomes for project participants and a comparison group; and second, to implicate these findings within a framework that allowed one to understand the role implementation played in affecting outcomes. This second goal was arrived at by conducting an implementation study that focused on understanding program operation, staffing, training, and teacher fidelity to implementation.

The overall design for the outcomes evaluation was mixed-methods. This included a matched comparison treatment/control design and an action research component involving two teachers. The outcomes evaluation was guided by the five hypotheses presented below:

Hypothesis 1: In the *pre-test* measurements of the outcome variables, no significant difference is expected between students assigned to the treatment group and the control group.

Hypothesis 2: In all subsequent evaluations, students in the treatment group will score significantly higher than students in the control group on all of the outcome measures.

Hypothesis 3: Within the treatment group, the duration and/or intensity of participation in YLA will be positively related to outcomes such that students with longer and more intensive involvement in YLA will have more favorable outcomes on all measures than students with less duration and intensity of involvement.

Hypothesis 4: Students whose teachers who were more successful in integrating YLA into their subject areas will demonstrate a greater change in attitudes and behaviors than those whose teachers were less successful.

A number of data collection instruments were used in the study. These included: a) YLA Teacher Assessment of Students' Behaviors (TASSB), b) the YLA/Verizon Student Survey (YLASS), and c) the YLA Treatment Teacher Survey.

Findings: Project Implementation

- Initial planning for the project occurred in a meeting at the high school, organized by Project GRAD staff, which included the school principal, selected participants from the freshman teaching team, the media coordinator, the YLA staff and the project evaluators. There were a total of 29 scheduled teacher training sessions over the course of the program at the school.

- Among the major challenges to optimal implementation of the YLA curriculum were the following:
  - *Technology access and reliability*: Sometimes the Internet worked and sometimes it did not. Oftentimes the labs were scheduled for YLA teachers but the reservation was changed to accommodate another activity/class at the last moment.
  - *Scheduling of training:* Although the group training sessions at the beginning of the year were bountiful, they were short in duration and a few teachers did not attend regularly when the meetings were held at 7:30 am.
  - *Maintaining Teacher Morale and Commitment:* Beyond a primary focus on test preparation, a plethora of concurrent initiatives at the school made it difficult for teacher to prioritize the YLA initiative. Moreover, most of the participating treatment teachers were novices: All freshman team teachers were non-tenured teachers; (4) were Teach America – alternate route teachers; and (2) were new to teaching and MXS. This meant that most participants were still getting their "sea legs" as beginning teachers.
  - *Consistency in support from lead organizations for curriculum integration:* During the course of Urban Tech's in-class consultations, it became apparent that some of

the teachers were more comfortable with, and better equipped for, performing these tasks.

Findings: Student Outcomes

The key findings on student outcomes are discussed below. The findings are highly suggestive of YLA's positive influence on students' academic and non-academic behaviors. The general findings are presented first, followed by highlights of the results that are directly associated with each of the hypotheses that was tested.

- Nine out of the ten teachers reported that their students' level of engagement with YLA content was good, very good or excellent.

- Nine out of ten teachers rated students' time on task, use of technology, and interaction with peers during YLA lessons very positively.

- Most teachers agreed that YLA had the greatest impact on improving students' abilities to express themselves more appropriately, their willingness to discuss sensitive topics and their growing understanding of important life skills –and this was especially true of "special needs" students.

- The majority of teachers did not believe that most of their students had improved in those behavioral dispositions that clustered around peer relations and felt that most students still were reluctant to trust others.

Hypothesis 1: In the pre-test measurements of the outcome variables, no significant difference is expected between students assigned to the intervention group and the control group.

- Pretest data on student academic performance showed no statistically significant difference in the performance on the Grade Eighth Proficiency Assessment between YLA students and students in the control group; that is, at the start of the YLA intervention both groups were roughly equivalent in their academic performance in language arts and mathematics.

- Pretest data on student attitudes showed no statistically significant differences between the treatment (YLA students) and control group students for 11 of 13 behavioral measures on the TASSPB; that is, at the start of the YLA intervention, the treatment and control groups were roughly equivalent attitudinally.

Hypothesis 2: In all subsequent evaluations, students in the intervention group will score significantly higher than students in the control group on all of the program outcome measures.

- Academic performance: Two measures of achievement were examined; marking period grades in the subject areas and performance on the standard based assessment that is administered district-wide at the end of the ninth grade (for regular education students only). Results showed that while there was no difference between groups in first marking period grades, the final grades of YLA students were significantly higher than the control group.

Twice as many students in YLA (27.4%) as compared to the control students (13.5%) were likely to receive a grade of B or higher.

- Engagement/Motivation: Three proxy variables were used to measure engagement: absences, tardiness and suspension. Results showed that students in the control group were almost two and a half times more likely to be absent from classes than students who were in YLA. Moreover, students in the control group were reported as being tardy 5.72 times compared to 3.8 times for YLA students.

- In-Class Behavior: Proportionately more students who were involved with YLA were deemed by their teachers to have shown an improvement in all of the behavioral categories that were examined, than students who were part of the control group. The most striking differences between both groups of students were found for the behavioral categories representing motivation, staying on task and peer relationships.

- With respect to attentiveness in class, significant differences were found between students in the control and YLA students who on the baseline were rated as needing improvement in this area. Approximately 18% of students in the control group who at the start of the academic year were identified as needing to improve their attentiveness in class actually did so at the end of the academic year, in contrast to 58% of students who were part of YLA.

- Self-Concept. The analyses indicated no significant differences in improvement in personal efficacies and self-concept formation between the groups of students in the evaluation

sample. This observation held for the complete battery of items on the YLASS, as well as for individual subscales.

Hypothesis 3: Predicts that students who remained in YLA continuously should perform better on the outcome measures than either students who moved in and out of YLA or those who were never exposed to YLA insofar as the former would have been more intensively exposed to YLA's curriculum than the other two subgroups.

- The data shows that a significant association existed between intensity of exposure to YLA and final course grades earned. The probability of earning a grade of B or higher was much greater for students who remained in YLA for a complete year than for students who either crossed over between YLA and the control group, or who stayed in the control group for the complete year.

- Intensity of exposure to YLA was significantly associated with both absence and tardiness. First, students who spent a full academic year in YLA were likely to be absent from classes fewer times than those who spent only one semester or no time at all. Students who spent at least one semester in YLA tended to have fewer absences than students who were never exposed to the YLA curriculum. With respect to tardiness, students who remained in YLA for a full academic year had significantly fewer incidences of tardiness than crossover students and students who remained in the control group for the entire school year.
- No significant relationship was found to exist between level of exposure to YLA and improvement in self-concepts and personal efficacies.

Hypothesis 4: Students of teachers who were more successful in integrating YLA into their subject areas will demonstrate a greater change in attitudes and behaviors than those for which the opposite is true.

The final proposition attempts to link level of teacher implementation of YLA directly to student outcomes. Implementation varied greatly among the ten teachers; hence one may conjecture that this is likely to impact to some extent, observable differences among students in the treatment group. In testing this hypothesis, three subgroups were created: Students taught by teachers who we defined as strong implementers, teachers who were moderate implementers and teachers who were described as poor implementers.

- Analyses showed that the students who were instructed by teachers with the highest level of implementation had proportionately fewer suspensions than those who were taught by weak and moderate implementers.

- Students exposed to high levels of implementation were also less likely to have absences and incidences of tardiness than students whose teachers were either weak or moderate implementers. The average number of days students in the high implementing subgroup were absent and tardy was 7.43 and 2.85 respectively; for students in the moderate implementing group, 10.43 and 3.62 and those in the poor implementing group 8.77 and 5.93.

Conclusions, Discussion and Recommendations

A review of the data presented in this report leads to a few clear conclusions.

A. Foremost is the clear message about the challenges to implementing educational innovation in the contemporary school organization. The challenge here is twofold. In the first place, the school is a fragile organization held together, if tenuously, by a series of rigid routines related to scheduling that are not easily disrupted. Introducing any new development seems to conflict inevitably with the rigidity of routines; and when such conflict arises; the routines almost always win –handily. Secondly, the school is an arena in which a multiple (and ever additive) set of demands confront teachers on a daily basis –competing for their attention with certain overarching imperatives, e.g. improving student standardized test scores. Not only are the demands probably unreasonable for any human being, but most of the teachers we meet in these urban districts are all too frequently "new" teachers who are still in the first years of adjusting to their new professional role. They are a particularly vulnerable group of whom we are probably asking more – by way of adaptation – than is reasonable given their limited experience and tentative adjustment to their role. All of this suggests yet again how critical implementation planning is for projects such as this. Organizationally, the decks are stacked against any new initiative surviving, let alone, prospering in the complex school environment. Educational leaders need to do everything possible to "re-stack" the deck in favor of such new ventures.

B. What is extraordinary is that despite implementation circumstances that were less than optimal, implementation goals were achieved at a "basic" level for most participating teachers.

C. Having documented the challenges to project implementation, the student outcome results documented appear all the more remarkable. These evaluation findings show quite conclusively that despite uneven implementation, students exposed to the YLA curriculum developed greater motivation and gained in their pro-social behaviors as compared to a control group. The gains were both attitudinal and behavioral; and the greater the student exposure, the greater the gains. Moreover, YLA students performed better academically in their course work as evidenced by final grades than students in the comparison group.

D. While the findings are statistically conclusive, a number of questions remain. One set of questions relates to the connections among the findings themselves. The one area in which YLA participating students did not improve vis-à-vis the control group was in the area of perceived self-efficacy, self-esteem and self concept –precisely that area that is a primary focus of the YLA curriculum. To what extent is that finding a function of the limitation of our instruments, i.e. incomplete or flawed measures of self-esteem? A function of the relatively limited time frame of the treatment – a maximum of one year of fairly limited weekly exposure? Possible contaminating effects between the treatment and comparison groups? Some have suggested that projects such as YLA need a longer time to impact student attitudes and self-concepts.

Based on these conclusions, we would make the following recommendations for future program development and research:

A. Any future YLA project will require extended and intensive implementation planning that recognizes the need to "build in" adaptations to both the organizational realities of the school and work realities of teachers. This suggests that both building level administrators and teachers must be directly involved in implementation planning from the beginning. Moreover, it is likely that schools will need to evaluate realistically how a supplemental project such as YLA fits in more broadly with the instructional agenda of the school and its technological infrastructure. Everyone, including the teachers needs to understand where YLA fits within their priorities in a high demand environment.

B. An important part of that implementation planning will be an assessment of the instructional and professional development needs of participating teachers. Explicit attention will need to be focused on where in the curriculum YLA modules might contribute and, even more importantly, concrete training and support must be consistently provided to facilitate integration of this new YLA content into the regular curriculum. In this regard, careful planning needs to be undertaken to manage both the training and subsequent scheduling of teachers over a multi-year period (schools typically do not show a long term perspective in their daily operations).

C. Several kinds of more focused research inquiries need to undertaken by Urban Tech in the future, including the following:

i. More focused attention needs to be placed on the mechanisms through which YLA modules achieve their cognitive and pro-social behavioral outcomes. How critical is the technology *per se* to those outcomes? How critical is the immediate feedback and interactivity of the YLA modules. Answers to these sorts of questions will allow Urban Tech to focus its attention on the most critical components for student engagement and achievement.

ii. While there appears to be some connection between amount of exposure to YLA and student outcomes, more controlled studies need to be undertaken to allow us to identify the timing of YLA benefits. How much exposure is required for what kind of benefits?

iii. Further exploration needs to be undertaken of the puzzling lack of connection between student improvement in certain areas such as behavioral engagement with school and lack of improvement in area such as self-esteem development. Is the resistance of the self-esteem variable an artifact of our measurement error? An artifact of the limited time frame? Student characteristics/ some other variables?

iv. Finally, further research needs to be undertaken specifically focused on implementation issues. We identified some of the major challenges earlier. Urban Tech can make a major contribution to school reform movement generally as well as to its own efficacy by leading this kind of initiative to understand the etiology and conditions of educational reform in our schools.

I. BACKGROUND

Introduction

Urban Tech is a non-profit educational organization established in 1995. Using interactive information technology, it has developed on-line materials to help young people gain knowledge about basic life skills in order to enhance their decision-making in keys areas of their health, sexuality, educational planning and conflict resolution. The centerpiece of its education programming is the Youth Leadership Academy (YLA). YLA is comprehensive in the approach it embraces in helping youngsters between the ages of 10 and 18 become productive citizens and community leaders later in their lives. The program is designed to serve as a counterfoil to the negative consequences of high unemployment and dropout rates, teen pregnancy and other social ills. The YLA curriculum is offered as a stand alone in after-school programs and community-based settings and as an integrated component in core academic subjects. The primary objectives of YLA are to: Build leadership, Help students appreciate new media, Improve academic skills, Explore college and career options and Encourage community service.

In 2005, with the support of Verizon Foundation, Urban Tech partnered with Project GRAD in the Newark Public schools to introduce these materials into the educational experience of 50 9th grade special education students at Malcolm X Shabazz High School. The goal was to enhance the life skills, motivation and educational achievement of these students. The project was implemented in two phases: Phase I focused on 9th grade special education students in the Spring 06 semester (February - June, 2006) and was considered the pilot year; Phase II included both a second cohort of 9th grade students in the 2007 academic year, and a returning cohort of 10th graders who had experienced the YLA modules as 9th graders the previous year.

Three special education teachers at Shabazz were recruited to introduce YLA modules in Conflict Resolution and Budget and Banking into their Spring 2006 instruction. That instruction was delivered approximately once per week for a period of 50 minutes in the school's computer lab from early February until mid June, 2006. Teacher and student access to YLA materials was limited to the single hourly session weekly. In Year II, the group of treatment teachers was expanded to include seven additional teachers, the majority of which were in regular education. In the second year, YLA's curriculum was integrated into a broader range of subject matters, to include mathematics, English, the sciences, history and communication.

This report presents the findings from a comprehensive evaluation of YLA's impact on project participants and their teachers. The current research builds on an earlier formative evaluation that was conducted in the Spring of '06. There are two foci to the present evaluation study: First, to establish the extent to which YLA has had a positive net effect on participants by comparing performance on a number of behavioral outcomes for project participants and a comparison group; and second, to implicate these findings within a framework that allowed us to understand the role implementation played in affecting outcomes.

Profile of the Intervention School: Malcolm X Shabazz High School

Malcolm X Shabazz is a four-year comprehensive high school. The school has been part of Project GRAD/ Newark of Grad USA, a program that provides academic and social support for eligible graduates who plan on attending college. Project GRAD scholars are given $6000 toward their college expense. In 2006, the student body stood at 1,359; 95% of whom were African-Americans. The enrollment numbers for the ninth and tenth grades were 303 and 319 respectively. Approximately 17.4% of students were classified as having a disability. Table 1

provides a profile of the school on a number of student and performance indicators. In 2006, the student mobility rate was 30.4%; which was three times higher than the state average of 10.2%. The school had a suspension rate of 13.9% in 2006, which was comparable with the state average (14.0%). Data for suspension have shown a steady decline over a three-year period. In 2004, 17.9% of students were suspended, in 2005 16.5%. In both years, the school's suspension rate was higher than the state average (state averages were 14.9 and 13.6 for 2004 and 2005 respectively). Attendance rate in 2006 was 86.2% below the state average of 93.6%.

Table 1:
Profile of Malcolm X Shabazz High School: 2006

Student Information and Performance Indicators	Percentage
Student Mobility rate	30.4%
Student with Disabilities	17.4%
Students taking the SAT	62.0%
Attendance Rate	86.2%
Graduation Rate	85.8%
Four-Year College Plans	21.6%
Student Suspension	13.9%
Eleventh Graders Proficient in Language Arts	45.5%
Eleventh graders Proficient in Mathematics	18.4%

The school has failed to make adequate yearly progress for four years, and has been classified as "in need of improvement". Performance on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) in 2006 failed to meet the state standards in Language Arts (79% proficient) and Mathematics (64% proficient). In 2006, the percentage of students who were proficient in Language Arts was 45.4% and in mathematics 18.4%. Approximately 86% of seniors in 2006 successfully graduated; with less than one in four planning to attend a four year college.

II. EVALUATION DESIGN

Evaluation Goals and Objectives

The evaluation of the YLA/Project GRAD project at Shabazz had three inter-related objectives: 1) To determine the degree to which the treatment teachers successfully integrated YLA into the subjects that they taught, that is, the degree and nature of program implementation; 2) to measure the net impact of YLA on students' attitudes, in-class behaviors, levels of engagement with school and academic outcomes; and 3) to identify the pre-conditions as well as the moderating or mediating factors (including implementation and organizational as well as individual factors) that explain how projects such as YLA are successfully integrated into the core content areas and hence subsequently influence student outcomes. The evaluation questions were informed by both the project activities that were delineated in the funded proposal, as well as the extant body of findings on the factors that influence character development in young adolescents.

Assessing Project Implementation

The implementation study of YLA provided invaluable information for understanding the nature and extent of program implementation, and in particular, identifying challenges that could be addressed in the course of the project. The implementation study addressed the following questions: 1) How was YLA rolled out in the school? Subsumed under this question were issues related to: a) The process used to foster the involvement of teachers; b) the quality of planning activities to include the pre-planning stages; c) the internal resources that Urban Tech, Project GRAD and the school committed to the project; and d) the communication networks that were

established between the major stakeholders for example, meetings. 2) How did the program operate in the school? Implicit in this question were issues related to: a) Staffing and the ability to train and maximize teachers' willingness to integrate YLA in their teaching; b) number of student and teacher participants and description of participants; c) intensity of the intervention for students and the level of teacher fidelity to implementation.

Schools are fluid environments, as noted in the implementation literature. Irrespective of the quality of the planning for implementing an intervention, any number of intervening and unanticipated factors can arise. Delineating these factors was important to understanding YLA's impact. To that end, the process evaluation sought to address the following questions with respect to these unanticipated issues: 1) What problems were encountered in implementing the core objectives and how were they resolved? 2) What challenges with respect to internal capacity did Urban Tech and Project GRAD confront with respect to these problems, and were capacity issues resolved satisfactorily?

The process evaluation began during the first year and continued throughout the second year. The evaluation team continued to monitor implementation beyond year 1. The team attended meetings with teachers and project staff. A multiplicity of data collection techniques were employed during the process evaluation. First, information was obtained on program participants, program activities to include the number of training sessions provided to teachers, the YLA modules that were used, the number of lessons taught using the modules and the YLA features that were employed during the delivery of the lesson. Second, with respect to the collection of data to answer the process evaluation questions that we posed earlier in this section, Table 2 depicts the primary data collection strategies that were used.

As is evident from the Table, the implementation/process study drew upon a number of data sources to include Urban Tech staff, Project GRAD staff and teachers. Data strategies included an implementation instrument that was completed by all teachers in the treatment group, and open-ended responses from Urban Tech and Project GRAD staff.

Table 2:
Process Evaluation Questions and Data Sources

Process Evaluation Questions	Data Sources
What process was used by YLA/Project GRAD to foster involvement with major stakeholders?	Urban Tech and Project GRAD Staff
What was the quality of the planning that was undertaken?	Urban Tech, Project GRAD Staff & Meetings
What is the level of internal resources committed to the project by Urban Technology, Project GRAD and the school?	Urban Tech, Project GRAD Staff & Teacher Implementation Survey
What were the mechanisms for communicating with major stakeholders?	Urban Tech, Project GRAD Staff & Meetings
What were the recruitment strategies for teachers- how were teachers selected?	Project GRAD Staff
What were the challenges faced?	Urban Tech, Project GRAD Staff, Meetings, Teacher Implementation Survey

Assessing Program Outcomes and Moderating Variables

The research propositions and logic model presented below reflect the theoretical approach to evaluating YLA project outcomes at Shabazz. The overall design for the outcomes evaluation was mixed-methods. This included a matched comparison treatment/control design and an action research component involving two teachers. The outcomes evaluation was conducted in two phases. The first occurred during the pilot year. The findings from the

formative evaluation that was conducted in the pilot year were used to refine the data collection instruments, as well as to assist in the redesign of the project during Year 2.

The Evaluation's Logic Model

The logic model in Figure 1 identifies the assumptions that inform the relationship between the evaluation focus and the project goals and activities. Inherent in the model are the following assumptions: 1) Adolescents' academic and non-academic behaviors are directly impacted by their pro-social behaviors. These are non-academic behaviors that have a direct influence on academic behaviors. 2) Long-term behaviors such as going on to college, developing and maintaining a community esprit de corps are also viewed as being directly impacted by such pro-social skills as developing a healthy self esteem, personal efficacy and academic self concept. 3) A recursive relationship is posited to exist between the short-term academic and non-academic behaviors and the development of pro-social skills.

These student-level outcomes are viewed as being directly influenced by YLA program components. However, we conjecture that a number of variables are likely to moderate that influence. These include personal factors such as gender, and prior academic performance; program characteristics such as the quality of teacher training, the technology infrastructure supporting YLA, the appropriateness of the modules to student interest and the 9th grade curriculum; and the ease with which teachers are able to integrate the modules into their lesson plans. Finally, fidelity of implementation is identified as being a critical factor that will influence how successful YLA will be in meeting its objectives.

Research Hypotheses/Propositions

The project's logic model and the design of the program intervention allowed for the development of several research propositions that guided the evaluation. The fundamental assumption of the intervention model is that YLA with its multi-media approach, when successfully integrated into the core subject areas will result in significant changes in adolescents' attitudes, decision-making around life skills issues, critical non-academic classroom behaviors such as attentiveness, volunteering in class, getting along with peers, school engagement (suspension, attendance, tardiness) and academic performance. Therefore, the program expects that those adolescents who participate will demonstrate significant improvements in the measures of the desired outcomes as compared to a non-participating control group. The following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: In the *pre-test* measurements of the outcome variables, no significant difference is expected between students assigned to the treatment group and the control group.

Hypothesis 2: In all subsequent evaluations, students in the treatment group will score significantly higher than students in the control group on all of the outcome measures.

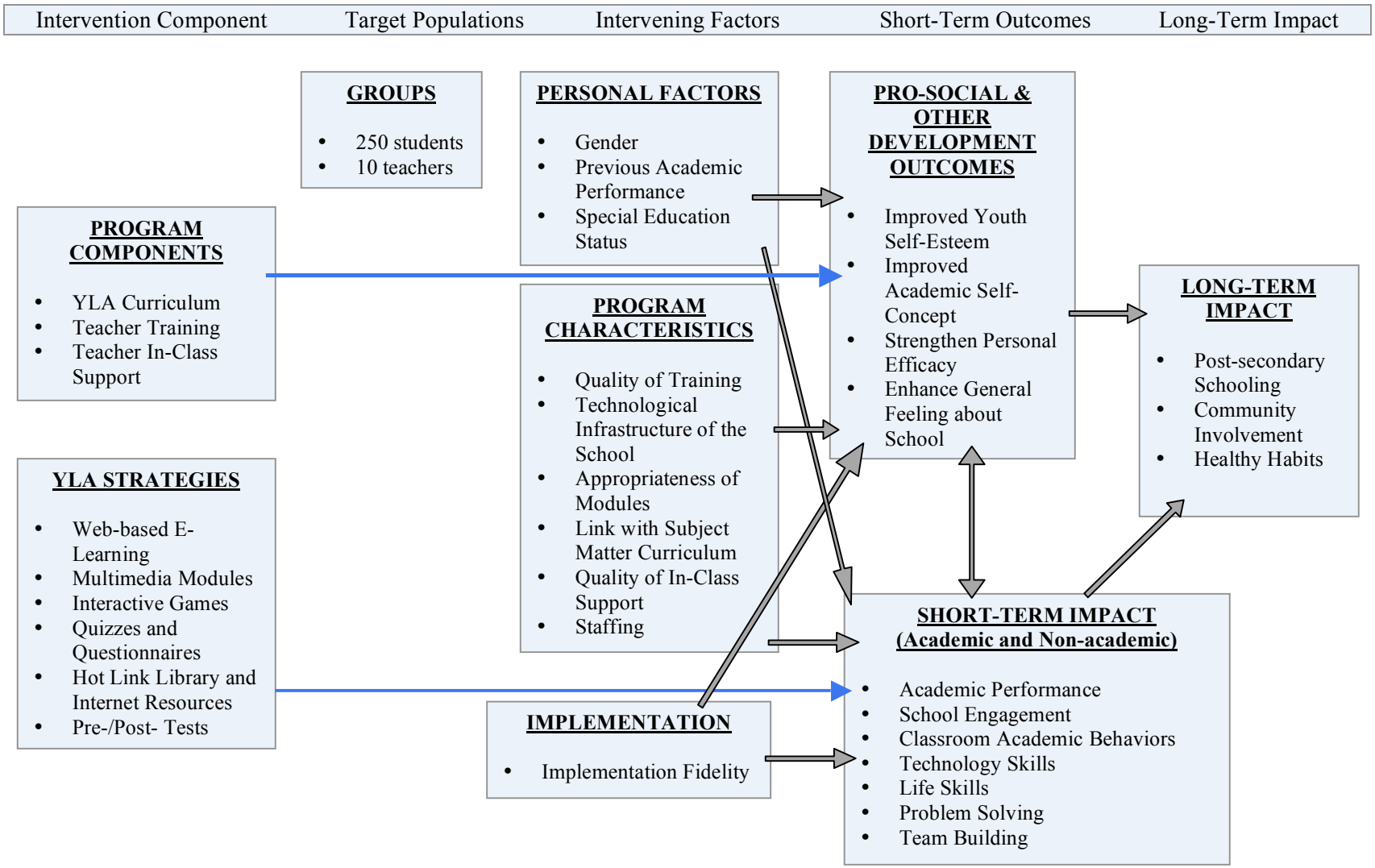
Hypothesis 3: Within the treatment group, the duration and/or intensity of participation in YLA will be positively related to outcomes such that students with longer and more intensive involvement in YLA will have more favorable outcomes on all measures than students with less duration and intensity of involvement.

Hypothesis 4: Students whose teachers who were more successful in integrating YLA into their subject areas will demonstrate a greater change in attitudes and behaviors (academic and non-academic) than those whose teachers were less successful.

Study Design - Treatment/Comparison Group

YLA's evaluation was based on a treatment/comparison matched group design in which the treatment and control classrooms were drawn from the ninth and tenth grades in the school. While randomizing classrooms would have been the preferred design, the following factors influenced the used of a matched comparison design. First, the ninth grade is organized into teams that are scheduled on a block basis. Second, the confluence of both scheduling and organizational imperatives made randomization of students difficult. While we would have preferred to have randomly selected a team to work with, the school administration selected the ninth grade team that would be involved with the project. The introduction of a non-random process in the selection of the team created the potential for possible bias in the study. Moreover, drawing the comparison classrooms from Shabazz, created some additional threats to the internal validity of the study. The most important of which was the spillover or the crossover effects. The spillover between treatment and control groups at the ninth grade was about 13%. Approximately 23 students who were originally in the treatment group during the first semester ended up in the control group during the second semester; and 13 students who were in the control group during the first semester became part of the treatment group during the second semester. Although the crossover rate was relatively low, we had additional concerns about contaminating effects. While none of YLA strategies spilled over to the control group at least in the ninth grade, there are questions on the extent to which control students and teachers' awareness of YLA at this grade level might have predisposed them to behavior differently on the outcome measures.

Figure 1:
Logic Model Used to Guide YLA Evaluation



However, the careful matching of the comparison classroom helped to minimize potential threats to the validity of the study, although the absence of randomization meant that possible biases cannot be completely ruled out. The following procedures were used to select the comparison teachers: (i) the content areas in which YLA was being integrated were identified; (ii) an identification of all other possible sections of the courses not being taught by a YLA teacher was done; and (iii) among the non-YLA teachers who were qualified to serve as controls, invitation to participate in the evaluation study was solicited. Only those teachers who gave informed consent were included in the study.

Third, in the tenth grade, only special education students were involved with the project. The special education teachers served as their own controls - that is YLA was used during designated periods only, with other periods serving as controls (See Table 3 for design). However, the special education population was a relatively small one; students might have served as controls in one subject, but were in YLA for another subject. There were only 15 special education students who were not exposed to YLA in any of the subjects that they took. Fourth, for the overall sample, power was set at .80; the effect size was .5, and alpha .05

Table 3:
Profile of Treatment and Comparison Groups

Grade	# of teachers in treatment group	# of teachers in control group	Subjects in which YLA was integrated	# of students in treatment group	# of students in control group	Spillover
Ninth Grade	6	6	Comprehensive Science, African American History, World Cultures, English	175	101	13%
Tenth Grade Special Education	4	Not applicable	Algebra1, English & Public Speaking	50	18*	Not applicable

Data Analysis for Outcomes Evaluation

One of the objectives of the outcomes evaluation is to measure the net impact of YLA on students' values and attitudes, knowledge, intentions and behaviors. This required a research design that compared the changes in students' attitudes and behaviors at the end of the intervention, and which isolated these changes from other intervening and mediating factors. This design was partly fulfilled by having students in the intervention and control groups and measuring both on the same outcomes indicators.

YLA participants and students from the control group were measured at the start of the school year and this information was treated as the baseline for future comparisons and evaluation of the successes of the intervention. A graphical representation of the data analysis model is presented in Figure 2. O1 through O4 represent the outcome measures. O1 represents improvement in academics; O2 improvement in attendance, suspension and tardiness; O3, improvement in classroom behaviors and O4 improvements in self concept.[1] The spillover effect discussed previously is represented by the line linking the YLA treatment group and the control group. In order to estimate more reliably the impact of YLA, a new variable, membership, was created. This variable had four levels: Group 4 represented students who remained in YLA for the entire school year; Group 3, was used to designate students who were in the control group during the first semester but became part of the treatment in the spring semester; Group 2, were students for whom the reverse was true, that is they were in YLA during the first semester and became part of the control group in the Spring semester and Group 1, were students who remained in the control group throughout the school year.

[1] 'O" designates outcome.

Pre-test or baseline analysis

Independent difference tests between those selected for the intervention and those selected for the control group were conducted. This involved analysis of the differences across these two groups on the outcome measures in Figure 1. Independent sample Chi-Square tests were run on all the pretest classroom behavioral measures (O3). Independent T-tests were also used to test for initial differences in academic performance (O1) and self esteem measures (O4). Eighth grade performance data on the state's standard based assessment (The Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment) were used as the pretest measure for O1.

Post-test (12 months)

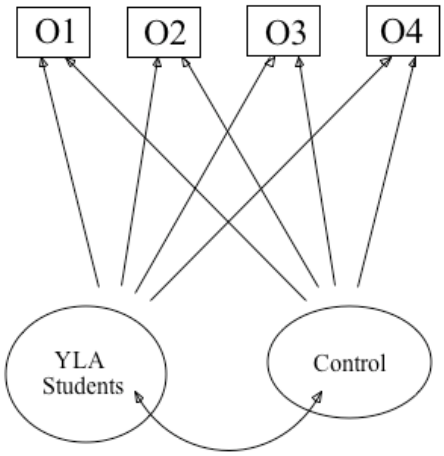
Univariate Analysis of Variance with two main effects (Treatment Status and Gender) and an interaction effect representing the combined influence of both variables was employed in testing hypotheses where the outcome variables were on an interval scale. For outcome variables that were measured on a nominal scale, Chi Square tests were the primary analytical tools that were used. For outcome variables where significant baseline differences were noted, these baseline data were used as control variables in the analyses of data gathered at the end of the academic year.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Data were collected using the YLA Teacher Assessment of Students' Behaviors (TASSB), the Youth Leadership Academy/Verizon Student Survey (YLASS), and the YLA Treatment Teacher Survey (TTS). The TASSB is a short rating form consisting of 13 behavioral categories. The form is administered in a pre/posttest format. The pretest version, which serves

as the baseline measure, asks teachers (both treatment and control) to indicate for each of the behavioral category whether a given student needs to demonstrate improvement. This l3-item form (Yes-No response format) includes categories such as "turning in homework on time"; "volunteering in class"; and "motivation to learn". These behavioral categories have been used in other evaluation studies to include the federally funded 21st CCLC After-School Program. The posttest TASSB requires teachers to rate the extent to which students have shown improvement in each of the category. Four additional items are included on the posttest version of the TASSB. These items are: first and final marking period grades; attendance; tardiness and suspension. Cronbach's alpha for the pretest and the posttest are .87 and .92 respectively.[1]

Figure 2:
Data Analytical Approach Used to Measure YLA's Impact



[1] Cronbach's alpha is calculated only for the 13 behavioral categories.

The YLASS student survey consists of 31 four-point likert scaled items that measure students' academic self concept, general self esteem, personal efficacy and general feelings about school. The personal efficacy subscale is based on YLA's self-discovery module and consists of statements such as: "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough"; and "It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals". Cronbach's alpha for the pretest was .77 and for the posttest .830. The means and standard deviations for the pre and posttest were 92.95 (standard deviation 8.721) and 94.31 (standard deviation 10.081) respectively. The correlation between the pre and posttest YLASS measures was .621.

All 10 teachers in the treatment group were asked to complete the TTS. The TTS is a comprehensive measure of implementation and addresses the following issues: a) basic demographic; b) general feelings about the YLA curriculum; c) modules and YLA features used; d) rating of the modules; e) integration of YLA into academic subjects; d) implementation challenges; e) student behaviors during YLA lessons and f) student behavioral changes that are directly linked to YLA. The TTS has both open-ended and closed questions. In total, there are 26 items on the TTS.

In addition, two teachers engaged in structured reflections of their involvement in the project. The evaluation team met bi-weekly with the two teachers until the teachers became comfortable with the action research process. The teachers' reflections took the form of journaling, and are narratively presented in the report in their authentic voices. All teachers in the study were compensated for each evaluation task that they undertook.

III. EVALUATION FINDINGS: THE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY (PROCESS EVALUATION)

Introduction

The evaluation literature is fairly consistent in its findings on the important role that implementation plays in influencing the extent to which program goals and objectives are successfully achieved. Each stage of implementation, from the pre-planning phase to the actual carrying out of program activities, is crucial to understanding how desired effects are attained. Knowing how faithful individuals were in implementing a program, the unforeseen obstacles and challenges that arose during implementation and their resolution are key to contextualizing the outcome results. This section of the report examines how implementation occurred in the school, the level of teacher fidelity to the implementation process, their assessments of the modules that they worked with and their assessments of student learning behaviors during YLA classes.

Overview of Planning and Implementing YLA

Getting Started: Initial planning for the project occurred in a meeting at Shabazz H.S. organized by Project GRAD staff and including the MXS Principal, selected participants from the freshman teaching team, the media coordinator, the YLA staff and the project evaluators. Project GRAD served as the liaison between Urban Tech and Malcolm X Shabazz's administration and staff. Project GRAD scheduled monitoring with Verizon, provided stipends for participants and refreshments at major meetings. The Project GRAD director attended all major meetings, kept lines of communications open between the school and funders, and assigned a Project GRAD staff member to serve as overall administrative coordinator for the

project. The coordinator ensured that concerns were addressed, training occurred, classes and teachers were correctly scheduled, resources were distributed to participants, surveys and questionnaires were distributed and completed, all requested research data was gathered and submitted to the researchers, computer services were provided and questions addressed. The project coordinator selected the control teachers based on the same grades and subject areas as the YLA participating teachers. In the first year, control teachers came from a matched high school, Central High that was not participating in the YLA project. In the second year, several of the participating teachers had separate YLA and Control classes during different blocks so as not to require an "outside the building" control group.

The coordinator recruited participating teachers from among the special education staff in the first year and, in addition, the freshman academy staff, in the second year. Teachers were subsequently assigned by the principal to participate in the YLA project – although the principal did not meet with participating teachers herself nor provided any formal indication of the school's commitment to the YLA program.

The coordinator served as program liaison to the department chairpersons and the vice principals. She worked cooperatively with the vice principal for scheduling to enable teachers to remain with the same students over several scheduled blocks during the first and second years so as to avoid random movement between treatment and control group every six weeks and to ensure continuity of treatment student enrollment in YLA classes. YLA project participation was not always a primary desideratum of scheduling, however; and several scheduling conundrums occurred during the year that interrupted smooth functioning of the project. The connection of the project coordinator to the second vice-principal –the Dean of the Freshman Academy --- was both less formal and intensive. There was no formal involvement in the YLA program; nor was

this vice principal asked to serve any supportive function with the administration and implementation of YLA.

Urban Tech's Training Role

There were a total of 29 scheduled teacher training sessions over the course of the program at Shabazz:

2005-2006 school year: Meeting/training sessions held with the Special Education teacher cohort (group training sessions, 90 minutes each): 12/13/05, 12/15/06, 1/17/06, 1/26/06, 2/2/06, 2/7/06, 2/16/06, 2/23/06; In–class consultation: 3/22/06. End of the year visits: 5/03/06, 5/09/06

Special post-year re-cap and group training sessions for fall 2006 general education teachers held: 6/19/06, 6/20/06, 6/21/06, 2 hour sessions each day.

2006-2007 school year: Meeting/training sessions held with the general education teacher cohort (group training sessions; 45 minutes each): 9/5/06, 9/11/06, 9/13/06, 9/18/06, 9/25/06, 10/02/06, 10/04/06, 10/11/06, 10/16/06, 10/24/06. In-class consultations: 11/28/06, 2/22/07, 2/26/07, 3/1/07, 4/3/07.

In the group workshops teachers reviewed the YLA curriculum, performed some classroom-style modeling exercises, and discussed ways to integrate it with their academic subjects. Teachers were encouraged to, and ultimately some did, devote common prep/planning

time with each other to coordinate lesson plans and teaching activities so that students common to each teacher would receive a continuum of non-redundant YLA integrated learning content. In the one-on-one consultations, which were coordinated with the Project GRAD project coordinator, YLA staff spent anywhere from a few minutes to half a block period answering questions or providing technical support information related to YLA. In addition, there were a total of 5 one-on-one visits conducted beyond the training sessions.

Implementation Challenges

Among the major challenges to optimal implementation of the YLA curriculum were the following:

- *Technology access and reliability*: Sometimes the Internet worked and sometimes it did not. Sometimes the Urban Tech website worked properly and other times it did not. Oftentimes the labs were scheduled for YLA teachers but the reservation was changed to accommodate another activity/class at the last moment. While never fully addressed, The Urban Tech website issue was identified as a caching issue and resolved at the district level and scheduling of the lab seemed to smooth out during the second half of the year via enhanced communication between the building IT coordinator and the YLA project coordinator.

- *Scheduling of training*: Although the group training sessions at the beginning of the year were bountiful, they were short in duration and a few teachers did not attend regularly when the meetings were held at 7:30 am. The group training sessions were re-scheduled to the afternoon and for designated P.D. (Professional Development) days, though again,

attendance by teachers was sometimes spotty due to conflicting district requirements for P.D. and competing program participation requirements on the teachers.

- *Maintaining Teacher Morale and Commitment*: The stipend of $400 per semester was not motivating enough to inspire or sustain a high level commitment in light of a lack of definable building administrative support. Beyond a primary focus, which was on test preparation, a plethora of concurrent initiatives at the school made it difficult for teachers to prioritize the YLA initiative. Moreover, most of the participating treatment teachers were novices: All freshman team teachers were non-tenured teachers; (4) were Teach America – alternate route teachers; and (2) were new to teaching and at the school. This meant that most participants were still getting their "sea legs" as beginning teachers. Complicating matters further, a verbal altercation between a teacher and a member of the implementing team produced adverse effects on morale in a manner that metastasized through some, though not all, of the teaching cohort. The project coordinator helped to address that particular issue with the teacher involved and worked through the issue with other staff who reacted negatively to the program as a result. Ultimately all of the participating teachers remained with the program through its completion.

- *Consistency in support from lead organizations for curriculum integration*: Urban Tech was able to demonstrate the program components as it had designed them, and did train teachers in the effective use of the tools to complement their academic instruction. Once the teachers were familiar with the material, they were instructed that it was incumbent on them to integrate it with their classroom activities and routines. During the course of Urban Tech's

in-class consultations, it became apparent that some of the teachers were more comfortable with, and better equipped for, performing these tasks.

Teacher Self-Reports of YLA Implementation

All 10 treatment teachers completed the TTS. Among the 10 teachers, only one taught most of the lessons contained in a module. Most taught part of a module that is at least half of the lessons in a module; while two teachers stated that they taught less than half of the lessons in a module. Teachers were provided the option to select the YLA module that they would prefer to work with. For all, the choice of module (s) implemented was influenced by the perceived ease of integrating the module's content into the subject taught. Information provided by the teachers indicates that with the exception of 3 teachers, most attempted to implement more than one of the YLA modules. The most extensively used modules according to the data contained in Table 4, were Conflict Resolution (used by eight teachers), and Self- Discovery, Budget and Banking, and Community Involvement (all used by four teachers respectively). However, the modules that were most intensively used, that is they had the most lessons taught by the teachers were Self Discovery and Budget and Banking. Generally, teachers tended to use most of the YLA features with the exception of the pre/post quizzes, as can be seen from the information reported in Table 4.

Teachers' Assessments of YLA Modules

The teachers were asked to reflect upon the module that they worked most extensively with, and to provide an assessment of the module in several areas to include content, their

comfort level in teaching the module, student engagement with the content, and ease of integrating the module with their subject matter content and lesson plans. Six out of the 10 teachers indicated that they were comfortable in teaching the primary module that they used (See Figure 3). While none of the teachers stated that they were uncomfortable, four noted that they were only somewhat comfortable. Not surprisingly, the teachers who were only somewhat comfortable were those teachers who had implemented less than half of the lessons in a module.

Table 4:
YLA Modules Implemented by Teachers During the Intervention

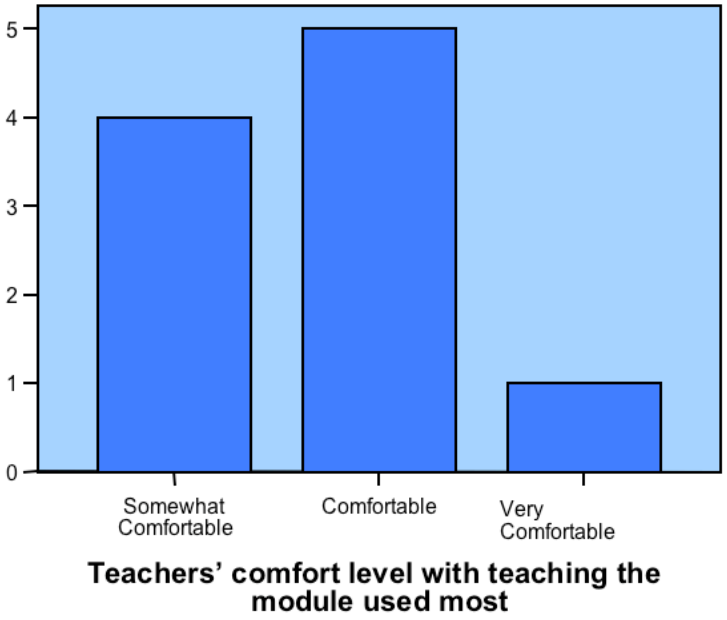
Module	Number of Teachers Implementing the Module	Number of Lessons Taught (Expressed as a range)[1]	YLA Features Most Used with Module
Self Discovery	4	19 - 1	On the Reel, Break it Down, Write to the Point, We Got Game, Final Answer
Budget and Banking	4	16 - 1	On the Reel, Break it Down, Write to the Point, We Got Game, Final Answer
Conflict Resolution	8	5 – 2	On the Reel, Break it Down, Write to the Point, We Got Game, Final Answer
Community Involvement	4	3 – 2	On the Reel, Break it Down, Write to the Point, We Got Game, Final Answer
STD and AIDS Awareness	2	3 – 1	On the Reel, We Got Game, Final Answer
Personal Appearance	1	3	On the Reel, Break it Down, Write to the Point, We Got Game, Final Answer
Educational Planning	1	2	On the Reel, Break it Down, We Got Game,
Substance Abuse Prevention	1	2	On the Reel, Break it Down, Write to the Point, We Got Game

Not-with-standing the fact that some teachers felt only somewhat comfortable with the modules, as can be seen from Figure 4, teachers rated the YLA content very highly. Seven out of the 10 teachers rated the content of the modules as being either very good, or excellent, and

[1] The range represents the greatest and least number of lessons taught.

three good. To what degree were teachers able to integrate YLA into the subjects that they taught; and how easy was it to develop lesson plans that addressed in tandem both the instructional objectives associated with YLA and the curricular objectives of their subjects? Figures 5 and 6 display the findings with respect to both issues.

Figure 3:
Teacher Reported Comfort Level with YLA Modules



It is clear that teachers experienced varying degrees of success in both integrating YLA content into their subjects, as well as in developing lesson plans that accommodated both their specific subject matter content and YLA objectives. Of the three teachers in Figure 5 who reported that they were unsuccessful in infusing YLA into their respective disciplines, two taught English and one Algebra. Two of these teachers indicated that they used YLA minimally. All three teachers were relatively new to the school and to the ninth grade; and in two of these cases

the teachers were involved in implementing several other projects, for example, a test tutorial program, a curricular mapping project, problem-based learning and a technology grant funded by Hewlett Packard.

Indeed, one of these young teachers, in addition to her involvement with YLA, was also responsible for implementing six other programs.

Figure 4:
Teachers' Rating of Module Content

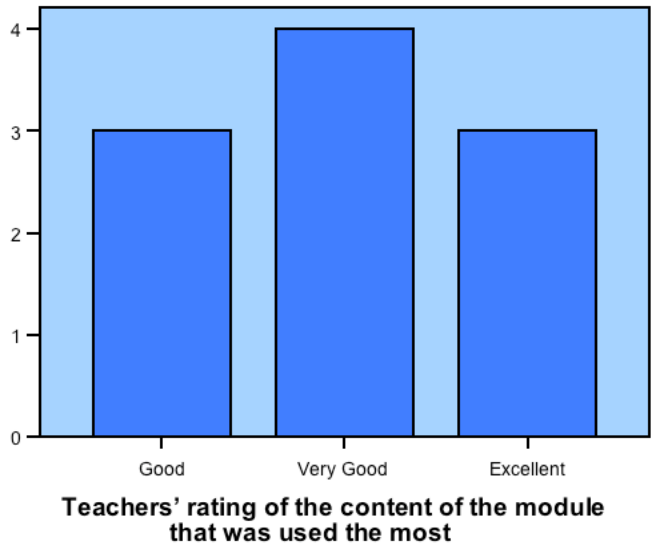


Figure 5:
Teachers Reported Success
In Infusing YLA in Subject

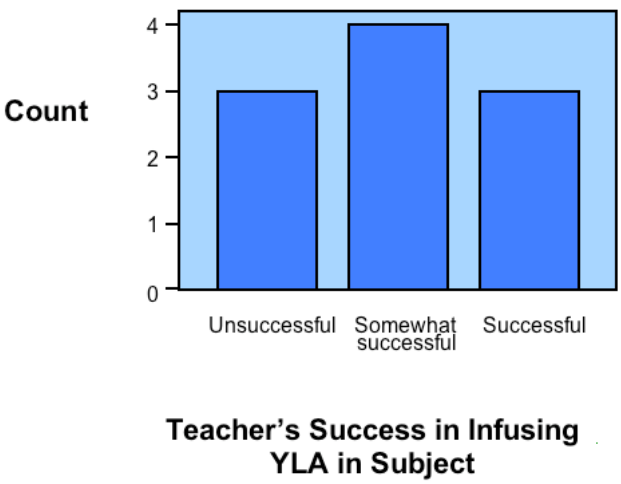
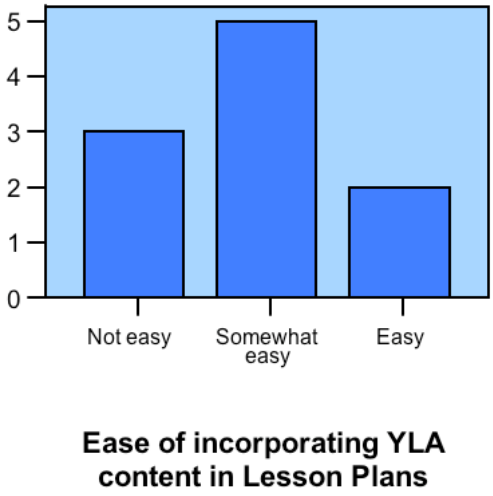


Figure 6:
Teachers' Reported
Ease of Incorporating YLA
Objectives in their Lesson Plans



On the whole, teachers experienced difficulties with incorporating YLA into their lesson plans. Only two teachers found it relatively easy to merge YLA with their lesson plans. In some instances, teachers noted that the time lag that existed between when their lesson plans were developed and when they begun their involvement with YLA contributed to these difficulties. In the absence of instructional support from a person knowledgeable about curricular integration, teachers were unsure as to how to modify their lesson plans to accommodate YLA objectives. As we noted, many of these teachers were beginning teachers with very little ninth and tenth grade teaching experience; a point borne out by the fact that the two teachers who found integration to be non-problematic had more than three years teaching at their respective grade levels.

In order to more fully understand the issues the teachers confronted with the integration process they were asked to rank order the three most important challenges faced, and to indicate the degree to which they were able to successfully surmount these challenges. According to the teachers, the most pressing issue was one of time management, a finding that is not totally surprising given all that has been written on the pressures that teachers face in accomplishing all that they need to do within the allotted instructional time. Nine out of the 10 teachers noted that this was the single most important issue in implementing YLA. Five of these teachers felt however, that they were successful, to some extent, in resolving this problem. In addition to time, difficulties associated with the school's technological infrastructure were cited as major barriers during implementation. For one, access to the computer labs was a source of frustration for the teachers as well as their students; and so was finding someone to fix technology glitches. However, the teachers noted that both problems were successfully resolved.

In spite of the challenges, it is reasonable to pose the question: What pedagogical benefits, if any, did the teachers derive from their involvement with the project; and what is the likelihood that some of these benefits may spill over into future teaching activities? All of the teachers felt that their involvement with the project had provided them with new ideas on how to enhance student learning. Six teachers stated that they would be using what they learned from the project in the future, three teachers were unsure if they would, and only two teachers stated that they would not. (These two teachers were first year teachers to both the grade and the school, and both had the lowest level of implementation of the project among all the teachers in the study.)

IV. STUDENT OUTCOMES

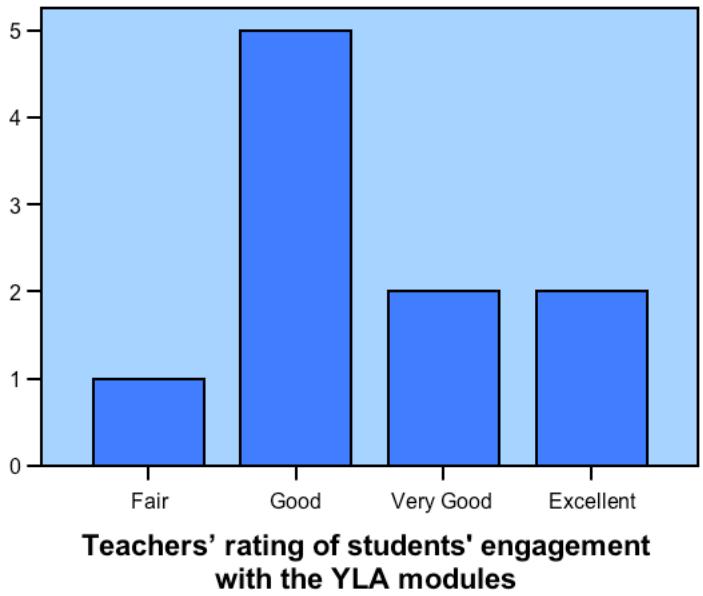
Introduction

The net impact of YLA on student academic and pro-social behaviors is determined by testing the assumptions that are embodied in the four propositions/hypotheses that were discussed previously. However, before establishing whether or not the propositions are in fact supported by the findings, we were interested in understanding students' learning behaviors during a YLA lesson. To that end, this section of the report is devoted to the presentation and analysis of two sets of data. First, teachers' evaluations of the learning behaviors and changes that have occurred in their students that they directly attribute to YLA are discussed. This is followed by the results of the statistical analyses that allowed us to link participation in the treatment to outcomes measures. This second discussion is schematically organized around each of the hypotheses.

Teachers' Perspectives on Students' Learning Behaviors during YLA Instruction

Teachers were asked to rate students' overall level of engagement and specific learning behaviors during the delivery of lessons in which YLA was integrated. With respect to student engagement, nine out of the 10 teachers reported that their students' level of engagement with YLA content was good, very good or excellent. Only 1 teacher, felt that students' interest was fair. This teacher reported minimal familiarity with the modules that she used, and while she attempted to teach several modules, actually taught fewer than three lessons in any given module.

Figure 6:
Teachers' Rating of Students' Engagement Levels with YLA Modules



In order for learning to occur in ways that are meaningful, students must demonstrate certain 'critical behaviors' that are conducive to cognition. Teachers in the intervention were asked to reflect upon and provide feedback on students' learning behaviors during the delivery of YLA. The results from their feedback are summarized in Table 5. The data in the columns represent the number of teachers who gave a rating of poor, fair, good or excellent to the learning behavior.

Table 5:
Teacher Ratings of Students' Learning Behaviors

Learning Behavior	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Time on Task	0	1	8	1
Motivation to Achieve	0	5	2	3
Interaction with Peers	0	1	7	2
Expression of Feelings	1	1	8	0
Classroom Participation	0	3	6	1
Ability to Cross-Transfer Knowledge	0	2	7	1
Ability to form Relationship among Ideas	0	4	4	2
Ability to Conceive Different Vantage Points	1	1	8	0
Ability to Sustain Focus	0	4	6	0
Ability to Think Critically	0	5	5	0
Ability to Follow Directions	0	5	5	0
Ability to Problem Solve	0	6	4	0
Ability to use Language more effectively	0	5	4	1
Ability to use Technology more effectively	0	0	7	3

Students' time on task, use of technology, and interaction with peers during YLA lessons were behaviors that were rated very positively by almost all (9) teachers. Learning behaviors rated less favorably in comparison to the previous three behaviors, were expression of feelings, ability to conceive different vantage points, and ability to problem solve. However, it should be pointed out that only in the area of problem solving were more teachers inclined to give a fair as opposed to a good or excellent rating.

Teacher Assessment of Specific Character Development Related Behaviors Enhanced By YLA

Our next set of analyses of student outcomes center on those behaviors that are inextricably associated with the assumptions that inform the curricular and pedagogical approaches embodied in the YLA modules. Some of these assumptions, such as willingness to trust others, understanding the importance of good character, ability to get along with others, ability to conceive different vantage points, ability to deal and solve conflicts, have been found to be salient to the development of healthy character traits in young adolescents and are supported by the wide body of work evident in the field on character development. All the teachers implementing YLA were asked to reflect on these behaviors and to indicate whether these behaviors, as a direct consequence of YLA, had improved for most of their students. Results from the teacher responses are summarized and presented in Table 6.

Behaviors that elicited the greatest congruency among teachers with respect to improvement for most students were those that focused on students' abilities to express themselves more appropriately, their willingness to discuss sensitive topics and their growing understanding of important life skills. Among the special education teachers in particular, all four felt that YLA played an important contributory role in students' being able to express themselves more appropriately and understanding of life skills. The majority of teachers did not believe that most of their students had improved in those behavioral dispositions that clustered around peer relations; and nine out of the 10 teachers felt that most students still were reluctant to trust others. However, at least four out of the ten teachers felt that as a function of being exposed to YLA, most students had developed an understanding of the importance of good character traits, the ability to conceive different vantage points when discussing an issue, had

improved in their interactions in group settings and had improved in their ability to be more constructive in conflict situations.

Teachers' open-ended comments, abstracted and presented on page 41, allow us to further understand their perspectives on YLA's contribution to the development of students' cognition and life skills. These comments capture the teachers' impressions regarding the appeal that YLA had for their students; and ways in which they as purveyors of information were able to use YLA to teach their subject matter content. The comments in the chart are presented for each of the major content areas in which YLA was integrated. The chart also lists the YLA module that was used in the subject.

Table 6:
Improvement in Character -Related Behaviors among YLA Participants

Behavior	**Percentage of teachers reporting improvement**
Students' understanding of life skills	50%
Students' willingness to trust others	10%
Students' willingness to discuss sensitive topics	70%
Students' understanding of the importance of good character	40%
Students' tolerance of others	20%
Students' ability to interact in groups	40%
Students' expression of their feelings more appropriately	60%

Behavior	Percentage of teachers reporting improvement
Students' abilities to get along with others	30%
Students' willingness to participate during the lessons	20%
Students' reflections about their behaviors	30%
Students' abilities to deal with and solve conflicts	40%
Students' abilities to conceive different vantage points	40%
Students' ability to problem solve	10%
Students' use of technology	90%
Students' abilities to construct and organize their thoughts	20%

Subject Matter: World Cultures

YLA Modules: Conflict Resolution, Community Development

Much of world cultures require critical thinking skills. Students build upon their understanding of the five themes of geography and apply their knowledge to history around the globe. Interdependence was a central theme in our units. YLA provided much of the basis for conflict resolution, community involvement, among others, and was then integrated into our lessons on achieving independence, nation building, international relations and world religions- all complex issues exemplifying interdependence.

Subject Matter: African American History
YLA Modules: Conflict Resolution, Self Discovery, Personal Appearance

It's a very cunning technology driven animal thus the children are inquisitive and drawn. Its modules helped me to simplify war into conflict, and by going through the modules the students had different lens or point of references to view not only conflicts but the people involved and their styles.

Subject Matter: English 1 and Creative Writing
YLA Module: Conflict Resolution

Write to the Point integrated writing skills into the module.

Subject Matter: Algebra
YLA Module: Budget & Banking

The Budget & Banking module allowed my students to really look at how they themselves and peers manage money and the importance of goal setting before making purchases. The students were really impacted by the cell phone comparison they had to do as a special project. The project allowed them to see the importance of product and vendor comparisons. One of my students said the assignment helped him to understand the details you need to know when purchasing cell phones.

Linking Program Treatment to Independently Measured Student Outcomes

Hypothesis 1: In the pre-test measurements of the outcome variables, no significant difference is expected between students assigned to the intervention group and the control group.

Pretest performance data for both academic and attitudinal dispositions were comparatively examined for students in the treatment and control groups. Results from a two-way Analysis of Variance in which the main effects were group membership (treatment versus control) and gender revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the pretest performance on the Grade Eighth Proficiency Assessment between students in the treatment and control groups; neither was there a significant interaction between the two main effects. In other words, at the start of the YLA intervention both groups were roughly equivalent in their academic performance in language arts and mathematics; and there was no difference in pretest performance across the groups for males or females.

For the 13 behavioral measures on the TASSB, significant pretest differences were evident between the treatment and control groups only in two areas: "attentiveness in class" (Chi-Square = 6.617,df = 2,$p \leq$ = .037), and "behavior in class" (Chi- Square=17.734, df=2, $p \leq$ =.000). With respect to the first behavioral category, "attentiveness in class", 69% of students in the control group were identified at the beginning of the academic year as needing improvement in this area as compared to 55% of students in the treatment group. Similarly, proportionately more of the students in the control group, 56%, were rated by teachers as needing to improve their "behaviors in class" than students in the treatment group (30%). Data from the baseline administration of the student YLASS survey reveal no significant differences between the

groups, although students in the control group tended to be slightly more positive in their self-reported attitudes than students in the treatment group.

Overall these results indicate that prior to the implementation of YLA, students in the treatment and control group were comparable in their behaviors on most of the outcome measures that will be used to determine the effectiveness of the program. We can assume that any differences in favor of the treatment group that are detected in our subsequent analyses can be partially attributed to the implementation of the intervention.

Hypothesis 2: In all subsequent evaluations, students in the intervention group will score significantly higher than students in the control group on all of the program outcome measures.

Analysis of Variance and Chi-Square Tests were used to determine the extent to which detectable differences between the treatment and control groups in the four outcome categories (academic, engagement, in-class behavior and self esteem/efficacy) were statistically significant. We start by discussing the results for academic performance.

(O1): Academic Performance Differences between YLA Students and Control Students

In measuring the net impact of YLA on student academic performance two measures of achievement data were examined; marking period grades in the subject areas and performance on the standard based assessment that is administered district-wide at the end of the ninth grade. While the marking period grades are for all students both regular and special education students in the study, the standard based assessment results are only applicable for the general regular education students in the ninth grade.

A Chi-square analysis of the first marking period grades revealed no significant difference between the control and treatment students in grades earned. Approximately 74% of students in the control group received a grade of "C" or higher at the end of the first marking period; and 76% of students in YLA received a similar grade. Results presented in Table 7 indicate that there are significant differences (Chi Square Value =12.446, df = 5, P≤=.029) in academic performance between both groups at the end of the academic year. In the Table, the percentage of students earning each letter grade is reported for the treatment and control groups respectively, and for the overall sample of 228 students in the column titled "Total". Approximately 62% of students in YLA received a final grade of "C" or higher compared to 39% of students in the control classrooms. Moreover, twice as many students in YLA (27.4%) as compared to the control students (13.5%) were likely to a grade of B or higher as a final course grade.

Table 7:
Final Course Grades Earned by Treatment (YLA) and Control (Non-YLA) Students

Final Course Grade	**Group**		Total
	Treatment	Control	
F	21.9%	34.1%	26.3%
D	16.4%	26.8%	20.2%
C	32.9%	25.6%	30.3%
C+	1.4%	0%	.9%
B	19.2%	9.8%	15.8%
A	8.2%	3.7%	6.6%

Results on the district standard based assessment administered at the end of the ninth grade revealed no significant differences between both groups of student; although slightly more of the YLA students were found to be proficient in Language Arts than students in the control group. Approximately 55% of ninth grade students in YLA scored in the proficiency range on the end of year assessment as compared to 52% of students in the control group, a difference of 3 percentage points between the groups in favor of the YLA students.

(O2): Engagement Differences between YLA Students and Control Students

Three proxy variables were used to measure engagement: absences, tardiness and suspension. Two-way ANOVAs (main effects gender and treatment status) with an interaction effect were calculated to determine YLA's impact. Turning first to the findings for absences, the main effect of treatment status was found to have a significant influence on the number of days absent ($F=34.389$, df, 1,217, $p<=.000$). The interaction between treatment status and gender was also found to have had a significant influence on absences ($F= 4.485$, df 1, 217, $p<=.037$). The mean number of days students in the control group were absent from classes was 20.78, compared to 8.84 for YLA students. These results suggest that students in the control group were almost two and a half times more likely to be absent from classes than students who were in YLA. The disordinal interaction between student gender and treatment status depicted in Figure 7 implies that among the control group female students tended to have poorer attendance than males, while for the YLA students the opposite was true. However, as can be seen in the Figure, both male and female students in YLA have substantially fewer days out of school than their respective counterparts who were not involved in the program.

Tardiness was the second outcome measure of engagement that was examined in the study. Findings from the two-way ANOVA indicate that students in the control group were more likely to be tardy for their classes than students who were part of the YLA intervention (F=5.537, df1, 216, p≤.020). According to data furnished by teachers, the average number of time students in the control group was reported as being tardy was 5.72. Among YLA students the comparable figure was 3.80.

Figure 7:
Number of Days absent by Gender and Treatment Status (YLA versus Non-YLA Students)

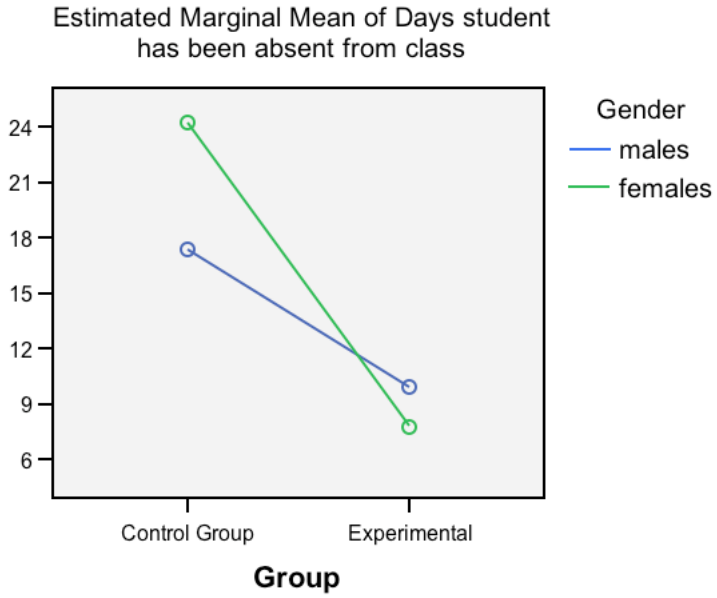
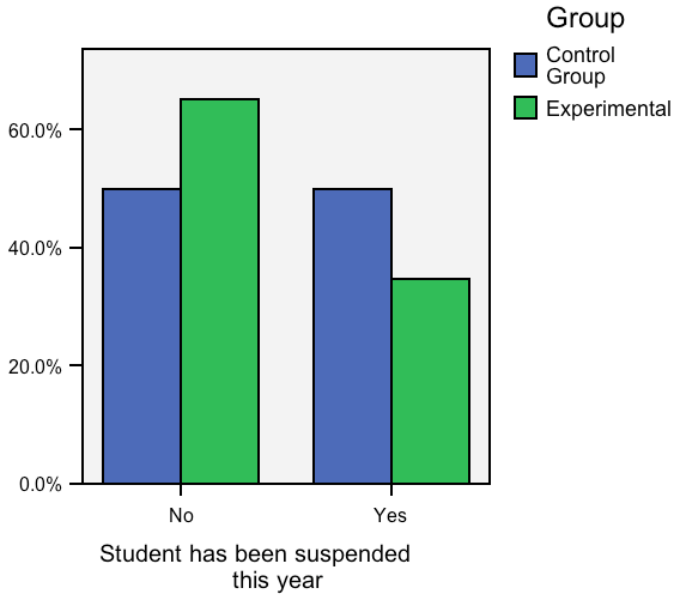


Figure 8. As can be seen from the figure, while about 50% of students or one in every two students in the control group was suspended at least once during the academic year, only 35% of students in YLA had received at least one suspension; suggesting that proportionately more students in the control group than students in YLA had received at least one suspension. The difference in suspension rates between YLA and non-YLA was found to be statistically significant (Chi-Square = 4.945, df =1, p≤.026).

Figure 8:
Suspension by Treatment Status



(O3): Improvements in In-Class Behaviors

Were there any detectable differences in the in-class behaviors of YLA students and those of their peers in the control group? In answering this question teacher ratings of students' behaviors on the TASSB were analyzed using a Chi Square Test for independent samples. On the TASSB, teachers identified whether a student had shown an improvement or decline in each of the behavioral categories. The results from these analyses are presented in Table 8 for all categories with the exception of the two areas (attentiveness and general deportment in class) in which baseline differences were found to exist between YLA students and the control group.

Scrutiny of the findings reported in Table 8 reveals that in all categories but the one measuring students' openness in discussing sensitive topics, significant differences in improvement could be detected between the two groups. Proportionately more students who were involved with YLA were deemed by their teachers to have shown an improvement in all of the behavioral categories than students who were part of the control group. The most striking

differences between both groups of students were found for the behavioral categories representing motivation, staying on task and peer relationships. For example, while 71% of YLA students were reported as having shown an improvement in their levels of motivation, only 39.8% of students in the control group were rated by their teachers to have improved in this area. Similarly, in contrast to roughly 80% of YLA students' whose peer relationships had improved over the course of the school year, only 59.8% of students in the control school showed a comparable change in their behaviors.

Table 8:
Improvements in In-Class Behaviors (YLA versus Non-YLA Students)

Behavioral Category	YLA Students		Control Students		Chi- Square
	Improved	No Improvement	Improved	No Improvement	
Turning in homework on time	55.1%	44.9%	23.2%	76.8%	21.818*
Completion of homework to your satisfaction.	55.1%	44.9%	23.2%	76.8%	21.818*
Participation in class	68.7%	31.3%	54.9%	45.1%	4.357*
Volunteering in class	64.6%	35.4%	45.9%	54.2%	7.723*
Attendance in class	72.8%	27.2%	54.9%	45.1%	7.566*
Motivation to learn	72.8%	27.2%	39.8%	60.2%	21.452*
Getting along with other students	80.3%	19.7%	59.8%	40.2%	11.221*

Behavioral Category	YLA Students		Control Students		Chi- Square
	Improved	No Improvement	Improved	No Improvement	
Staying on task	63.3%	36.7%	38.6%	61.4%	13.056*
Understanding life skills	85.6%	14.4%	68.7%	31.1%	9.301*
Use of technology	89.7	10 .3%	73.5%	26.5%	10.292*
More open in discussions of sensitive topics	74.7%	25.3%	73.6%	26.5%	.037

Note: Sample size = 230 (143 YLA; 87 Control). * Statistically significant.

The baseline data for attentiveness and overall class deportment were used as controls in the analyses of the end of year ratings. With respect to attentiveness in class, significant differences (Chi Square = 17.889, df 1, $p \leq .000$) were found between students in the control and treatment groups who on the baseline were rated as needing improvement in this area. Approximately 18% of students in the control group who at the start of the academic year were identified as needing to improve their attentiveness in class actually did so at the end of the academic year, in contrast to 58% of students who were part of YLA. No differences in improvement were detected between the groups in general class deportment when we controlled for the baseline data.

(O4) Improvements in self-concept and personal efficacies

An important assumption of the intervention was that students, who were involved in YLA, would on average develop healthier self concepts and become more efficacious in their

personal growth than those not exposed to YLA. Students' responses on the YLASS survey were analyzed in order to determine whether this assumption was supported by the data. The analyses indicated no significant differences in improvement in personal efficacies and self concept formation between the groups of students in the evaluation sample. This observation held for the complete battery of items on the YLASS, as well as for individual subscales.

Hypothesis 3: Overall, the level of intensity of participation in YLA will be positively related to outcomes such that students with higher levels of involvement in YLA will have more favorable outcomes on all measures than students with lower levels of involvement.

The preceding analysis focused on differences between the treatment and control groups without taking into account the level of intensity of participation in the project. However, as we noted previously in the methodology section, there was crossover between the control and treatment groups which must be accounted for in the analysis of outcomes. Hypothesis 3 allows us to disaggregate the intervention group into subgroups based upon the degree of exposure to YLA. In keeping with this, a new variable 'membership' was created. This variable had three categories: Students who remained in YLA for a full academic year; students who were in the control group for the entire school year and students who were crossovers, that is, they moved between the treatment (YLA) and control groups. Hypothesis 3 expects that students who remained in YLA continuously should perform better on the outcome measures than either of the other two groups, as the former would have been more intensively exposed to YLA's curriculum than the others.

Academic Differences

The data furnished in Table 9 below clearly shows that a significant association exists between membership and final course grades. The probability of earning a grade of B or higher was much greater for students who remained in YLA for a complete year than for students who either crossed over between YLA and the control group, or who stayed in the control group for the complete year. Moreover, comparisons between those in the crossover group and those whose membership in the control group was stable indicate minimal differences between these two groups. For instance, approximately 85% of crossovers earned a grade of C or lower for their final course grade, compared to 87% of students who remained in the control group for the full academic year.

Table 9:
Association between Membership and Final Course Grades*

Final Course Grade	Membership		
	Continuously YLA	Crossovers	Continuously Control
F	22.2%	21.2%	41.5%
D	15.1%	27.3%	28.3%
C	31.7%	36.4%	17.0%
C+	1.6%	0	0
B	20.6%	9.1%	13.2%
A	8.7%	6.1%	0

Note:* Significant Chi Square 22.043, $p<.015$

Engagement Differences and Membership

The extent to which discernible differences in student engagement existed among the three subgroups of pupils can be determined from an examination of the findings reported in Table 10. In the Table, the average number of times students have been absent and tardy is presented for all three subgroups. Standard errors are enclosed in parentheses. One-way Analysis of Variance and Least Square Difference post hoc testing are used to establish whether these overall mean differences are statistically meaningful, and to understand which pair of subgroups differ significantly from each other.

Group membership was found to have a significant influence on both absence (F=19.315, df 2, 210, p<=.000) and tardiness (F=3.663, df, 2, 210, p<=.027). First, students who spent a full academic year in YLA were likely to be absent from classes less frequently than those who spent only one semester or no time at all. Second, students who spent at least one semester in YLA tended to have fewer absences than students who were never exposed to the YLA curriculum. With respect to tardiness, students who remained in YLA for a full academic year had significantly fewer incidences of tardiness, than crossover students and students who remained in the control group for the entire school year. Although students in the crossover group were tardy fewer times than students in the control group, the difference was not statistically significant.

Table 10:
Influence of the Main Effect of Membership on Student Engagement

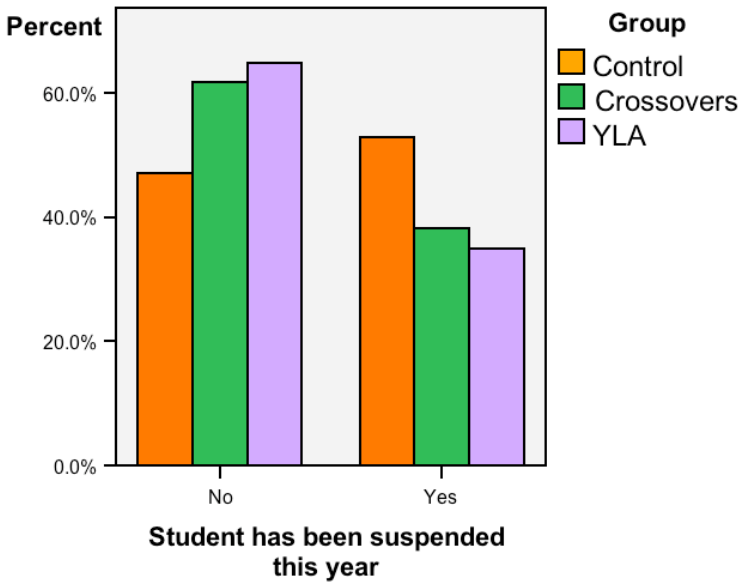
Engagement Measures	Membership		
	Continuously YLA	Crossovers	Continuously Control
Days absent from classes	6.61 (.827)**	10.60 (3.52)*	17.34 (3.14)

Number of times student has been tardy for class	2.88(.475)**	1.97(.753)	4.21(.987)

Note: ** The mean for this group was significantly lower than the means for the other two subgroups. * The mean for crossovers was significantly lower than the mean for continuously control. These results are based on Least Square Difference post hoc testing.

Table 10 depicts the relationship between suspension and membership status. Evident from the figure, is a trend which suggests that the number of student suspensions tends to increase monotonically with the lack of exposure to YLA. To amplify, 35% of students who were in YLA for the entire academic year were suspended at least once; 38% of students who spent a semester and 53% of students who were never in YLA.

Figure 9:
Suspensions and Membership



Improvements in In-Class Behaviors and Membership Status

There is a clear association between membership status and improvement in in-class behaviors as is starkly evident by the data reported in Table 11. On every single indicator of behavior, improvement was evident for proportionately more of the students who were in YLA for a full academic year than for students who were either in the program for one semester or not at all. On all but one behavioral indicator "more open in discussion of sensitive topics" these differences in proportions were statistically significant. More students in YLA for a complete academic year were likely to show improvements in homework, participation in class, volunteering in class, motivation to learn, getting along with other students, staying on task, use of technology and overall classroom deportment that students who were only exposed to YLA curriculum for a single semester or not at all.

Table 11:
Improvements in In-Class Behaviors (YLA versus Non-YLA Students)

Behavioral Category	Continuously YLA Students		Crossover Students		Continuously Control Students		Chi- Square
	Improved	No Improvement	Improved	No Improvement	Improved	No Improvement	
Turning in homework on time.	55.9%	44.1%	25.1%	75.0%	26.9%	73.1%	21.818*
Completion of homework to your satisfaction.*	55.9%	44.1%	29.0%	71.0%	24.5%	75.5%	21.818*
Participation in class.*	70.9%	29.1%	50.0%	50.0%	53.8%	46.2%	4.357*
Volunteering in class.*	66.1%	33.9%	40.6%	59.4%	47.2%	52.8%	7.723*
Attendance in class.*	75.6%	24.4%	56.3%	43.7%	57.7%	42.3%	7.566*
Motivation to learn.*	72.8%	27.2%	46.9%	64.2%	35.8%	642%	21.452*

Behavioral Category	Continuously YLA Students		Crossover Students		Continuously Control Students		Chi- Square
	Improved	No Improvement	Improved	No Improvement	Improved	No Improvement	
Getting along with other students.*	80.3%	19.7%	59.4%	40.6%	61.5%	38.5%	11.221*
Staying on task.*	63.0%	37.0%	43.8	56.3%	60.4%	39.6%	13.056*
Understanding life skills.*	84.9%	13.1%	75.0%	25.0%	66.0%	34.0%	9.301*
Use of technology.*	90.5%	9.5%	81.3%	18.8%	69.8%	30.2%	10.292*
More open in discussions of sensitive topics	73.8%	26.2%	81.3%	18.8%	69.8%	30.2%	.037
Class deportment.*	72.4%	27.6%	43.8%	56.3%	42.3%	55.7%	

Note: Sample size = 230 * statistically significant.

Improvements in self-concept and personal efficacies by Membership Status

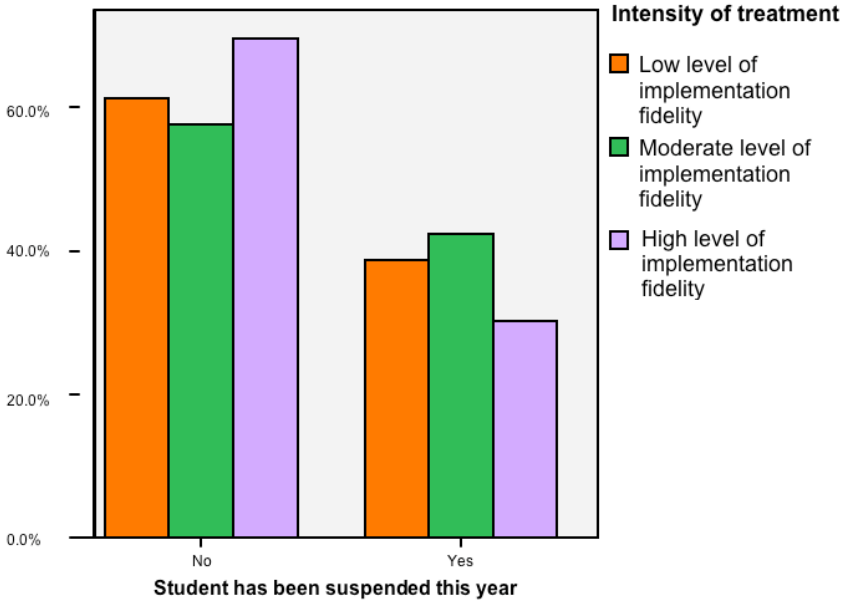
We found no significant relationship to exist between membership and improvement in self-concepts and personal efficacies. The means and standard errors on the YLASS student survey were as follows: YLA students (Mean = 92.81, Standard Error=1.327); Crossovers (Mean=96.18, Standard Error=2.95) and Control (Mean = 95.33, Standard Error =1.726).

Hypothesis 4: Students of teachers who were more successful in integrating YLA into their subject areas will demonstrate a greater change in attitudes and behaviors than those for which the opposite is true.

The final proposition attempts to link level of implementation directly to student outcomes. As was previously discussed, implementation varied greatly among the 10 teachers hence one may conjecture that this is likely to impact to some extent, observable differences among students in the treatment group. In testing this hypothesis, we identified within the treatment group three subgroups: Students taught by teachers who we defined as strong implementers (five teachers), that is these teachers taught more than half of a module, an average of about 10 YLA lessons and rated their comfort level with YLA as being very strong; students whose teachers were classified as weak implementers (three teachers) that is they taught less than half of a module, felt only somewhat comfortable with YLA and taught on average less than three lessons; and moderate implementers (two teachers) these were teachers who taught more lessons than the weak implementers but less than those who were in the strong implementer subgroup. These teachers felt slightly more comfortable with YLA than the weak implementers and taught about three lessons each.

When we examined the relationships that existed between teachers' level of fidelity to the project and student outcomes we obtained the following results. First, as can be seen from Figure 11, the students who were instructed by teachers with the highest level of implementation had proportionately fewer suspensions than those who were taught by weak and moderate implementers. Second students exposed to high levels of implementation were also more likely to have fewer absences and fewer incidences of tardiness than students whose teachers were either weak or moderate implementers. The average number of days students in the high implementing subgroup were absent and tardy was 7.43 and 2.85 respectively; for students in the moderate implementing group, 10.43 and 3.62 and those in the weak implementing group 8.77 and 5.93. Third, no differences were found between the groups with respect to improvement in in-class behaviors on the TASSB, responses on the student YLASS survey and academic performance. We infer that fidelity to implementation had a stronger impact on tardiness, absences and suspensions than any of the other outcomes that were investigated.

Figure 11:
Relationship between Teachers' Level of Implementation and Student Suspension



V: TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS ON THEIR TEACHING: ACTION RESEARCH PROJECTS

Two teachers were asked to journal theirs and their students' experiences over the spring semester. These mini-action research projects were intended to capture the teaching and learning environments in which YLA was implemented. The two teachers, one a teacher of special education students, the other of non-classified students, were asked to be particularly reflective when using YLA. The reflective narratives conforming to what we know about the underlying dynamics to teaching and learning identify several interesting themes.

First Action Research Reflection: Tenth Grade Special Education Setting

CLASS ENVIRONMENT

"I teach Algebra 1 to 10th grade self-contained classes. The classes that are participating in the program are my Block one and Block four classes. My block one class consists of 5 boys and 1 girl. Block four consists of 4 girls and 7 boys. The classifications for both blocks are as follows: 6- SLD = Specific Learning Disabilities, 3- SLLD= Specific Learning & Language Disabilities, 2- LLDS = Learning & Language Disabilities Severe, 3- SLLDM= Specific Learning & Language Disabilities Mild,1- VI = Visually Impaired, MD = Multiply Disabled, 1 = other classification.

Learning Styles

In the beginning of the school year I identified the students' learning styles through the use of a questionnaire based on Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence. The survey helped me to identify each student's learning style. Twelve of the students voluntarily completed the survey, five of the students did not take the survey. The following results demonstrate the primary learning styles represented in both classes: Mathematical/Logical = 4 students, Interpersonal = 2 students, Intrapersonal = 1 student, Linguistic = 2 students, Musical = 1 student, Visual/Spatial = 2 students, Natural = 0, Bodily/Kinesthetic = 0.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Computer Lab

The physical setting for the classes is a computer lab located in Rm. 216. The room contains twenty-five computers. The computers in the class are positioned in the shape of the letter M. The left and right walls are lined with computers and a row that is located in the middle of the room containing 2 rows of computers line back to back. In the front of the room is a smart-board and a desk that contains a desktop computer and a digital projector, The smart-board and the projector are used to facilitate the class.

Classroom Setting

My classes meet in two separate rooms; block 1 meets in a classroom that has seating for 25 students; however my entire class consists of 5 students consisting of 4 boys and 1 girl. The class began in September with seven students and ended in June with 5 students, 2 students were removed from roll due to poor attendance. The block 4 classroom has seating for a maximum of 15 students, the class size for this class started at the maximum capacity of 15. The student population consisted of 4 girls and 11 boys' by the end of the school year in June, the class ended with 11 students, 4 girls and 6 boys.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Grambling 1

The classroom environments for the two classes are drastically different in some instances. The Grambling 1 Team, which represents the Block 1 class, was always eager to do to the lab but they were not to responsive to the lessons performed in the classroom. The female student of the class expressed the opposite emotions than the males in regards to the classroom instructional time for YLA. Many of the class room assignments like the Wish List, Creation of a Budget, and the Cell Phone Comparison assignments stimulated her interest in these areas of learning, prompting her to further explore her personal attitude in regards to the money she controlled. The actual preparation of a budget in the classroom in her words "Helps me to think more seriously about my money and my spending habits." The male students' response to the budget lesson was not as responsive as I would have liked but I believe the lesson allowed them to see that they must take a more proactive roll in managing their money. I also believe that the

student's family environment has a significant role in these students perspective towards finances.

The female student I perceive has begun to distinguish the difference between her needs and her wants and the males although we've covered this topic as a lesson in the beginning of the year are still wrestling with this idea. My observation of the male versus the female in this class's response to this lesson was they were still attempting to work out their personal attitudes towards the way they spend their money, the focus seemed to lean more towards present gratification whereas the female focused more on future goals.

Grambling 4

The Block 4, on the other hand, which represents Grambling 4, displayed enthusiasm for both the classroom and the computer lab. Whenever we went to the lab they were very receptive to the lessons; however they were always distracted with playing the games versus performing the lessons after class discussions. Many of the discussions held in the classroom would spark a little debate now and then, but these isolated lessons always made for a more interesting class. The students were very vocal about how they felt about their spending habits. The males' attitude by the end of the class were somewhat mixed depending on the personal motivation and the desire. They really began to grasp the meaning of the budget and bank attitudes when they had to complete the Cell Phone Comparison Chart. Up until this point they primarily had difficulty distinguishing what should be categorized as a need or a want until this particular lesson. The comparison was the catalyst needed to help many of the males to change their attitudes about money and the differentiation between their needs and desires and how influential these two words have on one's attitude towards money. One student indicated to me

after he had completed the Cell Phone assignment that "The assignment really helped him to seriously think about the role the cell phone played and the different varying goods and services that were provided by the different vendors.

The females in the classroom in the beginning primarily focused on spending for their desires, however upon completion of the lessons their attitudes changed from desire spending to focusing more on their needs and their goals for the future. This class contained one female student that was cognitively impaired, and yet she expressed great interest when it came to the YLA lesson. She participated in the class discussions and she even attempted to do the lesson on the computer with the assistance of her personal aide. The daily journal will provide more detail on specific lessons and their instructions.

As for the computer lab experiences, due to the technical, conflicting lab schedules, testing and general unforeseen interruptions; the students enjoyed the interaction with the automation, the games that reinforced positive spending attitudes along with understanding the influence of vendors and peers, helped the students to gain a better understanding of the value of good spending and money management eager over the course of the project to look forward to their assigned day in the computer lab.

OVERVIEW

I think that the overall experience ended positively for me and the students. I honestly believe that many of the students through our discussions and the various lessons obtained valuable information that will have a lasting affect on their concept of money and spending. Although the two blocks varied differently in their attitudes and behaviors, it is clear to me that

these students were exposed to information that will have more far reaching affects on their spending habits, especially when they become the primary provider for themselves.

The use of animated modules that reflected the students' generational, cultural and behavioral identities aided the students in identifying with the characters in the lessons. In addition to the aforementioned, the YLA animations facilitated and addressed many of the various learning styles represented in the student class population. Most of Howard Gardner' Multiple Intelligences were evident in many of the lessons, making it easy to capture the attention of the students.

After have having exposure to YLA for the last year and a half I honestly think that this project should be opened up to the general population. Cash Control would be excellent in the subjects of Business. Even several of the other modules that I had the privilege of using last year would add much value to the learning experience for all students."

Second Action Research Reflection: Ninth Grade Regular Education Setting

Reading Levels

The students I instructed over the year were enrolled in the Read 180 program. Read 180 is an intervention program designed to improve reading comprehension skills. Of the estimated eighty (80) students I instructed this year approximately 12 % began the year reading at grade level. Approximately 16% of students were tested and considered to be "non-readers." The remaining 72% of student scores fluctuated from elementary grade reading levels to middle school grade levels.

Read 180 requires eighty (80) minutes of class time where students rotate between stations, group work, individual reading and using the computerized software to complete exercises. Read 180's pedagogy implies that spending more time on the basics, particularly English, represents a pathway to higher achievement overall. To excel in all subjects, students must know how to read and write.

Based on YLA's focus on empowerment, the modules became a valuable tool to build on students' vocabulary and to make connections to the students' personal lives in order to foster critical thinking skills. As you will read below, because of YLA's wide range of interactive features, I observed an increase in students' reading comprehension levels, writing skills, and student ability to make stronger connections to the Social Studies Core Curriculum.

High Order Thinking Skills

In World Cultures students are required to examine how Hinduism and Buddhism have shaped Indian culture. A key concept for our unit of study was to identify Karma and analyze how it shapes and governs Indian social systems.

Students were first asked to identify actions in their daily routine, both mental and physical, that would affect karma. Many had a hard time identifying examples of good and bad karma in society, other than beating up on siblings and classmates. Students also had trouble moving beyond the physical deeds to understand mental deeds, and clung to ideas such as punching, kicking, pushing and scratching.

However, I then integrated "The Trouble with Dime Sacks" into our lesson. The students, who had difficulty finding examples of good and bad karma in society, quickly responded with a deeper understanding of their presence in society. With the help of Break It Down, students also came to realize how people, especially groups of people, can be a "power of example" for good or bad. This concept was key in understanding the caste system and karma's role in its perpetuation.

Students were also successful at identifying Anthony's 'mental deed' of using peer pressure to make Shawna want to smoke marijuana. Rather than physically forcing her, they saw how people can be manipulated by words and ideas as well as actions.

Gandhi and Conflict Resolution

When students began the unit on Gandhi, YLA's module on conflict resolution, the "Ice Cream Incident, became a natural choice to help students make the connections necessary to master the essential questions of the unit. In order to prove mastery of the unit students were required to answer the following questions:

1) How did Gandhi's use of nonviolent civil disobedience gain independence for India and instill self-reliance in India's people?

2) How effective is the use of nonviolent civil disobedience in promoting social change and arriving at consensus?

Day 1: As a class we watched On The Reel using a digital projector, screen and speakers. Students identified the five (5) styles of conflict resolution displayed by The Crew during Break It Down. We also used YLA's glossary to identify key words during Break It Down, such as: compromise, controversy, deflect, diffuse, escalate, negotiate, pacifist, resentment and resolution—all words that students must know to participate in our discussions on Gandhi.

Students then surveyed the class and found that the majority of students thought of themselves as Exploders and Slash'n'burners. As their teacher, this correlated with my own observations, in my experience student disagreements often start with a series of verbal attacks, which then often leads to physical violence later in the day.

Students were then asked to complete Write To The Point on notebook paper in their YLA portfolios. The assignment was to write about a time when they used a conflict resolution style that escalated a conflict rather than resolved it. At first, students had a difficult time beginning writing. Most said that they didn't understand the question and couldn't think of any examples. However, after reviewing the five (5) "Heads UP" brainstorming questions and reviewing the Sample, students were quickly on their way to writing.

Day 2: Students analyzed clips from the movie Gandhi. After each clip we stopped the film and discussed the Conflict Resolution method that was presented. Students scored an average of 90% accuracy on the correct method in each of the six scenes we analyzed.

Students were also successful in expressing what resolution style was most effective in solving conflicts and which styles were not. By making a connection to their personal lives they were able to see how necessary it was for Gandhi to use nonviolence as a strategy to end colonization. Students also used the key words from the glossary to express their opinions on the success each method had on promoting change and coming to consensus.

At the end of the unit students were required to answer a series of open-ended and document based questions. On the unit examination 85% of students scored 80% or higher. Of the 15% that did not score higher than 80% on the test, 100% of those students were absent for a portion of the YLA module. It was clear that students understood the Essential Questions of the unit; in addition students used the key words from module's glossary to express themselves on opened essays.

VI. CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A review of the data presented in this report leads to a few clear conclusions. Foremost is the clear message about the challenges to implementing educational innovation in the contemporary school organization. The challenge here is twofold. In the first place, the school is a fragile organization held together, if tenuously, by a series of rigid routines related to scheduling that are not easily disrupted. Introducing any new development seems to conflict inevitably with the rigidity of routines; and when such conflict arises; the routines almost always win – handily. Secondly, the school is an arena in which a multiple (and ever additive) set of demands confront teachers on a daily basis – competing for their attention with certain overarching imperatives, e.g. improving student standardized test scores. Not only are the demands probably unreasonable for any human being, but most of the teachers we meet in these urban districts are all too frequently "new" teachers who are still in the first years of adjusting to their new professional role. They are a particularly vulnerable group of whom we are probably asking more – by way of adaptation – than is reasonable given their limited experience and tentative adjustment to their role.

All of this suggests yet again how critical implementation planning is for projects such as this. Organizationally, the decks are stacked against any new initiative surviving, let alone, prospering in the complex school environment. Educational leaders need to do everything possible to "re-stack" the deck in favor of such new ventures. In the case of YLA at Shabazz, it is a testament to the tireless and determined effort of the project coordinator that organizational obstacles were overcome in a fashion that allowed for project implementation to proceed to a "reasonable" but certainly not an optimal extent.

The latter would have required some serious scheduling interventions, some serious work with the technology infrastructure as well as some serious work with a group of relatively new teachers on the "curriculum integration piece" of the YLA project – the area that showed tremendous variability among participating teachers.

What is extraordinary is that despite implementation circumstances that were less than optimal, basic implementation goals were achieved at a "basic" level for most participating teachers. While one or two may have been "going through the motions," several showed extraordinary creativity in overcoming obstacles of inadequate technology support to devise their own uses of YLA curricular modules that did not depend on access to the computer labs. That extraordinary creativity was more evident among the participating teachers with greater teaching experience – suggesting that, at the least, some leavening of the enthusiasm of new teachers by the confidence of more experienced teachers facilitates overall implementation**.**

Having documented the challenges to project implementation, the student outcome results documented here appear all the more remarkable. This evaluation findings show quite conclusively that despite uneven implementation, students exposed to the YLA curriculum developed greater motivation and gained in their pro-social behaviors as compared to a control group. The gains were both attitudinal and behavioral; and the greater the student exposure, the greater the gains. Moreover, YLA students performed better academically in their course work as evidenced by final grades than students in the comparison group.

While the findings are statistically conclusive, a number of questions remain. One set of questions relates to the connections among the findings themselves. The one area

in which YLA participating students did *not* improve vis-à-vis the control group was in the area of perceived self-efficacy, self-esteem and self concept – precisely that area that is the primary focus of the YLA curriculum. To what extent is that finding a function of the limitation of our instruments, i.e. incomplete or flawed measures of self-esteem? A function of the relatively limited time frame of the treatment – a maximum of one year of fairly limited weekly exposure? Possible contaminating effects between the treatment and comparison groups?

There is no strong evidence in our findings that any subgroup of students benefited more from YLA participation than any other. Indeed, we had expected that special needs students might find particular motivational benefits in both the use of information technology as well as the introduction of "real life" situations into the classroom. That proved not to be the case. The number of special education students in the evaluation sample was relatively small hence imposing some limitation on statistical power in our analyses. However, it should be noted that all four special education teachers agreed that their students had shown improvements in their abilities to express themselves more appropriately and in understanding life skills.

A related matter is the nature of improvement process achieved by the YLA curriculum. How does it act on the student? What factors are key? To what extent is it the use of information technology? That a few teachers were able to achieve good results with YLA modules in the absence of computer availability suggests that this can be, at best, only a partial explanation. Is it the use of "real life" case simulations? Or, does the degree of integration of the YLA module into the regular 9th and 10th grade curriculum make the difference? These and related questions would seem to require more

continuous and more extended research into the educational outcomes of YLA participation for beginning high school students with larger and more robust samples allowing researchers to disentangle statistically the relative impact of duration and intensity of exposure, levels of teacher experience and level of integration of YLA materials with the standard curriculum. The results from this evaluation are highly encouraging, and suggest there is much merit to exploring these issues in future research endeavors.

Based on these conclusions, we would make the following recommendations for future program development and research:

A. Any future YLA project will require extended and intensive implementation planning that recognizes the need to "build in" adaptations to both the organizational realities of the school and work realities of teachers. This suggests that both building level administrators and teachers must be directly involved in implementation planning from the beginning. Moreover, it is likely that schools will need to evaluate realistically how a supplemental project such as YLA fits in more broadly with the instructional agenda of the school and its technological infrastructure. Everyone, including the teachers needs to understand where YLA fits within their priorities in a high demand environment.

B. An important part of that implementation planning will be an assessment of the instructional and professional development needs of participating teachers. Explicit attention will need to be focused on where in the curriculum YLA modules might contribute and, even more importantly, concrete training and

support must be consistently provided to facilitate integration of this new YLA content into the regular curriculum. In this regard, careful planning needs to be undertaken to manage both the training and subsequent scheduling of teachers over a multi-year period (schools typically do not show a long term perspective in their daily operations).

C. Several kinds of more focused research inquiries need to undertaken by Urban Tech in the future, including the following:

   i. More focused attention needs to be placed on the mechanisms through which YLA modules achieve their cognitive and pro-social behavioral outcomes. How critical is the technology *per se* to those outcomes? How critical is the immediate feedback and interactivity of the YLA modules. Answers to these sorts of questions will allow Urban Tech to focus its attention on the most critical components for student engagement and achievement.

   ii. While there appears to be some connection between amount of exposure to YLA and student outcomes, more controlled studies need to be undertaken to allow us to identify the timing of YLA benefits. How much exposure is required for what kind of benefits?

   iii. Further exploration needs to be undertaken of the puzzling lack of connection between student improvement in certain areas such as behavioral engagement with school and lack of improvement in area such as self esteem development. Is the resistance of the self – esteem

variable an artifact of our measurement error? An artifact of the limited time frame? Student characteristics/ Some other variables?

iv. Finally, further research needs to be undertaken specifically focused on implementation issues. We identified some of the major challenges earlier. Urban Tech can make a major contribution to school reform movement generally as well as to its own efficacy by leading this kind of initiative to understand the etiology and conditions of educational reform in our schools.

APPENDIX A

YLA TREATMENT TEACHER SURVEY
May 2007

This questionnaire is designed to assist us with understanding your feelings about the infusion of YLA in your classrooms this year. We are interested in your opinions regarding the impact of the program on your teaching and student learning. Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

1. What grade(s) do you teach? 9 ___ 10_____

2. What subject (s) are you currently teaching?

3. Please check the one that best describes your implementation of YLA for this school year.

a) This is the first semester that I am using the program_____

b) I used YLA in previously semesters 1 and 2_____

c) Would you say that:
1) You have taught most of a YLA module (most of the lessons in the module) ❍
2) Part of a module (at least half of the lessons in the module) ❍
3) Very little of a module (less than half of the lessons in the module). ❍

4. Please check all that apply. I teach the following students:

Regular education___ Bilingual____ Special Education____ Gifted____

5. How long have you been teaching at this grade level? _____

6. How long have you been teaching in this school? _____

7. Are you involved in any other special programs to enhance student motivation and academic achievement besides YLA Yes___ No___?

If yes, Please name and describe the programs in one sentence

Program Name Brief Description

Please Go To the Next Page

8. Directions: Please give us your general feelings about the YLA curriculum

A. How familiar have you become with the content of the YLA modules?

Very familiar	❍
Familiar	❍
Somewhat familiar	❍
Unfamiliar	❍

B. To what extent can the modules be used to enhance student learning in the subject that you teach? ***Using a scale that goes from 1 to 5 circle the number that comes closest to your opinion***.

To a great extent **Not at all**

5 4 3 2 1

C. To what extent did your exposure to the YLA modules, training and curriculum provide you with new ideas about how to enhance student learning? ***Using a scale that goes from 1 to 5 circle the number that comes closest to your opinion***.

To a great extent **Not at all**

5 4 3 2 1

D. How important is it, for students to have the opportunity in school to discuss the issues covered by the modules?

Very important	❍
Important	❍
Somewhat important	❍
Unimportant	❍
Definitely not important	❍

Please Go To the Next Page

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9. Directions: Which of the following modules did you use with your class? Approximately how many lessons did you teach for the module, and which YLA features did you use? (Check all that apply).

Module	Number of Lessons	On the Reel	Break it Down	Write to the Point	We Got Game	Final Answer
Self- Discovery						
Budget and Banking						
Conflict Resolution						
Community Involvement						
STD and AIDS Awareness						
Personal Appearance						

A. How comfortable were you with teaching the module (s) you used most?

Very comfortable ❍
Comfortable ❍
Somewhat comfortable ❍
Uncomfortable ❍
Definitely uncomfortable ❍

B. How would you rate the content of the module that you used most?

Excellent ❍
Very Good ❍
Good ❍
Fair ❍
Poor ❍

C. How would you rate students' engagement with the module you used most?

Excellent ❍
Very good ❍
Good ❍
Fair ❍
Poor ❍

Please Go To the Next Page

10. How successful were you in integrating YLA into the subject you teach?

Very Successful	❍
Successful	❍
Somewhat successful	❍
Unsuccessful	❍
Definitely unsuccessful	❍

11. How easy was it to integrate the YLA module you used most with your lesson plans?

Very easy	❍
Easy	❍
Somewhat easy	❍
Not easy	❍

Please Go To the Next Page

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12. From the list below, rank the three most important challenges (obstacles)that you faced in using the YLA curriculum module you used most; then assess(rate) the extent to which you successfully addressed these challenges.
In ranking the challenges use 1 for the most important challenge, 2 for the next most important and 3 for the least important.

Example: If integrating YLA with your lesson plans was the biggest challenge you faced, in the column labeled Ranking of Top Three Challenges you would write 1. If you were somewhat successful in addressing this obstacle you would check the column labeled "Somewhat successful in addressing this obstacle".

Obstacles	**Ranking of the top three challenges**	**Very successful in addressing this challenge**	**Somewhat successful in addressing this challenge**	**Not successful in addressing this challenge**
Getting access to computers				
Managing time and finding time to integrate the YLA in your subject				
Teaching life skills topics				
Building trust and respect among students				
Becoming proficient with the technology				
Finding someone to fix technical glitches				
Integrating YLA with my lessons plans				

Please Go To the Next Page

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13. How does a program such as YLA help students with subject matter?

14. How does a program such as YLA help students develop important life skills?

Please Go To the Next Page

15. How likely are you to use any of the information, materials, ideas and strategies that you obtained from this project with future classes?

Very likely ❍
Likely ❍
Not sure ❍
Unlikely ❍
Definitely unlikely ❍

Part B: The following questions concern the impact of YLA on student learning. In answering the questions, please think only about student behaviors while engaged in a YLA lesson.

16. Directions: During YLA how would you rate each of the following student learning behaviors? Please use the following scale and circle the number that best matches your feelings.

Learning Behaviors	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Students' time on Task	4	3	2	1
Students' motivation to do well	4	3	2	1
Students' interaction with peers	4	3	2	1
Students' expression of their feelings	4	3	2	1
Students' willingness to participate during the lessons	4	3	2	1
Students' abilities to transfer knowledge from one subject to another	4	3	2	1
Students' abilities to form relationships among ideas	4	3	2	1
Students' abilities to conceive different vantage points	4	3	2	1
Students' abilities to sustain focus	4	3	2	1
Students' abilities to think critically	4	3	2	1
Students' ability to follow directions	4	3	2	1
Students ability to problem solve	4	3	2	1
Students' ability to use language more effectively	4	3	2	1
Students' use of technology	4	3	2	1

Please Go To the Next Page

17. Directions: For most of the students in your class, check which of the following behaviors have improved as a function of YLA.

Remember to check only those behaviors that you feel improved because of the YLA Project.

Behavior	Improved
Students understanding of life skills	
Students' willingness to trust others	
Students' willingness to discuss sensitive topics	
Students' understanding of the importance of good character	
Students' tolerance for others	
Students' ability to interact in groups	
Students' expression of their feelings more appropriately	
Students' abilities to get along with others	
Students' willingness to participate during the lessons	
Students' reflections about their behaviors	
Students' abilities to deal with and solve conflicts	
Students' abilities to conceive different vantage points	
Students' ability to problem solve	
Students' use of technology	
Students' abilities to construct and organize their thoughts	

You have finished all the questions.
Thank you for your cooperation!

YLA TEACHER ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS'PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

Student's Name_____
Subject _____
Teacher's Name_____

Directions: For each behavior category below, please indicate if improvement has been demonstrated.

Behavior Category	**Improvement**	
1) Turning in homework on time	Yes____	No_____
2) Completion of homework to your satisfaction	Yes____	No_____
3) Participation in class	Yes____	No_____
4) Volunteering in class	Yes____	No_____
5) Attendance in class	Yes____	No_____
6) Attentiveness in class	Yes____	No_____
7) Behavior in class	Yes____	No_____
8) Motivation to learn	Yes____	No_____
9) Getting along with other students	Yes____	No_____
10) Arriving at class on time	Yes____	No_____
11) Staying on task	Yes____	No_____
12) Overall academic performance	Yes____	No_____
13) Understanding life skills	Yes___	No_____
14) Use of technology	Yes____	No_____
15) More open in discussion of sensitive topics	Yes____	No_____

ACADEMIC AND ATTENDANCE DATA

What was the first marking period grade that you gave this student?_____

What was the last marking period or most current grade that you gave this student?_____

Has this student been suspended for this year_____

How many days was this student absent from your class?_____

How many times was this student tardy for your class?_____

YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY/VERIZON PROJECT

Student Survey

Student ID_____ Teacher's Name_____

A. The following questions are about computers and your use of computers.

1) Do you have a computer at home?

Yes

No ☐

2) If yes, how frequently are you on the computer?

a) frequently (1-2 hours **each day**)
b) occasionally 1-2 hours **each week**)
c) Never

3) How frequently have you used the internet during the past year to:

	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
a) Do homework or other school work			
b) Chat with friends			
c) Surf the web			
d) Play computer games			

4) How good are your computer skills?

a) Better than average
b) About average
c) Below average

5) Would you say that this year your computer skills have:

a) gotten better
b) stay the same as last year
c) gotten worse

B. The following question is asking how much you agree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel easily annoyed when people try to question my opinion.					
Only actions matter; talking about problems never solves anything.					
I think gossip is harmful because it starts fights.					
In order to prevent violence, it is important to avoid conflicts with people.					
I always get into arguments with friends.					
I always find positive things to do when I am stressed.					
I always want to get even when someone has wronged me.					
I think that when there is a conflict between people both sides should give and take.					

C. These next questions are about how you feel about school.

6) Would you say that compared to last year this time you are

   a) feeling better about school
   b) feeling about the same
   c) feeling worse

7) How excited are you about next school year?

   a) very excited
   b) excited
   c) somewhat excite
   d) not excited
   e) definitely not excited.

8) How would you rate your experience in school this year

   a) excellent
   b) very good
   c) fair
   d) poor