

YLA in the classroom

The impact of the
Youth Leadership Academy
on academic performance



a study conducted by
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ABOUT THIS STUDY

The Youth Leadership Academy (YLA)/Project GRAD Classroom Implementation Study was conducted by Sametric Research, with the support of the Verizon Foundation, to demonstrate the social-emotional, motivation and academic impact of the Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) online instructional materials on the educational experience of students attending Malcolm X. Shabazz High School in Newark, New Jersey. The goal was to enhance the life skills, motivation and educational achievement of these students in key areas of their health, sexuality, educational planning and conflict resolution. The project was implemented over a two year period. 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. Detailed findings were collected from 186 ninth grade and 68 tenth grade students at Malcolm X. Shabazz High School. Central High School, also located in Newark NJ was used as the control group for purposes of comparison because of ethnic and income similarity.

For more information on the **YLA in the Classroom Evaluation**, including information on downloading the full report, please visit http://www.urbantech.org/Shabazz_Evaluation_2007.pdf or contact **The National Urban Technology Center** at 212.528.7350 or info@urbantech.org.

It was during YLA activities that my “silent students” responded with sheer enthusiasm. A student that never raised her hand was now quite literally leaping out of her seat with correct answers. During the remainder of our unit study on Gandhi, she exemplified the higher order thinking skills necessary to extend the material into current events.

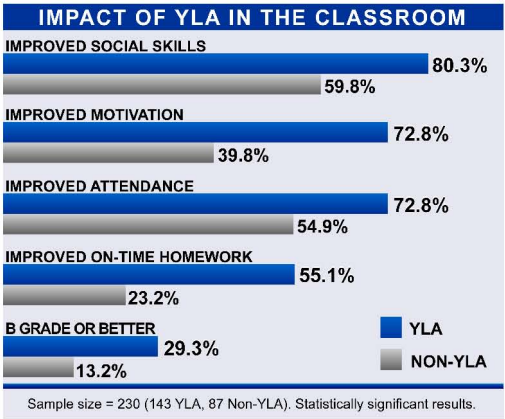
YLA Teacher
Malcolm X. Shabazz High School, Newark, NJ

YLA IN THE CLASSROOM IMPROVES STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students in YLA were more engaged in school and performed better on standard district ninth-grade assessments. Students in YLA were **2 times** more likely to earn a B grade or higher as final grades.

Students not in YLA were **2.5 times** more likely to be absent from classes and **1.5 times** more likely to be tardy than students in YLA.

In-class behavior and attentiveness dramatically improved for YLA students. When pre-tested, both YLA and non-YLA students were found to need improvement in the areas of motivation, staying on task, attentiveness and peer relationships. **40% more** YLA students improved their attentiveness compared to non-YLA students.



PARTNERS

The following national organizations partnered with the National Urban Technology Center to understand the educational benefits of the Youth Leadership Academy in the classroom environment:



Verizon Foundation



Newark Public Schools



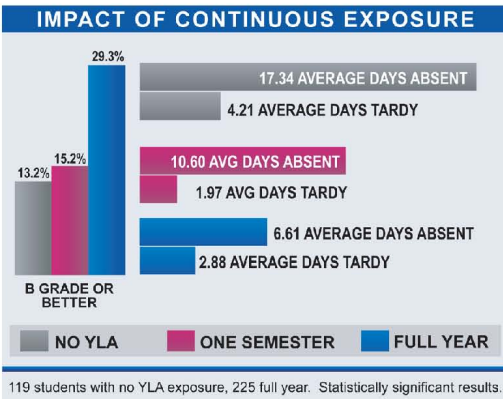
Project GRAD Newark

CONTINUOUS EXPOSURE TO YLA TIES TO:

- ✓ HIGHER FINAL GRADES
- ✓ LOWER ABSENTEEISM
- ✓ LOWER TARDINESS

Students who remained in YLA continuously earned higher final course grades. The probability of earning a grade of B or higher was **16% greater** for students who remained in YLA for a complete year than for students who were not exposed to YLA for the complete year.

Students who spent a full academic year in YLA were **62% less** likely to be absent from classes than those who spent no time at all. Students who spent at least one semester in YLA also tended to have **39% 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 **32% fewer** incidences of tardiness than students who had no exposure to YLA for the entire school year.



My students displayed enthusiasm for both the classroom and the computer lab. Many of the discussions held in the classroom would spark debate and the students were very vocal about how they felt about their spending habits.

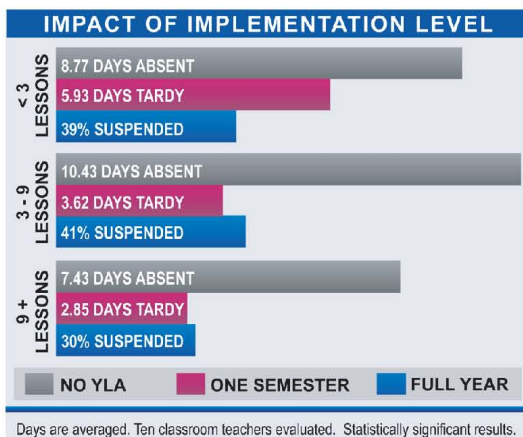
YLA Teacher
Malcolm X. Shabazz High School, Newark, NJ

STRONG TEACHER IMPLEMENTATION OF YLA IMPROVES STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students of teachers who were more thorough in integrating YLA with their subject areas demonstrated a greater change in attitudes and behaviors than those who didn't.

- Strong = taught > 9 YLA lessons with strong proficiency
- Limited = taught < 3 YLA lessons with limited proficiency

Analyses showed that the students who were instructed by teachers with the highest level of implementation had proportionately fewer suspensions, absences, and tardy days than those who were taught by limited and moderate implementers. Teaching more than 9 YLA courses to students resulted in a **52% decrease in tardiness**, a **23% decrease** in suspensions, **15% decrease** in absences compared to the weak implementation groups.



The use of animated modules that reflect the students' generational, cultural and behavioral identities aid them in identifying with the characters in the lessons.

YLA Teacher
Malcolm X. Shabazz High School, Newark, NJ

After 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 subject of Business. Several of the other modules would add much value to the learning experience for all students.

YLA Teacher
Malcolm X. Shabazz High School, Newark, NJ

OTHER RESEARCH ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

Dr. Maurice Elias, a leading child psychologist, researcher and expert on SEL from Rutgers University, maintains that “many of the problems in our schools are the result of social and emotional malfunction and debilitation from which too many children have suffered and continue to bear the consequences. Emotional well-being is dramatically and positively predictive not only of academic achievement, but also of satisfactory and productive experiences in the world of work and of better physical health.”

Rutgers University researcher Cary Cherniss, Ph.D. found repeated evidence that possession of such emotional competencies as cooperation, accurate self-assessment, optimism, and ability to handle stress led to greater productivity, job satisfaction or worker retention.

References:

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- McLaughlin, M., & Blank, M. (2004). “Creating a culture of attachment: A community-as-text approach to learning.” *Education Week*.

ABOUT YLA



Urban Tech’s Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) prepares young people with the practical skills to become productive, self-sufficient and achievement-oriented adults and community leaders. The program addresses teens, aged 10-18, and is designed to counter the social ills — high unemployment, school dropout, teen pregnancy — that often serve as obstacles in students’ lives. YLA empowers youngsters by providing employment and life skills, opening the door to new options and opportunities.

YLA’s rich multimedia curriculum for youth integrates life skills and technology skills with academic content, through the lens of popular culture, to provide a relevant and engaging learning environment, while providing young people with the necessary skills for success. YLA encourages positive self-expression and participation in making the community a better place to live, thereby creating a strong feeling of self-esteem and empowerment. YLA is available over the Internet, extending the learning environment and educational resources beyond the conventional boundaries of school.

The following YLA courses are offered as an after-school or summer program for community-based organizations or as an integrated core curriculum for schools across the country:

Leadership Series

- Team Building
- Self-Discovery
- Personal Appearance
- Conflict Resolution
- Community Involvement

Career Development Series

- Budgets and Banking
- Educational Planning
- Job Seeking

Healthy Living Series

- Healthy Habits
- Personal Relationships
- STD and AIDS Awareness
- Substance Abuse Prevention

