

# DESIGNING FOR ENGAGEMENT

THE EXPERIENCES OF TWEENS IN THE  
BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS' YOUTH ARTS INITIATIVE

COMMISSIONED BY THE WALLACE FOUNDATION

WENDY S. MCCLANAHAN, PH.D.

TRACEY A. HARTMANN, PH.D.  
LINDSEY LIU + OLUWATOSIN SHENBANJO



**November 2018**

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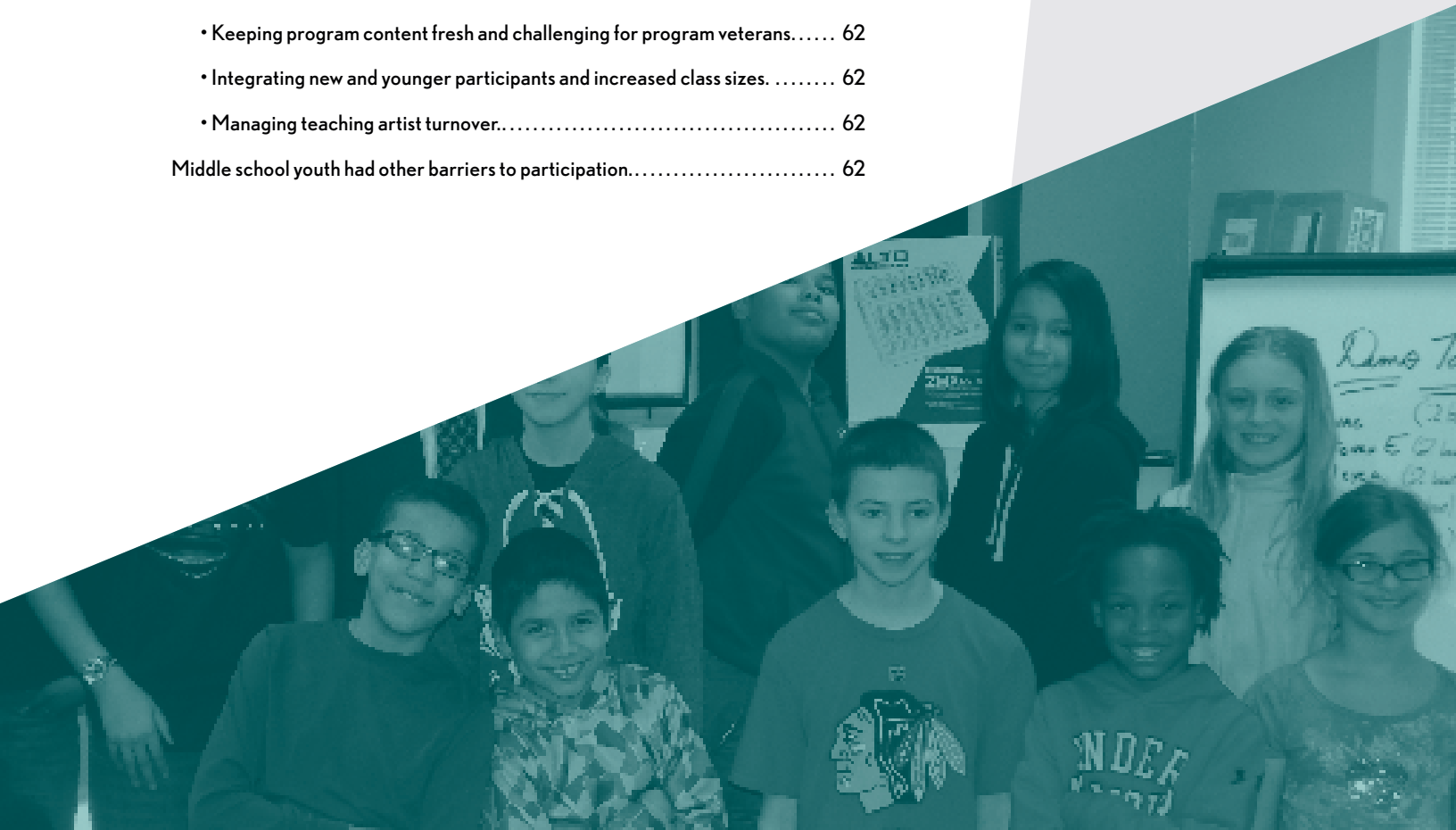
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Despite clear evidence that arts education can lead to benefits for youth, many young people from low-income urban areas grow up without exposure to the arts, and even fewer receive artistic training.<sup>i</sup> In response, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA), with funding from the Wallace Foundation, developed and implemented the Youth Arts Initiative (YAI), which offers high-quality art skill-development classes to tweens from high-poverty communities.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Despite clear evidence that arts education can lead to benefits for youth, many young people from low-income urban areas grow up without exposure to the arts, and even fewer receive artistic training.<sup>i</sup> In response, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA), with funding from the Wallace Foundation, developed and implemented the Youth Arts Initiative (YAI), which offers high-quality art skill-development classes to tweens from high-poverty communities.

In February 2014, three Clubs launched a YAI pilot based on the Ten Principles (Table ES-1) lessons learned from art-focused out-of-school-time (OST) organizations, youth, and families, documented in *Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts programs from Urban Youth and other Experts*.<sup>ii</sup> YAI was a new, innovative, and complex endeavor—and it aimed to create high-quality art skill-development programs in a multi-program, drop-in setting accustomed to working with limited resources. The main goal of the pilot was to explore the fundamental question: Can high-quality afterschool art skill-development programs be incorporated into a multi-program youth-serving organization (YSO), and if so, how? Research on the pilot, documented in *Raising the Barre and Stretching the Canvas*,<sup>iii</sup> shows that the Clubs did, in fact, successfully implement high-quality art skill-development programs as defined by the Ten Principles for Success.

While the previous report<sup>iv</sup> established the presence—and importance—of the Ten Principles in YAI, this research shifted the focus to participation and engagement. We asked: **Were tweens interested in programs designed with the Ten Principles in mind? How did Clubs attract, engage, and retain participants in high-quality arts programs?**

Implementing YAI and the Ten Principles required Clubs to adapt their typical operations and culture—and doing so could be a costly endeavor. Clubs already provide safe spaces and offer multiple programs, including arts and crafts. Consequently, we needed to find out: **Does the implementation of high-quality arts programs aligned to the Ten Principles add value to the Clubs—and for participating tweens?**

## II. CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE

YAI was implemented in a large, national organization—BGCA. The pilot, which started serving tweens in February 2014, involved BGCA's national office, three affiliate Clubs (the local umbrella organizations), and

<sup>i</sup> Denise Montgomery, Peter Rogovin, and Neromanie Persaud, *Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs from Urban Youth and Other Experts* (The Wallace Foundation, 2013), 11.

<sup>ii</sup> The study was conducted by Next Level Strategic Marketing Group and included data from best practice arts organizations, tweens with moderate and high engagement in the arts, and field experts.

<sup>iii</sup> Wendy S. McClanahan and Tracey A. Hartmann, *Raising the Barre and Stretching the Canvas: Implementing High-Quality Arts Programming in a National Youth Serving Organization* (Philadelphia: Research for Action, 2017).

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*



TABLE ES-1

## TEN PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESS

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PRINCIPLE N° 1

### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICING ARTISTS

Instructors are professional, practicing artists, and are valued with compensation for their expertise and investment in their professional development.

PRINCIPLE N° 2

### EXECUTIVE COMMITMENT

Executive directors have a public commitment to high-quality arts programs that is supported by sustained action.

PRINCIPLE N° 3

### DEDICATED SPACES

Arts programs take place in dedicated, inspiring, welcoming spaces and affirm the value of art and artists.

PRINCIPLE N° 4

### HIGH EXPECTATIONS

There is a culture of high expectations, respect for creative expression and affirmation of youth participants as artists.

PRINCIPLE N° 5

### CULMINATING EVENTS

Programs culminate in high-quality public events with real audiences.

PRINCIPLE N° 6

### POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Positive relationships with adult mentors and peers foster a sense of belonging and acceptance.

PRINCIPLE N° 7

### YOUTH INPUT

Youth participants actively shape programs and assume meaningful leadership roles.

PRINCIPLE N° 8

### HANDS-ON SKILL BUILDING

Programs focus on hands-on skill building using current equipment and technology.

PRINCIPLE N° 9

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Programs strategically engage key stakeholders to create a network of support for both youth participants and programs.

PRINCIPLE N° 10

### PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL SAFETY

Programs provide a physically and emotionally safe place for youth.

six units (Clubhouses where YAI programming was located). Three Clubs were awarded a grant to implement YAI; each club selected two units, and each of those units implemented two art forms.<sup>9</sup>

YAI offers two types of classes: skill-development and exposure classes. **Skill-development classes** were held several times a week for 1-2 hours with the explicit goal of building art-specific knowledge and competencies. In these classes, youth were expected to attend regularly, arrive on time, adhere to a strict code of conduct, and participate in a public culminating event at the conclusion of the program. For interested participants unable—or unwilling—to adhere to these requirements, or for skill-development participants wanting more time to practice, teaching artists offered commitment-free **exposure classes**. Examples included open studio classes, “try-it weeks,” and other opportunities.

### III. KEY FINDINGS

The findings are based on early, ground-level implementation in a small number of Clubs, and are derived from five sources of qualitative and quantitative data:

- Site visits, including interviews, observations, focus groups, and participant surveys;
- YAI staff surveys;
- Club-gathered YAI participation and participant background data;
- Club-wide attendance data; and
- BGCA’s National Youth Outcomes Survey, an annual survey of Boys & Girls Clubs members that assesses their experience in the Club and outcomes.

The full report examines youth recruitment and participation in a high-quality arts program and describes the reported value of this experience for participants. Specifically, the report addresses—and is organized according to—the following three sets of questions, presented here with key findings.

#### KEY QUESTIONS

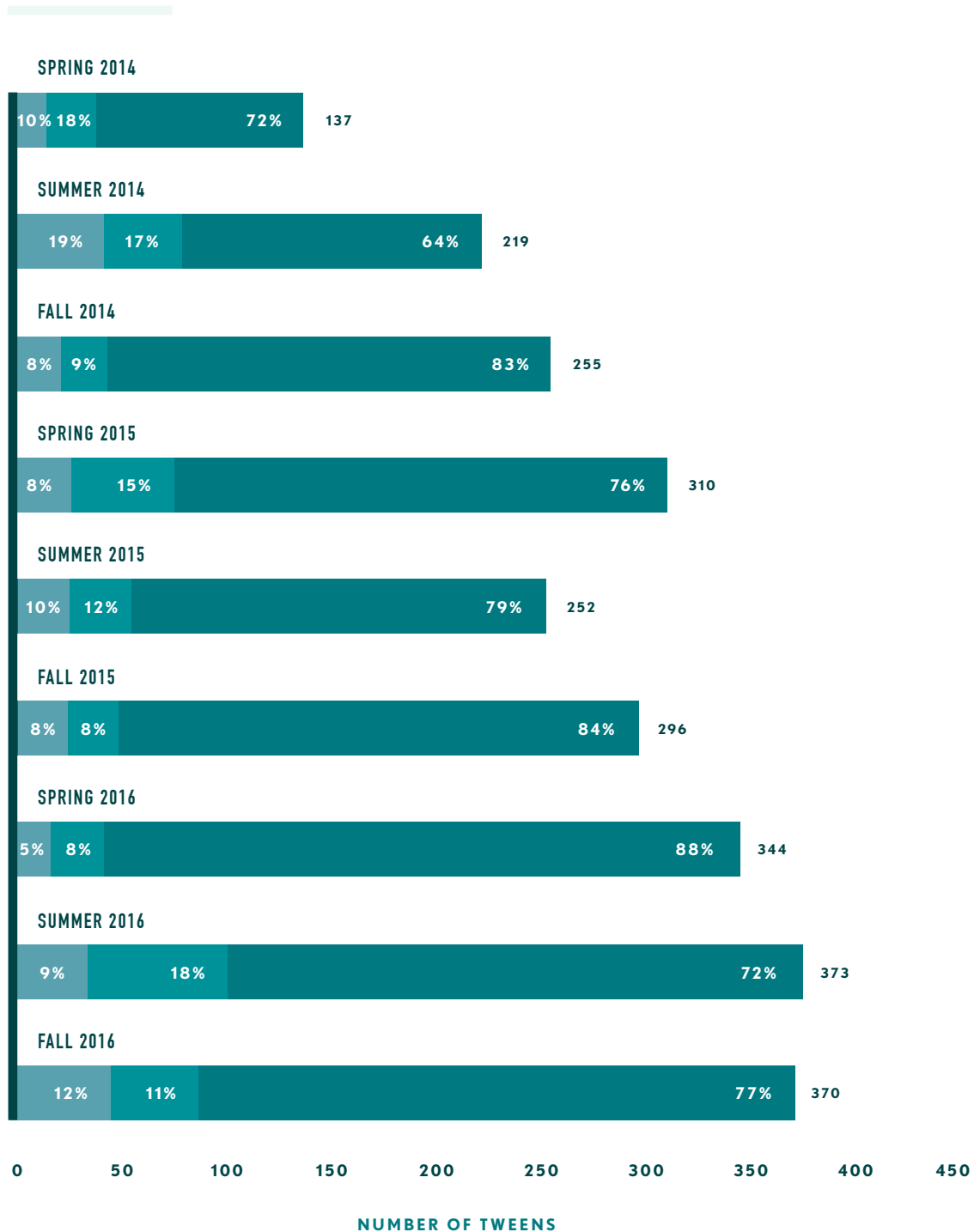
Were youth attracted to high-quality arts programs in a Club setting that offers many different types of programs? What strategies did Clubs use to recruit youth to the program?

**KEY FINDING: Tweens were interested in programs designed according to the Ten Principles, several of which (professional teaching artists, dedicated art-specific space, equipment and culminating events) attracted attention in the Club and made arts programming visible.** Over the course of the study, 1,280 tweens participated in YAI, and 90% were existing Club members. Clubs started with the goal of at least 15 tweens per skill-development class and launched 12 skill-development classes by Fall 2014. Figure ES-1 shows that YAI enrollment trended upwards over time and neared its skill-development enrollment capacity of 240 youth in Fall 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Please see full report for a complete list of YAI classes by type and location.

FIGURE ES-1

# NUMBER OF TWEENS SERVED BY PROGRAM PERIOD IN SKILL-DEVELOPMENT AND OPEN STUDIO CLASSES



**SKILL-DEVELOPMENT ONLY**      **OPEN STUDIO ONLY**      **BOTH SKILL DEVELOPMENT & OPEN STUDIO**

Source: YAI participation data (2014-16)  
Note: Students are double-counted in the figure if they attended YAI for more than one program.

The three primary art forms—digital, performing, and visual arts—recruited comparable numbers of youth. However, over time, it became apparent that art forms’ enrollment capacity varied based on room size, equipment needs, and the amount of individualized support required. The Ten Principles (particularly those that addressed the teaching artist, art-specific space, near-professional equipment, culminating events, and guidelines for youth input) bolstered recruitment efforts by attracting attention and making arts programming more visible in the Club. Because of this, informal word-of-mouth was the most effective recruitment strategy, and formal recruitment strategies, such as posters and flyers, were less effective. Teaching artists and staff reached out directly to Club tweens, and participants often recruited their friends. Attempts to recruit committed skill-development participants from exposure class rosters had limited success—only one quarter of tween participants tried an exposure class before enrolling. However, these classes provided important opportunities for youth to “dabble” in the art form. For example, boys were much more likely to participate in dance open studio classes rather than dance skill-development classes.

## KEY QUESTIONS

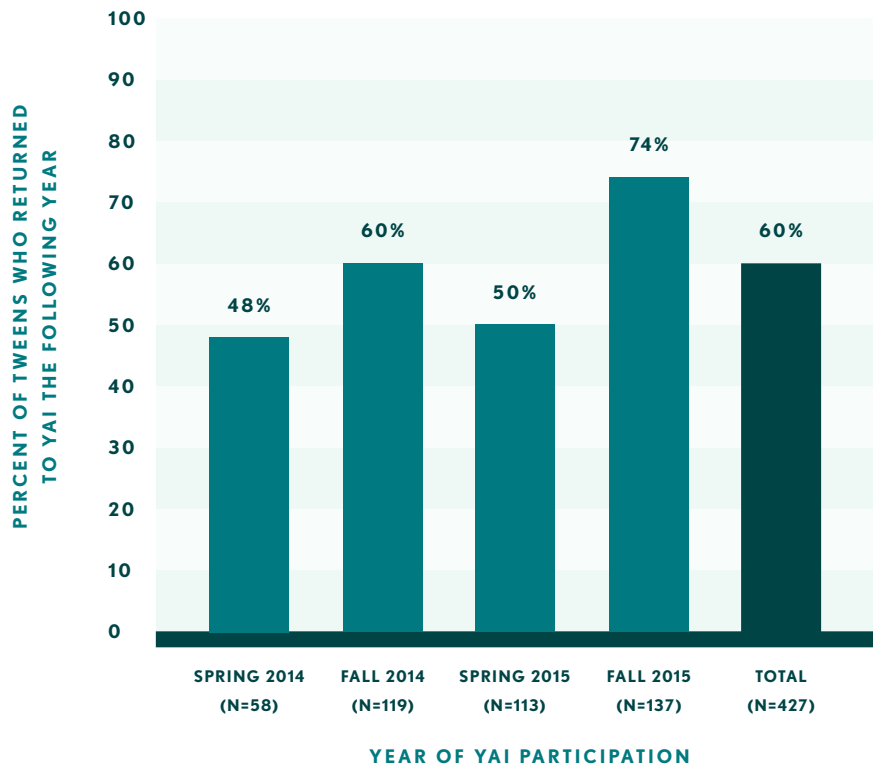
Were tweens engaged and participating regularly? What did it take to ensure engagement and regular participation in a rigorous skill-development program?

**KEY FINDING: YAI engaged participants—A majority participated regularly and returned the following year. Youth engagement and participation were driven by high-quality, challenging programming that nurtured creative “sparks.”<sup>vi</sup>** Almost all focus group participants said they enjoyed YAI, and at least a third were highly engaged. Further, more than half of the tweens who opted to enroll in demanding skill-development classes participated regularly, and a majority returned to the program the following year.

<sup>vi</sup>Peter C. Scales, Peter L. Denson, and Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, “Adolescent Thriving: The Role of Sparks, Relationships and Empowerment.” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 40, no. 3 (March 2011): 263-277. The concept of a ‘spark’ was developed by the Search Institute and describes a passion or motivating interest. Research by the Search Institute has found that having a spark is a key developmental strength and indicator of thriving; youth who report having one or more sparks have more positive outcomes than those who do not.

FIGURE ES-2

## ACROSS SESSION RETENTION: PERCENT OF SKILL-DEVELOPMENT TWEENS WHO CONTINUED THEIR PARTICIPATION IN YAI THE FOLLOWING ACADEMIC YEAR



Source: YAI participation data (2014-16)

Note: Each bar represents the percent of tweens who participated in YAI skill-development classes in the specified semester who returned to YAI at least once in the following school year.

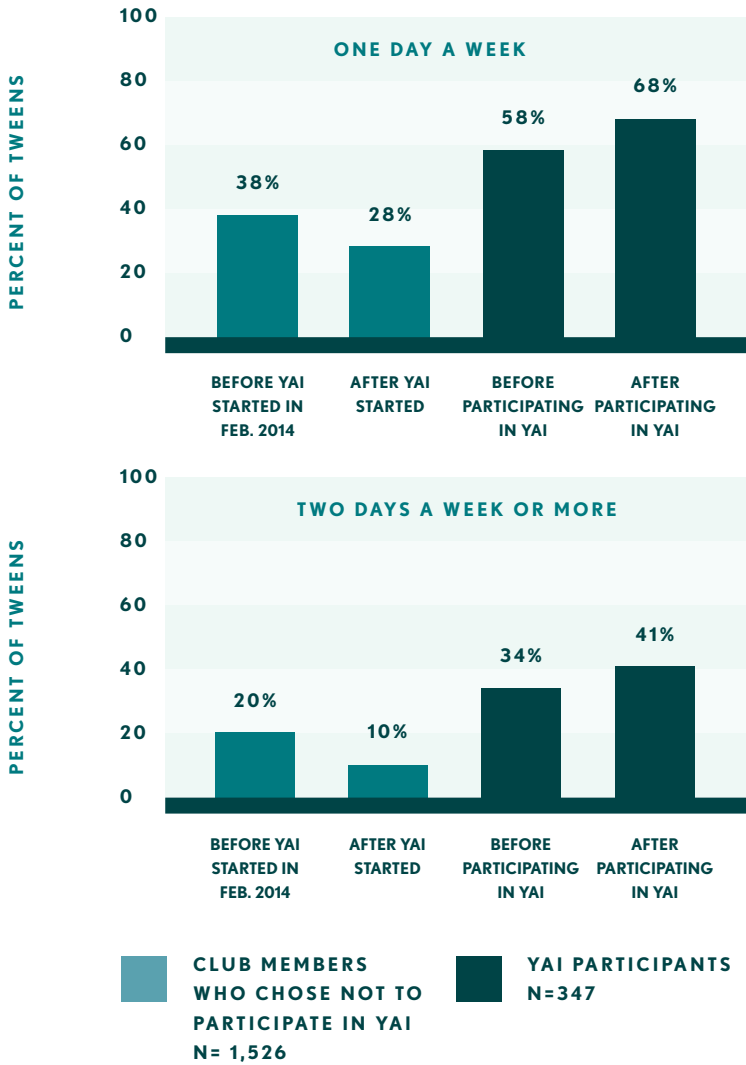
Some participants developed strong, motivating interests in their chosen art forms, and these “sparks” sustained their engagement despite the rigor of the classes themselves. Other factors that contributed to youth engagement and participation included strong youth development practices, as identified in the Ten Principles, and high expectations, including an attendance requirement, supported by parent engagement. There were some barriers to participation: Club leadership had to manage complicated schedules to reduce competition between programs, and teaching artists had to manage program growing pains.

### KEY QUESTION

What was the perceived value to youth and Clubs from high-quality arts programs?

FIGURE ES-3

# CLUB ATTENDANCE AMONG YAI PARTICIPANTS AND CLUB MEMBERS WHO DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN YAI



Source: Club participation data (2012-16)

Note: We examined the change in attendance patterns after YAI participation by controlling for participants' attendance trends before YAI started in 2014. We found the change in attendance patterns remained the same regardless of participants' pre-existing attendance trend.

**KEY FINDING: Youth, parents, and Club staff reported many benefits from regular YAI involvement, and YAI added value to the Clubs.**

YAI provided tweens with developmentally rich programs that offered a more positive Club experience. Families, Club staff, and tweens themselves said that participants honed more than just their new artistic skills—they developed social and emotional learning competencies related to self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills. YAI participants also increased their overall Club attendance after joining YAI, while non-YAI Club members' attendance declined over the same period. Further, YAI participants were much more likely than other Club members to come back to the Club year after year.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

BGCA's Youth Arts Initiative demonstrated that the Ten Principles for Success will attract and engage tweens. Importantly, while these high-quality arts programs are expensive and challenging to implement, they lead to positive youth outcomes and keep tweens connected to the implementing organization. This research suggests several lessons that may help OST providers and the field better understand how to attract and engage tweens in OST arts programming.

**To increase tween recruitment to arts programming, make arts visible and valued.**

Implementing the Ten Principles required well-equipped studio spaces, professional teaching artists, new equipment and technology, and public culminating events. These aspects of the program made YAI visible and conveyed the importance of the arts, which naturally attracted youth. Multi-component OST providers seeking to recruit youth to arts programs should assess the degree to which the arts are visible and valued in their organization.

**Offer multiple engagement strategies.** While many participants committed to the high-quality arts program, some preferred to dabble. While there were challenges associated with offering exposure classes, and only about a quarter went on to participate in skill-development classes, these classes did serve a purpose in some art forms and for some youth. OST programs seeking to recruit youth should offer both exposure and skill-development opportunities to meet different needs. In order to offer an appealing experience that could lead to deeper involvement, programs should carefully structure these classes based on the art form and participant age range.

**Don't be afraid to challenge youth and hold high expectations—as long as these are balanced by adult support and mentorship.** Initially, Clubs were unsure about YAI's attendance commitment requirement and concerned that it would deter participation. However, the program was able to institute an attendance commitment later recognized as a distinguishing characteristic. The attendance expectations allowed for some flexibility to account for tweens' other commitments, but still challenged youth and allowed them to develop artistic skills. High expectations and commitment do not deter tweens—in fact, they support deeper engagement, especially when reinforced by supportive adult mentors and strong youth development practices.

**Engage families to support committed attendance.** While tweens have more autonomy than younger youth, YAI staff found that they still needed to engage parents to ensure that youth could make an attendance commitment. OST programs for tweens often struggle to connect with parents, but successful communication can help boost attendance. YAI artists used emails, text messages, and social media to engage parents, and culminating events deepened parent support.

**Pay attention to quality to sustain participation and foster youth development.** YAI demonstrates that tweens, a difficult age group for OST programs to attract and retain, will be attracted to a high-quality OST program. Strong youth development practices identified in the Ten Principles were essential to retaining youth in a challenging program. When youth left the program, their reasons often reflected lapses in implementation. These included disruptions in relationships with teaching artists or peers, programs not responding to their interests or not being hands-on enough, or challenges with physical or emotional safety. For programs seeking to retain tweens, the first place to start is assessing program quality, particularly the strength of these core youth development practices.

**Recognize youth's sparks in the arts and provide mentoring to help develop them.** Youth need more opportunities to develop their artistic sparks in the presence of adult mentors. Other multicomponent OST programs should consider adding or expanding their arts program offerings in multiple traditional and non-traditional art forms to address this need. Providers should ensure the presence of professional teaching artists who can mentor participants in the art form, as well as other components of high-quality arts programming represented in the Ten Principles.

**Policymakers and funders should provide adequate funding for tween OST programs to attract and retain this population.** The importance of OST programming, particularly for older youth, is too often overlooked by funders and policymakers. As a result, many OST programs lack the funds they need to improve quality. Clubs received dedicated funding from The Wallace Foundation for YAI to implement the Ten Principles. This research shows that YAI successfully attracted and retained tweens, a difficult population for OST programs to engage. The research also provides more evidence to support the claim that when programs are high quality and interesting, tweens will attend and participate, allowing them to achieve important developmental outcomes. For this reason, OST funders and programs should focus on building up quality, even at the expense of capacity, when providing OST programming to middle and high school youth.



It's a lot of fun, but at some point, you have to do hard work...it's not just playing around. At one point you have to get real serious...

YAI PARTICIPANT



# INTROD



**ACTION**

Despite evidence that arts education can lead to benefits for youth, many young people from low-income urban areas grow up without exposure to the arts, and even fewer receive artistic training.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, many schools have abandoned the arts in favor of increased math and language arts instructional time. At the same time, free or low-cost community-based art education programs that focus on genuine skill development are few and far between. To address the lack of access to and deficiency in the quality of arts programs, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA), with funding from the Wallace Foundation, developed and piloted the Youth Arts Initiative (YAI) in pilot Clubs. YAI offers high-quality art skill-development classes to tweens from high-poverty communities through Boys & Girls Clubs.

In February 2014, three Clubs launched a YAI pilot based on the Ten Principles learned from art-specific out-of-school-time (OST) organizations, youth, and families, documented in *Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs from Urban Youth and Other Experts*.<sup>2</sup> With funding from the Wallace Foundation, Clubs used these Principles to expand their existing arts programming to include high-quality art skill-development opportunities for urban, low-income youth.<sup>3</sup> Art programs designed around the Ten Principles differ from other art programs because they take place in well-equipped studio spaces incorporating current equipment and technology and are taught by professional teaching artists who expect youth to attend regularly, create original artwork, and develop artistic skills showcased in public culminating events.

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YAI is a new, innovative, and complex endeavor—it attempts to build high-quality art skill-development programs in Boys & Girls Clubs, which are multi-program, drop-in OST providers that typically operate with limited resources and do not focus on the arts. Therefore, the main goal of the pilot was to explore the fundamental question: Can high-quality afterschool art skill-development programs be incorporated into a multi-program youth-serving organization (YSO), and if so, how?

Research on the pilot, documented in *Raising the Barre and Stretching the Canvas*,<sup>4</sup> shows that the Clubs did, in fact, successfully implement high-quality art skill-development programs as defined by the Ten Principles for Success. This was an important finding, because the Ten Principles were based on best practices of successful arts-specific OST organizations. Multi-program YSOs, like Boys & Girls Clubs, differ in meaningful ways from the arts-specific OST organizations studied in *Something to Say*; YSOs are typically drop-in and offer youth opportunities to explore and engage in a range of activities.

BGCA adopted the YAI pilot and the Ten Principles because it was in a unique position to offer high-quality art programs to youth who may not otherwise have access to them, and because it was interested in harnessing the power of the arts to benefit its members. But, through YAI,

<sup>1</sup> Denise Montgomery, Peter Rogovin, and Neromanie Persaud, *Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs from Urban Youth and Other Experts* (The Wallace Foundation, 2013), 11.

<sup>2</sup> The study was conducted by Next Level Strategic Marketing Group and included data from best practice arts organizations, tweens with moderate and high engagement in the arts, and field experts.

<sup>3</sup> We use the term “arts” to describe a variety of artistic activities, recognizing that in and of itself, the term does not acknowledge the broad diversity of creative artistic endeavors.

<sup>4</sup> Wendy S. McClanahan and Tracey A. Hartmann, *Raising the Barre and Stretching the Canvas: Implementing High-Quality Arts Programming in a National Youth Serving Organization* (Philadelphia: Research for Action, 2017).

BGCA also aimed to address another challenge—the struggle of OST programs to attract and retain older youth. BGCA, like other OST providers, reports that Club participation declines as young people age through the tween and teenage years. BGCA saw YAI as an opportunity to reverse this decline, because the Ten Principles incorporated findings from market research designed to investigate what teens want in an OST arts program. By implementing the Ten Principles, BGCA sought to increase the quality of its arts programming in the ways in which research from *Something to Say* suggests is appealing to older youth and, as a result, keep tweens engaged in the Club. BGCA also hoped that, by expanding its reputation beyond “swim and gym,” it would attract new tweens.

While our previous report established the presence of the Ten Principles in YAI, this research set out to uncover what it took to attract and engage tweens: **Were tweens interested in programs designed with these Principles in mind? How did Clubs attract, engage, and retain participants in high-quality arts programs?**

YAI and the Ten Principles required different practices—and were costlier—than Clubs’ typical operations and culture. Clubs already provide youth with safe spaces that incorporate multiple programs, including arts and crafts. Consequently, the final question this research set out to answer is: **Does the implementation of high-quality arts programs aligned to the Ten Principles add value to the Clubs and for participating tweens?**

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report examines youth recruitment and participation in a high-quality arts program and describes the reported value of this experience for participants. Specifically, the report addresses—and is organized according to—the following three sets of questions:

- Recruitment: Were youth attracted to high-quality arts programs in a Club setting that offers many different types of programs? What strategies did Clubs use to recruit youth to the program?
- Participation: Were tweens engaged and participating regularly in a rigorous skill-development program when other Club programs were drop-in? What did it take to ensure engagement and regular participation in this context?
- Perceived value: What was the perceived value to youth and Clubs from high-quality arts programs?

**The findings are based solely on early, ground-level implementation in a small number of Clubs.** Moving forward, The Wallace Foundation and BGCA will replicate YAI across a larger and more diverse set of Clubs, which will provide the opportunity to see if the findings reported here could apply to a larger group of youth.

**The findings presented in this report are derived from five sources of qualitative and quantitative data:**

Five rounds of site visits, including:

- Interviews with Club staff, including teaching artists, art liaisons,<sup>5</sup> Club site managers (called Unit Directors), Club leaders, and community partners
  - + Observations of skill-development classes
  - + Focus groups with skill-development participants and parents
  - + Skill-development class participation surveys
  - + Focus groups with former YAI participants
- YAI staff surveys;
- Club-gathered YAI participation and participant background data;
- Club-wide attendance data; and
- BGCA’s National Youth Outcomes Initiative Survey.

## HIGH-LEVEL TAKEAWAYS

**Finding 1: YAI successfully recruited tweens who were existing Club members, despite multiple competing Club program opportunities.** According to respondents, YAI most commonly attracted tweens through word-of-mouth. YAI’s recruitment took place primarily within the Club and was successful in this setting because the Ten Principles made the arts more visible. Professional teaching artists, new art studio spaces, and arts-focused culminating events elevated the status of the arts and attracted youth attention. More formal recruitment strategies, such as the use of marketing materials or exposure classes, were reported to have mixed utility. While existing Club members comprised the vast majority of YAI participants, toward the end of the pilot Clubs were beginning to see new members coming to the Club specifically for YAI.

**Finding 2: Tweens were engaged in challenging skill-development programming and participated regularly, even with the drop-in nature of the Club, because the program was high quality and it nurtured “sparks” in the arts.**

<sup>5</sup> Liaisons were YAI’s day-to-day managers, supervising the artists and working to create the infrastructure for YAI.

Youth engagement and participation were driven by a number of factors, all of which speak to program quality as defined by the Ten Principles. These factors include strong youth development practices, as described by Principle 6 (adult connections and positive peer relationships), Principle 7 (youth voice), Principle 8 (hands-on experiences), and Principle 10 (physical and emotional safety). In addition, the program had the expectation of an attendance commitment (Principle 4) which was supported by parent engagement (Principle 9). Finally, youth were either growing or developing new “sparks”<sup>6</sup> in the arts—that is, they expressed or exhibited a passion for art that motivated them to stay engaged.

**Finding 3: Youth, parents, and Club staff reported many benefits, including artistic skill improvement, social-emotional development, and increased Club attendance and retention, for young people with regular involvement in YAI.**

Respondents said youth were developing art skills and valuable social-emotional development competencies, such as persistence. In addition, YAI participants also increased their rates of Club attendance and retention at an age when many youth decrease their participation in the Club’s OST programs.

The following chapters tell the story of youth recruitment and participation in a high-quality arts program within the context of a multidisciplinary YSO and the ways in which youth’s experiences were valuable for them. The chapters detail each of the findings above:

- Chapter 1 provides background on YAI and describes its distinguishing characteristics.
- Chapter 2 describes YAI recruitment, including the overall numbers of participants, recruitment strategies, and factors underlying those strategies’ effectiveness.
- Chapter 3 discusses evidence of YAI tween engagement and participation patterns, as well as contributing factors, including the role of the Ten Principles and sparks in the arts.
- Chapter 4 explores the value of high-quality art skill-development programs for Clubs and YAI participants.
- The report concludes with Chapter 5, which includes important takeaways and recommendations for practitioners, policymakers, and future research beyond YAI.

<sup>6</sup> Peter C. Scales, Peter L. Denson, and Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, “Adolescent Thriving: The Role of Sparks, Relationships and Empowerment.” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 40, no. 3 (March 2011): 263-277. The concept of a ‘spark’ was developed by the Search Institute and describes a passion or motivating interest. Research by the Search Institute has found that having a spark is a key developmental strength and indicator of thriving; youth who report having one or more sparks have more positive outcomes than those who do not.



CHAPTER 1

# ABOUT YAI<sup>7</sup>



# 01

## ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS USED IN THIS REPORT

**BGCA:** Boys & Girls Clubs of America

**YAI:** Youth Arts Initiative

**YSO:** National youth-serving organization

**Club:** Boys & Girls Club city-wide umbrella organization

**Unit:** The neighborhood-based building within a Club where programming occurs

**Member:** A youth who attends the Club

**OST:** Out-of-school time

**Tween:** Youth aged 10-14

In YAI, high-quality afterschool arts programming is defined by the Ten Principles for Success described in The Wallace Foundation's *Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs from Urban Youth and Other Experts*. Researchers commissioned by

The Wallace Foundation interviewed more than 200 young people and their families, approaching them as consumers, to examine their needs and expectations about afterschool arts education programs. They incorporated these findings, along with views from arts program directors, researchers, and other authorities, into *Something to Say*, a guide to developing and improving afterschool arts programming for low-income youth. Instead of forming new arts-only organizations, The Wallace Foundation and BGCA explored the possibility of implementing these rigorous Principles in existing YSOs—those that demonstrated a belief in the value of the arts, had the infrastructure to support them, and had a footprint that allowed them to reach youth in low-income neighborhoods.

In *Something to Say*, researchers learned, among other things, that youth want arts programs with the following characteristics:

- The “wow” factor of a professional artist;
- Space for the arts that belongs to youth;
- Safety that will permit them to express themselves artistically;
- Instructors and peers who respect the arts and artists; and
- Regular hands-on experiences creating artwork of their own.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> McClanahan and Hartmann, *Raising the Barre*, 42-55. This section is taken from *Raising the Barre*. For more detailed information on YAI's implementation, see the report at <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Raising-the-Barre-Report.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Montgomery, Rogovin, and Persaud, *Something to Say*, 15.



TABLE 1.1

## THE TEN PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESS

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PRINCIPLE N° 1

### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICING ARTISTS

Instructors are professional, practicing artists, and are valued with compensation for their expertise and investment in their professional development.

PRINCIPLE N° 2

### EXECUTIVE COMMITMENT

Executive directors have a public commitment to high-quality arts programs that is supported by sustained action.

PRINCIPLE N° 3

### DEDICATED SPACES

Arts programs take place in dedicated, inspiring, welcoming spaces and affirm the value of art and artists.

PRINCIPLE N° 4

### HIGH EXPECTATIONS

There is a culture of high expectations, respect for creative expression and affirmation of youth participants as artists.

PRINCIPLE N° 5

### CULMINATING EVENTS

Programs culminate in high-quality public events with real audiences.

PRINCIPLE N° 6

### POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Positive relationships with adult mentors and peers foster a sense of belonging and acceptance.

PRINCIPLE N° 7

### YOUTH INPUT

Youth participants actively shape programs and assume meaningful leadership roles.

PRINCIPLE N° 8

### HANDS-ON SKILL BUILDING

Programs focus on hands-on skill building using current equipment and technology.

PRINCIPLE N° 9

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Programs strategically engage key stakeholders to create a network of support for both youth participants and programs.

PRINCIPLE N° 10

### PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL SAFETY

Programs provide a physically and emotionally safe place for youth.

These and other factors that matter to high-quality afterschool arts programming are represented in the Ten Principles. The Ten Principles include practices identified as important for quality afterschool art skill-development programs (the first five Principles) as well as core tenets of high-quality youth development (the last five Principles).

Research on YAI's implementation, reported in *Raising the Barre*, found the following ways in which YAI programs differed from typical Club programs:

- **YAI used professional practicing artists as instructors (Principle 1).** While most Club staff are youth development generalists, teaching artists were experts with professional experience. Those who were most successful also had youth development skills. Teaching artists had ample professional development opportunities and were expected to continue their own professional artwork.
- **YAI required Club leadership to become advocates for the arts (Principle 2).** The Clubs were not previously known as arts organizations, so they needed effective leadership to raise the profile of the arts at the Club and among partners. This served to integrate YAI and its new approach to arts programming, and it also helped sustain the initiative. YSO leadership is multi-tiered, so it was necessary for this advocacy to extend from the Clubs' Executive Directors to other senior leaders, including the Clubs' site managers and leaders of other aspects of Club operations.
- **YAI had dedicated studio space (Principle 3) and used near-professional current equipment (Principle 8).** Although typical Club operations used multi-purpose spaces, YAI studios were built specifically for the art form and were not shared with other programs. These dedicated spaces were needed for art instruction (e.g., to let paintings dry and store materials) and to give youth a sense of inspiration, ownership, and safety. YAI studios were equipped with current, high-quality equipment needed for art instruction. For instance, the fashion design studio had eight sewing machines, multiple updated computers and printers, electric scissors, textiles, and steam and traditional irons.
- **YAI required high expectations (Principle 4).** In the past, YAI Clubs offered art programs, such as arts and crafts. However, YAI called for tweens to develop specific art skills, and this required that Clubs invest in professional teaching artists, new and updated equipment, and dedicated space. Also, since skill development requires practice and instruction, YAI had an attendance requirement; typically, Clubs and their programs are drop-in. Youth were also expected to develop original artwork and engage in peer critique, and neither practice occurred regularly in existing Club art programs.
- **YAI involved external culminating events (Principle 5).** While Clubs traditionally hold family nights, open houses, and fundraising events to showcase programs and the work of Club members, YAI's culminating events were frequently external events that showcased tweens' artwork in a public or community forum.

Also, as reported in *Raising the Barre*, YAI pushed Clubs to extend their existing youth development practices. YAI programming set the following standards:

- **YAI created positive adult and peer relationships (Principle 6).** Positive adult and peer relationships are a hallmark of Club culture; however, some YAI participants reported more positive relationships with the teaching artist than with staff in other Club areas. Teaching artists used formal and informal strategies to develop relationships with tweens, both inside and outside of class, and they intentionally implemented strategies to build peer support.
- **YAI incorporated youth voice into all aspects of the program (Principle 7).** Clubs strive to incorporate youth input into programming choices, but YAI pushed Clubs to take youth input further. YAI encouraged youth input from the very beginning of the initiative: Club tweens helped select the art form, provided visions for the studio space, and participated in interviews for the teaching artists' positions. Teaching artists also elicited and incorporated youth input into on-going programming.
- **YAI provided hands-on programming focused on developing artistic skills (Principle 8).** Club programs typically provide hands-on activities to keep youth engaged. But to build youth's art skills through YAI, Clubs and teaching artists also needed to provide hands-on instruction. Early in the initiative, Clubs and teaching artists attempted to achieve their learning objectives through a combination of lecturing and hands-on activities, but they learned that lecturing turned tweens off, especially in a Club setting where other activities were all hands-on. As YAI matured, Clubs and teaching artists learned skills for teaching content through 'doing.'
- **YAI, by design, focused on family and community engagement (Principle 9).** While Clubs were not new to family and community engagement, YAI had a focused, intentional engagement strategy to help parents understand how YAI was different from the Clubs' typical drop-in programming. YAI also expanded Club partnerships, particularly with community arts

organizations but also with local businesses, schools, and universities. Partnerships enabled YAI to offer arts exposure opportunities and establish an arts-educational pipeline for youth who aged out of YAI but still wanted further instruction.

- **YAI programming incorporated intentional physical and emotional safety protocols (Principle 10).** Clubs strive to create safe spaces. Art requires risk-taking, so YAI pushed Clubs to think even harder about emotional safety. Teaching artists, in conjunction with YAI participants, developed strict behavioral standards for YAI classrooms. Club leaders also worked to bolster existing rules of conduct for the Club when tweens reported feeling physically or emotionally safer in YAI than in the rest of the Club.

Research showed that each Principle contributed to YAI's success in a YSO, but that they played different roles in the initiative's implementation. Four Principles led the transformative change that was needed for the Clubs to implement YAI, and others served as essential building blocks of program quality. The first four Principles were transformative; they clashed the most with existing Club culture, and implementation required culture shifts and adaptations to the Principles. For instance, Clubs typically employ youth development generalists, not subject-matter experts. Integrating professional practicing teaching artists into the Club created tensions around staff compensation and roles. The remaining six Principles formed the base of YAI's quality—Principles 6, 7, 8, and 10 fostered tween engagement, and Principles 5 and 9 built external visibility, support, and recognition for YAI and its participants. These building blocks of quality required Clubs to expand their existing youth development practices.

For more information about how these Principles were implemented in the Clubs, see *Raising the Barre and Stretching the Canvas*.

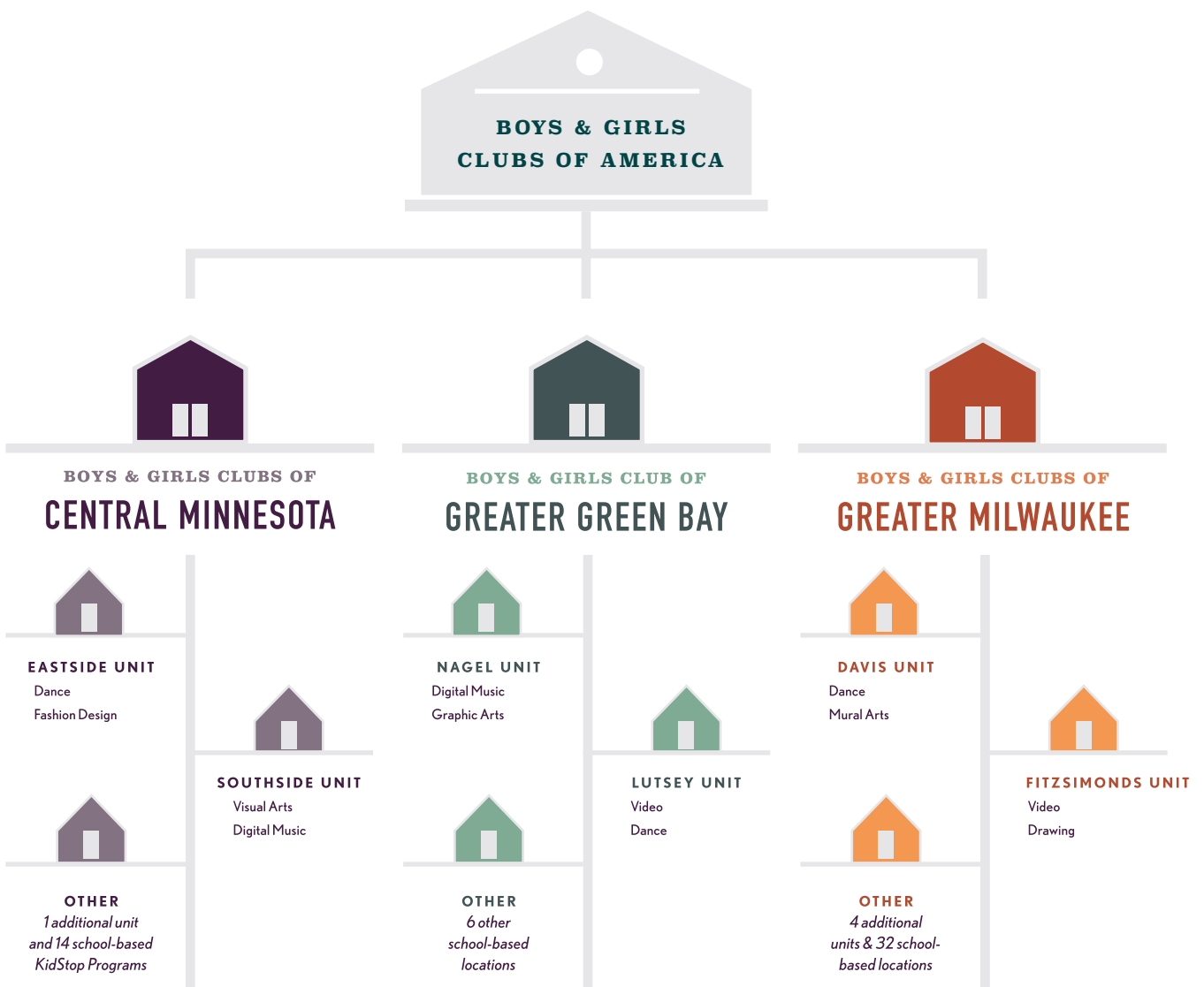
## THE YAI PILOT STRUCTURE

YAI's pilot started serving tweens in February 2014. It involved BGCA (the national office), three affiliate Clubs (the local umbrella organizations), and six units (Clubhouses where YAI programming was located). The structure of the pilot is depicted in Figure 11.

The Ten Principles include practices identified as important for quality afterschool art skill-development programs as well as core tenets of high-quality youth development.

FIGURE 1.1

## STRUCTURE OF YAI PILOT, INCLUDING ART FORMS



There are several notable elements of the YAI pilot:

**BGCA was the national YSO grantee for YAI.** BGCA, as the primary recipient of The Wallace Foundation’s grant, is the intermediary organization for YAI’s pilot, overseeing and supporting its implementation since the start of the initiative. BGCA is a federated structure; each Club is its own independent organization. As such, the national office has limited authority over Clubs; its role is to provide technical assistance, curricula, and advocacy for Clubs across the nation.

**Three Clubs were awarded a grant to implement YAI.** BGCA selected three pilot Clubs—Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Minnesota, Boys & Girls Club of Greater Green Bay, and Boys & Girls Clubs of

Greater Milwaukee—to test YAI and the Ten Principles in a YSO. The Clubs were selected by a rigorous Request for Proposals process. They were chosen because they had an interest in the arts and offered some arts programming, but they did not yet have well-established high-quality arts education programs.

**Each Club selected two units to execute YAI’s programming, and each of those units implemented two art forms.** Figure 1.1 also displays the four art forms selected by each Club. Units asked youth to help select the art forms. Table 1.2 displays how these art forms are categorized in this report.

TABLE 1.2

## ART FORM CATEGORIZATION

ART FORM	TOTAL NUMBER OF CLASSES IN ART FORM	TYPE OF CLASS (NUMBER OF CLASSES)
PERFORMING ART	3 classes	Dance (3)
VISUAL ARTS	3 classes	Mural arts (1), visual arts (2)
DIGITAL ARTS	6 classes	Fashion design (1), <sup>a</sup> film/video production (2), digital music (2), graphic arts (1)

<sup>a</sup> We adopt BGCA’s approach to categorizing the art forms in this report. BGCA categorizes fashion design as a digital art because the necessary equipment creates similar dynamics. For example, youth work individually at stations with computers or sewing machines and require more individual support in learning to use the equipment.

## YAI CLASSES

YAI incorporates two different types of classes: skill-development and exposure classes.

**Skill-development classes teach youth artistic skills.** Classes were held several times a week for 1-2 hours with the explicit goal of building skills specific to the art form, such as:

- Demonstrating competence and confidence in performing a variety of dance moves and effectively communicating intent or meaning through movement;
- Understanding of basic design and color principles and demonstrating the ability to use basic tools, techniques, and processes, including paints and surfaces; and
- Demonstrating competence and confidence in fashion design, including use of a sewing machine and other tools; use of colors and various forms of media; and hand-sewing techniques.

Regular attendance was expected, and participants needed to arrive in time to change their clothes, set up materials, stretch, or prepare equipment. In skill-development classes, teaching artists implemented the Ten Principles by working towards a culminating event, building skills through instruction and review, using proper art terms, teaching about the process of creating art, and supporting participants as they created original work. Every class had a strict code of conduct that promoted physical and emotional safety. By the end of the study period, most art forms offered more than one skill-development class per week to accommodate youth of different ages (10-12 and 13-14), skill levels (beginner to advanced), and interests (hip hop or ballet, drawing or painting). YAI skill-development classes enrolled 8-18 tweens, depending on the art form. At first, classes were held in six-week sessions during the school year, plus three or four one-week summer sessions. However, teaching artists learned that these time constraints did not allow for meaningful skill development; by the end of the pilot, teaching artists varied the session lengths at their discretion.

**Exposure classes were designed for interested participants who were not ready to commit to skill-development classes.** YAI teaching artists conducted three types of exposure classes:

- **Open studio.** At least once a week, instructors opened their studios and allowed all Club members to experiment with art supplies and equipment. YAI participants in skill-development classes also used open studio sessions for practice and additional work time.
- **“Try it” week.** Participants were given a week, typically at the beginning of a session, to try out a class without the obligation to commit.
- **Other exposure classes.** YAI also offered exposure classes to younger and older Club members, members of other Clubs, and school groups.

# RECRUITMENT



## KEY QUESTIONS

**Were youth attracted to high-quality art programs in a Club setting that offers many different types of programs?**

**What strategies did Clubs use to recruit youth to the program?**

## KEY FINDINGS

Tweens were interested in programs designed according to the Ten Principles. Over the course of the study, 1,280 tweens participated in YAI, and most were existing Club members.

The Principles (particularly those that addressed the teaching artist, art-specific space, near-professional equipment, culminating events, and guidelines for youth input) attracted attention in the Club and made arts programming visible. Because of this, informal word-of-mouth was the most effective recruitment strategy. Formal recruitment strategies, such as posters and flyers, were less effective inside and outside of the Club.

Pilot clubs previously offered limited arts programming, and they described sports programs as the main draw for Club youth. Therefore, at the start of the initiative, the demand for Club-based high-quality arts programs was unknown. In addition, YAI required each unit to implement two new art forms in the context of the unit's existing menu of options. While this provided tweens with many programs to choose from, it also created questions about whether and how these arts programs could attract sufficient numbers of participants. This section reports the number and characteristics of YAI participants as well as Clubs' strategies for YAI marketing and recruitment.

#### **TWEENS WERE INTERESTED IN YAI.**

YAI served a total of 1,280 tweens from the start of the program in Spring 2014 through Fall 2016.<sup>9</sup> Clubs realized, early on, that many existing Club members were expressing interest in YAI. Consequently, Clubs primarily focused on internal recruitment efforts, although they also conducted various levels of external recruitment. Clubs started

with a capacity expectation of 15 youth per skill-development class and launched 12 skill-development classes by Fall 2014, making the goal 240 skill-development students per semester for the initiative as a whole.

**Figure 2.1 shows that YAI enrollment trended upwards over time and neared its skill-development enrollment capacity in Fall 2016.** Clubs started with three art forms in Spring 2014; subsequent enrollment increases reflect the addition of three art forms in Summer 2014 and six art forms in Fall 2014. After that point, YAI's participation numbers reflect a combination of returning and newly-enrolled tweens.

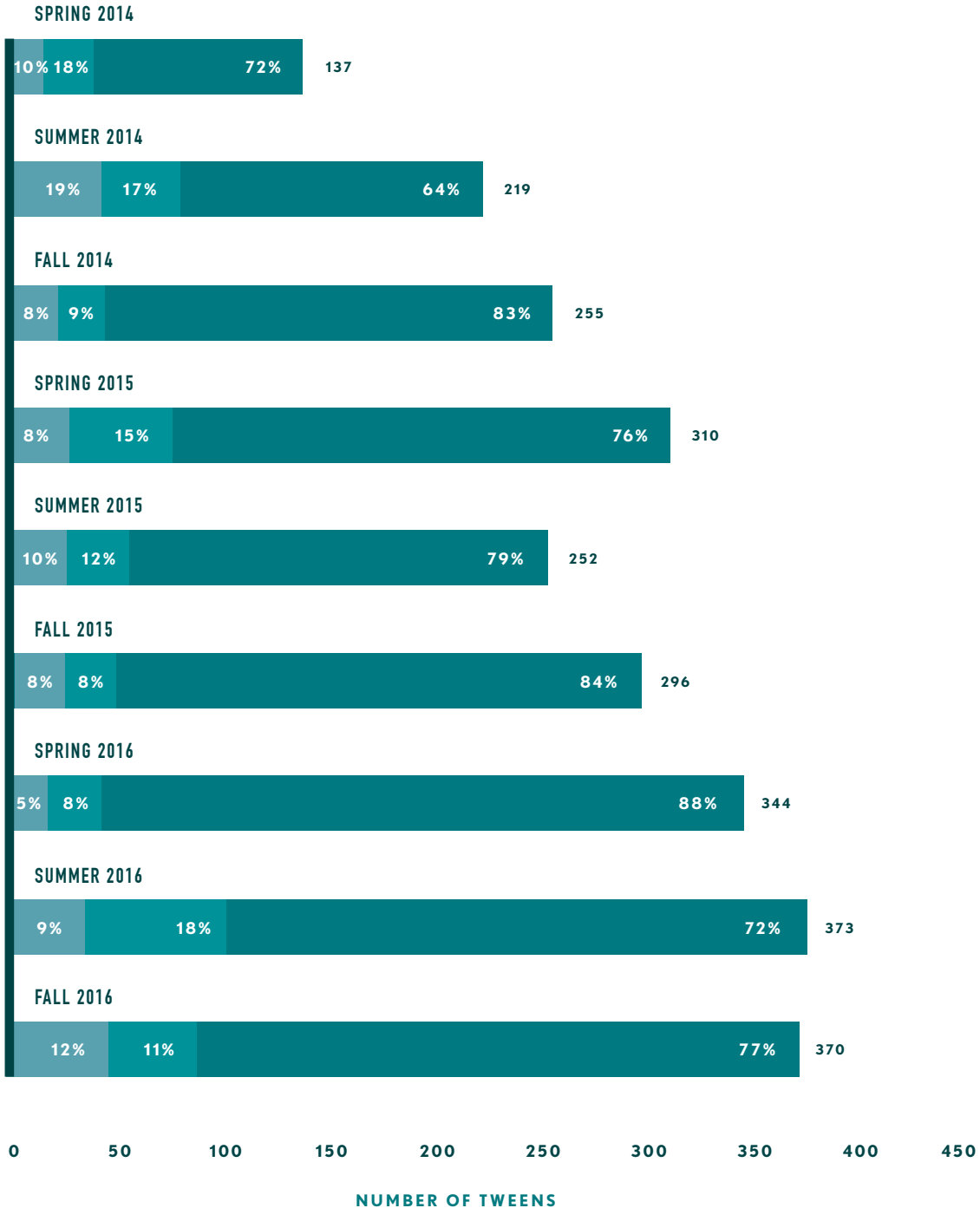
However, as is common for tweens in OST programs, not every participant came to class every day, resulting in an average daily class attendance of 12. Common reasons for missing class included family or school responsibilities and other activities inside or outside of the Club.

<sup>9</sup> Fall 2016 is the last session for which complete enrollment data were available at the time of writing this report.



FIGURE 2.1

# NUMBER OF TWEENS SERVED BY PROGRAM PERIOD IN SKILL-DEVELOPMENT AND OPEN STUDIO CLASSES



**SKILL-DEVELOPMENT ONLY**      **OPEN STUDIO ONLY**      **BOTH SKILL DEVELOPMENT & OPEN STUDIO**

Source: YAI participation data (2014-16)  
Note: Students are double-counted in the figure if they attended YAI for more than one program.

(Chapter 3 provides more details on program participation.)

Each Club served 358-472 tweens in YAI over the study period. YAI served about 8% of tweens in the largest unit, while the smallest unit served just under a half (42%) of its tweens (see Appendix A).

**The three primary art forms—digital, performing, and visual arts—recruited comparable numbers of youth<sup>10</sup>; however, over time, it became apparent that art forms varied in capacity based on room size, equipment needs, and the amount of one-on-one support required.** For example, dance classes took place in relatively large studio spaces and required less individual support so more than 15 youth could be served in one skill-development class. Technical art forms, such as digital music, took place in smaller spaces, needed a computer work station (or sewing machine) for each participant, and required significant one-on-one support; these classes reached a maximum capacity of 8-10 students. Often, Clubs offered additional weekly skill-development classes for these art forms in order to serve more youth.

Table 2.1 shows that YAI primarily served low-income youth of color who said they performed well academically and had high rates of Club

attendance prior to YAI. YAI also attracted more girls than boys, even though Clubs serve approximately equal percentages of each gender. However, there were some gender and age differences by art form and class type (see box on page 46 for more details).

**CLUBS RECRUITED EXISTING CLUB MEMBERS FOR YAI, WHILE THE TEN PRINCIPLES ATTRACTED ATTENTION AND SUPPORTED WORD-OF-MOUTH RECRUITMENT.**

**Of the 1,280 tweens who participated in the pilot, 90% were existing Club members.** Unlike community arts organizations, Clubs recruited from an existing population of participants. In fact, the three pilot Clubs were chosen, in part, because they served youth who otherwise would not have access to high-quality art skill-development programs. To cultivate youth interest, teaching artists, liaisons, and Unit Directors used a variety of recruitment strategies directed toward Club youth and their parents. In addition, Clubs integrated YAI into their existing Club-wide external recruitment efforts, and YAI staff made some limited efforts at external recruitment in the surrounding Club communities.

<sup>10</sup> Fall 2016 is the last session for which complete enrollment data were available at the time of writing this report.

TABLE 2.1

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF YAI TWEENS

	DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION	YAI
RACE <sup>a</sup>	Black or African American	54%
	White or Caucasian	16%
	Hispanic or Latino	15%
	Multi-Racial	2%
	Other	13%
GENDER <sup>b</sup>	Female	58%
	Male	42%
AGE OF YAI PARTICIPANTS <sup>c</sup>	Under 12	47%
	12 to 14	53%
FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH STATUS	--	97%
SELF-REPORTED EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS <sup>d</sup>	Mostly As and Bs on report card	77%
	Learning is "very important"	68%
	Missed school more than 2 times in the past month	20%
	Plan to attend college	87%
CLUB ATTENDANCE <sup>e</sup>	Participants who attended the Club 1 or more day per week before YAI	67%

<sup>a</sup> nYAI=1,280 nNon-YAI=6,929; Source: YAI participation and background data and Club member background data, 2014-16

<sup>b</sup> nYAI=1,280 nNon-YAI=6,932; Source: YAI participation and background data and Club member background data, 2014-16

<sup>c</sup> n=693; Source: YAI participation and background data, Spring 2016

<sup>d</sup> n=1,073, 207 participants did not report free or reduced-price lunch program status; Source: YAI participation and background data, 2014-2016

<sup>e</sup> nYAI=1,129 nNon-YAI=3,357; Source: Club participation data, Fall 2012 to Fall 2016

Note: n for club member background data; 2014-16 varies due to missing race data.

**Intentional word-of-mouth recruitment was the most effective recruitment strategy, and it was supported by the implementation of the Ten Principles.**

Clubs also used formal recruitment strategies: they distributed new, professionally-produced YAI marketing materials, including flyers and posters, and they also offered exposure classes. Few youth, however, reported first hearing about YAI from these sources (see Appendix B). Recruitment strategies are described below.

- *YAI's teaching artists (Principle 1) personally invited many participants.* Just under a third (29%) of YAI participants first heard of the initiative from the teaching artists, seasoned professional artists who piqued tweens' interest with their experience and enthusiasm. Relationship building was also important; teaching artists worked to build preliminary relationships with youth to get them to try out the program. This required teaching artists to circulate throughout Clubs outside of programming times to talk about YAI. One Unit Director said:

**When the kids come in the building...[the teaching artists are] not sitting in their program areas. They're with the kids, like, "Hey, are you going to try dance? Are you going to try art? Come try my program out."**

Clubs also intentionally hired artists a month before programming began to give them the opportunity to circulate, get to know youth, and interest them in the program. Some participants said that they joined YAI because a teaching artist "inspired" them to enroll. In these cases, teaching artists convinced students that they could be successful in the program.

- *YAI artists intentionally encouraged peer-to-peer recruitment.* Youth are often engaged and invested in programs if friends are fellow participants.<sup>11</sup> About a third of surveyed participants learned about YAI from other Club members, and teaching artists agreed that a key recruitment strategy involved tweens asking their friends to participate. Tweens said they heard about YAI from friends, siblings, or other young family members, and they also reported following these individuals to YAI. One participant described knowing “everybody” in YAI because “all [his] friends” were in the program, and others reported joining because their best friends were in the program. Peer-to-peer word-of-mouth recruitment was supported by the high level of visibility of YAI within the Club, the new art spaces, equipment, and culminating events.
- *YAI’s new art spaces (Principle 3) and near-professional equipment (Principle 8) supported peer-to-peer word-of-mouth recruitment.* YAI captured youth attention because of its new spaces, new equipment, and high-quality performances, events, and productions. Club staff reported that finished art spaces, stocked with equipment and technology, attracted youth and parents. One teaching artist described an “explosion of interest” once art spaces were completed.
- *YAI artists made youth artwork visible and held high-quality culminating events in the Club; these displays supported peer-to-peer word-of-mouth recruitment.* At some Clubs, for example, dance performances were filmed and posted on video monitors within the Club, as well as on YouTube and Facebook, to engage other

youth. At other Clubs, film program participants walked through the Club with their professional video cameras, filming Club activities and events. YAI tweens also reported that culminating events and other displays, particularly those that took place within the Club, generated the interest of their peers. Some reported that non-participants would be “motivated” to join after seeing YAI art or performances. One student explained, “When they see us doing our thing in the studio, it motivates them to think... ‘Hey, this is something I might be able to do.’ It gets them thinking it might be fun for them.” Culminating events in the community also had the potential to cultivate interest from outside of the Club.

- *Unit Directors (Principle 2) and other Club staff recommended YAI to youth they thought would benefit from the program.* The third most commonly reported source of YAI information cited by youth was other Club staff. Unit Directors reported looking for youth who would be a good fit and directing them to YAI. At times, Unit Directors and other Club staff walked youth to the YAI room or introduced them to teaching artists. These personal introductions helped hesitant youth feel more comfortable.
- *YAI sought youth input (Principle 7) to identify specific artistic interests.* Youth were attracted to YAI because they had interests that weren’t addressed by existing Club programs. Figure 2.2 shows that the vast majority of YAI participants were interested in learning an art form; prior to YAI, the Clubs did not offer artistic skill-building programs to meet this need.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Amy Arbeton, Molly Bradshaw, Sarah Pepper, and Jessica Sheldon, *Making Every Day Count: Boys & Girls Clubs’ Role in Promoting Positive Outcomes for Teens* (Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 2009), [http://nationalassembly.org/uploads/publications/documents/ppv.org/295\\_publication.pdf](http://nationalassembly.org/uploads/publications/documents/ppv.org/295_publication.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> 2015 is the first year this question was asked on the NYOI; unfortunately, baseline data prior to YAI’s implementation are unavailable.

When they see us doing our thing in the studio, it motivates them to think, ‘Hey, this is something I might be able to do.’ It gets them thinking it might be fun for them.

YAI PARTICIPANT

FIGURE 2.2

## YAI PARTICIPANTS’ INTEREST IN LEARNING AN ART FORM



YAI PARTICIPANTS (N=225)

Source: National Youth Outcomes Survey, Spring 2015

# GENDER & AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

TABLE 2.2

## GENDER OF YAI TWEENS BY ART FORM AND CLASS TYPE

		PERFORMING	VISUAL	DIGITAL
<b>TWEENS WHO PARTICIPATED IN ANY TYPE OF YAI CLASS</b>				
<b>GENDER (N=1,706)</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	74%	59%	51%
	<b>MALE</b>	26%	41%	49%
<b>TWEENS WHO PARTICIPATED IN A SKILL-DEVELOPMENT CLASS</b>				
<b>GENDER (N=1,303)</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	81%	59%	54%
	<b>MALE</b>	19%	41%	46%
<b>TWEENS WHO PARTICIPATED ONLY IN EXPOSURE CLASS(ES)</b>				
<b>GENDER (N=387)</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	56%	60%	40%
	<b>MALE</b>	44%	40%	60%

Source: YAI Participation and Background Data (2014-2016)

Note: n sizes are larger than the total number of tweens who participated in YAI because a subset of tweens participated in more than one art form; they are double counted in this table.

Table 2.2 shows:

- Most skill-development participants were girls, but boys were almost as likely as girls to participate in digital art skill-development classes.
- Girls formed the majority of exposure class participants in performing and visual arts, but boys were the majority of exposure class participants in digital arts.
- Boys showed high participation in performing arts exposure classes relative to their representation in skill-development classes for this art form.

These participation patterns seem to demonstrate that boys were willing to try out different art forms, but they were less likely than girls to commit (except for in digital arts, where they were strongly represented).

TABLE 2.3

## AGE OF YAI TWEENS BY ART FORM AND CLASS TYPE

		PERFORMING	VISUAL	DIGITAL
<b>TWEENS WHO PARTICIPATED IN ANY TYPE OF YAI CLASS</b>				
<b>AGE AS OF FIRST DAY IN PROGRAM (N=1,706)</b>	<b>UNDER 12</b>	74%	70%	68%
	<b>12 TO 14</b>	26%	30%	32%
<b>TWEENS WHO PARTICIPATED IN A SKILL-DEVELOPMENT CLASS</b>				
<b>AGE AS OF FIRST DAY IN PROGRAM (N=1,303)</b>	<b>UNDER 12</b>	75%	72%	70%
	<b>12 TO 14</b>	25%	28%	30%
<b>TWEENS WHO PARTICIPATED ONLY IN EXPOSURE CLASS(ES)</b>				
<b>AGE AS OF FIRST DAY IN PROGRAM (N=387)</b>	<b>UNDER 12</b>	63%	70%	62%
	<b>12 TO 14</b>	37%	30%	38%

Source: YAI Participation and Background Data (2014-2016)

Note: n sizes are larger than the total number of tweens who participated in YAI because a subset of tweens participated in more than one art form; they are double counted in this table.

Table 2.3 shows:

- Most participants were under 12 years old for both class types.
- Older participants were more likely to participate in digital arts.
- Younger tweens showed the highest participation in performing arts skill-development classes but for exposure classes, they were most attracted to visual arts.



Girls, especially, reported that they were interested in YAI because there were few Club programs that truly attracted or engaged them. Participants often said that YAI was more interesting than other activities, as students could be more active by “moving around” and “dancing their feelings out.” One parent said that, prior to YAI, her son would “free play” and “wander” in the Club because he could not find an activity that held his interest.

YAI's emphasis on youth input (Principle 7) also enabled YAI to tap into the specific artistic interests of Club tweens. While Clubs had other arts and crafts programs, YAI was unique because the specific art forms were selected based on youth input. In addition, YAI sought youth input on the hiring of the teaching artists and design of the space. Youth participants said that their involvement in early start-up activities motivated them to participate. Additionally, ongoing programming was developed based on youth input and interest, which attracted youth who were interested in a particular type of project. For instance, teaching artists would ask Club tweens about their interests and then develop programming around them. Club staff used surveys and conversations to gather youth input in selecting art forms.

- *Clubs distributed specialized YAI marketing materials; however, few tweens reported first learning about YAI from these posters and flyers.* Initially, the materials were art-form specific (e.g., they advertised dance, fashion design, film making, etc.) but designed by BGCA to be used across Clubs. However, teaching artists preferred materials tailored to their own programs and, ideally, wanted to design their own using their knowledge of the art form, design skills, and familiarity with Club and community contexts. Because their many other responsibilities made this difficult, BGCA produced new materials that allowed for customization, including the addition of photographs of local youth. Most teaching artists (83%) reported that they used these customized marketing materials, particularly for external recruitment. Many youth and parents had positive perceptions of YAI marketing materials—they “stood out” and were “eye-catching”—but focus group tweens did not always attend to

marketing materials, as they were “not [always] in front of [our] faces.” Youth and teaching artists reported that these materials were not typically participants’ “first” contact with YAI.

- *The Clubs offered exposure classes to recruit new youth, but those classes ended up serving multiple purposes.* In a survey administered to teaching artists across Clubs, 48% of teaching artists reported using exposure classes, such as open studio and “try-it” weeks, to generate interest. However, exposure classes did not often lead to enrollment in skill-development classes. Participation records also show that only one quarter of YAI tween participants tried an exposure class before enrolling in skill-development classes. Other exposure class participants preferred to “dabble” in the art form and stayed in exposure classes without enrolling in skill-development classes. For example, Table 2.3, in the text box, shows that boys were much more likely to participate in dance open studio classes rather than dance skill-development classes.

While some teaching artists viewed open studio classes as an important recruitment tool for youth who were “teetering” on joining, other teaching artists pointed out challenges. Often, open studio classes served younger youth, along with tweens, and this caused some older youth to lose interest. One teaching artist said that open studio “doesn’t really make sense to an outsider,” as tweens may enter the class with no knowledge of the art form, hindering their full engagement and possibly deterring further interest. Further, well-attended exposure classes could, on occasion, prevent teaching artists from spending one-on-one time with students, especially in small art spaces with a lot of expensive and complicated equipment. One teaching artist said that providing tools and materials for youth uninterested in long-term participation might inhibit more invested participants. In this way, open studio sessions could negatively influence the recruitment of fully invested youth or might not realistically portray the skill-development process.

- *Clubs led ongoing external recruitment efforts, but these were slow to yield results.* As mentioned above, YAI filled its classes with existing Club members. At the same time, YAI staff recognized the need to reach out beyond the Club to identify other interested youth and continue to grow the program. External recruitment happened in several ways. First, Unit Directors incorporated YAI into their ongoing, external Club recruitment efforts. In addition, YAI staff made YAI-specific external recruitment efforts. Some teaching artists offered off-site exposure sessions or lessons at schools and in non-YAI Clubs. One dance teacher visited an elementary school and “spent a whole morning teaching dance” to students from kindergarten to 5th grade. In the process, teaching artists also cultivated relationships with school teachers. One Club leader explained:

**So if we get into the middle schools, and we can start a relationship with, let's just say, the history teacher...if they're doing a unit on the 1920s, we could have [the visual arts teaching artist] come in and talk about what the artwork looked like in the 20s. [The fashion design teaching artist] could talk about fashion design in the 20s...So we could really make history come alive in a whole new way for these kids, using art. And then hopefully get them over here to the Club to try out those art forms as well.**

YAI artists also offered short summer sessions at non-YAI units to increase interest in other Club units. At the end of the pilot period, Clubs reported that they had started to see a small number of tweens who were not current Club members coming to the Club for YAI programs.



# ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION



# 03

## KEY QUESTIONS

**Were tweens engaged and participating regularly in a rigorous skill-development program when other Club programs were drop-in?**

**What did it take to ensure engagement and regular participation in this context?**

## KEY FINDINGS

YAI engaged participants: A majority participated regularly and returned the following year. Youth engagement and participation were driven by several factors:

- Strong youth development practices identified in the Ten Principles;
- High expectations supported by parent engagement; and
- Sparks in the arts.

Barriers to participation also existed: Clubs and artists could address some, though not all, of these barriers.

- Club leadership (Principle 2) had to manage Club-wide schedules to reduce competition with other programs ; and
- Teaching artists (Principle 1) had to manage program growing pains.
- Middle school youth had other barriers to participation.

Youth were drawn to YAI, but did they become engaged, participate regularly, and stay involved? These are important questions because, regardless of the quality of the program, youth will not experience positive outcomes if they are not participating regularly and over time.<sup>13</sup> OST programs often find it difficult to attract tweens because older youth have more autonomy, options, and responsibilities than younger children, and tweens will not participate in a program they do not find engaging. This section reports levels of tween engagement and participation and describes how YAI engaged youth and sustained their participation.

**TWEENS WERE ENGAGED IN YAI; A MAJORITY PARTICIPATED REGULARLY AND RETURNED THE FOLLOWING YEAR. Almost all participants reported enjoying YAI, and about a third—across art forms and Clubs—reported high engagement.** Across all focus groups conducted with current YAI

participants, most of whose members were moderate- to high-intensity participants, all but a handful expressed enjoyment of the program. About a third of participants also expressed high levels of motivation and commitment to YAI. When asked what they liked about the program, highly-engaged youth often said “everything” and wanted more time to participate. Highly-engaged participants said:

**It is the best thing I have ever done.**

**One thing [to improve the program] is that it could be one more day of the week. More days besides Mondays, Wednesday, and Friday...I wish it could go on one more day.**

Teaching artists, parents, and other Club staff also observed high levels of youth engagement. Several teaching artists reported YAI youth would arrive for the program early and not want to leave. Staff in all three Clubs consistently reported that YAI youth were eager to attend the program; some even waited outside the studio door for the program

<sup>13</sup> Priscilla M.D. Little, Christopher Wimer, and Heather B. Weiss, “After School Programs in the 21st Century: Their Potential and What It Takes to Achieve It,” Issues and Opportunities in Out of School-Time Evaluation no. 10 (February 2008); U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, The Evaluation of Enhanced Academic Instruction in After-School Programs: Final Report, by Alison Rebeck Black, Marie-Andrée Somers, Fred Doolittle, Rebecca Unterman, and Jean Baldwin Grossman, NCEE 2009-4077 (Washington DC., 2009), <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20094077/pdf/20094077.pdf>.

to start. Parents also reported that their children talked frequently about YAI at home. One parent said:

The program is a big deal, family-wise, because they bring home so much of it. We talk about it more than we talk about school. It's such a big deal—it's such an accomplishment.

#### **YAI participants were willing to put effort into the program.**

True engagement includes willingness to put concentrated effort into a challenging program.<sup>14</sup> This is important because creative challenges are necessary for skill development and broader youth development. High expectations (Principle 4) made YAI programs challenging. In almost half of the focus groups, youth demonstrated that they were embracing these challenges. One dance participant said:

...It's lots of fun, but at some point, you have to do hard work—it's not just playing around. At one point you have to get real serious...

A visual arts student gave a specific example of working through a difficult task:

I drew a picture of a really, really hard, detailed bird and a wolf...all by myself and it was really hard. I got really, really frustrated, and I thought 'Oh my God I am never going to get this' and I started sketching.

YAI participants also illustrated their willingness to put forth effort in the program through their desire to produce high-quality work. One digital music participant said, "Once I know it is perfect, then I will start to share it with people—but it isn't the best yet."

#### **More than half of YAI tweens who chose to participate in demanding skill-development classes participated regularly.**

We adopted a benchmark similar to that used by BGCA, which defines *regular* participants as those who come to the Club one day per week or more and *high-engagement participants* (here referred to as *high-intensity participants*) as those who come two or more times per week. Table 3.1 shows the average percent of skill-development participants who had regular and high YAI participation.

<sup>14</sup> Kaylin M. Greene, Bora Lee, Nicole Constance, Kathryn Hynes, "Examining youth and program predictors of engagement in out-of-school time programs," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 42, no. 10 (October 2013): 1557-72, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-012-9814-3.pubs/20094077/pdf/20094077.pdf>.

TABLE 3.1

## AVERAGE PERCENT OF REGULAR OR HIGH-INTENSITY YAI TWEENS IN SKILL-DEVELOPMENT CLASSES SERVED DURING EACH SESSION IN EACH SEMESTER

PERFORMING ARTS (N=569)	REGULAR PARTICIPANTS (1 DAY PER WEEK OR MORE)	66%
	HIGH-INTENSITY PARTICIPANTS (2 DAYS PER WEEK OR MORE)	39%
VISUAL ARTS (N=424)	REGULAR PARTICIPANTS (1 DAY PER WEEK OR MORE)	50%
	HIGH-INTENSITY PARTICIPANTS (2 DAYS PER WEEK OR MORE)	19%
DIGITAL ARTS (N=1,220)	REGULAR PARTICIPANTS (1 DAY PER WEEK OR MORE)	54%
	HIGH-INTENSITY PARTICIPANTS (2 DAYS PER WEEK OR MORE)	24%
OVERALL (N=2,213)	REGULAR PARTICIPANTS (1 DAY PER WEEK OR MORE)	58%
	HIGH-INTENSITY PARTICIPANTS (2 DAYS PER WEEK OR MORE)	32%

Source: YAI participation data (2014-16)

Notes: Average percent of tweens by semester; n represents sum of participants per semester. Tweens are double counted if they attended more than one semester.

### TABLE 3.1 SHOWS:

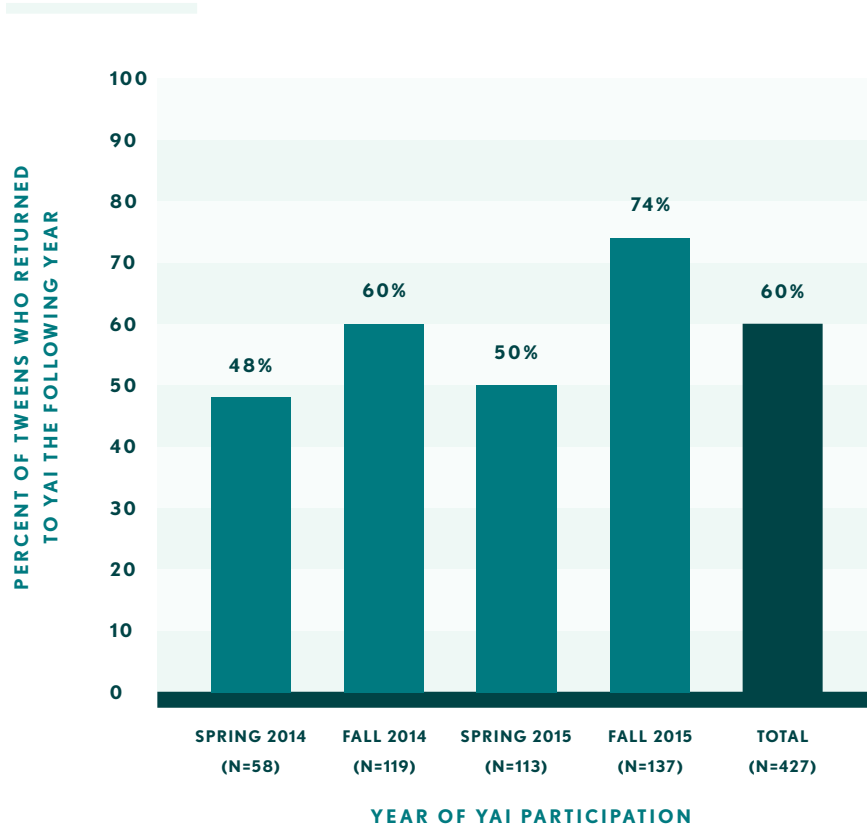
- Across all art forms, more than half of tweens each semester attended at least once per week.
- Almost one-third of participants attended at least twice per week.
- The intensity of tweens' participation varied by art form. The performing arts had the largest group of regular and high-intensity participants: two-thirds (66%) attended once a week or more and 39% attended twice a week or more over the course of one session. About half of visual and digital arts participants were regular participants (50% and 54%), but a quarter or less were high-intensity participants (19% and 24%). Our data do not allow us to conclude why this variation by art form existed.

Comparable numbers for other Club programs are not available because the pilot Clubs did not track program-level participation. The next chapter provides a comparison of Club-level participation for YAI and non-YAI tweens (see page 69 for more details).

**A majority of YAI skill-development youth returned the following year.** We looked at duration, defined as the percentage of youth that participated in YAI for at least one day during one school year and returned to YAI at least once the following year. Figure 3.1 displays overall retention, as well as seasonal fluctuations over time.

FIGURE 3.1

## ACROSS SESSION RETENTION: PERCENT OF SKILL-DEVELOPMENT TWEENS WHO CONTINUED YAI PARTICIPATION THE FOLLOWING ACADEMIC YEAR



Source: YAI participation data (2014-16)

Note: Each bar represents the percent of tweens who participated in a YAI skill-development class in the specified semester who returned to YAI at least once in the following school year.

### FIGURE 3.1 SHOWS:

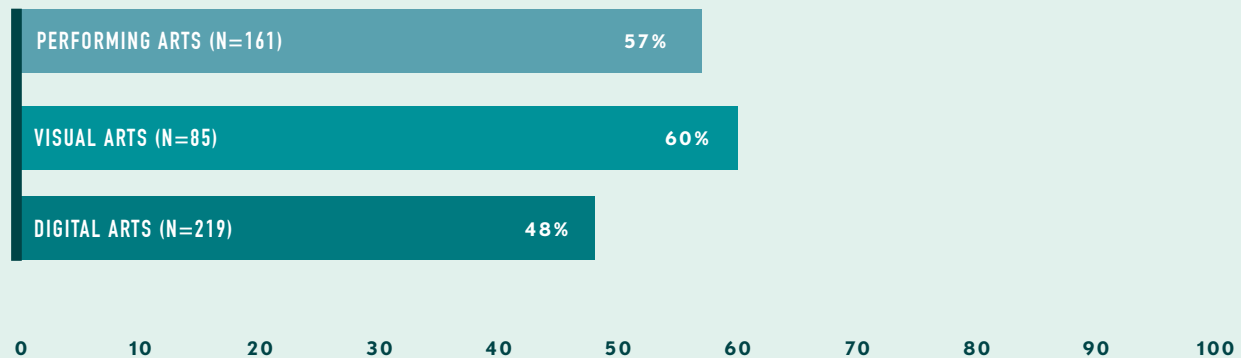
- Sixty percent of tweens who participated in at least one skill-development class returned to YAI the following academic year. This percentage is particularly impressive considering that youth typically begin to decrease their involvement in OST programs as they reach middle school. However, as with engagement data above, comparable numbers for other Club programs are not available because the pilot Clubs did not track program-level participation. The next chapter provides a comparison of Club-level retention for YAI and non-YAI tweens. (See page 70 for more details.)
- While there were seasonal fluctuations, retention increased over time. The lowest retention occurred in Spring 2014, while the highest retention rate was observed in Fall 2015. However, more data is needed to confirm this trend.
- Fall participants are slightly more likely than spring participants to return to YAI the following year, even though there are at least nine months between the fall program and the following academic year. This finding might not reflect program operations; rather, it could be that the Club attracts the most stable and committed participants at the start of each new school year.

## ART FORM DIFFERENCE

# YAI RETENTION

FIGURE 3.2

## ACROSS SESSION RETENTION: PERCENT OF SKILL-DEVELOPMENT TWEENS WHO PARTICIPATED IN YAI THE NEXT YEAR BY ART FORM



Source: YAI participation data (2014-16)

**Digital arts had the lowest retention across sessions.** This low average is driven by a low retention rate in the program's first year (not pictured above). As reported by teaching artists, this could be related to the steep learning curve in those art forms: Tweens could have become frustrated and given up, or they could have had initial misunderstandings about the nature of the art form.



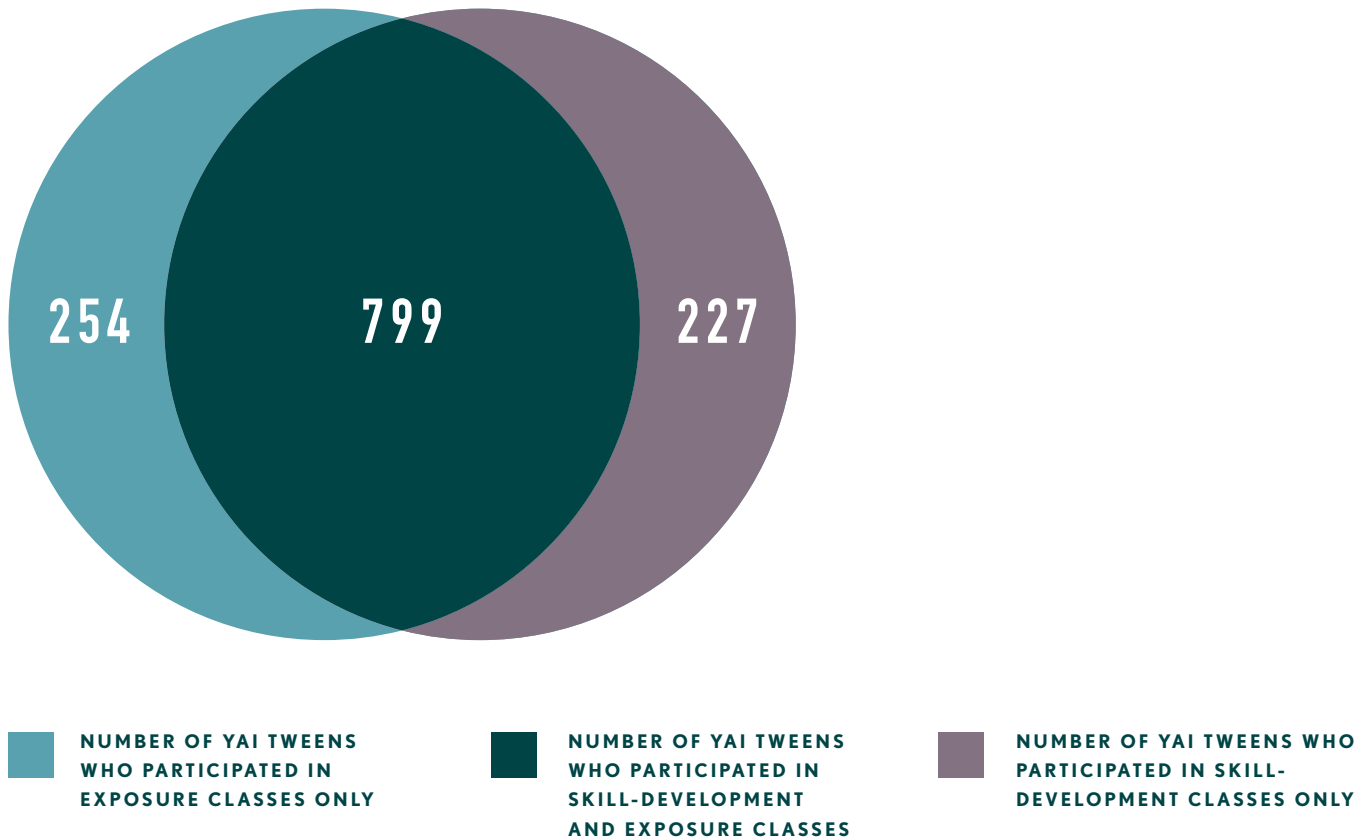
**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND REGULAR PARTICIPATION WERE DRIVEN BY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEN PRINCIPLES AND BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPARKS IN THE ARTS.**

Why was YAI successful in engaging and retaining tweens when so many OST programs are not? YAI set high expectations for attendance (Principle 4), but these expectations relied on parent engagement (Principle 9) and strong youth development practices (Principles 6-8 and 10). Additionally, youth were motivated by the art forms. Some youth developed an artistic spark or passion, while others entered with the spark and were having it nurtured. This section discusses the role of the Ten Principles and sparks in YAI engagement and participation.

**Youth rose to the challenge of YAI's high expectations (Principle 4), which included expectations for regular attendance and skill development, even though many other Club programs did not have these expectations.** Figure 3.3 shows that the vast majority of YAI participants (1,026 of 1,280) chose to participate in skill-development classes, the more rigorous component of YAI, whereas only 254 opted for drop-in exposure classes only.

**FIGURE 3.3**

## NUMBER OF TWEENS SERVED IN YAI BY CLASS TYPE



All YAI skill-development classes required a regular attendance commitment, and other Club staff described this attendance commitment as a feature that differentiated YAI from other Club programs. Across Clubs and art forms, youth were aware that they were expected to attend regularly. Artists varied in their implementation of the policy, however. All artists allowed absences for “excused” reasons, such as doctors’ appointments or school and family obligations. About half had attendance policies that offered rewards for strong attendance or consequences for missing too many classes. In some programs, artists incentivized attendance with field trips or the ability to take home a set of art supplies. In one dance class, youth were required to attend regularly to participate in culminating events and performances. In one program with a waiting list, the teaching artist asked students to sit out the session if they missed too many classes to allow other youth to participate.

**YAI required parent engagement (Principle 9) to support the attendance commitment. Early on, Clubs recognized the importance of gaining parents’ buy-in, particularly to support the attendance commitment.**

Many parents were accustomed to picking up their children on the way home from work, which could cause youth to leave YAI classes mid-session. Teaching artists quickly realized the need to communicate with parents to explain that YAI was not a drop-in program; for youth to develop skill in the art form, they had to stay for full program periods (typically two hours) and be present for each skill-development session. A few teaching artists created contracts for youth and parents or organized parent meetings to outline the attendance commitment.

Because parents were not accustomed to regular communication with Club staff, YAI used formal and informal common methods to build intentional parent relationships: they sent letters, talked to parents at Club-wide family nights, and engaged in informal conversations with parents at the Club or in the parking lot. One liaison in a Club that has curbside pick-up spent time in the parking lot connecting with parents about YAI. The liaison asked them to come into the Club, meet the teaching artist and see their child’s artwork. According to teaching artists, liaisons and parents, once they met the teaching artist and saw the artwork that was developed in the class, they understood YAI’s high expectations and were more likely to comply with YAI’s attendance requirement.

In time, teaching artists obtained parents’ contact information to text or email and used social media to share updates, photos, and videos of youth work. Club staff also used formal events, such as open houses, family nights, and culminating events, to build relationships with parents. Occasionally, parents’ immediate reception could be lukewarm. However, as YAI matured, parental investment grew. Over time, parents recognized that YAI programming seemed to be higher quality than other Club programs. Parents also appreciated their children’s high level of engagement, and they observed changes in their children because of their participation. These reported benefits will be discussed in the next chapter.

**Strong youth development practices, including adult support and positive peer relationships (Principle 6), youth input and leadership (Principle 7), hands-on activities with current equipment (Principle 8), and physical and emotional safety (Principle 10) were needed to balance the attendance requirement and maintain ongoing engagement in YAI.** Participants and teaching artists consistently pointed to these Principles—which were also important for recruitment—as important for keeping youth engaged in challenging arts programs, providing the necessary balance for high expectations. Youth described these aspects of YAI either as elements of the program they particularly appreciated or, when there were lapses in their implementation, as reasons for not participating. The ways in which each of these Principles worked to engage youth are described below.

Participants and teaching artists consistently pointed to these Principles—which were also important for recruitment—as important for keeping youth engaged in challenging arts programs, providing the necessary balance for high expectations. Youth described these aspects of YAI either as elements of the program they particularly appreciated or, when there were lapses in their implementation, as reasons for not participating. The ways in which each of these Principles worked to engage youth are described below.

- *Adult support (Principle 6).* Adult mentorship is a key facet of positive youth development and YAI's model. Teaching artists' professional backgrounds were a draw for youth, but artists and youth highlighted the ability to build positive and supportive relationships as a key to youth engagement. Artists reported that developing relationships with youth helped them to better tailor programming to meet youth needs and interests. In addition, artists reported that it was necessary to build a relationship with youth in order to challenge them and hold high expectations. It was also important for youth to have one-to-one adult support and mentorship when learning challenging skills so that youth did not get overly frustrated or give up.

Across Clubs and art forms, focus group participants reported positive relationships with teaching artists and sometimes reported that their teaching artist was more supportive than other Club staff. A focus group participant said, “[the teaching artist] really takes more time to understand what we are like. Some teachers do that, but not everyone.” Teaching artists built youth trust within YAI by listening to youth, expressing interest in their lives and, according to youth, resolving conflicts or problems in a fair manner. They also built relationships by circulating elsewhere in the Club, talking with youth over snacks, and playing sports.

- *Positive peer relationships (Principle 6).* As stated earlier, peer relationships were important levers for recruiting youth to YAI; youth often followed their friends to the program. Positive peer relationships and support were also important factors in keeping youth engaged. Focus group participants reported that they enjoyed participating with existing friends and making new ones. Teaching artists fostered positive peer relationships with collaborative

projects and activities designed for youth to get to know each other and build a sense of community. However, maintaining positive peer dynamics was an ongoing challenge as youth of different skill levels or ages joined the program. Teaching artists addressed these challenges by creating different classes for different skill levels or age groups and were supported in resolving any peer tensions by YAI liaisons who were youth development professionals.

- *Youth voice and leadership (Principle 7).* Youth voice was important to recruiting youth to the program—their interests were solicited in selecting the art form, hiring the teaching artists, and designing the spaces. Not surprisingly, youth and teaching artists reported that ongoing attention to youth input was important to keeping youth engaged and participating regularly. Teaching artists allowed youth voices to be heard in a variety of formal and informal ways. They allowed participants to vote on project ideas and held informal conversations about student feedback and interests. Participants described these experiences with appreciation. One visual arts participant said, “He listens to our ideas—he just sits there and listens to the whole thing. Even if we complain, he listens. Nobody does that.” A student in another visual arts class said, “He has a variety of things that he needs us to do, and we can choose to do it in our own order as long as we get it done.”

However, it took time for artists to develop youth voice in their classes; early on, youth in focus groups reported wanting more input, and even after teaching artists had begun to address this, youth input could, at times, backfire on the teaching artist. One teaching artist allowed the class to vote on a project; a few tweens dropped out when their ideas were not selected. Therefore, teaching artists needed support to develop strategies for eliciting and incorporating youth voice.

- *Hands-on activities with current equipment and technology (Principle 8).* Teaching artists learned early on that YAI youth wanted to learn by doing and that handling the new equipment and technology kept youth engaged. Therefore, they reported spending the bulk of YAI class time actively practicing the art form, even during active instruction. Students described a typical day as being either immediately hands-on or hands-on after some initial instruction. One visual arts student said, “Usually when [I] first get in [the YAI class] there is [time for] free draw[ing] or [to] get [your work] done. After snack we start working on some particular stuff.” In another visual arts class, a student said, “He talks first about [the] next project... and then we paint.” In a dance class, one student said, “We start with warm ups and then we do a game called ‘how are you

feeling?’ for about 15-20 minutes...” Youth reported that this active learning was important to them, particularly after school. One dancer said, “I like that it is fun and I can move around.”

Youth also appreciated access to YAI equipment and materials. A film participant said, “You get to learn techniques about the camera... we get to hold the camera and stuff... How to take pictures, record. I’ve never held a camera like that before.” A visual arts participant also said, “He lets us...use more materials than a regular art class at school.”

- *Physical and emotional safety (Principle 10)*. Some participants perceived YAI to be a safer environment than other Club programs and this drew them to the program and kept them attending. Youth parents, and staff said that YAI helped some tweens “[find] their place in the Club” or “fit in.” In some cases, youth described other Club areas as less structured, noisy, and places where they were less likely to experience positive interactions with other youth. Many tweens described YAI spaces, on the other hand, as peaceful, quiet, and calming. One participant said:

**Personally, I think this is one of the best areas, because everywhere else, like the teen room, the gym, and the other art [areas], it’s just too busy in there... but in here, it’s like you feel comfortable...I think this is a calm place, because when I first walked in here, people were doing art, they were talking quietly, versus the teen room or art room where they are arguing and talking real loud.**

In other cases, YAI served as a “closed atmosphere” of “mutual respect,” allowing some tweens, especially those interested in the arts, to express themselves without ridicule. Additionally, YAI’s tight-knit, respectful space encouraged some youth to develop peer relationships and grow comfortable with fellow Club members. As a result, many tweens enjoyed being part of the warm and welcoming YAI community. YAI participants said:

**[YAI] is my safe spot.**

**I like that we all get to show creativity in there and no one can judge anything.**

Tweens in most YAI classes reported that their teaching artist set a clear no-tolerance policy for bullying or criticism and responded when one of their peers violated this policy. One participant said, “[The teaching artist is] doing stuff but he’s also paying attention to every single person, because he always says it’s a safe environment and tells people to get out if [they’re] going to be mean.” Artists reported that they engaged openly and honestly with youth about emotional safety issues as these arose.

Teaching artists also fostered physical and emotional safety through a number of other strategies. These included incorporating formal relationship and trust building activities, such as group check-ins at the beginning of class. Artists

also encouraged youth to address emotional issues through their artwork, including addressing topics such as bullying or experiences of racism. One artist incorporated a compliment board in her classroom, which encouraged youth to provide positive feedback to peers, while other artists taught youth how to provide constructive peer critique. Finally, some artists established gender-separated classes and added privacy curtains to studio windows.

### **Youth were developing sparks in the arts, which kept them engaged.**

We heard from youth and parents across Clubs and across art forms that youth were engaged and participating regularly because they were interested in the art form. This strong and motivating interest in the art form developing through YAI could be described as a “spark.”<sup>15</sup> Sparks, a term coined by the Search Institute, appropriately captures the enthusiasm for the art form we heard described by YAI participants and observed by Club staff and parents. Research on sparks illustrates why nurturing sparks is critical for healthy youth development. Research has found that when youth have sparks, they are more likely to thrive.<sup>16</sup> For instance, an athletic spark could lead a student indifferent about education to improve her school attendance in order to access high-quality sports programming. However, the importance of sparks is often devalued when compared to academic performance. The Search Institute’s national youth surveys have found that almost half of youth who report having a spark have no adult support in developing it. These surveys also reveal that, while many types of sparks exist, the arts are one of the most frequently reported sparks.<sup>17</sup> However, arts programs must be accessible and high quality, with strong adult mentors, to nurture a spark.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, YAI is well suited to developing sparks, and this is one reason for YAI’s success in retaining youth in the program.

At least half of focus group participants described an interest in the arts as a motivating factor for their YAI participation. About one fifth entered YAI with a pre-existing interest in the art form, and YAI helped nurture and develop it. However, about one third appeared to be developing a new interest in the art form through YAI and were excited to come to YAI each day because they wanted to keep practicing and learning new skills. One participant said:

**...I am learning how to go in the computers and learning all that animation. And I also like the drawing because you draw it and you put it in the computer and it helps you... I had something to look forward to coming to [the teaching artist’s] room.**

<sup>15</sup> Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain, “Adolescent Thriving,” 264.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 264.

<sup>17</sup> Peter C. Scales, Peter L. Benson, and Eugene C. Roehlkepartain. Teen Voice 2010: Relationships that Matter to America’s Teens, (Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2010), 5.

<sup>18</sup> Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain, “Adolescent Thriving,” 274-75.

Another tween described her interest in the art form: “The whole fact that I’m making music is really awesome!” Two participants talked about their art form becoming hobbies for them:

■ **Fashion helped me find something to do—a hobby.**

A few participants were also beginning to imagine future careers in art. One said:

**It changed me. At first, I didn’t know what I wanted to be, and now I know what I want to be, and now I know I want to follow with my dreams [of being a dancer].**

Not only did the art form motivate youth to come to the program, but engagement continued when youth were at home. YAI parents across Clubs and focus groups described seeing their children practicing at home; they were pleased that youth were engaged in productive activities. Two parents, one with a daughter in fashion design and another with a son in digital music, described their children’s home activities:

**She was really immersed in [fashion design]. There are times where I can’t find her, and I’ll holler and say, ‘where are you?’ and she says, ‘I’m downstairs sewing.’ So she set up her own sewing thing. She uses my sewing machine more than I do—she designs everything from Barbie to American Girl to things for herself.**

**[My children] were telling me all this stuff they are learning over the summer. And playing music and they bring home their thumb drives with their videos or music that they made, all of that stuff. So, it was really cool. They are proud of it, and now my son does not stop singing.**

Other parents also reported at-home activities with their children, including filming videos or drawing and painting. One parent said, “All she does is dance, dance, dance. But before, she wasn’t really into it.”



**BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION ALSO EXISTED; CLUBS COULD ADDRESS SOME, THOUGH NOT ALL, OF THESE BARRIERS.**

**Club leadership (Principle 2) had to manage unit-wide schedules to reduce competition with other programs.** Youth had multiple interests, and programming for their age group sometimes occurred at the same time as YAI. In addition, the Club philosophy calls for a well-rounded experience. Some Club staff were concerned that the commitment required by YAI would prevent youth from participating in a balanced slate of activities. A Unit Director from one Club explained:

Integrating both pieces [YAI and other activities] is a challenge, trying to make sure all our kids get everything they need as a whole. When it comes to sports, a lot of our kids have to cancel everything to get to basketball or football. How do we move forward to get them to say, “This is what I signed up for, this is what I’m going to do”? That’s a challenge, trying to make sure they have dance and art, and character building, healthy life skills. How can we combine it?

Early in the initiative, the commitment required by YAI also created tensions with other staff, who were also seeking tweens for their activities. Unit Directors played a key role in coordinating scheduling to avoid these conflicts and tensions and allow youth to participate in YAI without giving up other activities.

**Teaching artists (Principle 1) had to manage program growing pains.** As the program matured, it encountered new retention challenges that required support for teaching artists as they developed new strategies.

- *Keeping program content fresh and challenging for program veterans.* Teaching artists were challenged to keep programs fresh and engage veteran participants while also addressing the needs of beginners. In one class, several veteran students left the program, reporting that projects were being repeated for the benefit of beginners and that the program had become boring. Some programs created advanced and beginner classes to address these challenges.

- *Integrating new and younger participants and increased class sizes.* In addition, over time, younger participants entered the program, creating tensions with older, more mature youth. And, as class sizes grew, teaching artists found it even more challenging to manage different skill levels and ages. In some cases, they were reluctant to limit class sizes because they and the Club wanted to serve all interested youth. However, some older youth in one larger class reported leaving the program because their younger peers were “annoying” and there was too much disruption. Toward the end of the study period, a few teaching artists experimented with project-based instruction to engage older youth and permit them to work independently from younger students.
- *Managing teaching artist turnover.* Over time, teaching artists left and were replaced, and some youth who held close relationships with an artist left the program if they didn’t bond in the same way with the new artists. To help keep youth engaged through staff transitions, Clubs involved veteran youth in the selection of the new instructors to help retain students’ enthusiasm and involvement.

**Middle school youth had other barriers to participation.**

Tween participation in OST programs typically declines because youth at this age have other competing activities or responsibilities as well as more autonomy. Focus groups with youth<sup>19</sup> who discontinued their attendance described these external barriers to involvement, reporting that middle school experiences interfered not only with YAI but with Club attendance in general. Older tweens were more likely than younger tweens to report these conflicts, including more homework, school sports practice, or afterschool babysitting responsibilities. At one unit, rising middle school youth lost transportation to the Club as their new school was further away from the Club, so they could not walk, and there was no bus drop-off at the Club. As tweens transitioned to middle school, then, a number of barriers emerged which prevented YAI involvement.

<sup>19</sup> From each YAI class (N=32).





# PERCEIVED VALUE



## KEY QUESTION

**What was the perceived value to youth and Clubs from high-quality arts programs?**

## KEY FINDINGS

High-quality arts skill-development programming added value to the Clubs.

- YAI provided tweens with developmentally rich programs that offered a more positive Club experience than other Club programs.
- YAI increased tween Club participation and retention when other tween participation was declining.

High-quality arts skill-development programming benefited tweens.

- YAI created environments in which youth reported experiencing social-emotional development.
- YAI created the conditions for tweens to develop artistic skills.

The previous chapters showed that, while many OST programs struggle to attract and engage tweens, the Ten Principles attracted them to YAI, where they also participated regularly and over time. However, Clubs already had full schedules, and YAI programs were more demanding and expensive to implement. The final key questions that this report addresses, then, are: Why should Clubs or other OST programs add this type of programming to their schedule? What was the added value of these high-quality arts skill-development programs for tweens and Clubs?

The data reveal that these programs added value to the Club by providing youth with developmentally rich experiences that offered a more positive experience and increased tweens' Club participation and retention. YAI also created environments in which youth were reported to be developing art skills and social-emotional competencies.

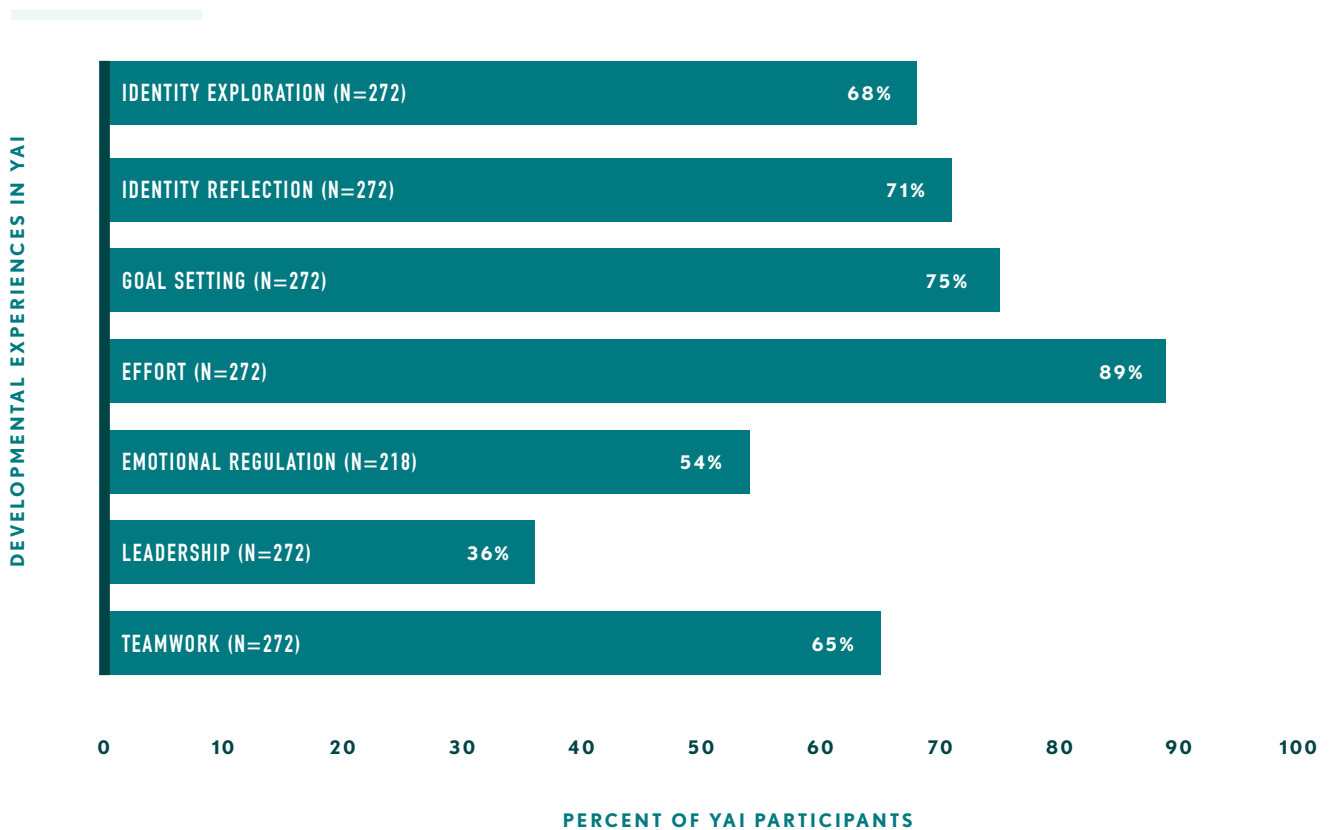
This section describes evidence that YAI and the implementation of the Ten Principles accrued benefits to the Club and its participants.

**IMPLEMENTING A HIGH-QUALITY ART SKILL-DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM LIKE YAI HAS THE POTENTIAL TO PROVIDE YOUTH WITH DEVELOPMENTALLY RICH PROGRAMS THAT OFFER MORE POSITIVE CLUB EXPERIENCES THAN OTHER CLUB PROGRAMS.**

YAI participants reported that their class was filled with important youth development experiences such as identity exploration and reflection, goal setting, effort, emotional regulation, leadership, and teamwork. The YAI youth survey asked participants to rate the frequency with which they had developmentally important, positive experiences in YAI classes. Figure 4.1 shows the vast majority of youth reported having developmentally important experiences in half or more of their YAI classes. These developmentally important experiences correlated with youth's experience of the Ten Principles (see Appendix C).

FIGURE 4.1

# PERCENT OF TWEENS WHO REPORT HAVING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES IN YAI IN MORE THAN HALF OF YAI CLASSES



Source: YAI Participant Survey (2014-16)



**FIGURE 4.1 SHOWS:**

- About two thirds of YAI participants had experiences related to effort, goal setting, identity reflection and exploration, and teamwork in half or more of their classes.
- YAI participants experienced leadership opportunities less frequently than other developmental experiences. Just over a third of participants had leadership experiences in half or more of their classes each session. This aligns with feedback provided by teaching artists who struggled to identify meaningful and productive leadership experiences for youth, especially when YAI was new and tweens had little to no experience with the art form.

YAI youth also reported having positive overall Club experiences and, in some instances, more positive ones than those of non-YAI participants. BGCA administers an annual nationwide survey which asks members about their perceptions of the Club, known as the Club Experience. The Club Experience uses seven indicators to measure the five key elements of positive youth development. Club experiences are important because BGCA has found that its programming is more impactful when youth experience these five elements and participate regularly.

Table 4.1 shows that tweens who attended YAI reported Club experiences that were as good as or better than those of tween Club participants who chose not to participate in YAI. Specifically, YAI tweens reported significantly higher levels of recognition and high expectations from staff than similar peers who opted not to participate in YAI. These two experiences align to key YAI elements, including recognition received from culminating events and the high expectations present in YAI classes.

TABLE 4.1

## FIVE KEY ELEMENTS OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS FOR YAI PARTICIPANTS VS. CLUB MEMBERS WHO DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN YAI

KEY ELEMENT <sup>b</sup>	AVERAGE SCORE (1-4 SCALE WHERE 4 IS FAVORABLE) <sup>a</sup>	
	CLUB MEMBERS WHO DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN YAI (N=281) <sup>c</sup>	CLUB MEMBERS WHO DID PARTICIPAT IN YAI (N=123) <sup>d</sup>
ADULT CONNECTIONS	2.80	2.93
EMOTIONAL SAFETY	3.02	3.05
PHYSICAL SAFETY	3.12	3.08
RECOGNITION	2.95	3.18*
HIGH EXPECTATIONS	3.40	3.73**
BELONGING	2.93	2.99
HAVING FUN	3.23	3.29

Source: 2016 National Youth Outcomes Survey

Note: Stars indicate that averages are significantly different between YAI participants and matched non-YAI Club members; \*\*=p<.01; \*=p<.05

<sup>a</sup> Scores represent regression-adjusted means controlling for demographics, Club, and attendance. Scales for staff support, emotional safety, physical safety, recognition, high expectations, belonging, and having fun range from 1-4, where 4 is the most favorable rating. Scale for physical safety also includes one question with a range from 1-5, with 5 indicating the most physical safety.

<sup>b</sup> The five key elements are represented by seven constructs, as listed here.

<sup>c</sup> The minimum number of days these tweens attended the Club is 9 and the mean is 93 days in 2016.

<sup>d</sup> Includes all tweens who participated at least one day in a YAI skill-development class in 2016 and completed the NYOI.

### IMPLEMENTING A HIGH-QUALITY ART SKILL-DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM LIKE YAI COULD INCREASE TWEEN PARTICIPATION AND RETENTION IN OST PROGRAMS.

Given their overall positive experience and regular participation, the research examined whether YAI involvement was related to any changes in overall Club participation. Due to its design, our research is not able to determine if YAI was the cause of these differences; nonetheless, the findings suggest that YAI is achieving valuable outcomes.

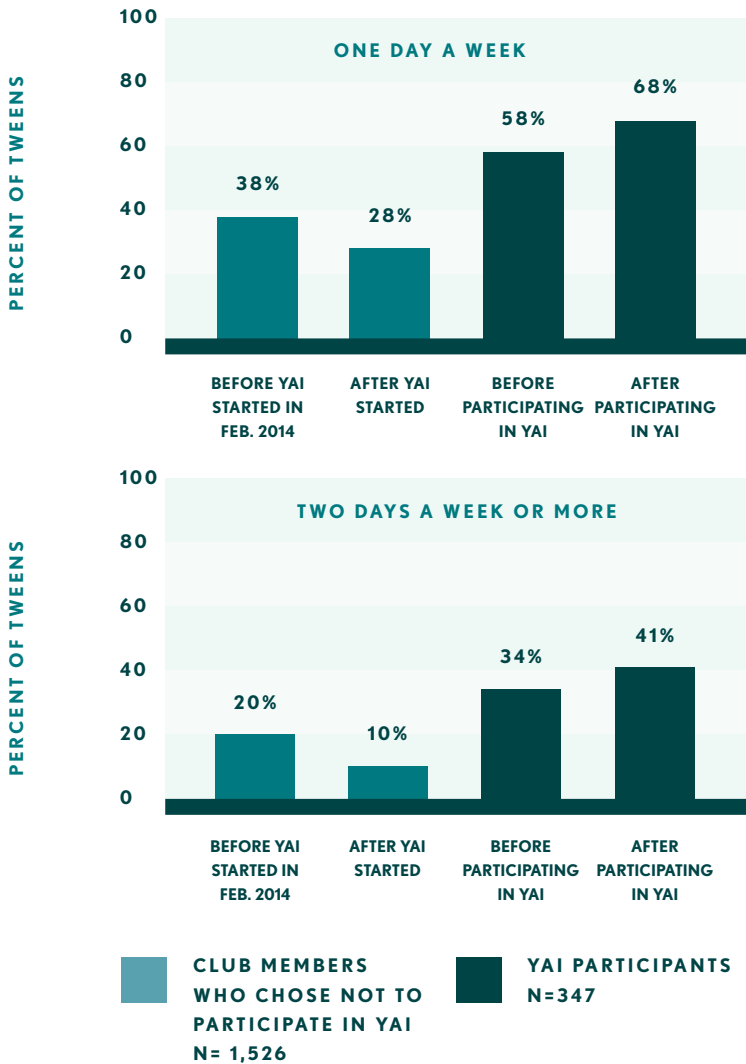
### YAI participants increased their overall Club participation after joining YAI, while non-YAI tweens' participation declined over the same period.

Specifically, we calculated the percent of YAI tweens who attended the Club regularly before and after YAI participation, and we assessed how this number compared to Club attendance among YAI non-participants<sup>20</sup>. For those who were not in YAI, all Club attendance after the first day of YAI was considered "post YAI." We looked at both BGCA attendance benchmarks—the percent who attended the Club one day a week or more and the percent who attended the Club two times or more per week. Figure 4.2 displays the results of this analysis.

<sup>20</sup> We examined the change in attendance pattern after YAI participation by controlling for participants' attendance trends before YAI started in 2014. We found the change in attendance remained the same pattern regardless of participants' pre-existing attendance trend.

FIGURE 4.2

## CLUB ATTENDANCE AMONG YAI PARTICIPANTS AND CLUB MEMBERS WHO DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN YAI



Source: Club participation data (2012-16)

Note: We examined the change in attendance patterns after YAI participation by controlling for participants' attendance trends before YAI started in 2014. We found the change in attendance patterns remained the same regardless of participants' pre-existing attendance trend.

### FIGURE 4.2 SHOWS:

- The percentage of YAI participants who attended the Club regularly (once a week or more) *increased* from pre- to post-YAI. In contrast, the percentage of non-YAI tweens who attended the Club at least one day a week *decreased* over the same period.
- The percentage of YAI participants who attended the Club two or more days a week *increased* from pre- to post-YAI. However, the percentage of non-YAI tweens who attended at least two days a week *decreased*.

FIGURE 4.3

# ONE-YEAR CLUB RETENTION RATES FOR YAI PARTICIPANTS AND CLUB TWEENS WHO DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN YAI



Source: Club participation data (2012-16)

**YAI participants also increased the duration of their Club participation after joining YAI.** Figure 4.3 displays the results of this analysis.

**FIGURE 4.3 SHOWS:**

- YAI participants were much more likely than non-YAI participants to come back to the Club year after year. In each year, almost three quarters of YAI participants returned to the Club (for YAI or for other activities) in the subsequent school year, compared to about one third of non-YAI Club tweens. As noted above, our data do not allow us to conclude that YAI caused youth to return to the Club. Nonetheless, this finding suggests that YAI is a promising strategy for keeping youth engaged as they get older.

**IMPLEMENTING A HIGH-QUALITY ART SKILL-DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM LIKE YAI CREATES AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH YOUTH CAN EXPERIENCE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.**

The YAI research explored the potential outcomes of a high-quality arts program. YAI created the conditions for positive youth development because it was high-quality, youth were regularly participating, and they were having multiple developmentally important experiences on a routine basis. However, it was unclear what specific youth development outcomes would result. We asked parents, Club staff, and youth to reflect on the benefits of tween YAI participation to better understand the program's potential impact.

Parents, Club staff, and youth reported that youth were experiencing social-emotional development. Prior research has found that high-quality OST programs bolster youth's social and emotional development when youth participate regularly.<sup>21</sup> The Center for Social and Emotional Learning defines social and emotional learning competencies as "knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."<sup>22</sup> Table 4.2 defines several social and emotional learning competencies observed by parents and Club staff and reported by YAI participants. Several social-emotional skills, including self-awareness, self-management and persistence, and relationship skills, were observed by parents and Club staff and reported by YAI participants. Exploratory evidence for the development of each of these skills in YAI participants is described below.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Devaney and Deborah Moroney, *Ready for Work: How After-School Programs Can Support Employability Through Social and Emotional Learning*, (Chicago, IL: Beyond the Bell at American Institutes for Research, 2015), <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/After-school-Programs-Support-Employability-Brief-Dec-2015.pdf>; Joseph A. Durlak, Roger P. Weissberg, and Molly Pachan, "A meta-analysis of afterschool programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 45, no. 3-4, (March 2010): 16, 294-309, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-010-9300-6>.

<sup>22</sup> "What is SEL," Center for Social and Emotional Learning, accessed January 24, 2018, <https://www.casel.org/what-is-sel/>



TABLE 4.2

## THREE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS EMERGING FROM YAI PARTICIPATION

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCY	DEFINITION
SELF-AWARENESS	Self-confidence and self-efficacy; the ability to recognize one's strengths and accurate self-perception.
SELF-MANAGEMENT AND PERSISTENCE	The ability to manage and control emotions, set goals, and work towards them; self-discipline and persistence.
RELATIONSHIP SKILLS	The ability to communicate well, to listen and respond appropriately, and to negotiate conflict.

Note: Definitions for the social-emotional skills come from the Center for Social and Emotional Learning: <https://casel.org/>

**Self-awareness: Parents and Club staff members commonly described increased self-confidence resulting from YAI experiences.** Observations were based on participants' interactions with teaching artists, their efforts to meet the program's high expectations, and particularly through their work in culminating events. Comments from a few parents, typical of what we heard across Clubs and art forms, are reported below:

**Parent 1:** Her self-esteem, in general, has improved. Again, she couldn't do sports—but this is something that makes her stand out, like, 'I made these pants I am wearing today.' She's done a lot of leggings and skirts. The leggings she made were [perfect]...They fit her nicely. It's so impressive. It is such a big deal, when she looks at herself.

**Parent 2:** I think they have exceeded the goals I set. [Teaching artist] has performed a miracle on my daughter.

She can dance now, she's not shy, she doesn't mind getting up in front of people, and she would not do that. She's done a 180 as far as her personality—she wants to do more now, and she was not like that [before].

**Parent 3:** [My daughter] opened up on a personal level. She is a very quiet and shy girl. Not a lot of self-esteem. And now she is really open to taking some constructive criticism, without taking it personally. She is able to be open-minded to others' opinions and work even if they don't agree with hers...She has always been really insecure. And this has given her a voice. She is just a stronger person now. She said 'I used to come to Boys & Girls Club and cry if anybody looks at me wrong. And now if they say something about my artwork I just go, "Well I did it! I don't see you...putting yourself out there.'" So she is

just a stronger person. Built in some resiliency. I'm really, really thankful. I was concerned about her. She definitely said, "Now I laugh it off or if someone says I am weird, I say, 'thank you!'" She was not like that before. She would cry. Now she is a stronger person. It is fabulous to see...She used to be such a people pleaser, and that is nice, but now she is a strong, assertive young lady.

Youth in four focus groups also described an increased sense of self-efficacy, particularly in relation to culminating events. One dancer said, "I was proud of myself when I was done." Other dancers in another program agreed: "It is scary, at first, before you really perform. But then at the end you congratulate yourself for achieving it." Two visual arts students described feeling more comfortable showing their art to others:

**Participant 1: We can show people our art and not hide it.**

**Participant 2: Because it gets you over your shyness.**

While youth were developing self-confidence, they were also developing an accurate self-perception of their artistic abilities—another related component of self-awareness. Teaching artists and youth reported that developing the confidence to share artwork or perform was a first step, but blind confidence that was not grounded in realism was not helpful. One participant got a reality check that decreased his perhaps-unsubstantiated confidence, leading him to work to improve:

**It's definitely changed my confidence and show-off attitude. When I first came, I thought I was the best at everything. I realized when I got in the booth I didn't sound as good as I thought I did. [The teaching artist] explains to you that when you come in this program, you are not the best, you're supposed to build your way up to [be] the best. You just can't come into the business as the best.**

A dance teaching artist described a national competition that required youth to develop an "accurate self-perception," which further motivated them to improve in the art form:

**They did a great job. But afterwards, it hits them right away, "Man, we messed up here." We had people crying...[but] you need that breakthrough so you understand where you are and where you want to be. It happens to all of us. I feel it's best for it to happen when you are young and figuring it out versus when you are an adult... they didn't give up at all. Like there was a moment of sadness for a second...then we had to buckle back down the following week.**

YAI provided youth opportunities to develop self-awareness by developing their confidence and honing their self-perception. This allowed them to improve and grow as artists.



**Self-management and persistence: Parents, youth, and other Club staff reported that YAI participants developed self-management skills associated with the program’s high expectations and participants’ relationships with teaching artists.**

Parents across all art forms described changes in participants’ self-management skills:

Parent 1: It’s definitely taught them more responsibility. Because it’s like, “[Teaching artist] is going to be so upset if I don’t do this or don’t get this done.” They know they’re going to be held accountable—even though it’s a fun activity, they still know that they have to have some responsibility.

Parent 2: He makes sure he has his dance clothes in his book bag and he makes sure he commits himself to being here...He’s finishing his work at school, because he knows that when he gets to the Club he has to eat and go to dance. He doesn’t have time to do his homework at the Club, so he does it at school. So that when he gets here he can go straight to dance, because he knows he can’t be late because then [teaching artist] won’t let him dance right away, so he’s like “I gotta get this work done”—which is great for school.

Club staff described similar changes. One Unit Director said, “You can see them being a little bit more responsible, being more of like a leader rather than causing trouble or causing issues.”

Finally, youth in three focus groups described improvements in their own behavior and self-management. One youth said: “I changed how I talk to people, if I talk politely to them. How I react to people—I stop before I do something stupid. It helps me get out of trouble too.”

Other youth described how previous behavior problems had subsided since they started YAI. One participant said, “I used to get in trouble, too, and [teaching artist] said I wouldn’t get to participate if I was bad. Then I started being better and now I have opportunities.”

Some YAI youth appeared to be developing the ability to persist in challenging artistic tasks, another aspect of self-management. This competency was a clear theme in five youth focus groups as well as in interviews with parents and Club staff. As described earlier, YAI youth engaged in challenging program activities. Parents and caregivers described ways in which they observed youth developing persistence outside of YAI as a result of these experiences. One parent said:

Usually, if she does not ‘get it’ immediately, she gets frustrated with herself. You say, slow down, take it step by step, she couldn’t really grasp that. I feel like being involved in the dance or fashion has helped her with that, because A leads to B leads to C, you can’t just go from A to D. It helped her grasp that ... everything is a process. You just need to find the right process. And I don’t think she was able to grasp that before these classes.

Multiple dance program participants described learning lessons about hard work and practice. One YAI participant said: “I love dancing, and if you like this, you have to practice a lot to get better and better.”

Digital music students in one focus group also reported learning about practice. When asked what they learned in the class, they reported:

**Participant 1: Try to improve what you made.**

**Participant 2 [referring to the first participant]: He has to practice.**

**Participant 3: Practicing once isn't really practicing.**

A visual arts student similarly reported: "You have to take your time on doing your best because, if you rush, it may not turn out."

**Relationship skills: Parents, other Club staff, and youth reported that YAI fostered relationships between youth who would not otherwise have been friends.**

**[The program has] made friendship with kids you wouldn't think would have friendships, because it's bringing kids from their different groups, and then they...come into dance, and then they're all together. They're friends...they're really tight now. Some of them wouldn't have been friends.**

**They are building really good relationships... And they are socializing with people that might not have been someone they would have dealt with or have had contact with.**

In almost half of our focus groups, youth also reported developing new friendships. One visual arts participant said: "I like how you can help others...and make new friends. And...express your feelings to others. Try to help them out and be kind."

Another dance participant reported, "It's helped us get along much better."

In summary, parents, Club staff, and participants reported many benefits for YAI youth as a result of participants' involvement in high-quality arts programs. While our data do not allow us to assess how many YAI youth experienced these benefits, they were consistent themes across all art forms.

**ART-SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES COULD CREATE THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH YOUTH CAN DEVELOP ART SKILLS, INCLUDING UNDERSTANDING HOW TO USE AND CARE FOR TOOLS, MATERIALS, AND SPACE.**

YAI professional artists, high expectations, current equipment and technology, and high-quality art spaces all created the environment for artistic skill development. We heard that youth were at the beginning stages of "learning the craft" of their art form.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Hetland, Winner, Veenema, and Sheridan, Studio Thinking.

### **Tweens and teaching artists described how youth learned techniques of the craft.**

Teaching artists described youth learning fundamental skills. One digital music teaching artist reported, “in the end, they’ve learned a bunch of skills. They learned to make beats, how to structure a song, work together, and put a song together.” Another visual artist explained the way in which his participants developed more intentionality in their use of colors:

You know, there’s more intentional color-scheming. You know, a lot of kids, when they come in to paint, they mix a bunch of colors together, and they get these really weird greens and really muddy colors. And then when they start to realize that once that dries and they paint over it, they get these really bright colors on top. So, they learn about how to intentionally design something. And with a lot of the kids, they learned about design...they have realized, oh, you don’t need 100,000 colors in there, you just need two.

In three quarters of our focus groups, youth provided concrete examples of learned skills. They described learning how to draw cartoons and 3D images, how to sew, or how to create special effects and do basic dance moves. One participant said:

[In film class] we made the superhero [movie]. It’s easy to do special effects, and now I know how they make special effects look realistic.

Another young person described the process of painting:

The process of our creating is, first, imagine what you are going to draw. Then the next step is you are going to sketch it out to see what it looks like at first. If it doesn’t look right to you, you sketch it out again, and if it still doesn’t look right, then you keep on making changes to it. Then, if it looks right, that’s when you start coloring it in to find out what colors you want to use. Then you paint it on a canvas.

A third youth described learning a new dance:

First you have to learn the moves, then you got to get the details, then you’ve got to get through all that and make it slightly your own but not so [you] stand out. Then you work on trying to compromise to be with the whole group. And then you got to clean it. It’s just a long process.

To see the growth...when they first started, and it was kind of what you would expect from a [youth performance]... And then, to see what they did on the stage last year was like, ‘this is dance!’

YAI COMMUNITY PARTNER

Other dance students described learning dance moves, such as “jazz fingers,” or more physical skills, such as a cartwheel or a tuck-and-roll. Community arts partners also recognized youth developing their technique. One community partner said:

To see the growth...when they first started, and it was kind of what you would expect from a [youth performance], you know, it was sort of dance. And then, to see what they did on the stage last year was like, “This is dance!”

**Youth also reported learning how to use and care for the tools of the art form.** Youth described learning to use video cameras, editing software, and sewing machines. One tween reported, “I knew how to take photos on a camera or a phone, but not video...”

Other tweens described learning about visual arts tools. In one focus group, participants described a variety of lessons about caring for their paint brushes, including “Don’t use hot water because it [will] damage the paint brush” and “don’t leave the paint brushes out.” In the fashion design program, both participants and the teaching artist reported youth learning to use the sewing machines and other sewing tools. The teaching artist also described ways in which youth were learning to use and care for the tools. The teaching artist said:

Well, the main thing is that some of them can fix the machines, and it’s taken a year, but [they] actually can thread them. And [they are] sewing straight. And they are more independent to just go on the machine, and they don’t have as many issues as they go further along...I’ve seen how much those guys have grown from last year.

In summary, the data suggest that regular or high-intensity YAI participants were developing the craft of the art form, improving their technique, and learning to use and care for tools and materials.

CHAPTER 5

# CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH



BGCA's Youth Arts Initiative demonstrated that the Ten Principles for Success will attract and engage tweens in OST programming. Importantly, while these high-quality arts programs are expensive and challenging to implement, they lead to positive youth outcomes and keep tweens connected to the Club.

The YAI research suggests several lessons for OST providers and the field regarding attracting and engaging tweens in OST arts programming.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OST PROVIDERS**

The research presented in this report suggests important considerations for OST providers.

**To increase tween recruitment to arts programming, make arts visible and valued.** High-quality studio spaces, professional teaching artists, new equipment and technology, and public culminating events made arts programs visible and conveyed their value. This attention to arts programming naturally attracted youth. Multi-component OST providers seeking to attract youth to arts programs should assess the degree to which the arts are visible and valued in their organization. Programs can display youth work through events or showcases and hire professional artists to convey the program's serious focus on the arts. Programs can also facilitate recruitment by improving art spaces and incorporating high-quality equipment and supplies.





**Offer multiple engagement strategies.** While many youth committed to the high-quality arts program, some preferred to dabble. For example, boys were more willing to attend drop-in exposure dance classes than the more rigorous skill-development classes. While there were challenges associated with offering exposure classes—for example, youth could not fully engage in some art forms in a drop-in setting because they needed to learn to use the equipment—these classes did serve a purpose in some art forms and for some youth. About 25% of youth dabbled in the art form before they tried a skill-development class. OST programs seeking to recruit youth should offer both exposure and skill-development opportunities to meet different needs. In order to offer an appealing experience that could lead to deeper involvement, programs should carefully structure these classes based on the art form and participant age range.

**Don't be afraid to challenge youth and hold high expectations balanced by adult support and mentorship.** Initially, Clubs were unsure about YAI's attendance commitment requirement and concerned that it would deter participation. However, the program was able to institute an attendance commitment later recognized as a distinguishing characteristic. The attendance expectations allowed for some flexibility to account for tweens' other commitments, but still challenged youth and allowed them to develop artistic skills. High expectations and commitment do not deter tweens—in fact, they could even support deeper engagement, especially when they are reinforced by supportive adult mentors and strong youth development practices.

**Engage families to support committed attendance.** While tweens have more autonomy than younger youth, YAI staff found that they still needed to engage parents to ensure that youth could make an attendance commitment. OST programs for tweens often struggle to connect with parents, but successful communication

## For programs seeking to retain tweens, the first place to start is assessing program quality, particularly the strength of core youth development practices.

can help boost attendance. YAI artists used emails, text messages, and social media to engage parents, and culminating events deepened parent support.

**Pay attention to quality to sustain participation and foster youth development.** YAI demonstrates that tweens, a difficult age group for OST programs to attract and retain, will be attracted to a *high-quality* OST program. Strong youth development practices identified in the Ten Principles were essential to retaining youth in a challenging program. When youth left the program, their reasons often tied back to lapses in quality implementation. These included disruptions in relationships with teaching artists or peers, programs not responding to their interests or not being hands-on enough, or challenges with physical or emotional safety. For programs seeking to retain tweens, the first place to start is assessing program quality, particularly the strength of these core youth development practices.

**Recognize youth's sparks in the arts and provide mentoring to help develop them.** Interest in the arts is one of the most commonly identified “sparks” on national youth interest surveys,<sup>24</sup> yet disadvantaged youth have few opportunities to develop this spark. Youth need more opportunities to develop their artistic sparks in the presence of adult mentors, such as those in YAI. Other multicomponent

OST programs should consider adding or expanding their arts program offerings in multiple traditional and non-traditional art forms to address this need. Providers should ensure the presence of professional teaching artists who can mentor participants in the art form, as well as other components of high-quality arts programming represented in the Ten Principles.

### **RECOMMENDATION FOR THE OST FIELD** **Policymakers and funders should provide adequate funding for tween OST programs to attract and retain this population.**

The importance of OST programming, particularly for older youth, is too often overlooked by funders and policymakers. As a result, many OST programs lack the funds they need to improve quality. Clubs received dedicated funding from The Wallace Foundation for YAI to implement the Ten Principles. This research shows that YAI successfully attracted and retained tweens, a difficult population for OST programs to engage. The research also provides more evidence to support the claim that when programs are high quality and interesting, tweens will attend and participate, allowing them to achieve important developmental outcomes. For this reason, OST funders and programs should focus on building up quality, even at the expense of capacity, when providing OST programming to middle and high school youth.

<sup>24</sup> Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain, “Teen Voice 2010,” 5.





## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research provides early and preliminary information about YAI's benefits for tweens. However, more research is needed to understand YAI's impact on youth and to inform its implementation in other settings and with youth of other ages.

**Assess outcomes for high-quality arts programs.** Future YAI research should rigorously test what this research suggests: that high-quality arts programs positively impact youth's social-emotional learning. It would also be valuable to the field to assess whether particular Principles are associated with this impact.

**Explore the trade-offs between quality and outcomes.** During its pilot, YAI received dedicated funding to test whether a YSO could implement the Ten Principles. However, these funds are often unavailable to YSOs on an ongoing basis. In the future, YAI will be implemented at a broader set of Clubs with less funding to explore ways in which programs could reduce cost while maintaining quality. Whereas YAI's pilot model was relatively prescriptive, the next set of Clubs will determine how to allocate their YAI funding across the Ten Principles. This will provide the opportunity to explore how different funding allocations and the resulting program quality relate to tweens' YAI experiences and outcomes.

**Explore if YAI will work with teens.** This report suggests that YAI participation is related to ongoing involvement in a YSO with adequate intensity to accrue benefits for tweens. Teens also benefit from OST programs, but they are at least equally difficult to engage and keep. In the future, YAI will expand to serve teens, and the research will focus on what adaptations, if any, are needed to successfully ensure positive outcomes for teens.

# YAI ENROLLMENT DATA

TABLE A

## PERCENT OF CLUB TWEENS SERVED BY YAI BY UNIT (2014-16)

CLUB	UNIT	TOTAL NUMBER OF CLUB TWEEN MEMBERS	TOTAL NUMBER OF CLUB TWEENS WHO PARTICIPATED IN YAI	PERCENT OF CLUB TWEENS WHO PARTICIPATED IN YAI
BGC CENTRAL MINNESOTA	EASTSIDE	556	235	42%
	SOUTHSIDE	797	212	27%
BGC GREATER GREEN BAY	LUTSEY	913	117	13%
	NAGEL	1,621	241	15%
BGC GREATER MILWAUKEE	FITZSIMONDS	2,025	276	14%
	DAVIS	2,337	196	8%

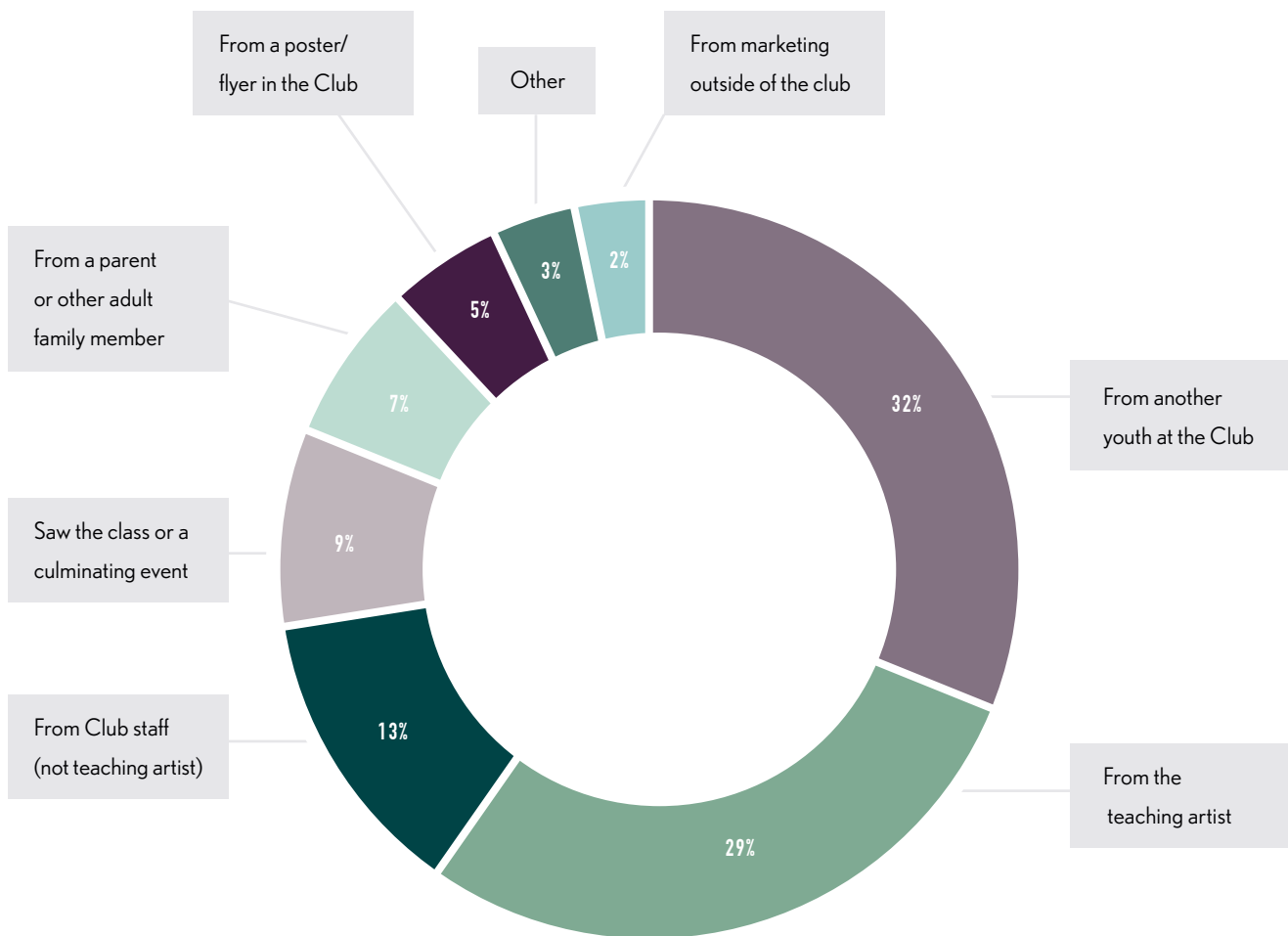
Source: YAI and Club participation data (2014-16; 2012-16)

APPENDIX B

# YOUTH SURVEY RESULTS: HOW YAI TWEENS HEARD ABOUT YAI

FIGURE B

## HOW YAI TWEENS REPORT THEY FIRST HEARD ABOUT YAI



n=304  
Source: YAI Participant Survey (2014-16)

YAI classes served about 12 students a day, on average, but enrollment was higher. Teaching artists, particularly those of art forms that required a great deal of one-on-one support, like digital music, were satisfied with small class sizes, since it meant they could provide participants with much-needed individual support. For these reasons, YAI recruitment during this period focused most intensively on internal efforts.

## APPENDIX C:

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLES AND DEVELOPMENTAL EXPERIENCES IN CLASS

Use of the YES survey also allows us to test the relevance and importance of the Principles; that is, whether implementation yields a developmentally rich experience for youth. We examined whether the YES assessment related to the experience of the Principles using a structural equation modeling regression to assess how the Principles relate to different types of positive developmental experiences.

Tweens' perceptions of the Principles are related to positive developmental experiences in YAI classes. Table C displays the relationship between seven Principles included in the survey and the positive youth development experiences measured by the YES. A "+" represents a statistically significant positive relationship between the experience and the Principle, and a "-" represents a statistically significant negative relationship. If the box is empty, it means that there was no statistically significant relationship.

TABLE C

# ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SEVEN OF THE TEN PRINCIPLES AND DEVELOPMENTAL EXPERIENCES IN YAI

PRINCIPLES	TYPE OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE						
	IDENTITY EXPLORATION	IDENTITY REFLECTION	GOAL SETTING	EFFORT	LEADERSHIP	TEAMWORK	EMOTIONAL REGULATION
<b>PRINCIPLE 1: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICING ARTISTS</b>	(-)*						
<b>PRINCIPLE 3: DEDICATED SPACES</b>		(+)**	(+)**				(+)**
<b>PRINCIPLE 4: HIGH EXPECTATIONS</b>	(+)*						(-)*
<b>PRINCIPLE 6A: POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS (ADULTS)</b>		(+)*	(+)**			(+)*	
<b>PRINCIPLE 6B: POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS (PEERS)</b>	(+)*				(+)*	(+)**	(+)*
<b>PRINCIPLE 7: YOUTH INPUT</b>	(+)**						
<b>PRINCIPLE 8: HANDS-ON SKILL BUILDING</b>							
<b>PRINCIPLE 10: PHYSICAL &amp; EMOTIONAL SAFETY</b>	(+)*			(+)**		(+)*	(+)*

Note: Findings noted in the table control for tween demographic characteristics, Club, participation, and semester.



### TABLE C SHOWS:

- Physical and emotional safety (Principle 10) was associated with the broadest array of positive developmental experiences. Tweens who felt safe were more likely to report experiences related to identity exploration, effort, teamwork, and emotional regulation in class. When tweens are safe, they may feel more comfortable taking risks associated with investing more effort, experiencing something new, and being open to teamwork. Safety may also reduce the risk of conflict thus requiring less emotional regulations by tweens.
- Hands-on experiences (Principle 8) and youth input (Principle 7) appear less important to tweens' developmental experiences. Hands-on experiences and adequate equipment were not related to tweens' rating of any YAI youth development component. Similarly, youth input is one of the hardest Principles to implement effectively, and it was only associated with one positive developmental experience: identity exploration (or trying new things). These findings do not suggest that these Principles are not important to YAI's quality, only that they are not related to these aspects of the youth experience in YAI. They may be associated with other important opportunities for tween growth not measured in this study.
- Tweens who gave higher ratings to the teaching artist as an artist and instructor (Principle 1) were less likely to report engaging in identity exploration. They may have had fewer opportunities to try something new in their YAI classes because of the artistic caliber of YAI teachers—their expertise may have translated into fewer opportunities to try a new skill. But this negative association does not suggest that teaching artists are squashing tweens—instead, their talent allows them to implement the other Principles, many of which do enhance tweens' identity exploration experiences. At the same time, higher ratings of teaching artists were associated with more experiences of teamwork. One reason for this finding might be that tween ratings of teaching artists reflect, in part, the artists' youth development skills, which enable them to teach youth about the collaborative aspects of the art form.
- Lastly, while tweens most frequently experience high expectations (Principle 4), that Principle is associated with only two developmental experiences—and one is a negative relationship. It is important to note that the variation is lowest in tweens' reports of high expectations; that is, almost all youth reported experiencing them. This makes it statistically more difficult to find a relationship between this Principle and any of the given developmental experience constructs. The negative association between high expectations and emotional regulation could be because participants who perceive high expectations could be frustrated when they are set too high, leading them to act out in class and display lower levels of emotional regulation. At the same time, high expectations were positively related to identity exploration (that is, trying something new).



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