IMAGINE U™

toolkit

ELO network
Expanded Learning Opportunities

believe 2 BECOME℠

When young people comprehend that they have a purpose to fulfill in the world, they see their futures in a whole new light.

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Equipping youth for successful futures

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background

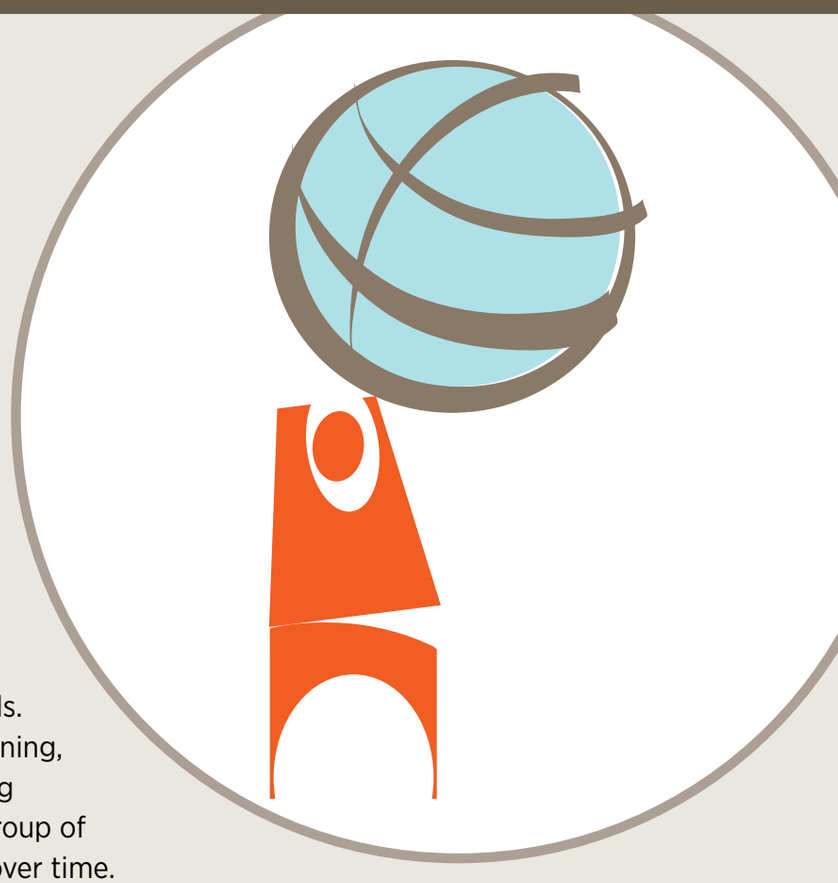
IT IS IMPORTANT to understand the context in which Imagine U took place. The Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Network had been primed over years to evaluate the impact of after-school and to drive quality within practice. The Doug & Maria DeVos Foundation recognized the extent to which ELO after-school providers were engaged and taking ownership in promoting best practice.

Since 2001, the ELO Network has been dedicated to ensuring quality after-school programs for all children to better prepare them for college, work and life. Over the years, several national investments have fueled its work to promote quality. The Forum for Youth Investment and the Wallace Foundation both invested in the ELO Network to implement a model of quality assessment and improvement. The Imagine U Initiative was a timely response to an assessment of all ELO Network providers by the David P. Weikart Center. The Weikart report showed youth engagement as one of the lowest scoring domains, consistent with national trends.

The ELO Network had also developed shared child outcomes that included social and emotional gains. The Network was exploring ways to measure social and emotional impact. Thus, the ELO Network was ripe for an initiative that acknowledged provider expertise, created a learning community, and offered a practical model to implement with measurements. This initiative has been so successful that 97 percent of ELO providers have been involved, and the trainings have been the highest attended by youth development workers to date. The ELO providers have reported a change in their language and approach to engage youth more fully, and are working to incorporate the lessons within ELO's professional development and training.

Lynn Heemstra
Director, ELO Network
Director, Our Community's Children

preface



ALL OF OUR CHILDREN HAVE POTENTIAL—the ability to learn, grow, and achieve. Every child has a special place in the world—a place where their abilities, gifts and talents converge, and when cultivated, support discovery of their purpose: plausible paths toward a meaningful future.

Helping children reach their potential and access the "good life" is the quiet hope and dream of families—parents, grandparents, care givers, and young people—across the globe. It's the shared vision and value of youth development professionals, educators, civic leaders, business leaders, clergy, and the community at large.

Imagine. When a young person is able to tap into his or her potential, possibilities unfold, opportunities reveal themselves and with the right guidance, the world opens up to them. They are propelled forward to the life that is awaiting them—a life where they are destined to do good and make a mark in the world.

Reaching the "good life," however, won't happen by osmosis. The world is changing and opportunities are not always visible to young people and their families.

Through the work of IMAGINE U, we have come to understand that if young people are to succeed in this new opportunity landscape, they must be equipped:

- with information about future careers
- with motivation to build skills and knowledge
- with techniques for securing employment
- with insights about succeeding in the workplace.

When students are armed with these capacities, tools and assets, they are ready to be self-directed, self-motivated, self-driven agents of their own successful futures.

This is what IMAGINE U promises to provide. Based on extensive student research, IMAGINE U is packed with innovative, field-tested student activities that are designed to instill a sense of purpose, impart career knowledge, cultivate growth mindsets, and teach workplace social skills.

IMAGINE U has turned out to be a great beginning, a starting place on the journey toward discovering what might propel children forward and how a group of practitioners might consistently have an impact over time. The effort represents a plausible way forward toward releasing the potential in all of our children.

We are grateful to our ELO Network partners and delighted to extend this resource to others whose mission it is to help our children succeed. Thank you!

Chana Edmond-Verley
Senior Program Officer
Believe 2 Become, an initiative of the
Doug and Maria DeVos Foundation

Imagine U overview

RECENT RESEARCH has demonstrated the importance of non-cognitive factors (also referred to as soft skills, 21st century skills, and character) for success in school, work, and life. These factors support the development of agency. Agency is a tendency to be proactive (rather than passive) in determining the course of one's life. Imagine U was conceived based on the belief that out-of-school-time programs are well-suited to support the development of agency-related factors in youth. The goals of Imagine U are to:

- support a professional learning community (PLC) of practitioners who are committed to helping young people prepare for their futures;
- focus on important topics that often fall through the cracks because it is no one's job to teach them; and
- better prepare young people for their futures.

AGENCY

Agency is an "action or intervention, especially such as to produce a particular effect" (Agency, 2014). Developing agency in children and youth entails nurturing their propensities for purposeful action—for example, habits of setting goals, taking initiative, and persisting in the face of resistance or difficulty.

The diagram to the right shows a constellation of success mindsets and other factors that support personal agency.

FOUR LEARNING CATEGORIES

Imagine U is focused on four areas that support agency. The rest of this document describes each in more detail.

future orientation

future orientation

A FUTURE ORIENTATION is the tendency to think about and be proactive regarding one's future. A strong future orientation can provide motivation to work hard and persist through difficulty. Ideas about the future also inform decisions regarding how to use one's time and other resources to the best effect (e.g., what classes to take, how hard to study, what extracurricular activities to do, which post-secondary programs to apply to). It is like an internal compass.

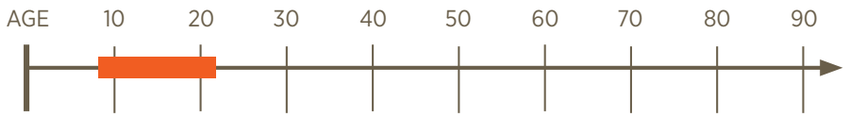
COMPONENTS

- Future Awareness
- Sense of Purpose
- Possible Selves in the Following Areas
  - » School
  - » Work (what the jobs do; what workers in those like about them)
    - – *Non-college options*
    - – *Community college options*
    - – *Four-year college options*
    - – *Graduate school options*
  - » Life
- Goals and Planning
- Expectations and Hopefulness

FUTURE AWARENESS

The future can seem far away and abstract. Young people may lose sight or underestimate the connection between their actions today and future prospects. Visual tools like timelines can be used with youth to emphasize that the relatively small window of adolescence has implications for decades down the line. Another approach is to have young people imagine a conversation with their older self—what decisions might their older self wish they had made in their youth? What advice would they give to their younger self?

future awareness timeline



Message for youth: What happens during the "red years" has implications for a much longer period. Make choices that your future self will want you to have made.

Based on the work of Ronald F. Ferguson and the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University.

future orientation

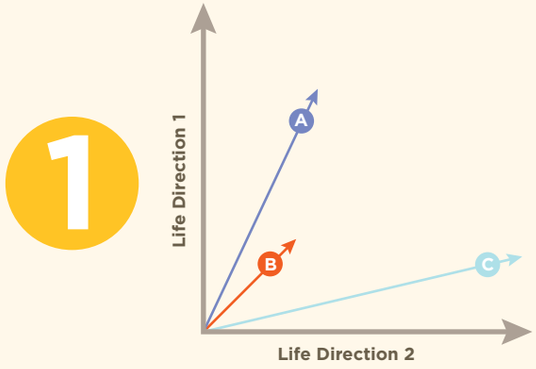
SENSE OF PURPOSE (NORTH STAR)

A sense of purpose has to do with one's values and the kind of person one hopes to be. Damon et al. (2003) define purpose as "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self... Purpose is a goal of sorts, but it is more stable and far-reaching than low-level goals... Purpose is part of one's personal search for meaning, but it also has an external component, the desire to make a difference in the world, to contribute to matters larger than the self." We sometimes refer to an individual's purpose as his or her "North Star" because it provides a sense of meaning and direction in life. North Stars can, and often do, evolve over the course of a lifetime. There are many ways to follow one's North Star (e.g., through a career or other roles in one's family or community). Seeking one's purpose or North Star is a lifelong process.

Sense of Purpose is depicted in the North Star diagrams at right.

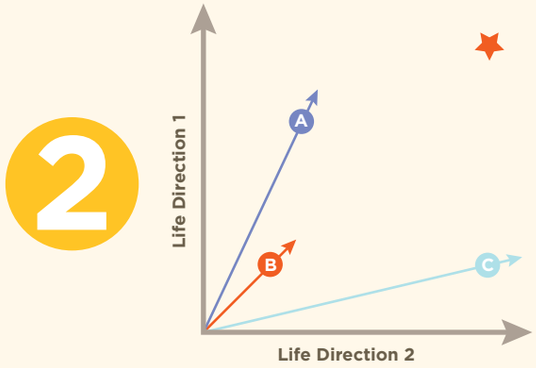
Benefits of Purpose

A sense of purpose has been shown to foster motivation and resilience. For example, resilient children in highly stressful environments are sustained by faith that their own efforts will help them escape their circumstances. Conversely, a lack of purpose can lead to disengagement, idleness, poor mental health, and self-destructive lifestyles.

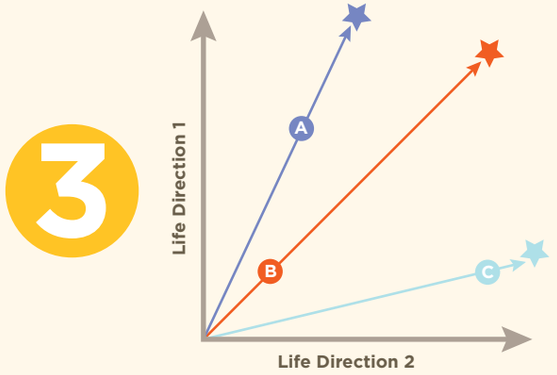


NORTH STAR FOR SENSE OF PURPOSE

Many young people feel like Arrow B, thinking: "Everyone else is ahead of me at everything." Others, like A and C, seem to have identified their interests and strengths and appear to be making progress toward their goals.



Who is in the lead to reach this life destination?



For each of us finding our own destination is a life's mission. Once we find it, we realize that we were always in the lead and there was never really any competition.

Based on the work of Ronald F. Ferguson and the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University.

future orientation

POSSIBLE FUTURE SELVES

Possible selves are future roles that a young person can imagine for him or herself. They can fall into multiple domains; for example, we can support young people to develop possible selves in the domains of school, work, and life. Possible selves are important because they provide motivation and an incentive for young people to regulate their behavior (e.g., delay gratification to do what is required to attain a possible self).

Characteristics of Effective Possible Selves

Effective possible selves are ones that feel:

- plausible/realistic,
- logically and emotionally consistent with the young person's current identity (described in more detail below),
- deserved (vs. survivor's guilt and sellout guilt),
- generally worth achieving for the resulting benefits.

It is also important to have a balance of positive (e.g., "I want to cure cancer") and negative (e.g., "I don't want to be poor!") possible selves. Wanting to avoid certain outcomes can be a source of motivation. Programs can help young people develop possible selves that meet the above criteria or help close the gap between potential possible selves and their current self-concept.

Based on the work of Ronald F. Ferguson and the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University.

Personal Identity/Possible Selves

Group Identity	AMBITIOUS	NOT AMBITIOUS
AMBITIOUS	**A: Congruent** Effective Engagement: I am who I'm supposed to be and I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing.	**B: Incongruent** Inferiority: I feel like I don't measure up—like I'm just a failure and maybe even an embarrassment to my group.
NOT AMBITIOUS	**C: Incongruent** Stereotype Anxiety: I worry about being misjudged because of what people believe is true about my group.	**D: Congruent** Dis-identification with ambitiousness: I accept that neither I nor my group is ambitious.

The Role of Identity

We all have personal identities and self-concepts. In addition, we all belong to groups that have identities (e.g., peer groups, socioeconomic groups, linguistic groups, neighborhoods). Personal and group identities can be aligned (i.e., congruent) or they may be in tension with one another (i.e., incongruent). The table above illustrates the relationship between self and group identities as they relate to the ambitiousness of one's goals—say the goal to attend college. A young person in Box A has an ambitious goal and perceives that her group is supportive of this goal. This situation is desirable and leads to effective engagement. On the other hand, a student in Box C may aspire to attend college but perceives that this aspiration is not for "people like me." This can cause a sense of conflict or anxiety that becomes an obstacle on the path to achieving her goal. For students who belong to groups that do not fall in the "ambitious" category, their peers in the program can play an important role. In programs with strong cultures, "people like me" may conjure this supportive group of peers.

future orientation

GOALS AND PLANNING

To be in a position to achieve their possible selves, young people also need to develop specific goals, along with plans for achieving those goals. Program staff can help youth articulate goals and plans and check in on their progress. Importantly, they can help youth anticipate obstacles to reaching their goals and develop strategies for overcoming them.

EXPECTATIONS AND HOPEFULNESS

We want all young people to have a positive sense of anticipation about their future. Some young people may have mixed feelings about success. They might think, “I don’t deserve [fill in the blank] because my family and friends never even had a chance to have it,” which leads to self-sabotage. Kids need permission to succeed. An effective form of permission comes from understanding that their own successes will enable them to help the people they love.

We want all young people to have a positive sense of anticipation about their future.

future orientation activities

THE ACTIVITIES in this section represent strong programs from the first cohort of Imagine U. They were selected on the basis of survey results measuring youths' experiences and developmental outcomes. The activities are intended to showcase successful programs and to provide guidance or spark ideas for practitioners seeking to improve outcomes in a particular learning category.

For Future Orientation, the activities address one or more of the following learning objectives:

1. Students will have knowledge of (a) a menu of approximately two dozen careers and (b) more detailed knowledge of at least two careers that currently interest them.
2. Students will develop the habit of considering how their current actions affect their future options.
3. Students will be exposed to people from their own racial and socio-economic background in a variety of occupations. (The goal of this is to help establish the plausibility of a variety of future selves.)

The chart below overviews the activities presented.

	Learning Objective	Activity Name	Age Group Reached
Grand Rapids Initiative for Leaders (GRIL)	1	Exploring Career Options	Upper Elementary and Adolescents
Grand Rapids Urban League	1,2	Now & Later	Adolescents
Our Community's Children – Mayor's Youth Council	1,3	My Year in City Government	Adolescents

exploring career options

2 SESSIONS OF **1** HOUR OVER **2** DAYS

AGES **9–18**

This is an activity from the Realizing the College Dream curriculum from ECMC Foundation (ecmc.org). The activity helps to guide students' thinking about the types of careers or jobs they might want to pursue, what they might need to do in order to reach their objectives, and how college might help them achieve these goals. The lesson begins by identifying student interests and different types of careers related to those interests. It culminates with a research project on specific careers and career clusters.

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- Any space with access to the internet, and tables and chairs for small group works

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will have knowledge of (a) a menu of approximately two dozen careers, and (b) more detailed knowledge of at least two careers that currently interest them.

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Tactile/Kinesthetic (touching/doing)
- Auditory (hearing/listening)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Large Post-it® Notes
- Realizing the College Dream curriculum's Career Interest Survey, Career Research Worksheet, and Career Clusters and College Majors
- Internet access

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

- www.bls.gov/ooh
- www.bls.gov/k12
- www.learnmoreindiana.org/careers/careers-research
- www.collegegrad.com

INSTRUCTIONS

Part 1: Career Interest Survey, Section A (10 minutes)

1. Distribute the Career Interest Survey handout and instruct students to complete Section A only. Explain that this survey is not a test but an opportunity for them to reflect on their interests, what they are good at, and who they are.

Part 2: Team Brainstorming on Careers and Jobs (10 minutes)

2. Divide the class into teams of four students, and have each team come up with a college name to represent their team. Give each team eight 3x5 Post-it Notes.
3. Have each team generate a list of 10 specific jobs that they know or have heard about from family members, friends, other adults, people they've seen on television or in the movies, or from other sources. Instruct students to be specific (e.g., a "teacher" is a job or a career, "education" is not).

NEXT PAGE

DENISE FASE

An amazing resource that exists for those in the youth development field includes the various curriculum pieces and educator resources from the **ECMC Foundation**. *Their "PERSIST" and "Realizing the College Dream" curricula offer many activities for middle and high school students in helping them reach and live within their academic goals.*

GRIL - GR Initiative for Leaders
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exploring career options

PREVIOUS PAGE

4. Ask each team to choose eight of the jobs/careers they have identified, writing each one on a Post-it Note. Then have students put the jobs/careers on the board under their team name. Have one student from each team read aloud the jobs/careers identified by their group.

Part 3: Career Clusters (10 minutes)

5. Select one volunteer to be the Post-it Note Master.
6. Have the students identify jobs/careers from the different teams that are exactly the same, and have the Post-it Note Master stick them on top of each other.
7. Have students identify jobs/careers that are similar (such as nurse/doctor), and have the Post-it Note Master put those jobs/careers next to each other. Use the Career Clusters and College Majors handout for guidance.
8. When all of the jobs/careers have been grouped, have students look at each group of jobs/careers and create a cluster name for each (i.e., construction, health, education). If necessary, add the job/career name from the handout next to the cluster name the class created. Students do not need to identify all career clusters used in the handout.

Part 4: Career Interest Survey, Section B (10 minutes)

9. Leave the jobs/careers that the class has identified on the board and ask the students to return to their small groups. Have each student choose three jobs/careers that they might be interested in. Ask the students to take out their Career Interest Survey and quietly review their answers to Section A.
10. Have students fill out Section B of the Career Interest Survey, using the jobs/careers listed on the board as a guide. Ask students to try and make a connection between their answers in Section A with the jobs/careers that they find the most interesting (Section B). If students struggle with this activity, provide an example such as, "I like to work with my hands and my favorite subject is math. So, three jobs I find interesting are: carpenter, architect, and electrician."
11. Have students share their answers in Section B with their small groups. If students had trouble answering any of the questions, encourage other members of the group to make suggestions.

Part 5: Career Research (40-45 minutes)

Distribute the Career Research Worksheet handout. Using the internet or classified ads, ask students to research the three jobs/careers they identified in Section B of the Career Interest Survey. Students may either complete the Career Research Worksheet individually, or if internet access is limited, they may work in small teams with each team member selecting one job/career to research.

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exploring career options

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DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

1. Are there any jobs that don't require some education or training?
2. Which careers require the most education?
3. What was one thing that you learned about a job?
4. How do you think people get into the jobs they have?
5. Which jobs are you no longer interested after researching them?

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

- Students will have completed the Career Interest Survey that identifies three jobs/careers that they are interested in.
- Students will have researched those jobs/careers utilizing the Career Research Worksheet.

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

The curriculum with ECMC is a great resource for those who work with 4th-12th grade students.

now & later

SARA R. BROOKS

Be sure to give the students enough time to talk amongst themselves and report out, but not too much time that they get off task. It's important that the groups hear what the other groups are saying (report out) so that they can compare and contrast the different answers..

Grand Rapids Urban League
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2 SESSIONS OF **4** HOURS OVER **2** DAYS

AGES **12-18**

This activity will help students link their behavior to their interests and career choices both now and in the future. Students will complete an online survey that will help them explore career choices on the basis of their interests and desired level of job preparation (experience, education, and training). Students will choose three careers they believe are a "fit," then research job descriptions, starting salary, and requirements.

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- In the classroom, preferably a computer lab

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will have knowledge of (a) a menu of approximately two dozen careers, and (b) more detailed knowledge of at least two careers that currently interest them.
- Students will be exposed to people from their own racial and socio-economic background in a variety of occupations. (The goal of this is to help establish the plausibility of a variety of future selves).

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Tactile/Kinesthetic (touching/doing)
- Auditory (hearing/listening)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- **O*Net Interest Profiler Career List (generated by the system)**
- Blank sheets of paper
- Computer or cellphone with internet access (one per student)
- Printer

INSTRUCTIONS

Pre-work

- Familiarize yourself with the tool by completing your own **O*Net Interest Profiler assessment**.

Activity

1. Direct students to the O*Net Interest Profiler assessment at http://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip. Students should complete the first section on interests.
2. Direct students to read Job Zones. Job Zones is the next step in the interest profiler that categorizes levels of job preparation from little or no preparation to extensive preparation. For the purposes of this activity, students should select from Job Zones 3-5 (medium to extensive preparation).
3. Ask students to explore the career links and choose one career that they think fits them best from each of the three Job Zones. O*Net Profiler will automatically generate a list of careers for each level selected in Job Zones.
4. Ask students to type their name in the field at the top of the screen for each O*Net Interest Profiler Career List generated by the interest profiler. Print lists for each student.

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Activity adapted from My Next Move: O*NET Interest Profiler, by National Center of O*NET Development, n.d., (https://www.mynextmove.org/). In the public domain.

now & later

PREVIOUS PAGE

5. Direct students to www.indeed.com, www.snagajob.com, and www.americanjobexchange.com to find current/relevant job postings. Students should examine requirements, starting salary, and the necessary certifications and qualifications of each posting.
6. Ask students to think about their current behavior patterns and how their behaviors may (or may not) align with what they learned about career requirements. Give them time to write down their thoughts on the blank paper provided.
7. Guide a discussion in which students can share their thoughts (Step 14) and reflect as a group on what they learned.

To align with learning objective 3, this activity can be modified to include examples of people who look like the participating students in various careers. Examples can be compiled in advance or with students after they have identified career choices through the O*Net Interest Profiler.

DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

(Step 7 above)

1. Do you think your current behaviors match the level of job preparation required for the careers you selected? If yes, what steps can you take to stay on track? If no, what steps can you take to match your behavior with the level of job preparation required?
2. What did you learn from this activity that would be helpful for you to remember and for other teens to know?

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

- Have they been introduced to careers they didn't previously know about? Can they identify two careers of interest?
- Do they know more about the process and requirements to obtain a position in one of the two careers they identified?
- Can they outline tangible steps needed to reach one career of interest?
- Can they identify the behaviors they possess (or need to work on) to reach one career of choice?

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

my year in city government

SHANNON L. HARRIS
I recently heard that grit had to be inspired, and the light bulb went off. If we're going to prepare young people for the future, we have to create opportunities that align with their interests which may not be our own.

Our Community's Children — Mayor's Youth Council
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SESSION LENGTH AND NUMBER VARIES BASED ON ACTIVITY OVER

26

WEEKS

AGES

12-18

The Mayor's Youth Council (MYC) is a council of teens in grades 9–12 who gain first-hand experience about the careers and functions of municipal government and how it impacts their lives. The intent of MYC activities is to develop a keen understanding of the role different people play in government and the decision-making process on public policy. Along the way, students learn important life-long skills in leadership, team-building, political strategy, public speaking, negotiation, debate, and community organizing. This activity gives students the opportunity to explore a variety of careers in government and how these careers are essential to the City operating at optimal capacity. There will be on-going meetings and activities that will provide deeper insight into how these careers not only mimic careers outside of city government, but how to prepare for a career and life after high school.

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- Classroom, City Hall, City Departments

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will have knowledge of (a) a menu of approximately two dozen careers, and (b) more detailed knowledge of at least two careers that currently interest them.
- Students will be exposed to people from their own racial and socio-economic background in a variety of occupations. (The goal of this is to help establish the plausibility of a variety of future selves).

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Tactile/Kinesthetic (touching/doing)
- Auditory (hearing/listening)

This activity can be adapted to any industry by generating a list of possible careers for that industry and inviting industry representatives to give a presentation to students and/or sponsor a field trip to one of more of their job sites.

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Career Choices at the City of Grand Rapids (or your own list of careers for the industry you choose)
- Email Etiquette Tips Sheet
- Paper
- Computer with internet access

INSTRUCTIONS

Pre-work

- Schedule presentations and/or field trips with your city or industry representatives.

Part 1: Before Presentation (or Field Trip)

1. Guide students through the Career Choices at the City of Grand Rapids list (or other list of industry careers you create). In the first round, students should check every career that interests them. In round two, ask students to circle the two careers they would like to learn more about either through research, a presentation, or field trip.
2. Ask students to write down at least three questions they would like to ask and have answered about their two careers during their learning experience. The questions are the students' personal learning objectives.

Part 2: After Presentation (or Field Trip)

3. After the presentation and/or field trip, hand out and review the Email Etiquette Tip Sheet.
4. Give students the assignment to write a professional email to you. The email should be concise and include a summation of what they learned, what they would like to know more about, and why other teens should find this information of value.
5. Guide a discussion where students can integrate their email summations and reflections as a group.

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my year in city government

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DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

1. How did this activity expand your knowledge of careers?
2. Did you see people who looked like you in the careers you selected? What are your thoughts about why or why not?
3. Did this activity meet your personal learning objectives?
4. How can this activity be improved the next time we do it?

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

After each presenter and/or field trip, students will have the opportunity to openly and candidly discuss whether they've met their learning objectives or not. If not, they will discuss future opportunities that will help improve their experience.

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

1. Ensure students are exposed to a variety of skilled labor and white-collar employment opportunities.
2. Ensure students have the opportunity to interact with individuals in the careers of interest, and especially, to people who look like them.
3. Give opportunities for students to travel outside of the program's site.
4. Provide more than one way for participants to reflect on activities.

future orientation indicators

At the end of each activity, your students should be able to successfully complete the activity goal. You can tailor each activity to your students' skill level by changing the intensity level to add an additional level of understanding.

	Grades K-2	Grades 3-5	Middle/High
Future Awareness	Be able to identify careers based on images of people at work, in uniforms, etc.	Be able to discuss the importance of the contributions of workers in a variety of fields, including both blue-collar and white-collar.	Be able to describe at least three career clusters as well as career ladders.
Goal Orientation – Career	Be able to name at least two things the child might want to be when they grow up and why those are of interest.	Be able to name at least two things the child might want to be when they grow up and why those are of interest.	Be able to identify three careers of interest and describe the types of education and training that prepare a person for those careers.
Goal Orientation – Schooling	Be able to describe why school is important in helping students achieve personal goals and have happy lives.	Be able to name some personal academic strengths as well as some areas to work on and goals in those areas.	Be able to articulate school-related goals and describe how they relate to (or are aligned with) longer-term career and life aspirations.
Goal Orientation – Other Regarding	Be able to describe ways of helping other people in the classroom, family, or community.	Be able to describe ways that they could be even more helpful to other people in the classroom, family, or community.	Be able to articulate ways that their goals for the future will help their family, community, or other entities. Be able to articulate why helping others is a worthy life goal.
Planning	Be able to identify personal likes and dislikes, needs and wants, strengths and challenges.	Be able to describe what a plan is, and why having plans help. Be able to describe a personal plan (for example, a plan for completing all homework; mastering a particular video game; making the school sports team; achieving career goals).	Be able to describe the steps needed to achieve schooling, career, and other-oriented goals. Have a written list of such steps—i.e., a plan—with target dates (for items where target dates are appropriate, versus "everyday-type" items). To develop the habit of planning, keep a weekly "to-do" list.
Expectations Hopefulness	Be able to describe ways that they would like to make other people's lives better.	Be able to describe how individual people have made a difference in the world. Be able to describe some ways that they plan to make a difference on a small scale, and ways that they would like to make a difference on a larger scale.	Be able to describe how individual people have made a difference in the world. Be able to describe some ways that they plan to make a difference on a small scale, and ways that they would like to make a difference on a larger scale.

future orientation activities

	Grades K-2	Grades 3-5
Low/Light Intensity	• Talk about all the different jobs that people do in the community. • Introduce jobs through pictures of people working in the community in uniforms. • Read aloud stories that feature different careers and roles that people can play in the community. • Have youth draw and write about possible future selves.	• Point out moments when you observe youth exhibiting interest and joy. Start a conversation about the activity. What do they like about it? How can they learn more about it? How can you help? • Affirm youths' interests and goals by asking questions, providing encouragement, directing them to additional information and opportunities in the community. • Have a selection of books on future selves. • Talk about the relationship between what youth are learning in school and careers of interest.
Medium Intensity	• Create activities where students match job descriptions to pictures of people performing those jobs. • Have youth identify career categories within the community. Talk about the ways in which all jobs support the success of the community. Have youth create a collage to represent the importance of each job to the whole. Talk about other ways people can contribute to the community.	• Have youth work in groups to create their own "community." Have them select people for the various careers and other roles. • Conduct role plays/skits about possible future selves. • Have youth produce "Possible Me Trees" or collages. Talk about how people prepare for different types of jobs. • Use literature and movies as a basis for discussions about how people find happiness and satisfaction in life.
High/Deep Intensity	• Take field trips that expose children to all the roles people play in the community. • Organize a project where children can give back to the community.	• Invite representatives from the community to come in as speakers or do projects with the group (or have them Skype in). Talk about the importance of all jobs, what people like most about their jobs, and what a typical day is like, etc. • Take field trips that expose youth to all the roles people play in the community. • Arrange volunteering/job shadowing experiences. • Have youth design and carry out a project that contributes to the community.

future orientation activities

	Middle/High School
Low/Light Intensity	• Use timelines to cultivate future awareness. Have students take the perspective of their future selves and consider the types of choices their future selves would want them to make. • Have conversations about purpose. What is purpose? What are different examples of purpose? You can live out your purpose though a job or through other parts of your life. • Have conversations about interests and goals. Ask questions that get youth to think about the things that bring them joy and satisfaction. What do they like about it? How can they learn more about it? How can you help? What careers are related to these interests? • Point out moments when you observe youth exhibiting interest and joy. • Affirm youths' interests and goals by asking questions, providing encouragement. Help them identify opportunities and resources that are related to their future goals. • Have youth brainstorm and discuss some of the factors that guide a career choice (e.g., earnings, opportunities to help others, alignment with interests, what kinds of people they would work with and how social the job is, amount of training required, schedule, etc.). Have them reflect on—possibly rank—factors in order of importance to them. • Talk about the relationship between what youth are learning in school and careers of interest. • Emphasize that all work is honorable. There are "good" jobs that require four-year college degrees as well as lots of "good" jobs that require other types of preparation and training.
Medium Intensity	• Brainstorm with youth as many careers as possible, divide them into career categories. Key vocabulary: job clusters, career ladders. Look at examples of job clusters and career ladders. • Have youth conduct an interest/skill inventory and discuss what kinds of careers might fit with their skills and interests. • Give youth time with computers to research possible post-secondary and career options. Explore career websites. • Investigate a career option in one of the categories and create a presentation for the group. • Discuss the qualities of good goals (e.g., meaningful, realistic, stretching — from Step it Up to Thrive). What are examples of meaningful goals? How can we tell if something is realistic?
High/Deep Intensity	• Arrange field trips to work sites in the community that highlight different career options. • Assign each young person a career to research, including an interview with someone in the community. • Invite adults from the community to speak about their lives and careers (or have them Skype in). They can discuss what led them to their current job, what they find rewarding, the training that prepared them, the skills they use on a regular basis, etc. • Visit post-secondary institutions, both four-year college and non-college options. • Arrange volunteering/job shadowing experiences. • Have youth choose and carry out a project or service learning opportunity that is connected to their sense of purpose. Have students come up with proposals and decide on the activity. • Adaptation of Oyserman's School-to-Jobs program. • Adaptation of Hock's Possible Selves Program.

success mindsets

success mindsets

SUCCESS MINDSETS

Research has begun to show that certain habits of mind that are just as important as academic skills for success in life. These habits of mind include the tendencies to take initiative, tackle challenges, and persist in the face of resistance or difficulty. We refer to these habits of mind as success mindsets. Imagine U focuses on two success mindsets: growth mindset and conscientiousness. Each is described in more detail below.

COMPONENTS

- Growth Mindset
- Conscientiousness

GROWTH MINDSET

The essence of growth mindset is a belief that effort produces ability. (Even IQ, it turns out, depends importantly on life experience.) In contrast, a "fixed mindset" is the belief that individuals are born with certain ability levels that do not change much over their lifetime.

Why Care about Growth Mindset?

Compared to those with a fixed mindset, individuals with a growth mindset are more likely to:

- Interpret failure as an indication that they didn't work hard enough (rather than an indication that they are "dumb" or don't have the ability to succeed)
- Persevere when they encounter difficulty
- View mistakes as learning opportunities
- Seek out challenging work

growth mindset experiment #1

Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) used an eight-session workshop to teach a treatment group of middle school students the growth mindset concept that effort builds the brain like exercise builds muscles. A control group learned study skills instead. The treatment group improved markedly in math performance. The control group did not. The treatment group's advantage lasted through the rest of the school year.

Simply increasing a person's belief in effort-based ability can improve performance.

growth mindset experiment #2

Mueller & Dweck (1998) asked fifth graders to solve some difficult math problems. Some of the students were given intelligence praise—remarking on how smart they were—while others received effort praise, remarking on how their hard work had paid off. Next, the students were given a set of very difficult problems on which all performed poorly. These were followed by a third set of problems whose level of difficulty was about the same as the first. Children who received the effort praise solved 30% more problems than the others, and asked for more challenging work afterward! There was no instruction on the topic of growth mindset; only an emphasis on effort instead of intelligence in the delivery of praise.

Simply altering the form of praise can make a difference.

Laern more on page 106.

success mindsets

Ways to Promote Growth Mindset

- Teach that the brain is like a muscle—it gets stronger with use.
- Praise effort/perseverance/struggle vs. ability.
- Discuss the importance of mistakes for learning and celebrate mistakes when they occur.
- Challenge students. Support them to achieve things they didn't think were possible for them. Resist the temptation to step in and provide the solution when they experience difficulty.

Examples at right and following are from Carol Dweck, author of *Growth Mindset*, and her colleagues.

PRAISE TO GIVE AFTER SUCCESS

Promotes the Objective: Try to Say More	Undermines the Objective: Try Not to Say
"You're doing so much better...you're really improving and growing."	"Good job, you're smart at that."
"Wow, you're really getting better at this."	"See, I told you you're smart."
"Great, you're really using some good strategies."	"Oh, you got that right away, you must be good at that."
"Great, you've learned so much!"	"See, I think you're secretly a math person."
"All right, you are really using the right strategies." [Try to name and describe the specific strategy.]	"You're such a great writer...so great at science, etc..."
"See, you do have the skills, now we are going to strengthen them."	"I'm glad this is so easy for you."
	"I know you know this already — we still need to practice."

PRAISE TO GIVE WHEN SOMEONE IS STRUGGLING

Promotes the Objective: Try to Say More	Undermines the Objective: Try Not to Say
"No matter where you start, everyone can improve and grow with effort, using the right strategies."	"Overall you're really smart, but maybe you're just not a math person."
"When you learn how to do a new kind of problem, you're growing your math brain!"	"Not everybody is good at math. Just get through it."
"If you catch yourself saying 'I'm not a math person' just add the word 'yet' to the end of it: 'I just don't get it....yet.' Add 'yet' to the end of negative self-talk."	"Well, maybe math is not your strength."
"That feeling of math being hard lets you know you have the chance to learn/grow."	"Don't worry about it. You'll do better next time."
"You don't have to be better than other people... just be better than where you started."	"No one is good at everything."
"The point isn't to get it all right away; the point is to grow your understanding step by step."	"You would have done better had you tried harder." [This is problematic because it does not emphasize that you have to use switch strategies sometimes when things aren't working]
"So you got a low score. It doesn't mean you can't get this. It means you have a chance to learn a lot."	"Keep trying and you'll get it." [This is problematic because students can feel especially dumb if they try hard but still fail, when perhaps what they needed was help finding a different strategy]

success mindsets

CRITICAL FEEDBACK

Promotes the Objective: Try to Say More	Undermines the Objective: Try Not to Say
"This class has a high standard — a standard of really deeply understanding the math. But I wouldn't hold you to it if I didn't believe that together we could get there."	Over-praise characteristics unrelated to performance and learning. "Well, you may not be good at this, but I know that you have a lot of strengths in music [or some other unrelated subject]." Squash Sandwich: "I really like your ideas. All your writing is bad. But I can see you were passionate."

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Conscientiousness refers to the tendency to be thorough and meticulous regarding one's work. Conscientiousness is often thought of as a personality trait, yet there is also mounting evidence that conscientiousness can be developed in youth through high-quality instruction. Developing conscientiousness involves:

- learning to be more organized;
- learning to focus on the quality of work;
- learning to keep trying when inclined to give up; and
- learning to use time more wisely.

Why Care About Conscientiousness?

Conscientiousness is strongly associated with achievement. In fact, of the big five personality traits—which also include openness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism—researchers agree that conscientiousness is most related to achievement.

Ways to Promote Conscientiousness

- Have youth set goals that are meaningful to them. Have them reflect on how they would feel if they accomplished those goals.
- Anticipate challenges to achieving those goals and brainstorm strategies for coping with challenges and setbacks.
- Revisit goals periodically and chart progress.

success mindsets activities

THE ACTIVITIES in this section represent strong programs from the first cohort of Imagine U. They were selected on the basis of survey results measuring youths' experiences and developmental outcomes. The activities are intended to showcase successful programs and to provide guidance or spark ideas for practitioners seeking to improve outcomes in a particular learning category.

For Success Mindsets, the activities address one or more of the following learning objectives:

1. **Growth Mindset.** Students will be able to provide at least one example of something they accomplished that they did not expect to be able to do.
2. **Persistence.** Students will know that mistakes are an important part of the learning process and be able to describe strategies or "self talk" when inclined to give up.
3. **Conscientiousness.** Students will be able to identify behaviors associated with conscientiousness and explain ways that they themselves could become more conscientious.

The chart below overviews the activities presented.

	Learning Objective	Activity Name	Age Group Reached
Our Community's Children	1,2,3	Mind(set) Over Matter	Adolescents
Boys & Girls Club of Grand Rapids	2,3	Instead of ... Try Thinking ...	Upper Elementary
GAAH Cook Library Center	1,2	Fixed vs. Growth Mindset	Upper Elementary

mind(set) over matter

1 SESSION OF **2-3** HOURS OVER **2** DAYS

AGES **12-18**

The Grand Rapids Mayor's Youth Council will observe a City Commission meeting, not only to be more informed about city policy and practice, but also to identify the differences between a Growth Mindset and a Fixed Mindset. They will record Growth Mindset statements and Fixed Mindset statements made by City Commissioners and appointed officials during the meeting. This activity will help them realize how mindsets can contribute to or diminish productivity. ***This activity can be adapted to any government, community, or business meeting open to the public.***

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- City Commission Chambers or other public meeting

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Growth Mindset.** Students will be able to provide at least one example of something they accomplished that they did not expect to be able to do.
- **Persistence.** Students will know that mistakes are an important part of the learning process and be able to describe strategies or "self talk" when inclined to give up.
- **Conscientiousness.** Students will be able to identify behaviors associated with conscientiousness and explain ways that they themselves could become more conscientious.

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Tactile/Kinesthetic (touching/doing)
- Auditory (hearing/listening)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Pen and paper
- Flip chart paper
- Computer (optional)

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

- www.grcity.us
- **Believe In Yourself**
- **Will Smith's Mindset Wisdom**, cue 5:38-6:49 min.
- **Kid President's 20 Things We Should Say More Often**
- **Getting Stuck in the Negatives (and How to Get Unstuck)**, Alison Ledgerwood, TEDx UC Davis

INSTRUCTIONS

Pre-work

Prior to the activity, make sure students have a good understanding of Growth Mindset and Fixed Mindset.

Activity

1. Choose a City Commission or other public meeting to attend with your students.
2. Have students bring legal pads and pens or laptops.
3. Tell students to record verbatim, as best they can, statements made by City Commissioners and the appointed officials that fall into the following categories: Growth Mindset and Fixed Mindset.
4. At the next group meeting, divide students into groups of four. In their groups, they should have a 5-minute discussion to compare and contrast lists.
5. Have groups pick the top five statements that represent a Growth Mindset and the top five statements that represent a Fixed Mindset and write them on a piece of flip-chart paper.
6. Ask each group to take the five Fixed Mindset statements and, as a team, create five Growth Mindset statements that could have been spoken instead.
7. Have each group choose one person to report-out to the whole group.

NEXT PAGE

SHANNON L. HARRIS

It's important for young people to see and hear from adults from every walk of life, and know that we are all navigating our way through fixed and growth mindsets. Students appreciate knowing the struggle is real, as is the success.

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mind(set) over matter

PREVIOUS PAGE

DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

The process used to debrief students will be a conversation about the overall learning objectives of the City Commission meeting and how a Growth Mindset and Fixed Mindset can work for or against a common goal, respectively.

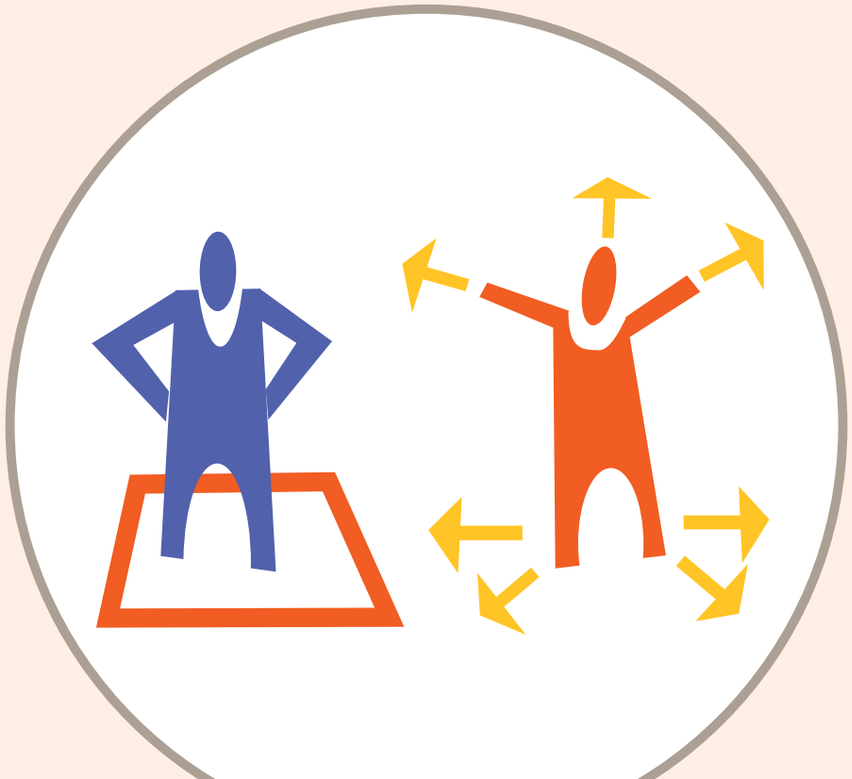
1. How many Growth Mindset statements did you hear?
2. How many Fixed Mindset statements did you hear?
3. Did any statements made by elected officials surprise you? If so, how so?
4. If you were a City Commissioner, how would you have rephrased the Fixed Mindset statements that you heard?
5. What do you think your mindset should be when faced with new and challenging projects?
6. Can you give an example of when you needed a Growth Mindset in order to accomplish a goal?
7. What did you learn about yourself through this activity?

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

This activity will be assessed by the depth of the conversation that occurs during the report-out and debriefing sessions. It will also be assessed by evaluating the statements recorded during the City Commission meeting. Lastly, through a show of hands, students will be able vote on the following:

- Was this activity worthwhile?
- How many people will apply what they've learned to other situations outside of this program?



REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

- Fixed and Growth Mindsets are practiced by teens as well as adults.
- It's more difficult to convert a Fixed Mindset into a Growth Mindset than it is to convert a Growth Mindset into a Fixed Mindset.
- Recognizing the impact that Growth and Fixed Mindsets of elected officials can have on determining how decisions get made, and their ultimate outcomes, is an important life skill.

instead of … try thinking …

3 SESSIONS OF **2** HOURS OVER **7** DAYS

AGES **9-11**

This activity provides an opportunity for cognitive reframing by encouraging students to turn a Fixed Mindset into a Growth Mindset. With the worksheet provided, students will take a set of negative self-talk statements and write down thoughts they could think instead that would indicate a Growth Mindset.

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- In the classroom

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Persistence.** Students will know that mistakes are an important part of the learning process and be able to describe strategies or "self talk" when inclined to give up.
- **Conscientiousness.** Students will be able to identify behaviors associated with conscientiousness and explain ways that they themselves could become more conscientious.

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Growth Mindset: Instead of…Try Thinking worksheet **DOWNLOAD**
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Begin this activity by having a discussion about Fixed Mindsets and Growth Mindsets. Provide some examples and then ask students to share some of their own. Give guidance if necessary (e.g., the Fixed and Growth Mindset examples offered do not quite fit.)
2. Have students draw what they think a Fixed and Growth Mindset look like. Ask individuals to share with the group.
3. Instruct students to fill out the worksheet. If they are having difficulty, encourage students to ask questions.
4. Wait until all students have completed their worksheets and ask for volunteers to share one of their "Instead of … Try Thinking" ideas.
5. Guide a discussion on what they learned from the activity.

NEXT PAGE

TAYLOR CRISON

It is important that you have alternative instructions for the activity so that the youth don't get discouraged. You can also adjust to your audience depending on the age group you are working with. Most importantly, to make it fun you could give other incentives. Aside from the two Learning Center points, their names can be entered into a drawing for a fun prize!

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instead of ... try thinking ...

PREVIOUS PAGE

DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

The main point of this exercise is to stress the importance of having a Growth Mindset versus a Fixed Mindset. Students are invited to have a discussion about their worksheet and its similarities and differences from their peers' worksheets.

- Will you explain the meaning of Growth Mindset in your own words?
- Why is it important to have a Growth Mindset?

How can a Growth Mindset help us in our future? Help you in your future?

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

If students are open to having discussion and can find their own words to describe Growth Mindset, this activity is considered a success.

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

It is important to make activities flexible and open for questions because each child is different and will react differently to the activity.

fixed vs. growth mindset

1 SESSION OF 1 HOUR OVER 1 DAY

AGES 9-11

Experience suggests that young people tend to be fixed in their mindset and stand still when facing difficulties. However, through intentional training and repetition, the brain can be retrained and students can develop a Growth Mindset. In this activity, students will participate in four stations designed to intentionally challenge them while completing difficult tasks. As students experience frustration, they will receive coaching to help them develop a Growth Mindset. Students will learn to say, "I can't," less often. They will also learn that frustration is inevitable but conquerable over time and with the right tools.

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- In the classroom

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Growth Mindset.** Students will be able to provide at least one example of something they accomplished that they did not expect to be able to do.
- **Persistence.** Students will know that mistakes are an important part of the learning process and be able to describe strategies or "self talk" when inclined to give up.

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Tactile/Kinesthetic (touching/doing)
- Auditory (hearing/listening)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

Create four stations with activities that will provide challenges:

- Station 1: Magnetic letters, magnetic boards, difficult spelling words on index cards, chalk boards, or pencil and paper
- Station 2: Ten items for a memory game, paper and pencils or dry erase boards and markers
- Station 3: Top of a spray bottle (to assist in spelling words that start with spr-) and spoons with letters on them (for the F, L, S, Z rule which is explained in the instructions below), dry erase markers and boards or pencil and paper
- Station 4: Play-Doh to make pizzas

INSTRUCTIONS

Pre-work

Set up the four stations around the room. Make sure items are randomly ordered, such as the alphabet letters in Station 1.

Part 1: Introduction to Growth Mindset

1. Discuss Fixed Mindset and encourage students to think of the opposite: a Growth Mindset.
2. Ask them to write down their thoughts. Give them ample time to think and process.
3. Discuss with students that the goal is to retrain our brains and our attitudes when faced with challenges.
4. Explain that the phrase "I can't" should be avoided. Encourage students to self-monitor when they hear themselves say the words.

NEXT PAGE

SUE GARZA

How do you teach students to fail with grace? By giving them opportunities to struggle and use the teachable moments to help them find the strategy that works for them. This activity works best when there is a time limit for each activity and time to debrief. One student remarked, "My brain feels like it is growing when I don't give up.

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fixed vs. growth mindset

PREVIOUS PAGE

Part 2: Growth Mindset Stations
Split the group into four teams and direct each team to one of four stations you created beforehand. Read the instructions to each team at each station:

Station 1: Find the missing letter

1. Find a partner.
2. One of you will close your eyes. While your eyes are closed, your partner will take away one letter from the alphabet. Open your eyes and guess the missing letter.
3. Repeat taking away two letters. Repeat taking away three letters, and then four letters.
4. Switch places and do the exercise again

Note: To increase the level of difficulty, have one student read a difficult spelling word from the index cards you created. Their partner will try to spell the word correctly, using the magnetic letters. (Be sure to have enough letters to spell the words.)

Station 2: Find Missing Items

Part A

1. Look at the items at your station for two minutes.
2. Turn away from the items and draw them in two minutes.
3. Turn back and write down what you missed.

Part B

1. Find a partner.
2. One of you will close your eyes. While your eyes are closed, your partner will take an item away. Open your eyes and guess which item is missing.
3. Switch places and do the exercise again.

Station 3: Spelling Words

Part A

1. Put the sprayer in your hands.
2. Come up with five words that start with *spr*.

Part B

1. Think of words that end with two F's, L's, S's, and Z's and have a short vowel sound. (Example, "Jeff will pass Buzz."
2. Come up with at least one more word

Station 4: Making pizza

1. Make a pizza out of the Play-Doh without allowing the colors to mix.

DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

- How did it feel when you experienced frustration?
- Were you saying or thinking that you couldn't do it?
- What did you do to get through the frustration to achieve success?
- Do you think you could retrain your brain to say, "Just try and see how it goes?"
- How did you feel when others around you were fixed in their mindset? Or, maybe you experienced the opposite?

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

It is important to observe and ask questions like, "What do you think you should do?" Challenges are opportunities for growth and it is important for students to have ample time and experience struggling. Don't underestimate the power of youth. They will surprise you!

success mindsets indicators

At the end of each activity, your students should be able to successfully complete the activity goal. You can tailor each activity to your students' skill level by changing the resources level to add an additional level of understanding.

	Grades K-2	Grades 3-5	Middle/High
Persistence	Be able to name two things they could do when a task is challenging and they want to give up.	Know that mistakes are an important part of the learning process and not a reason to give up. Be able to describe strategies or "self-talk" to use when a task is challenging and they feel inclined to give up.	Know that mistakes are an important part of the learning process and not a reason to give up. Be able to describe strategies or "self-talk" to use when a task is challenging and they feel inclined to give up.
Growth Mindset	Know that the brain is like a muscle and gets stronger when you work hard.	Know that the brain is like a muscle and gets stronger when you work hard.	Know what growth mindset is and that successful people tend to have a growth mindset.
Conscientiousness	Be able to identify behaviors that help a person to do well in school (e.g., being careful to do your best quality work, working hard, and not giving up when work is difficult, and not letting other people stop you from doing your best).	Be able to identify behaviors that help a person to do well in school (e.g., being careful to do your best quality work, working hard, and not giving up when work is difficult, and not letting other people stop you from doing your best).	Be able to define conscientiousness and explain why some people practice it and others do not. Be able to explain ways that they themselves could become more conscientious. Be able to identify ways that people help one another to remain or become conscientious.
Belonging	Understand that when people treat one another by the Golden Rule, everyone can be happier to be together. Be able to identify ways of helping other people to feel liked. Understand that when a person is treated badly, it is because the person who treats them badly made a bad decision and that is the person who needs to change.	Know that all people feel as if they don't belong at one time or another. Understand that when people treat one another by the Golden Rule, everyone can be happier to be together. Be able to identify ways of helping other people to feel liked. Understand that when a person is treated badly, it is because the person who treats them badly made a bad decision and that is the person who needs to change.	Know that all people struggle to feel like they belong in new settings. Understand ways of determining whether to change their own behavior in order to fit in with other people. Be able to describe ways to avoid adopting self-destructive behaviors when feeling a need to fit in with people whose behaviors are self-destructive.

success mindsets activities

	Grades K-2	Grades 3-5
Low/Light Effort or Resources	• Teach that the brain is like a muscle and that it gets stronger when you try at something. Use other related metaphors (e.g., sports, sponges). Discourage labels like "smart" and "dumb." • Talk about strategies for persevering when something is hard and you feel like giving up. • Make sure adults in the program praise for effort rather than ability.	• Teach that the brain is like a muscle and gets stronger with effort. Discourage labels like "smart" and "dumb." • Have youth brainstorm strategies for when something is hard and they feel like giving up. • Create a class mission and goals involving growth. • Make sure that adults in the program praise for effort rather than ability.
Medium Effort or Resources	• Have the group commit to a culture of not being afraid to make mistakes. Talk about the importance of making mistakes in the learning process. Have students encourage each other when they try at something. • Talk about goals and set some goals as a group. Write the goals down and post them on the wall. Occasionally revisit the goals and see if you are making progress. • Read aloud and discuss stories where characters persevere.	• Build growth mindset talk into the organization. Teach youth how to give growth mindset praise (i.e., praising others for effort) and reward them when they do so. • Lead youth brainstorm ways to reframe fixed mindset thoughts (e.g., instead of saying "I'm stupid" or "I'm bad at math," what can you say?) • Have youth read **"You Can Grow Your Intelligence"** article from Mindset Works. • Read books and have discussions about people who have persevered through difficulty. Have youth come up with examples of people they know who have persevered through difficulty. How did they do it?
High/Deep Effort or Resources	• Build growth mindset talk into the organization. Teach children how to give growth mindset praise (i.e., praising others for effort) and reward them when they do so.	• Have students help create a growth mindset bulletin board for a public space. This could include a space for "shout-outs" and post-its so students can recognize others. • Present youth with opportunities to be challenged, conveying that challenging activities are fun, and that mistakes help them learn and improve (e.g., physical or teamwork activities).

success mindsets activities

	Middle/High School
Low/Light Effort or Resources	• Talk about what research is. Discuss the fact that researchers have studied successful people and that successful people tend to have some things in common—one of those things is a growth mindset. Teach difference between growth mindset and fixed ability mindset. Have youth self-assess their own tendencies. • Teach youth about the brain, brain plasticity, and what learning does to your brain. Emphasize the importance of making mistakes when learning—making mistakes is not a sign that you should give up. Discourage labels like "smart" and "dumb." • Commit to a culture of growth mindset where youth encourage each other for effort. • Make sure adults in the program praise for effort rather than ability.
Medium Effort or Resources	• Help youth set goals (academic and non-academic). Have them write about these goals and revisit them throughout the year. Help them anticipate challenges and brainstorm strategies for coping with challenges and setbacks. • Present youth with opportunities to be challenged, conveying that challenging activities are fun, and that mistakes help them learn and improve (e.g., physical or teamwork activities).
High/Deep Effort or Resources	• Have youth design a presentation on growth mindset for younger students. • Invite young people who are several years older than those in the program (e.g., high schoolers, college students, students in other types of training programs) to share their experiences adjusting to new circumstances. Emphasize that it is normal to struggle and to question whether one belongs. Have them describe how they eventually overcame these feelings. What strategies did they use? This can be done on more than one occasion.

social and emotional learning

social and emotional learning

THE COLLABORATIVE for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as the "process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the 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" (Casel, 2016). Social and emotional skills are important in their own right, as they are the foundation for healthy relationships emotional lives. They are also "critical to being a good student, citizen, and worker" (Casel, 2016).

COMPONENTS

- Self Esteem
- Managing Emotions (both feelings and behaviors)
  - » Conflict
  - » Anger
  - » Sadness
- Social Norms
  - » Helping norms (and need for strategies to be helpful)
  - » Negative norms (and need for peer-resistance skills)
  - » Need to have a personal philosophy regarding norms to comply with or resist

SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem refers to how good a person feels about themselves, based on how they believe they rate in areas that matters to them. For example, if basketball is important to me and I do not consider myself to be good at basketball, this perception has a negative impact on my self-esteem. On the other hand, if basketball is not very important to me, my basketball skills do not affect my self-esteem.

Why Care about Self-Esteem?

- Self-esteem is a positive emotion that we care about in and of itself.
- People who have higher self-esteem are in a better frame of mind to achieve other goals.

The Tricky Thing about Self-Esteem...

- Targeting self-esteem directly has not worked.
- Targeting self-esteem directly has often taken the form of giving empty praise or protecting youth from failure.
- Self-esteem is an outcome of changing the basis upon which youth might legitimately experience it.

Suggested Ways to Raise Self-Esteem

- Help youth improve in areas that are important to them.
- Raise the personal awareness or importance of areas in which they currently rate high or in which they could potentially rate higher if given sufficient supports. (Note: this relates to growth mindset.)
- Help youth reduce the personal importance of areas in which they are not particularly outstanding.
- Reduce the importance of negative comparisons with others by helping them identify appealing and feasible North Stars.

social and emotional learning

MANAGING EMOTIONS

Managing emotions effectively depends on having the following knowledge and skills:

- Awareness of one's own emotions (and the words to label those emotions).
- Understanding of the causes of one's own emotions.
- Awareness of others' emotions and perspectives.
- Productive strategies for managing strong emotions.

Emotional Awareness

- We often default to a limited vocabulary to describe emotions
- Being able to precisely identify and label emotions is the first step to managing them
- There are tools designed to support the development of emotional awareness with children and youth (e.g., Mood Meter, feelings chart)

Promoting Emotional Awareness and Perspective Taking

- Help youth identify and interrogate their negative patterns of thought or self-talk.
- Use open-ended questions.
- Brainstorm alternative interpretations and explanations for what happened. What were the perspectives of others in the situation? How do you know?
- Anticipate experiences that trigger negative emotions and plan responses to avoid or better cope with those situations in the future.
  - » Different strategies work for different people. We should help familiarize young people with a broad range of strategies so they can figure out what works for them (e.g., talking to a friend, exercising, being outside, mindfulness activities)

SOCIAL NORMS

Youth are embedded in social dynamics that affect the cost-benefit analysis for behaving in certain ways. For example, there may be social rewards for doing things that are considered "cool" and social penalties for not doing those things. Young people do not always like the prevailing social norms, but they go along with them for fear of being penalized. Programs can help young people develop their own understanding of social norms, their own philosophies regarding when and when not to adhere to social norms, and skills for doing so.

Social Norms in Elementary Settings

Harmful social dynamics can emerge very early. For example, teasing is evident in classrooms as early as kindergarten. Research has found that struggling learners in grades K-2 are more likely to be teased than their peers. No child has the power to flip a classroom or program culture, so adults must intervene to help children collectively design the culture they want.

Programmatic Approaches in Elementary Settings:

- Teach what it means to be a good citizen in school and in your program.
- Teach empathy.
- Organize a respect campaign.
- Notice and positively reinforce positive peer interactions.

social and emotional learning

Social Norms in Adolescent Settings

Peers are highly influential during the period of adolescence. This leads adolescents to:

- Seek peer approval and a sense of belonging.
- Conform their own behaviors to fit norms that are expected by their peers, sometimes violating their own preferences.
- Often hide their disapproval of peers' behaviors and potentially act in ways that appear to condone some behaviors that they actually disapprove of.

As a result, research suggests that:

- There is a mismatch between the things students report that others do in order to be liked, on the one hand, and the things they would like to define as "cool," on the other hand.
- Adolescents sometimes hide and/or reduce effort due to fear of how peers might react if they strived more openly in school.
- Low achievers report greater tendencies to hide effort and hold back.

However, adolescents would change their behaviors to align more closely with their positive preferences, if the social costs (or benefits) of doing so were lowered (raised).

Adolescent Social Norm Interventions

Interventions that address adolescent social norms are based on the following assumptions:

- Changing youth behavioral norms to align more closely to actual preferences is a collective action problem.
- Youth generally have positive values; they need help creating the social opportunities to live out those positive values.
- The social costs (benefits) of good behavior can be lowered (raised) by helping youth conspire to overcome aspects of peer culture that reward bad behaviors and penalize good behaviors (e.g., as in peer resistance interventions for drug use).

Goals of Adolescent Social Norm Interventions

Individually

- Students learn specific concepts and vocabulary to help them think more clearly about managing their responses to peer norms.
- Students learn specific skills for responding to peer norms.
- Students learn specific "self talk" for managing their own social behaviors.

Collectively

- Students achieve a peer culture in which there are mainly positive supports for the types of behaviors that the youth report they would like to have treated as socially popular and cool—i.e., behaviors that support learning and healthy development.
- Students achieve social conditions in which they feel free to openly express and act upon their desires to strive and thrive academically.

Navigating Across Contexts with Different Norms

- Youth need to understand that different settings have different norms. Their ability to comply with the norms affects their prospects for success in that setting.
- Each person has to decide whether to comply with norms in a given setting.
- The decision to comply or not has personal consequences.
- The act of complying may be consistent with, or inconsistent with, the individual's personal values, sense of identity, or predisposition.
- The act of complying may require behaviors that amount to what is called"code switching." Code switching may be experienced as "not being my real self."
- Young people need help understanding that a strong personal philosophy can be a resource for helping decide when to code switch and when not to.
- A strong personal philosophy can also be a resource for helping decide when to "go along with the crowd" and when to make the "right decision," even though doing so may result in being punished by members of "the crowd."

social emotional activities

THE ACTIVITIES in this section represent strong programs from the first cohort of Imagine U. They were selected on the basis of survey results measuring youths' experiences and developmental outcomes. The activities are intended to showcase successful programs and to provide guidance or spark ideas for practitioners seeking to improve outcomes in a particular learning category.

For Social Emotional Learning, the activities address one or more of the following learning objectives:

1. **Identifying Emotions:** Students will develop larger emotional vocabularies. They will be able to more accurately identify their emotions and discuss the causes of their emotions.
2. **Managing Emotions:** Students will be able to describe three strategies that help them manage their emotions.
3. **Navigating Social Norms:** Students will be able to explain what social norms are and how they affect decision making and behavior. They will be able to provide examples of social norms associated with different types of settings, and how those norms affect whether people accept you and treat you the way you want to be treated.

The chart below overviews the activities presented.

	Learning Objective	Activity Name	Age Group Reached
Girls Growing II Women, Inc.	1	Exploring Emotions and Causes	Upper Elementary and Adolescent
Boys & Girls Club of Grand Rapids	2	My Relaxing Place Collage	Upper Elementary and Adolescent
Family Futures	3	Switch-Mode: The Art of Code Switching	Adolescent
Grand Rapids Urban League	3	Code Switching: Knowing, Understanding, & Navigating the Unspoken System	Adolescent

exploring emotions and causes

LATASHA ROBERTSON-CRUMP

This activity is an extremely fun way to identify emotions, and it helps students to get to know each other! If you can, I would also suggest showing the movie "Inside Out" (from Disney/Pixar) to the younger students.

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1 SESSION OF **1** HOUR OVER **1** DAY

AGES **9-18**

This activity helps students understand that emotions are very important to our daily functions and how emotions help guide our decisions and connections with others. Students will identify emotions and discuss why they identify with those particular emotions. Students will gain understanding that it is acceptable to have different emotions from others.

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- In the classroom

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Identifying Emotions:** Youth will develop larger emotional vocabularies. They will be able to more accurately identify their emotions and discuss the causes of their emotions.

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Tactile/Kinesthetic (touching/doing)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- 11 x 17 paper
- Crayons, markers or colored pencils
- Tape to hang paper
- List of statements or scenarios. You may use the scenarios and statements included with this activity or create your own. Make sure statements and scenarios are appropriate and relevant to the age range participating in the activity.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

- Journals or paper (some students may want to write down feelings, emotions, or experiences that correspond with the scenarios)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Begin by asking students to draw the following emotional faces: Happiness (joy), sadness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust.
2. Hang the pictures of each emotion on a different area of the wall in the program space. Happiness in one area, sadness in another, etc.
3. Explain to students that you will read a statement. They will need to identify which emotion is closest to the feeling they get when they think about the statement.
4. Once the statement is read, direct students to move around the room, standing by the emotion they identified with the most.
5. After each statement is read, ask one or two students from each emotion station to tell you why they identified with that particular emotion.

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exploring emotions and causes

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SUPPORTING ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

This activity helps students understand that emotions are very important to our daily functions and how emotions help guide our decisions and connections with others. Students will identify emotions and why they identify with those particular emotions. Students will gain understanding that it is acceptable to have different emotions than others.

EMOTIONS THAT WILL BE USED:

- Happiness (joy)
- Sadness
- Fear
- Anger
- Surprise
- Disgust

INTRO STATEMENTS

- Eating broccoli
- Riding roller coasters
- Riding an airplane
- Scary movies
- Exercising
- Going to the dentist
- Being with your siblings (if no siblings think of cousins)

SERIOUS STATEMENTS

- The thought of loneliness.
- Students who have no hope.
- Students who feel no one believes in them.
- Being treated unfairly.
- Scheduling time for self-care.
- Seeing students achieve their goals.

A spokesperson for every question will be identified. The spokesperson will be responsible for sharing with everyone why that group identified with that specific emotion.

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exploring emotions and causes

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DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

- Why do you think we did this activity?
- What is one thing you will take away?
- If you did not have similarities with others, how did that make you feel? (Explain that it is okay to feel differently than others.)

Finally, lead a group discussion about the process. An alternative is to have students journal about an emotion they identified with the most and explain why they chose to write about that emotion.

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

- Was this activity helpful? Did you learn anything about yourself?
- If you could change anything about the activity what would it be and why?

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

It is important to remember the significance of identifying our emotions and working to understand what causes the emotions and why.

my relaxing place collage

1 SESSION OF 1 HOUR OVER 1 DAY

AGES 9-18

Students will create a collage representing their "relaxing place" that also contains sensory information about that place. This can be used as a coping mechanism to recall in times of stress or intense emotions.

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- In the classroom

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Managing Emotions:** Youth will be able to describe three strategies that help them manage their emotions.

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Tactile/Kinesthetic (touching/doing)
- Auditory (hearing/listening)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Magazines or newspapers
- Colored pencils or markers
- Glue, paste, or rubber cement
- Construction paper or poster board

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

- **This article** can help to understand guided imagery and also provide examples of relaxing spaces.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ask students to think about places that are relaxing to them. They will choose their favorite relaxing place for this activity.
2. Tell students to think about their senses in their relaxing place. Students should write down five things they can see, four things they can touch, three things they can hear, two things they can smell, and one thing they can taste in their relaxing place. (Create and use a worksheet if preferred.)
3. Tell students to create a collage. Students should find and cut out pictures that remind them of their relaxing place and glue or paste the pictures on a piece of paper in a creative way.
4. Encourage students to draw or color around their pictures and use words to describe their senses in their relaxing place. The point is to be as creative and descriptive as possible in order to be able to call to mind the cognitive imprint of their collage in times of extreme emotion.

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CASEY STRATTON

This activity has proven to be an engaging and conversation-starting project for kids and adults alike. Make sure to have plenty of magazines for participants to cut out pictures from. As the activity suggests, the takeaway from this exercise is to be able to recall your "relaxing place" in times of stress or strong negative emotions, so make sure to have time for sharing and discussion.

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my relaxing place collage

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DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

Students will share their collage with the group, describing their relaxing place and some of their sensory cues associated with it.

Questions like "Will you say more about your relaxing place?" or "When you imagine your relaxing place, how do you feel?" should be asked. The goal is to promote understanding that the relaxing place, and its sensory cues, can be used in moments of strong emotions to anchor, ground, and redirect the mind and mood.

Emphasize that when a student experiences a trigger, they can use their relaxing place as a calming tool in order to assess the situation in a more balanced way and make a choice about options to move forward in a healthy manner. This may not happen overnight, but the more tools one has to rely on in times of stress, the more progress will be made toward greater capacity with emotional management.

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

Engagement during the creation and sharing stages of this activity is key. If the facilitator moves around and asks questions about what students are creating, this will help the process and emphasize that you care about the outcome.

Difficulties to watch for with this activity are an inability to connect the relaxing place and its sensory cues to emotional coping mechanisms. Provide scenarios and ask how they could use their relaxing place and sensory cues to help the situation (e.g., "Next time you get really angry, what part of your relaxing place can you think about to help you calm down?"). Introduce the idea of "self-talk."

Some students might have trouble thinking of a relaxing place or feel overwhelmed. Providing examples is helpful.

It can be helpful to make your own collage first or provide an example from another session, so they can see a finished version of the project.

Even if some students feel "hopeless" when it comes to being angry or upset, the ongoing process of connecting emotions with coping strategies can foster long-term results.

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

People have such varied experiences and sensory memories. This can be a tool to work on empathy as each student shares and gains insights into other people's experiences or opinions. A variation of this coping strategy can be to find the five sense categories in the place you are when experiencing intense emotions. Find a few things you can see, touch, hear, smell, or taste to provide a moment to calm down and avoid reacting in a way that would bring about negative consequences or make the situation worse. This activity generally creates a lot of conversation and input.

switch-mode: the art of code switching

1 SESSION OF **1-2** HOURS OVER **1** DAY

AGES **12-18**

Students will learn and reflect on the concept of Code Switching through self-reflection, role-playing, and small and large group discussions. Students will engage in written and verbal communication along with a visually interactive role-play.

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- In the classroom, with space to conduct breakout sessions

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Navigating Social Norms:** Youth will be able to explain what social norms are and how they affect decision making and behavior. They will be able to provide examples of social norms associated with different types of settings, and how those norms affect whether people accept you and treat you the way you want to be treated.

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Tactile/Kinesthetic (touching/doing)
- Auditory (hearing/listening)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Definition of Code Switching: the rationality for showing and demonstrating various characteristics that one will only show in or to a certain demographic, in a particular location, and with particular circumstances.
- A quote or short video clip of your choosing that is related to Code Switching. A humorous example but one that very often leads to productive conversation and understanding of the concept is YouTube video **Key & Peele – Obama Meet and Greet**.
- Scenario for role-play
- Laptop to run video clip
- Paper and pen/pencil
- Flip chart paper, easel, and markers

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

- **Article: Five Reasons Why People Code-Switch**

INSTRUCTIONS

Pre-work: Scenario for Role-Play

Scenarios should be created ahead of time and should be realistic to the group participating in the activity. Some examples:

- Asking your teacher for more time on an assignment.
- You are with a group of your friends and you run into one of your grandparents.
- You are being interviewed for a job.
- You are with friends in a park at night and are approached by the police.

An alternative to having a pre-scripted scenario for the role-play is to ask students to come up with mini scenarios and present to the larger group.

Part 1: Introduction to Code Switching (20-30 Minutes)

1. Show video clip **Key & Peele – Obama Meet and Greet** (or the video or quote you selected) to demonstrate Code Switching in a way that is applicable and appealing to teens.
2. Ask students to reflect on what they saw in the video clip. Have volunteers share their observations.
3. Read the definition of Code Switching to the group.
4. Ask students to write down their own definition of Code Switching. Have volunteers share with the larger group.
5. Guide a discussion for students to gain a more in-depth understanding of the concept and contexts of Code Switching.

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TRINITY CLEMENS

Code-switching starts with you. In order to effectively engage your audience, YOU have to make the choice to code-switch yourself. Adapt your thoughts, language, behaviors, and expectations to meet your audience where they are (this helps you build Relationship Equity). Be intentional about the examples you use and how you're delivering the content. It's essential to your success.

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switch-mode: the art of code switching

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INSTRUCTIONS, continued

Part 2: Self-Reflection and Sharing (20-30 Minutes)

6. Introduce the self-reflection activity. This activity will give students the opportunity to reflect back on a time when they had to Code Switch.
7. Ask them to think of an example and write down what happened. Wait until every student is done before going to the next step.
8. When each student has completed the self-reflection, have students pair up or form groups of three and share their self-reflections.
9. Reconvene back to the larger group.
10. Ask for volunteers to share their self-reflection and later how they felt about doing this activity.
11. Ask if anyone has questions or comments, then transition students to last activity (role-play).

Part 3: Role-Play and Closing Reflection (20-30 Minutes)

12. Ask for two volunteers. Briefly review a scenario with them and have them act it out while students listen and watch.
13. Ask for another volunteer (one who likes to write). Instruct this volunteer to write the words “Appropriate” and “Inappropriate” at the top of a piece of flip chart paper. A line should be drawn down the middle of the paper to separate responses.
14. Encourage students to raise their hands and share things they felt were appropriate and inappropriate when they saw the role-play.
15. Once a list is generated, have a few students share ways in which Code Switching could have taken place to ensure the interactions were appropriate.
16. Summarize what was covered in the session.
17. Ask students to share one takeaway on Code Switching that they will begin to use.

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switch-mode: the art of code switching

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DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

- What is your definition of Code Switching?
- What is a good example of a time when you had to Code Switch?
- What are ways in which Code Switching can take place to ensure our interactions are appropriate?
- What is one takeaway you would like to share on Code Switching?
- How did you feel about the activities?

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

Ask students to share feedback on what they liked and disliked. Be attentive and gauge students' responses and comments while students are completing the activities. Do a quick "Thumb Check" to see how students are grasping concepts:

- **Thumbs up:** I liked it and it was fun; I felt safe and the level of challenge was good.
- **Thumbs to the side:** It was okay and kind of fun; safety was fine and level of challenge could have been better.
- **Thumbs down:** I did not like it and it was not fun; I did not feel safe and it was not challenging at all.

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

Be cautious of the time so you have time to do all the activities. Be sensitive and attentive to students' responses and level of engagement in activities, allowing time to go deeper and have more time for reflections and dialogue. It is acceptable not to get to all activities. As far as the videos, quotes, and scenario for role-playing, be sure to make them applicable to students' interest and age. Make sure activities are fun, engaging, and interactive.

code switching

knowing, understanding & navigating the unspoken system

LAMONT R. COLE

"Code Switching" has been around for quite a while. It is a tool utilized to blend in to an environment at any given time. You may switch your attire, use of speech, writing, or mannerisms given your surroundings. The way you greet your friends is different from the way you greet your boss. Now ask yourself: how do I Code Switch?

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1 SESSION OF **3** HOURS OVER **1** DAY

AGES **12-18**

In this activity, students will learn about Code Switching and how it is performed by everyone, every day, and in various settings including school, work, church, and community.

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- In the classroom, with ample moving space

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Navigating Social Norms:** Youth will be able to explain what social norms are and how they affect decision making and behavior. They will be able to provide examples of social norms associated with different types of settings, and how those norms affect whether people accept you and treat you the way you want to be treated.

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Auditory (hearing/listening)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Definition of Code Switching: the rationality for showing and demonstrating various characteristics that one will only show in or to a certain demographic, in a particular location, and with particular circumstances.
- Scrap paper
- Notecards with the scenario written out (See Instructions, Part 2)

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

- **Humorous** 2:00
- **Social Class** (Georgetown Univ – Josh Powell) 9:15
- **Communication that matters** (AAVE) Starting at: 4:10 – 12:39

INSTRUCTIONS

Part 1: Code Switching at School (15 Minutes)

1. Discuss how students think they Code Switch in school.
2. Read the statements below and ask them to self-reflect on how they might Code Switch:
   - » A conversation with your principal, asking for a transfer
   - » A conversation with your coach, asking to be team captain
   - » A conversation with your teacher, asking for more time on an assignment
   - » A conversation with your best friend at your locker about disliking your principal, teacher, or coach
3. Invite volunteers to share their self-reflections with the whole group.

Part 2: Code Switching at the Mall (45 Minutes)

4. Ask students to form small groups of 4-6 students.
5. Give each group a notecard with the scenario written on it. The scenario: You and your 16 year-old friends are headed to the mall. One of you borrows your mother's car and picks everyone up. When you arrive at the mall, you have several conversations.

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INSTRUCTIONS, continued

6. Have each group discuss the scenario:
   - » How do they communicate with each other (peer-to-peer)?
   - » How do they communicate with mall security (an adult in authority)?
   - » How do they communicate with a friend working in the mall (professional setting)?
7. Ask them to repeat the scenario, thinking of ways they might apply Code Switching and improve their communication.
8. Invite students to share insights from their small group discussions with the whole group.
9. Summarize key points from the three activities and invite students to share one thing they will take away.

DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

Ask students to reflect upon the exercises and inquire:

- When and where do you Code Switch and why?
- In what situations have you felt good about Code Switching? Not good?
- How do you think your friends or other people perceive you when you Code Switch?
- How can you use Code Switching as tool to be more successful in school, work, and life?
- How do you feel about this activity?

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

Students will become more aware of how they Code Switch instinctively and in what surroundings. They will also become more aware of how their actions are perceived by others.

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

All people (regardless of social status, economic situation, culture, gender, race, or age) naturally Code Switch.

social and emotional learning indicators

At the end of each activity, your students should be able to successfully complete the activity goal. You can tailor each activity to your students' skill level by changing the resources level to add an additional level of understanding.

	Grades K-2	Grades 3-5	Middle/High
Self-Esteem	Be able to identify personal qualities, skills, or accomplishments that make them feel good about themselves. Be able to describe things that they could learn to do better or that they could do more often, that would make them feel even better about themselves. Be able to name some goals associated with these things.	Be able to identify personal qualities, skills, or accomplishments that make them feel good about themselves. Be able to describe things that they could learn to do better or that they could do more often, that would make them feel even better about themselves. Be able to name some goals associated with these things.	Be able to identify personal qualities, skills, or accomplishments that make them feel good about themselves. Be able to describe things that they could learn to do better or that they could do more often, that would make them feel even better about themselves. Be able to name some goals associated with these things.
Social Norms – Other Regarding	Be able to describe ways to work and play well with others.	Be able to explain what social norms are and how they affect decision making and behavior. Be able to provide examples of social norms associated with different types of settings, and how those norms affect whether people accept you and treat you the way you want to be treated.	Be able to explain what social norms are and why it matters that people comply with them or not, especially in professional settings. Key vocabulary: signaling, code switching, and navigating. Be able to provide examples of social norms associated with different types of settings, and how those norms affect whether people accept you and treat you the way you want to be treated.
Social Norms – Peer Resistance	Be able to describe some things that they could do if they saw someone being teased or mistreated. Be able to describe some ways to say "No," if another child tries to do something bad—i.e., something that might get them in trouble or that might hurt another person.	Be able to describe some actions they could take if they saw someone being teased or mistreated. Be able to describe ways to avoid adopting self destructive behaviors when feeling a need to fit in with people whose behaviors are self-destructive.	Have strategies for staying focused on personal goals in the face of negative peer pressure. Be able to describe ways to avoid adopting self destructive behaviors when feeling a need to fit in with people whose behaviors are self destructive.
Managing Emotions	Be able to describe some strategies—i.e., things that a person could think or do—if someone hurt their feelings. Be able to describe some ways to constructively resolve conflicts.	Be able to describe some strategies—i.e., things that a person could think or do—for managing negative emotions. Be able to describe some ways to constructively resolve conflicts.	Have a set of strategies for managing negative emotions. Be able to articulate why people sometimes have different perspectives—i.e.,why one's own perspective may differ from someone else's—and to identify types of differences in perspective that are important vs. not-so-important.

social and emotional learning activities

	Grades K-2	Grades 3-5
Low/Light Effort or Resources	• Help students understand and name their emotions. Talk about how the body and face show emotions. • Help students identify each other's emotions. • Teach students strategies for self-control and anger management (e.g., stopping and taking a deep breath, self-talk, focus on something else, compromising). • Help children find solutions to interpersonal conflicts that come up in the program. • Talk about friendships, ways to be a good friend, and what happens when someone is not a good friend.	• Have students brainstorm actions they can take to be kind and show appreciation for others. • Discuss strategies for managing negative emotions (cognitive reframing, switching to activities that inspire positive feelings).
Medium Effort or Resources	• Have students talk about and draw pictures of what they should do when they feel angry or upset. • Read aloud and discuss stories about emotions and managing emotions. • As a group, generate a list of qualities of a good friend and post them on the wall. Do the same with strategies for solving conflicts. • Read stories where characters deal with issues of friendship and conflict. Have the students come up with ideas for what the characters could do. • Play games that involve impulse control (e.g., Red Light, Green Light)	• Have students generate a set of community norms (e.g., no teasing, encourage others). Post them on the wall. • Develop hypothetical scenarios involving negative emotions, peer pressure. Have students advise the individuals in the scenarios or engage in role plays. • Talk about social norms and how we navigate across places with different social norms. How do social norms affect our body language and the ways we talk and act? • Teach about manners and politeness using read-alouds and role-plays.
High/Deep Effort or Resources	• Have kindergarteners act out emotions. Others can try to guess their emotions. • Have first and second graders act out strategies for self-control and anger management. • Conduct a "Respect Campaign." Have students create materials to post in a public space.	• Have students create a poster/campaign surrounding an issue that peers struggle with (bullying, teasing, etc.). • Have a speaker address issues of peer pressure and resistance.

social and emotional learning activities

	Middle/High School
Low/Light Effort or Resources	• Discuss and practice strategies for handling negative emotions (e.g., cognitive reframing, mindfulness). Define terms like "social norms," "signaling," and "code switching." Have students brainstorm lists of social norms in different kinds of settings and consider ways in which people signal their belonging in or navigate across these settings. The take-away should be that no set of norms is of greater value, but you set yourself up for success if you know how to navigate among different sets of norms. • Discuss empathy and have students brainstorm ways to show empathy (e.g., ask yourself how you would feel in that situation; make eye contact, don't interrupt, ask follow-up questions to really understand someone's point of view; be aware of how many "you" questions you ask vs. "I" statements you make). • Discuss the social norms of typical professional settings (e.g., shaking hands, dressing a certain way, not texting or using Facebook, being on time, etc.). Why are these important? What happens if you don't adhere to social norms? • Talk about first impressions. How do you see yourself? How do you think others see you? • Discuss the types of goals participants could set that would make them feel better about themselves.
Medium Effort or Resources	• Define a "Circle of Care." Have youth identify who is in their circle as well as people or groups who are not. Why are particular people inside or outside of their circle? How might they expand their circle? • Have students keep gratitude journals. • Read thought-provoking scenarios about workplace behavior or code switching. How would youth advise individuals in the scenario? • Assign students to different contexts/scenarios (e.g., with your friends, first day of a new job, at your grandmother's house). Have them role play how they would act in each one. Have them pay attention to the ways we enact social norms, e.g., speech, body language, dress, etc. Debrief afterward—discuss the social norms in each of the settings and how they code switched across settings. • Assign students characters with different backgrounds and perspectives. Have them role play or debate as these characters. Have them practice ways of being empathetic. • Sometimes people disagree on fundamental issues. Read scenarios of disagreements that take place in school or the workplace, particularly examples where there is a power dynamic (e.g., a teacher and student or supervisor and employee.). Engage students in discussions of ways to appropriately handle disagreements. • Have students journal about a time they had a disagreement with someone. What was the other person's perspective? Why might the other person have felt that way? Did the student try to understand their perspective? How could the student have shown empathy? • Discuss the types of goals participants could set that would make them feel better about themselves. Talk about which goals seem most reachable. Adopt some of these goals and track progress over time in the program.
High/Deep Effort or Resources	• Have guest speakers from local employers discuss what qualities they look for in applicants/on the job. • Have students shadow at work. Prepare for the experience beforehand. Have them report to the group about the experience. • Create a skit or activities to teach younger children about empathy.

communication skills

communication skills

RECENT SURVEYS of diverse employers show that communication skills are in high demand. These surveys also reveal that employers are not satisfied with the communication skills of incoming entry-level workers. Out-of-school-time settings are well-positioned to help young people develop professional communication skills that are not addressed in school.

COMPONENTS

- Written Communication
- Information Search Capabilities

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

What Employers Have to Say

In a Conference Board survey of 431 employers, respondents named the following as some of the most important skills for success in the modern workplace:

- Professionalism/Work Ethic
- Oral and Written Communications
- Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
- Teamwork/Collaboration

Priorities for Written Communication

Our priorities are the things that tend not to be taught in school, but that are important for success in life and the workplace. These include:

- Professional emails, letters, memos, reports
- Resumes and cover letters
- Choosing an appropriate email address

ONLINE SEARCHES

- Gathering and making sense of information online is increasingly important for success in life and the workplace.
- It requires different skills from related tasks offline.
- A recent study found a significant gap between more and less advantaged students in online reading and research skills that is separate from the achievement gap in offline reading.

Conducting an Effective Online Search

- Use precise search terms
- Judge the quality of the search results based on:
  - » Authority of the author (regarding specific assertions: e.g., a person can have lots of authority concerning their own experience, but not regarding a phenomenon more generally)
  - » Purpose/audience
  - » Relevance to the purpose of the search
  - » Tone/style
  - » Domain (e.g., .edu, .gov., .org.,.com)
  - » Currency

Check out lesson plans and search challenges developed by **Google**.

communication skills activities

THE ACTIVITIES in this section represent strong programs from the first cohort of Imagine U. They were selected on the basis of survey results measuring youths' experiences and developmental outcomes. The activities are intended to showcase successful programs and to provide guidance or spark ideas for practitioners seeking to improve outcomes in a particular learning category.

For Communication, the activities address one or more of the following learning objectives:

1. **Information Search:** Students will be able to perform an effective internet search, considering the quality and relevance of sources. For example, they should be able to describe the difference between an authoritative source and a non-authoritative source.
2. **Written Communication:** Students will be able to formulate professional forms of written communication such as business letters, emails, resumes, and cover letters. They will be able to distinguish the characteristics of such communication from more informal communication, such as the types that they exchange with their friends and family.
3. **Interpersonal Communication:** Students will learn to carry themselves with confidence when speaking to adults in positions of authority such as teachers, interviewers, and job supervisors. They will be able to distinguish characteristics (verbal and non-verbal) of these interactions from more informal encounters.

The chart below overviews the activities presented.

	Learning Objective	Activity Name	Age Group Reached
Cook Library Center	2	Awesome Adjectives!	Upper Elementary
Our Community's Children	1,3	A Current Affair	Adolescent
Boys & Girls Club of Grand Rapids	2,3	Career Readiness Program	Adolescent
United Methodist Community House	2,3	Communicating to Win!	Adolescent

awesome adjectives!

1 SESSION OF **1** HOUR OVER **1-2** DAYS

AGES **9-11**

Students will learn how to use adjectives to describe nouns. Students will watch a "Schoolhouse Rock" video (or another video of your choosing) and then create monsters out of paper bags. The monsters will serve as a starting point for using adjectives to describe the monsters they create. Students will relate the use of adjectives to school writing endeavors and understand how adjectives enhance the message they are conveying in their stories. Students will develop the understanding that adjectives assist in creating a mental picture in the reader's mind. Students will make a human sentence (i.e., they will line up to form a sentence out of words they are individually assigned).

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- In the classroom

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Written Communication:** Students will be able to formulate professional forms of written communication such as business letters, emails, resumes, and cover letters. They will be able to distinguish the characteristics of such communication from more informal communication, such as the types that they exchange with their friends and family.

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Tactile/Kinesthetic (touching/doing)
- Auditory (hearing/listening)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Computer with internet access to run video
- Paper
- Large pieces of paper for writing words that will form a sentence
- Pencils
- Materials to create monster paper bags (paper bags, glue, etc.)

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

Video

- **"Schoolhouse Rock"**

Books

- *The Power of Grammar* by Mary Ehrenworth
- *Mechanically Inclined* by Jeff Anderson

Additional Web Links

- **Adjective Song from Grammaropolis**
- **Adjective Song – Parody of "All About That Bass"**
- **Teaching Adjectives With Great Children's Books**

INSTRUCTIONS

Pre-work: Human Sentence Preparation

1. Select a sentence that will be used in this activity. You can take from a mentor text (a model text used to teach students how to write) on adjectives or create your own.
2. Write each word from the sentence on its own piece of paper. Include commas, punctuation, and capital letters when necessary.
3. Mix up the pieces of paper.

Part 1: Monster Bags

4. Play "Schoolhouse Rock" video or another video of your choice. Discuss and write adjectives on the board to help clarify the meaning.
5. Divide students into groups of two or three. Give each group a paper bag. Inside the paper bag are items the groups need to make a monster. Bags should include hair, eyes, ears, a nose, a mouth, and clothes. Student should proceed to glue them onto the bag and write their names inside the bag.

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SUE GARZA

This activity helps bring words to life. Adjectives add details and flavor to our sentences. When students learn that colors are adjectives, the possibilities are endless! The songs will add meaning to your visual and auditory learners. They will be humming the songs too!

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awesome adjectives!

PREVIOUS PAGE

6. When the students are finished, collect the bags. Give a monster to each group: one that they did not create. Each group will describe the bag they received using very descriptive adjectives. They will write the descriptions in complete sentences on a piece of paper. For example: “The monster has long, orange, straight, shiny hair. He has small, narrow, blue, piercing eyes.”
7. Have students read the descriptions aloud. Each group then guesses which written description is written about the monster they made. When students guess correctly, the monster is given back to the group, and they will read their written description. If the students guess incorrectly, the teacher chooses another group to have a chance to guess. Every group shares until all written descriptions are shared aloud.

Part 2: Human Sentences

8. Guide students in reflecting on how adjectives help create a mental picture in their minds.
9. Take the pieces of paper from the sentence you created in the pre-work above and give each student one word (piece of paper). Make sure the words are mixed up.
10. Instruct students to figure out the sentence. To complete the sentence, they must stand side-by-side and in the proper order. For additional emphasis, you can have students holding adjectives take a step forward after the sentences are completed.

NEXT PAGE

awesome adjectives!

PREVIOUS PAGE

DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

What would our writing be like without adjectives?

- Try to speak without using adjectives and your speech becomes colorless and boring.
- Adjectives add flavor to our writing and help create the image that we want our readers to see.
- The proper use of adjectives can affect our emotions and engage us as readers more.
- Adjectives are essential to creating a great piece of writing that will be remembered.

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

When students can effectively write a sentence so the visual image is clear in the reader's mind, they understand adjectives. If they cannot describe adjectives, there is more work to do.

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

To understand an adjective, one must understand a noun and a verb first. Keeping a running list of good adjectives helps increase the students' vocabulary. Even if you are working with high school students, having a funny song or YouTube video is much better than diagramming sentences. It is important for the instructor to know what an adjective is, or if you are not sure, say, "What do you think? Let's look that up and use a dictionary or an online dictionary."

a current affair

SHANNON L. HARRIS

This activity incorporates layers of competencies that young people find to be valuable and practical, but, most importantly, relevant to the immediate and to the future. They will be immersed in media literacy, locating information, reading comprehension, collaboration and public speaking. A by-product of this activity underscores the need for curiosity and awareness about the world around them.

Our Community's Children — Mayor's Youth Council
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1 SESSION OF **45** MINUTES OVER **1** DAY

AGES **12-18**

Students will actively participate in a teambuilding, media literacy, and current events exercise that will strengthen reading comprehension, public speaking, and problem-solving skills. They will gain an awareness of and curiosity about the impact of local, national, and international events.

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING
- In the classroom

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
- **Information Search:** Students will be able to perform an effective internet search, considering the quality and relevance of sources. For example, they should be able to describe the difference between an authoritative source and a non-authoritative source.
- **Written Communication:** Students will be able to formulate professional forms of written communication such as business letters, emails, resumes, and cover letters. They will be able to distinguish the characteristics of such communication from more informal communication, such as the types that they exchange with their friends and family.
- **Interpersonal Communication:** Students will learn to carry themselves with confidence when speaking to adults in positions of authority such as teachers, interviewers, and job supervisors. They will be able to distinguish characteristics (verbal and non-verbal) of these interactions from more informal encounters.

LEARNING MODALITY
- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Tactile/Kinesthetic (touching/doing)
- Auditory (hearing/listening)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS
- Cellphone, tablet, or laptop with internet access
- Paper
- Pen/pencil

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES
- Local and national news websites: npr.org, espn.com, and/or other websites

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a current affair

PREVIOUS PAGE

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide students into groups of four. Make sure at least one person in the group has a cellphone, tablet, or laptop with internet access.
2. Give each group the opportunity to create a team name, and select a team captain and a scribe. The team captain's role is to keep the group focused on the activity. The scribe will write the group's paragraph (Step 5) on the paper provided.
3. Direct the groups to conduct an internet search for news articles that their group feels are important to teens. After reviewing several sites, the group should select one news article, using the following criteria:
   - » Must be from a trusted source. Discuss the definition of a "trusted news source."
   - » Must be news that has occurred within the last seven days, including today's news.
   - » Must be news that they deem is important to teens. No subject, within reason, is off-limits.
4. Instruct each group to summarize their news article in one or two written paragraphs. The summary should include:
   - » The source(s)
   - » A summary of the content
   - » An explanation of why they think the article is important to teens
5. Have each group present their summary to the larger group. The team captain can lead the presentation, but each team member must have an active role in the presentation. Be sure to encourage them to project their voices, watch their body language, and make eye contact.
6. Invite their fellow students to pose questions of curiosity, ask for clarity, or share thoughts to generate respectful dialogue. Any member of the presenting team can and should answer these questions to the best of their ability.
7. Give each group a round of applause when they have completed their presentation.

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a current affair

PREVIOUS PAGE

DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

Each team will report their current events summary to the larger group. The rest of the group will ask follow-up questions to the presenters to better understand the content and key details of the article and to explore diverse points-of-view. Students will lead their own large group discussions with limited guidance and constructive criticism from you. Your role is to be objective and ensure the discussion stays on topic.

Key Questions

- Was there any key information missing from this article?
- What made this source(s) reliable in your mind?
- What impact does this article have on the community in which you live?
- Why do you think teens should even care about current events?
- How did it feel having to answer questions asked by your peers?

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

- The depth of the questions and conversations that derive from the presentations
- How well students followed the instructions
- Observations of students overcoming challenges during the process (e.g., coming to a consensus on an article, writing a summary, experiencing "stage fright," speaking publicly, answering questions, etc.)

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

This activity gives young people an awareness of how local, national, and international events impact their lives. It sharpens their ability to locate information, comprehend, and summarize it in written and oral forms. Most important, this activity highlights youth voices and choices, igniting authentic peer-to-peer conversations about issues of importance to them.

career readiness program

3-6 SESSIONS OF **1** HOUR OVER **3-6** DAYS

AGES **12-18**

Students will broaden their understanding of employer expectations regarding verbal and written communication. Students will learn to write a resume and cover letter and participate in mock interviews. *This activity can be adapted for actual hiring for summer jobs or the like.*

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- In the classroom. Mock interviews will need to take place in an appropriate space.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Written Communication:** Students will be able to formulate professional forms of written communication such as business letters, emails, resumes, and cover letters. They will be able to distinguish the characteristics of such communication from more informal communication, such as the types that they exchange with their friends and family.
- **Interpersonal Communication:** Students will learn to carry themselves with confidence when speaking to adults in positions of authority such as teachers, interviewers, and job supervisors. They will be able to distinguish characteristics (verbal and non-verbal) of these interactions from more informal encounters.

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Tactile/Kinesthetic (touching/doing)
- Auditory (hearing/listening)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Computers
- Sample resume and cover letter
- Job description and mock interview questions

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

Web Links

- **Resumes and Cover Letters for High School Students**
- **How to Write a Cover Letter**

NEXT PAGE

CASEY STRATTON

Teens are more aware than ever that their futures depend on what they do today. Walking alongside them as they prepare materials for a mock interview process will give them much-needed tools to be successful in acquiring their first jobs. Often, much emphasis is placed on post-secondary and future careers, but we must remember that our teens need skills to land those first jobs as well.

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career readiness program

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INSTRUCTIONS

Pre-work

1. Decide if you want to work with a community partner (local business or non-profit agency) to conduct the interviews or if you want to do it internally with staff. Coordinate and set the interview schedule accordingly.
2. Obtain sample resumes, cover letters, and job descriptions. Try to find ones that are relevant to students' interests and experience level.
3. Develop mock interview questions.

Part 1: Resumes and Cover Letters

4. Provide an overview of the typical process of finding a job. Be sure to speak to the role of the job description and the importance of a resume and cover letter. Share samples.
6. Make sure students have a good understanding of the job description, then ask them to write a resume and cover letter to apply for the position. This can be worked on over several days or weeks. Share these guidelines:
   - » Submit the best representation of yourself as possible, using written form.
   - » Be concise, yet descriptive enough to give your potential employer a good understanding of your accomplishments.
   - » Provide accurate information.
   - » Proofread! Triple check your work and ask someone to look it over for you.

Part 2: Mock Interviews

7. After the resumes and cover letters are complete, conduct mock interviews with community partners or staff. Interviewers should have time to review students' resumes and cover letters in advance. Interviewers should take notes on each student, so that feedback can be specific and productive.
8. Debrief the interview process and discuss general insights and observations with students.
9. Set aside a few moments to give each student feedback specific to his or her written, verbal, and non-verbal communication.
10. Practice uplifting and confidence-building language and strategies.
11. Optional: Choose one or more students that would have gotten the job and provide a reward of some kind.

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career readiness program

PREVIOUS PAGE

DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

Students should discuss the process of writing resumes and cover letters as well the mock job interview experience. Questions can include:

- What have you learned about the experience of applying for a job?
- Where do you think the process was easy? Challenging?
- What careers are you interested in pursuing?
- What communication skills will you need to be successful in the career of your choosing?
- What do you think employers are looking for when filling positions in the career you are interested?

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

The quality of the written materials should be taken into consideration as well as the success (or lack thereof) of the mock interviews. Notes should be made about what was lacking or where disconnections seemed to happen to be better prepared for future versions of this program.

Debriefing with the mock interviewers can provide valuable insight into what areas need the most work and individuals who showed the most success in the interview process. Recognition and rewards can be a great motivator. Perhaps the candidates who would be offered positions based on their materials and interview get taken to dinner or receive a gift card.

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

When planning this activity, it was clear how much knowledge is lacking regarding professional writing. It is also important to acknowledge nerves during the interview process, and practice uplifting and confidence-building language and strategies. This program is extremely valuable in helping young people prepare for their first, real-world job experiences. It also strengthens partnerships and community relations.

communicating to win!

2 SESSIONS OF **8** HOURS OVER **4** DAYS

AGES **12-18**

This activity will help teens enhance their oral and written communication skills in preparation for college or future life endeavors. Students will receive a letter stating they qualify to win a full-ride scholarship to the college/university of their choice. Students must submit a form included with the letter in order to be considered for the scholarship. Once the form is submitted, students will participate in mock interviews with board members of a fictional foundation.

ENVIRONMENT/SETTING

- In the classroom

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Written Communication:** Students will be able to formulate professional forms of written communication such as business letters, emails, resumes, and cover letters. They will be able to distinguish the characteristics of such communication from more informal communication, such as the types that they exchange with their friends and family.
- **Interpersonal Communication:** Students will learn to carry themselves with confidence when speaking to adults in positions of authority such as teachers, interviewers, and job supervisors. They will be able to distinguish characteristics (verbal and non-verbal) of these interactions from more informal encounters.

LEARNING MODALITY

- Visual (reading/seeing pictures)
- Auditory (hearing/listening)

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Form letter for scholarship
- Notebook/computer
- Pen

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

- **50 Communication Ideas for Teens**

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Discuss the activity with students. Explain they will each receive a letter for a chance to win a (fictional) full-ride scholarship to the school of their choice.
2. Pass out form letters and give students ample time to complete them (or come back to this activity a different day to give students additional time).
3. Bring in additional staff or special guests to serve as the fictional foundation's Board of Directors.
4. Conduct interviews with each student, using their answers from the form. Ask questions that are relevant to the college admissions process.
5. Provide productive feedback to each student after the completion of interviews, which may need to be given privately depending on the student's disposition. General observations and learning points should be shared with the whole group.

NEXT PAGE

TAWANDA WILLIAMS

This fun activity was created to enhance students' communication skills and help them conquer their fears of speaking publicly. I have seen the life changing effects of Communicating to Win! in my own classroom; students who were afraid to speak up or engage in classroom activities came out of their shells and were able to communicate effectively—in both written and verbal settings!

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communicating to win!

PREVIOUS PAGE

DEBRIEF

What process will you use to debrief students? What questions will you ask? Main points to get across?

Explain to the students that communicating effectively is key to achieving success in life. There is a level of communicating effectively to achieve goals. Whether they are seeking an opportunity for a job, promotion, scholarship, or school, writing is a strong form of communication. The way they write can even determine if they are considered for the opportunity in the first place.

Debrief Questions

- How can you enhance your communication skills through written and verbal communication in the future?
- What could you have done to make your form the best form received? Were all the steps followed? Did you include everything in the form that was required?
- Do you feel that written communication is just as important as verbal communication?

Main Points

- Everyone should strive to constantly become better communicators.
- Communication skills will play a significant role in success in all of our lives.
- Continue to practice and build confidence to communicate on all levels.

ASSESSMENT

How will you know the ways it worked well? The ways it didn't work well?

Based on the forms and interviews, students will be able to understand the importance of communication. Mock interviews will be held along with other communication activities to measure how much students have enhanced their communication skills.

REFLECTION ON PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

What insights have you gained from planning this activity that you think are important for you to remember or would be helpful for others to know?

Each individual may have some challenges with communication. Some students may communicate well on paper and not orally or vice-versa. Some students may struggle with confidence when speaking orally but are able to write more effectively.

communication skills indicators

At the end of each activity, your students should be able to successfully complete the activity goal. You can tailor each activity to your students' skill level by changing the resources level to add an additional level of understanding.

	Grades K-2	Grades 3-5	Middle/High
Information Search	Be able to use age-appropriate information gathering skills (active listening, looking at pictures, reading) to find information on careers.	Be able to perform an effective internet search, considering the quality and relevance of sources. For example, be able to describe how to find information for a class assignment on how old different types of animals live to be.	Be able to perform an effective internet search, making informed judgments regarding the quality and relevance of various sources. For example, be able to describe the search terms they might use for finding information for class assignments on various topics. Then, be able to describe the differences between authoritative versus non-authoritative sources.
Written Communication	Be able to use a combination of drawing and writing to convey information about a career.	Be able to support an opinion on a topic with information and reasoning. Be able to draft an informational letter, for example, a letter to a relative inviting them to a birthday party, etc.	Be able to formulate informal personal letters and emails and to distinguish the characteristics of such communication from professional letters or emails. Be able to distinguish email addresses that are appropriate for communicating with friends, from those appropriate from communicating with adults that you do not know very well and that you want to take you seriously and a possible student or employee.

communication skills activities

	Grades K-2	Grades 3-5
Low/Light Effort or Resources	• Have students interview one another about their favorite foods, games, etc., and then report orally to the group what they learned from the classmates that they interviewed. Review the idea that by reporting to the group, students are communicating; they are telling people things they might not already know. Emphasize that communication is the way that we learn, and that each of us can both teach and learn. Emphasize that by getting better at explaining things, we are getting better at helping other people to understand and learn the things that we tell them.	• Have students interview one another about their favorite foods, games, etc., and then report orally to the group what they learned from the classmates that they interviewed. Review the idea that by reporting to the group, students are communicating; they are telling people things they might not already know. Emphasize that communication is the way that we learn, and that each of us can both teach and learn. Emphasize that by getting better at explaining things, we are getting better at helping other people to understand and learn the things that we tell them.
Medium Effort or Resources		• Have students identify one or more adults who have jobs that they are curious about. Have them interview one or more adults about their jobs and then report orally to the group what they learned from the people that they interviewed. Have students ask questions in response to the oral report.
High/Deep Effort or Resources		• Have students identify one or more adults who have jobs that they are curious about. Have them interview one or more adults about their jobs and then report orally to the group what they learned from the people that they interviewed. Have students ask questions in response to the oral report. After the oral report, have the students return to the adult with the questions that their classmates asked. Finally, have the student present both an oral and a brief written report. Students can include additional information—for example, information that they find on the internet—about the types of jobs included in their reports. They might also include commentary on whether they might like someday to have such jobs themselves. Give students brief oral and written feedback on the quality of their written reports. This feedback should include both positive reinforcement and ideas for ways to do an even better job. Students could be give chances to revise their writing in response to this feedback.

communication skills activities

	Middle/High School
Low/Light Effort or Resources	• Discuss how to research effectively on the internet. Brainstorm strategies for selecting search terms and how you know a source is high quality (e.g., authority of the author, purpose/audience, domain). • Discuss the characteristics of a professional email or letter. Provide good and bad examples and have students discuss and critique. • Have students read hypothetical scenarios in which a student or employee needs to communicate something to a teacher or boss. Have them write an email as the person in the scenario. • Discuss the differences between a personal and professional email address.
Medium Effort or Resources	• Hold a competition or game where students have to find reputable sources on a topic as quickly as possible. Compare what they find. Have them generate a list of ways to distinguish high quality from lower quality sources. Use Google Search lesson plans and search challenges. • Invite a local HR rep to come and talk about what they typically look for in an interview, resume, correspondence, and online/social media activity. • Talk about interview skills and conduct mock interviews. Have students interview each other.
High/Deep Effort or Resources	• Have students conduct an online job search or research a particular career or post-secondary option. As a group, develop a list of tips and sites that meet quality criteria. • Conduct a resume and/or letter writing workshop with peer editing.

program implementation

program implementation

THE PLANNING TEMPLATE

- Purpose: bring focus and intention to your pilot projects
- Process:
  - » Step 1 Meet as a team to review your data
  - » Step 2 Decide on your focus area, age level and activities for completion
  - » Step 3 Fill out the template
  - » Step 4 Work your plan

BASIC ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

1. **Options** for goals and purposes to pursue
2. **Strategies** for pursuing chosen goals and purposes
3. **Resources** for implementing strategies (either available or attainable)
4. **Rewards** (immediate or anticipated) that make the effort worthwhile
   - » Sense of competence
   - » Sense of belonging
   - » Sense of power/influence
   - » Sense of security

APPLYING THE ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

- Create menus of possible selves options
- Help youth understand the steps they need to take (strategies to use and resources needed) in order to pursue and achieve the interests (careers and otherwise) that they express
- Help youth understand the forms that fulfillment and rewards take in association with particular possible-selves options

program implementation

COMBINING IDEAS

Build Future Orientation activities around the basic engagement framework. In addition, have students practice Success Mindsets, Social and Emotional Skills, and Communication skills in the context of these Future Orientation activities.

- **Future Orientation**
  - » Help young people expand their knowledge of the range of available life and career options. This includes the types of skills and preparation required for particular options.
- **Success Mindsets**
  - » Help develop habits of mind and behavior that support conscientiousness (i.e., being organized, using time wisely, staying on task, and producing quality work), persistence, and growth mindset.
  - » This may best be done with small projects—especially those focused on Future Orientation.
- **Social and Emotional Learning**
  - » Help young people expand their repertoires for managing negative emotions.
  - » [Related to Future Orientation] Familiarize young people with ways to help improve other peoples' lives. Help them understand that doing so adds value to life and feels emotionally rewarding.
- **Communication**
  - » Build communication skills into the Future Orientation activities. This includes searching for information, writing business letters, and speaking confidently with unfamiliar adults. The latter may include practice interviewing before actually interacting with adults.

seven guidelines

for teaching that cultivates agency

RONALD F. FERGUSON, Ph. D.
The seven guidelines here are derived from the Tripod Project for School Improvement created and authored by Dr. Ronald F. Ferguson, director of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University.

CARE
Be attentive and sensitive, but avoid the tendency to coddle students in ways that hold them to lower standards and undermine their agency.

CONFER
Encourage and respect students' perspectives and honor student voice, but also stay focused on instructional goals; avoid extended discussions that have no apparent purpose and thereby fail to model self-discipline and effective agency.

CAPTIVATE
Strive to make lessons stimulating and relevant to the development of agency. If some students seem unresponsive, do not assume automatically they are disinterested. Some students—and especially those who struggle—purposefully hide their interest and their effort.

CONSOLIDATE
Regularly summarize and check for understanding, because consolidation helps to solidify learning and models your agency as a teacher, even when students seem reticent or disinterested.

CLARIFY
Clearing up confusion
Take regular steps to detect and respond to confusion in class, but in ways that share responsibility (and agency) with students for doing the thinking.

Lucid explanations
Strive to develop clear explanations—especially for the material that students find most difficult—including lucid examples of how the skills and knowledge you teach can support effective agency.

Instructive feedback
Give instructive feedback to help scaffold student agency in correcting their own work and building their own understandings.

CHALLENGE
Requiring rigor
Press students to think deeply instead of superficially about their lessons; set and enforce performance goals that require students to use reasoning and exercise agency.

Requiring persistence
Consistently require students to keep trying even when work is difficult—to give their best efforts and produce their best work—knowing that few things could be more important for developing agency.

CONTROL
Strive to achieve orderly on-task student behavior in your class by teaching in ways that clarify, captivate, and challenge—in support of agency—instead of coerce.

JOCELYN FRIEDLANDER
Research Assistant
Achievement Gap Initiative
at Harvard University

Ferguson, et al. (2015). "7Cs™ Framework." Tripod Education Partners, Inc. Cambridge, MA.
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instructional quality

approach to instruction and quality

IMAGINE U fits within a tradition of youth programming that came to be known during the 1990s as positive youth development. The idea is that youth need more than prevention—more than just a place to be, or things to do, in order to avoid trouble. In addition, they need knowledge, skills, and experiences that equip them to thrive as young people and become successful as adults. Hence, the phrase "positive youth development" describes a philosophy. With that philosophy comes an approach to youth programming.

Quality delivery of the Imagine U program, like any high quality positive youth development program, is characterized by a menu of conditions that youth should experience. Different groups of scholars and youth development professionals have described these conditions in quite similar ways. For example, the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) features six components of program quality (Smith et al., 2012):

- Higher order engagement through choice, planning, and reflection
- Peer interaction through grouping and cooperative learning
- Supportive environment through welcoming, conflict resolution, active learning, encouragement, and skill building
- Physical safety, emotional safety, and inclusive practices
- Youth decision-making in the organization
- Time and space for staff to grow professionally

A similar menu emerged from a National Research Council (NRC) Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth. Titled "Features of Positive Developmental Settings" (Reed, Eccles, & Gootman, 2014), the elements are:

- Physical and psychological safety
- Structure
- Supportive relationships with adults
- Social opportunities to belong
- Positive social norms
- Skill building opportunities
- Community networking opportunities
- Opportunities to practice new skills

approach to instruction and quality

Both the YPQA and NRC criteria for quality youth development settings address safety, interpersonal relationships, and several additional conditions that optimize opportunities to learn. Neither framework is prescriptive concerning the details of program curricula or the specific goals for learning. Both, however, are informed by a body of evidence from research and practice concerning what young people need developmentally from out-of-school-time learning experiences.

In order to provide these experiences, the staff needs the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for interacting effectively with young people as well as for delivering the curriculum they are responsible for teaching. These staff qualities can be cultivated through professional development. Instructional skills include such things as the ability to establish rapport with participants, to engage them in conversation (ways of seeking their feedback), to discover and build upon their interests, to detect and respond to confusion, to press them to test their limits, and to manage discipline. Professional development can provide opportunities for staff to discuss and practice such skills, including in the context of teaching the Imagine U curriculum. With regard to curriculum, professional learning can help staff become familiar with elements of the curriculum that might be new to them and master approaches to delivering the curriculum that might be idiosyncratic to the Imagine U programming. The end-of-program survey for Imagine U participants includes the opportunity for participants to provide feedback on the quality of program instruction. This feedback becomes an input to planning for improvement.

The creators of Imagine U embrace the positive youth development criteria that the YPQA and NRC have offered as core features of what quality means in settings that deliver Imagine U programming. In addition, in order to live up to these features, Imagine U has developed and implemented professional learning experiences for program staff in the context of an Imagine U professional learning community described in a different section of this toolkit.

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survey and measurement

Surveys were used to document youths' experiences in Imagine U programs and to assess developmental outcomes. Pre- and post-program surveys were administered to youth toward the beginning and end of each Imagine U cohort experience. There are two versions of each pre- and post-program survey: one for upper elementary grades (grades 3-5) and one for middle and high school students. Children in grades K-2 did not complete surveys.

SURVEY STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The upper elementary and adolescent surveys have the same conceptual structure, with items written to be developmentally appropriate for each age group (the upper elementary surveys are also shorter). The table below compares the structures of the pre- and post-program surveys. They share two sections: Career Knowledge and Developmental Status. The pre-program survey, containing only these two sections, provides a baseline measure of students' knowledge, mindsets, and skills with regard to developmental domains targeted by Imagine U. The post-program surveys have two additional sections, Developmental Learning and Program Climate/Staff Quality. We were therefore able to compare students' Career Knowledge and Developmental Status at the end of the program to baseline, as well as examine relationships between these outcomes and students' perceptions of what occurred in the programs. Each is section described in more detail below.

	PRE-PROGRAM SURVEY	POST-PROGRAM SURVEY
I. Career Knowledge	✓	✓
II. Developmental Status • Future Orientation • Success Mindsets • Social and Emotional Skills • Communication Skills	✓	✓
III. Developmental Learning • Future Orientation • Success Mindsets • Social and Emotional Skills • Communication Skills		✓
IV. Program Climate/Staff Quality		✓

In the Career Knowledge section, students are asked to name two careers they could imagine having as an adult. There are also several forced-choice items regarding how much students believe they know about those careers and whether they have ever spoken to an adult on the topic.

The next section on both the pre- and post-program surveys concerns students' Developmental Status with regard to the four Imagine U domains: Future Orientation, Success Mindsets, Social and Emotional Skills, and Communication Skills. Items ask students to rate their current mindsets or skill levels. The following are example Developmental Status items from the adolescent version of the survey:

- **Future Orientation:** "I have a clear purpose in my life—I know the types of things I want to achieve"
- **Success Mindsets:** "I am the type of person who believes I can get smarter."
- **Social and Emotional Skills:** "I try to understand people who are different from me."
- **Communication Skills:** "I know at least one correct way to write a business letter."

On the post-program surveys, the Developmental Learning section asks students to rate how much the program contributed to their learning in each of the four Imagine U domains. Below are sample learning items from the adolescent survey:

- **Future Orientation:** "This program helps me make plans for my future that I can achieve."
- **Success Mindsets:** "In this program, students learn to believe they can get smarter."
- **Social and Emotional Learning:** "In this program, we learn to understand people who are different from us."
- **Communication Skills:** "In this program, we learn correct ways to write business letters."

survey and measurement

SURVEY STRUCTURE AND CONTENT, *continued*

The last section of the post-program surveys covers elements of program quality that are not specific to Imagine U. On the upper elementary survey, this section addresses Program Climate with general questions regarding how supported students feel (e.g., "This program is a happy place to be."). On the adolescent version, this section is focused on Staff Quality, with items asking students to rate the adults in their program on a number of dimensions associated with instructional quality (e.g., "The adults in this program want us to speak up and share our ideas" or "In this program, we stay busy and don't waste time."). This final section provides additional context for interpreting what students report learning in their programs as well as changes in developmental status from the baseline through the end of the program.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION PROCESS

Parental consent was obtained prior to having students complete the surveys. The surveys were administered by staff at each site using written guidelines prepared by the Imagine U design team. The guidelines included general instructions as well as language to use when presenting the surveys to students. Pre-program surveys were administered during a period of several weeks prior to implementation of Imagine U activities; post-program surveys were administered over a period of several weeks at the end of each implementation period.

DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

After turning in their pre-program surveys, each site received a report with their own baseline results as well as aggregate results for the network as a whole. During a PLC session, staff received guidance on how to interpret their reports. The baseline reports served as input for the implementation planning process. Similarly, after turning in their completed post-program surveys, each site received a report comparing responses from their pre- and post-program surveys along with patterns at the network level.

Professional Learning Communities

Professional Learning Communities

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WHAT IS A PLC?

Professional learning communities (PLCs) and Communities of Practice (CoPs) has been emerging across the country for more than a decade as professional development strategies designed for educators to seed and integrate research into practice.

A professional learning community, or PLC, is a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students. Shirley Hord, an expert on school leadership, came up with perhaps the most efficient description of the strategy: "The three words explain the concept: Professionals coming together in a group—a community—to learn" (Professional Learning Community, 2014).

A community of practice (CoP) is a group of people who share a craft and/or a profession. These groups of people share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. The concept was first proposed by cognitive anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in 1991 (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). PLCs and CoPs are innovative approaches to performance improvement through intensive professional development. They allow for colleagues to learn, practice, and grow together in and through community.

WHAT DIFFERENTIATES A PLC FROM TRADITIONAL TRAINING?

Instead of one-off, a-la-carte trainings, PLCs go much deeper, providing a supportive community, content experts, and engaging methods for reflective practice and transformational learning. These design elements increase the capacity of leaders to grow their competencies.

The following chart summarizes differences in these approaches.

Traditional Training Program	Professional Learning Community
• Focus on awareness and knowledge	• Focus on skilled practice and reflection
• Short term exposure to content	• Long-term focus on content
• Individual achievement focus	• Supportive community focus
• Technical	• Networked through relationships
• Program and classroom goals	• Organization-wide and systemic goals
• Transactional	• Transformational
• Leader is expert	• Leader is facilitator of group expertise
• Learning is one direction	• Learning is multifaceted

IDEA IN PRACTICE

The Grand Rapids Imagine U PLC mobilized and engaged more than 100 youth development professionals. The process they used included translating a set of national evidenced-based ideas into practices specific to their local context, sharing ideas, integrating concepts into daily program delivery, and analyzing data to confirm impact and plan for improvement.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"The Imagine U PLC means being a part of a group of professionals who have a vast array of knowledge, and are willing to share the knowledge to strengthen others."
—Imagine U Participant

Professional Learning Communities

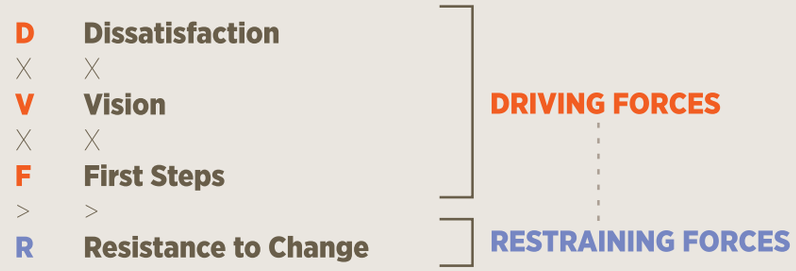
WHEN AND WHY USE A PLC?

Albert Einstein has been credited for defining insanity as doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. There is a limited window for intervention in a young person's life coupled with a tremendous urgency to deliver high-impact content within highly effective instructional methods. With limited formal educational pathways for youth development practitioners delivering services before and after school and during the summer months, it is essential that performance improvement approaches are targeted, efficient, and effective.

It has been said that is takes 30 days to create a new habit. To change any practice, it requires intentionality and intensity over time. The change process starts with inquiry and self-reflection. Practices include assessing and observing current ways of being, coupled with deep and honest reflection about what is and is not working.

Change does not generally happen through awareness alone; it is necessary to have alternative choices with concrete plans to act differently. Sustained change requires repeated opportunities to gain confidence and mastery in a new practice, coupled with incentives and rewards for the new behavior. Dick Beckhard and Reuben Harris described the following change formula in an article. They attribute it to David Gleicher who created it while he was working at Arthur D. Little in the early 1960s (Beckhard & Harris, 1987).

This formula for change suggests that a successful organizational change is possible only when the product of D, V, and F, is greater than the resistance to change. Since the formula involves the multiplication of the three variables, if any variable is completely missing or is too low, the end result will also be low. This implies that falling short on any one of these variables will make it difficult to get past the resistance. The change plans can fall back if any of these factors are ignored during the change process. In the most transformative learning experiences, this formula works best within relationships of trust, where individuals can grow deeper in vulnerability and wider in risk taking. A PLC offers the opportunity for reflective practice within the safety of a supportive community with common goals.



IDEA IN PRACTICE

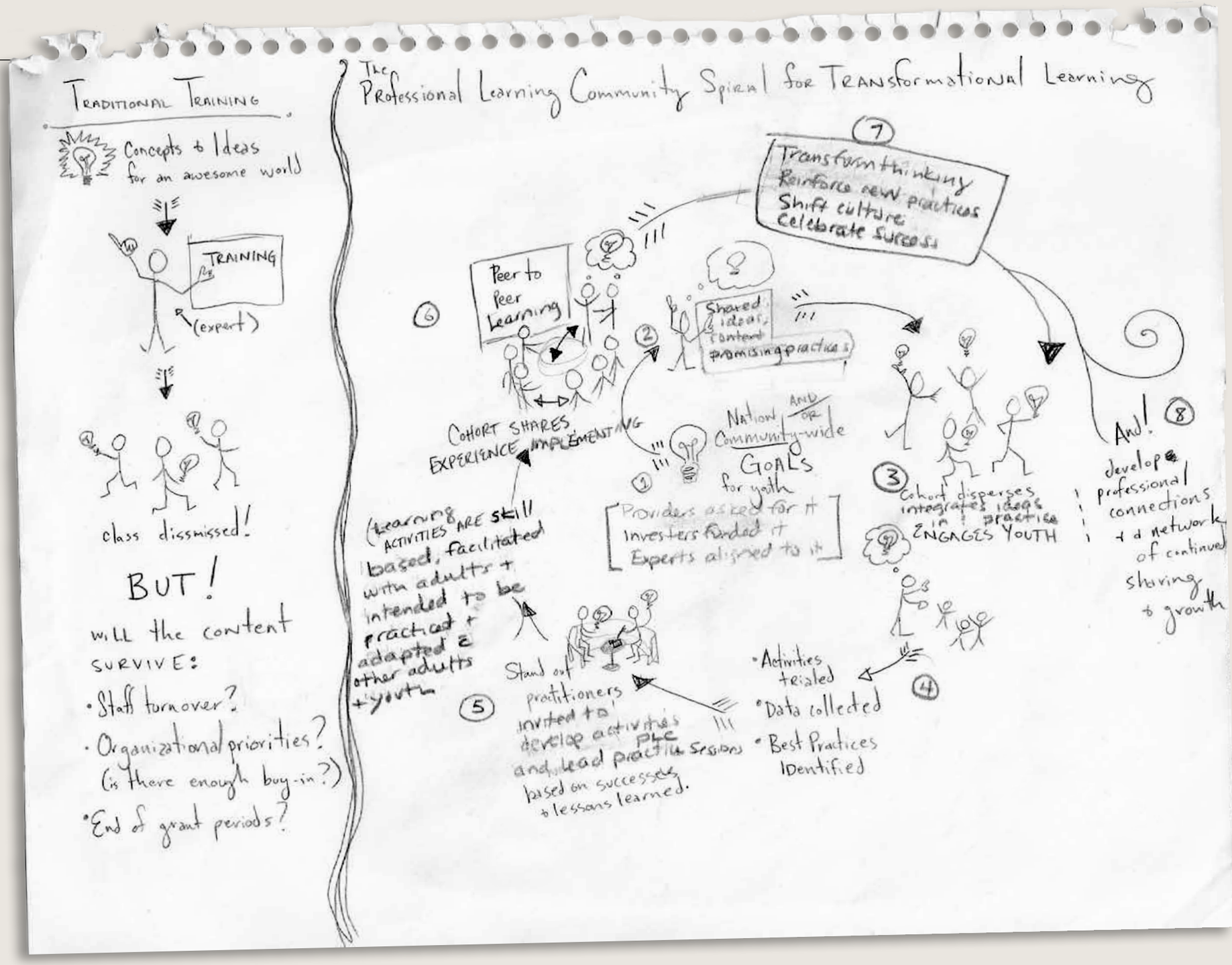
In the Grand Rapids Imagine U initiative, the common goal was to align and improve practice along a set of outcome areas, which required a more intensive approach than a traditional training model.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"The PLC worked because of the sense of community and shared commitment to impact the lives of young people. Our passion for this work served as a bonding agent for all involved. Meeting once per month keeps concepts and relationships fresh. A feeling of family was achieved." —Imagine U Participant

Professional Learning Communities

Teresa Zbiciak



This sketch illustrates the differences between a traditional training and a professional learning community approach.

characteristics of a PLC

IN DESCRIBING the building blocks for success, a number of factors were embedded into the Imagine U PLC design.

IDEA IN PRACTICE

The Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) network represents a vastly diverse network of providers. The PLC design was structured around network-level goals that included attendance in and out of school, police contact, program quality, and social emotional learning skills. There was consistent reinforcement on how the individual, program, and organizational level goals contributed to the shared community goals.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"The special sauce of our PLC was having so many diverse people and programs together in one room, learning and sharing together towards a common goal."
—Imagine U Participant

structuring the PLC experience

FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION. Communities interested in creating a PLC experience should begin with clarifying purpose and system constraints within the field of practice. Imagine U was a two-year initiative. The target audience was afterschool and summer learning practice leaders and the purpose was to increase the level of agency among youth development professional along with the children, youth, and families they serve. In this project, agency was defined as a combination of skill-based objectives across four distinct learning categories, illustrated in Figure 3.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"Our PLC has offered us many different approaches and activities to get to the same end goal of agency. When you are focused on future orientation, success mindsets, social emotional learning, or communication skills, you can find something here that will work to enhance your programs and impact on youth." —Imagine U Participant

FIGURE 3

Imagine U Learning Categories

structuring the PLC experience

A total of 15 youth-serving organizations participated in the inaugural cohort of Imagine U. The duration of the experience was eight months. As illustrated in Figure 4, the engagement included a youth pre-survey followed by an intensive period of "learning" in the first two months, and "doing" in the next four months. This was followed by a youth post-survey and "reflecting and sharing" in the final two months. All participants received integration grants to incentivize and promote these ideas in practice.

FIGURE 4

YEAR 1 Imagine U Timeline Phases & Milestones

Social-Emotional Youth Development and Youth Community Data Center (YCDC)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
LEARNING		DOING					
Engage with a PLC in monthly day sessions		Planning and integration grants to embed new practices into existing programs			REFLECTING & SHARING Gather and distill learning through pre and post surveys		

A total of 28 youth-serving organizations participated in the second cohort of Imagine U. The duration of the experience was 11 months. As illustrated in Figure 5, the engagement started with a youth pre-survey, included a total of three "deep dive" research-based sessions intermixed with six practitioner-team-led "practice sessions," followed by a youth post-survey, reflection, and celebration.

FIGURE 5

YEAR 2 Imagine U Timeline Phases & Milestones

Social-Emotional Youth Development and Youth Community Data Center (YCDC)

SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL
ORIENTATION	DEEP DIVE	PRACTICE			DEEP DIVE	PRACTICE			DEEP DIVE	FINAL CELEBRATION
MCU Signing **2** hours for all organizations interested in participating	**New research and the four learning categories** Handout pre-surveys Reflective planning **3** hours of coaching with AGI	**Future Orientation** **2** hours of skilled practice with reflective planning	**Growth Mindset** **2** hours of skilled practice with reflective planning	**Identifying Emotions** Providers receive site reports **2** hours of skilled practice with reflective planning	**Pre-survey results** (network) **3** hours of coaching with AGI	**Managing Emotions** **2** hours of skilled practice with reflective planning	**Code Switching** **2** hours of skilled practice with reflective planning	**Communi-cations** **2** hours of skilled practice with reflective planning	**Post-survey results** **3** hours of coaching with AGI	**Imagine U Toolkit** YCDC Reveal Reflective planning

structuring the PLC experience

IN CONTRASTING year one and year two, the major differences were as follows:

DURATION AND FORMAT

Year 1

The learning season was more condensed in year one. Year one was characterized by iterative learning that included new knowledge and reflection complemented by practice and program integration.

Year 2

A longer cycle of 11 months, providing more time to focus on practice, with sessions led by peers.

LEADERSHIP

Year 1

No formal leadership development initiative in place.

Year 2

Leaders who positively impacted youth outcomes in year one were identified, nurtured, coached, and invested in during year two. Each session was led by a team of two practice leaders who had demonstrated positive impacts in youth outcomes in the first year.

PARTICIPATION

Year 1

The first cohort averaged 15 agencies and 60 people participating. More program directors and site managers engaged and participation was limited to grantees.

Year 2

The second cohort averaged 25 agencies and 80 people participating. More site managers and program teams attended with front-line practice leaders, and participation was open to broader network.

METHODS

Practice sessions were opened up to the broader network of youth serving agencies, organizations participating in the cohort were strongly encouraged to bring practice teams, and the variation in speakers and delivery methods kept participants engaged.

CULTURE

Year 1

Year one had more characteristics of a professional learning community.

Year 2

Year two had more characteristics of a community of practice with a strong emphasis on leadership development.

PLC session structure

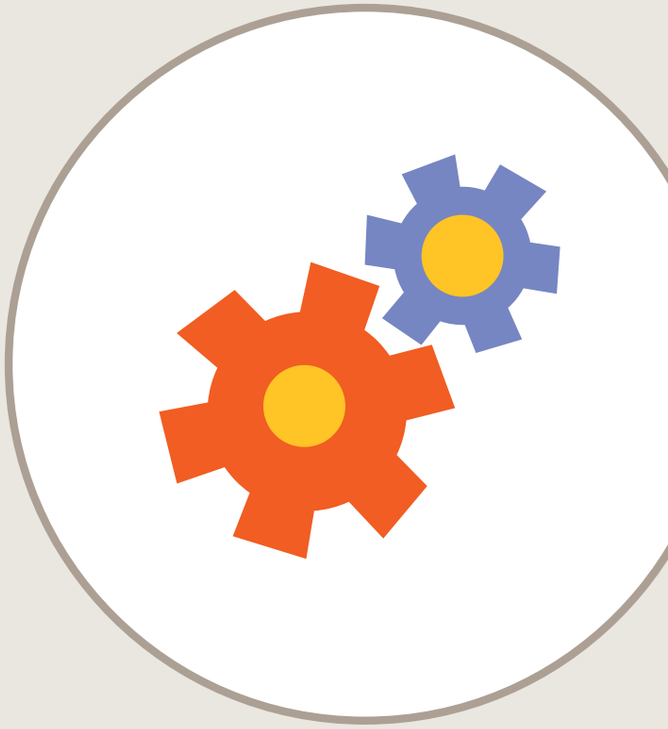
One of the goals in Grand Rapids was to build upon the decade of investment made in building network level capacity to deliver high quality programs. This work and the majority of practitioners were anchored in a set of concepts around performance improvement that includes an assessment, planning, and aligning professional development supports for program improvements. These ideas are illustrated here. This research (Smith et. al., 2012) has played a significant role in shaping the national narrative about the importance of high quality programs at the point of service delivery. The pyramid of program quality resembles Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs by design; the idea being that the higher order engagement skills on the pyramid such as planning and reflection require a great deal of intentionality. OST programs across the country have notoriously struggled with delivering on these higher order life skills, so the Grand Rapids team was intentional about modeling these practices into the PLC structure while wedding these methods with high quality content.

Pyramid of Program Quality

Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI)

Figures from "The Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) Research Study: Implications for Policy and Practice," by Forum for Youth Investment (http://cypq.org/sites/cypq.org/files/YPQIBrief2.29.pdf). Copyright 2012 by Forum for Youth Investment. Reprinted with permission.

PLC session structure



There is a poem entitled “Children Learn What They Live” (Nolte, n.d.). This is true of adults as well, which means we must be intentional about expanding our lived experience. One of the challenges for youth development professionals is lacking experience in the practices they are responsible for delivering. For example, while program leaders know that giving youth time for planning and reflection is important for higher order skill development, front line practitioners do not often have the opportunity to model and practice the skills of planning and reflection for one another.

The formative questions used to decide on the content of each PLC session included, “Will this be a transformative learning experience for practitioners? Can each activity be adapted for youth? Will the activity have a positive impact on youth outcomes?” The Imagine U PLC session leaders responded to these questions by creating a culture with high levels of participation, commitment, engagement, voice, choice, reflection, and interaction. The agendas followed a basic outline that included core instructional design elements, as shown at right.

OPENING ACTIVITY
Interactive, relational, and related to session topic

INTRO TO TOPIC
Theory and key concepts

PRACTICE
Activites modeled for staff to replicate back home

REFLECTION AND MEANING MAKING

APPLICATION
Action planning for adaption with staff and youth

CLOSING ACTIVITY
Interactive, relational, and related to session topic

FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION
Session goals, content, and methods

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

IDEA IN PRACTICE

The Imagine U experience in Grand Rapids, MI was a data-driven initiative from the start. Extensive research about the state of OST programs was conducted in 2012. The recommendations from this research included the need for more targeted Professional Development supports in the area of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), a desire for deeper organizational and individual relationship among youth development practitioners, and a shared data system that would deliver better data for bolder decision making. After the findings were released, an investor stepped forward and funded the recommendations. When you give people what they need, they respond with high levels of engagement. This goes for youth in programs, and the professionals that deliver these critical supports across the lifespan for young people in every community.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

“This year has been awesome. I have learned so much in our PLC. I have appreciated having a chance to hear from others who are doing the same work that I am but with different methods and strategies.”
—Imagine U Participant

lessons learned

1

Activities that build social capital and strengthen networked relationships create buy-in and high levels of engagement. This work is highly relational, and those relationships form over time. Practice leaders and program directors were invited to become part of a community that met over multiple months and tackled complex issues together. The opportunity for teams to connect within and across agencies was a powerful experience. There was a lot of intention built into creating trust and a sense of community. Networking was one of the strongest value adds of the experience for many practitioners.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"The activities, discussions and networking have been the best thing about the PLC experience. I really enjoyed the intentional and planned time to talk to other programs about how they run their OST programs. It is helpful to have trusted colleagues to problem solve with, especially programs with similar goals and age groups." —Imagine U Participant

2

Intensity and dosage matter. Demonstrating clear and consistent evidence-based instructional supports with ample opportunities to practice in SAFE settings (sequenced, active, focused, and explicit) are essential to improving youth outcomes (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

The effectiveness of the Imagine U initiative is directly related to the simple but profound act of listening to those closest to the work, and responding with resources to supply what they were asking for with an evidence-based approach. Practitioners have limited time for curriculum design, so the more explicit the supports are, the more likely they are to make a positive impact on youth outcomes.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"Everyone has brought positive energy to each of the sessions. I feel that the environment is empowering and inclusive, which makes me feel safe to ask questions and try new things. I liked being forced out of my comfort zone. It's how we learn and grow. I especially appreciate the turnkey activities that are provided. This makes it easy to take back and apply to our programs." —Imagine U Participant

lessons learned

3 **Model high-impact, practical content with high-quality delivery methods.** There was a strong attention to both the content and delivery methods in every Imagine U session. Effective strategies for community development, adult learning and youth engagement were modeled in each session. This combination provided challenge, choice, and practical application. Activities that are relevant and accessible are the more likely to be integrated back into local programs.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"I loved having the program leaders facilitating the presentations. I enjoyed learning with my peers and sharing knowledge on how we can implement activities effectively. It was especially effective when we invited youth as guest speakers and presenters. Every session has been youth focused. I've learned so much I can use with my children and youth."

—Imagine U Participant

4 **A little funding goes a long way.** Financial investment in this work is important, but is not the primary motivator for participation. In other words, it initiated engagement, but it was not enough alone to sustain it. With the frequency of OST staff turnover, it is important to pay for system coordination and provider engagement in the professional development system. For sustainability, it is also essential to appoint program directors with the task of sustaining this work in their own organizations through orientation, training, and onboarding practices.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"I loved the interactive nature and structure of each PLC. I especially appreciated that there was no cost to attend. Everything we learn and do in the PLC we have been able to put into practice with our youth."

—Imagine U Participant

5 **Shared goals, collective impact, and leadership development can help sustain the movement.** Members of the Imagine U PLC expressed a desire to connect with their peers, to know what resources and community partners were available to enhance their existing programs, and to keep abreast of emerging trends and topics in their field. Providers were struggling with how to define, measure and move success indicators in the areas where they felt they had direct influence and responsibility. By working together, the Imagine U PLC collected data, which was then processed by a third party, who could identify and share clear themes and patterns. Perhaps the most important element in sustaining this work was the year-two investment in practice leaders. The PLC thrived in large part from the identification of leaders who successfully integrated content in year one and achieved stand-out results. These leaders received coaching as they developed and facilitated the six practice sessions for members of the second cohort.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"The PLC highlights included networking and working with others who share the same passion and vision. Diverse agencies coming together and united by a common goal for our youth in what made this work."

—Imagine U Participant

recommendations for future practice

THERE ARE MANY ELEMENTS of the Imagine U model that are transferable to other content areas within the OST system and beyond, in and outside of the community where these ideas were initially piloted. A few tips that worked well in practice and are recommended for any community considering the introduction of a PLC:

- Invest in building a community of youth development professionals, including front line practitioners and program directors
  - » Promote broad engagement by encouraging organizational teams to attend together for regularly scheduled meet-ups
  - » Find and build on the commonalities within a diverse community; uplift and celebrate intersectionality
- Emphasize a culture of safety, practice, risk taking, feedback, and continuous quality improvement
  - » Use data for meaning making and action planning; build in feedback and reflection loops for multifaceted learning
  - » Maintain strong focus on fidelity to the most important elements of practice, uplifting failures and successes in implementation
- Plan for sustainability
  - » Wherever possible, systematize processes such as video taping high-impact practices or creating an online resource guide; these make implementation easier, more consistent and more sustainable
  - » Invest in coaching and leadership development with high-potential, next-generation leaders; engage youth voice and choice in planning and implementation wherever possible
- Coordination is crucial
  - » This collective impact initiative was led by a cohesive design team that included content development partners, service delivery partners, research and data partners, funding partners, communication partners, and project managers
  - » All members of the team received some level of compensation to bring their time and talents, and this coupled with a high-impact experience created robust and sustained engagement. In considering the future of the Imagine U initiative, the cohort has bonded and members wish to meet and continue developing their expertise further. One recommendation to consider is to use the PLC model to explore how to move the needle on other shared outcomes and network level goals, including attendance in and out of school, police contact, and program quality. A chart and diagram of how this could be replicated follows.

recommendations for future practice

YEAR 1 FOCUS

- National experts shared concepts, promising ideas, and suggested curriculum
- Local experts curated content and introduced practices within a professional learning community

YEAR 1 RESULTS

- Local goals established
- Commitments secured
- Community established
- Practice targets identified
- Integration completed
- OST and SLA models
- Youth impact assessed
- PLC experience evaluated

YEAR 2 FOCUS

- Imagine U model refined
- Standout practices identified
- Practice leaders identified
- Coaching introduced
- Peer-to-peer problem solving

YEAR 2 RESULTS

- Expanded model to full school year
- Increased local expertise
- Developed next-generation practice leaders

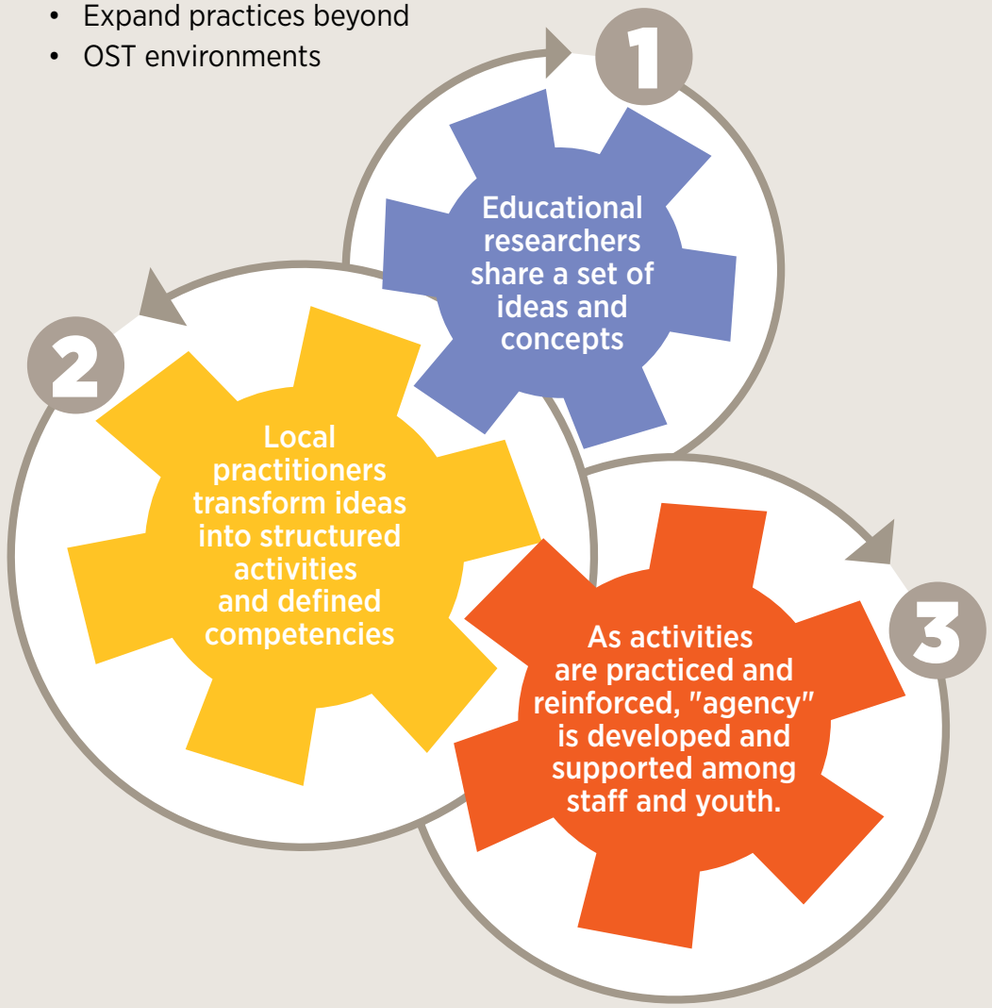
YEAR 3 FOCUS

- Mastery, replication, sustainability
- Use toolkit to orient and onboard next generation of OST leaders

YEAR 3 RESULTS

- Increase OST mastery
- Expand practices beyond
- OST environments

Three-Phase Change Model



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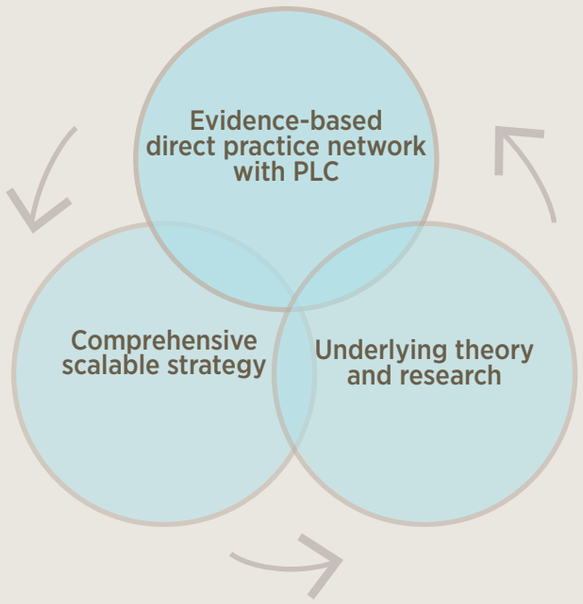
funding and impact

funding for impact

PARTNERSHIP AND COLLEGIALITY

Systems building efforts such as Imagine U can benefit from collegial partnerships with funders, especially when the common interest is changing conditions for children. Writers espousing the need for more catalytic philanthropy focus on two things: catalyzing change for improved outcomes for children, and sharing responsibility for getting results. When this is the case, funders can bring more to the table than money. They often bring thought leadership, a multi-systems view, and passion for the cause. Their resource chest is packed with important assets needed for results-oriented work, including: access to national thought leaders, models and frameworks, expert facilitators, strategic communications—and the list goes on. These assets can be brought to bear in support of the systems building efforts in out-of-school time for greater collective action and systems change.

Often funders scan the "underlying theory and research" to identify "evidence-based practices" that can be innovatively harnessed toward a "comprehensive scalable strategy." In the case of Imagine U, this is exactly the framework used.

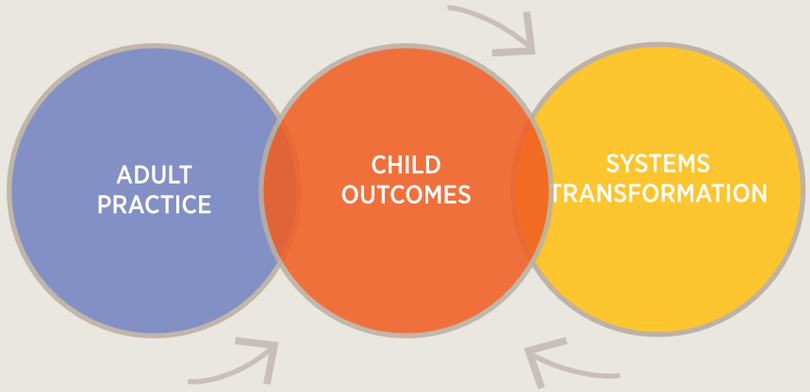


POSITIONING

The Imagine U extended learning model is a transformational systems-building approach to developing deep capacity and innovative practice in a delivery mechanism for social-emotional development. Building upon systems change research that highlights key levers in larger scale change efforts, the model includes a shared vision for four key success factors:

1. research-based content that helps develop student agency—essentially the capacity and propensity to take purposeful action
2. a delivery system that includes a professional learning community designed to change the practice of youth professionals
3. an integration strategy to move content and practice into action and impact
4. data mining that drives understanding of how youth are situated and their growth over time.

Together, these factors position any system for impact in three directions: changed adult practice, transformed systems, and improved child outcomes.



mutual reinforcement for systems change

CAPACITY BUILDING EXPERIENCES

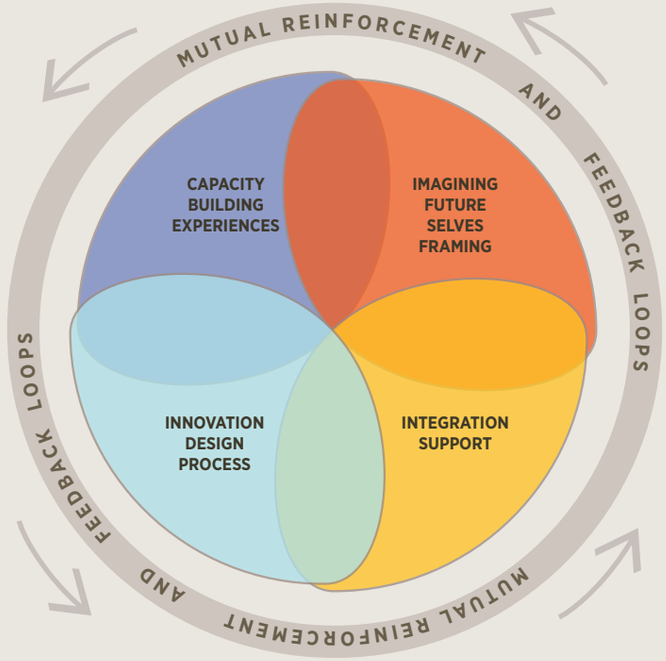
Two sets of experiences yield greater capacity in organizations:

1. a learning process promoting deep understanding of the social emotional factors supporting school, work, and life success for young people
2. an exploration of the research and practice relative to strengthening social emotional factors and helping young people discover their future self.

These experiences are supported by thought leadership and technical assistance in the field of social emotional learning and development.

INNOVATION DESIGN PROCESS

At the heart of Imagine U is a design process for developing innovations and interventions that embody core social emotional content and levers of change. Participants designed specific programs, cultural messaging, and the curriculum for program and organizational integration. The process included opportunities for collegial feedback and coaching by local experts as well as review and feedback from thought leaders with the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University.



IMAGINING FUTURE SELVES FRAMING

A creative framework and extended learning campaign supports a common identity and platform for the aspiration of young people strengthening social emotional competencies, and finding and exploring their future selves.

INTEGRATION SUPPORT

Imagine U features an integration process for embedding new learnings and practices into the programmatic delivery, organizational culture, and data collection and measurement system. Facilitation and coaching was provided within a professional learning community structure. Alignment support on common measures for social emotional development, and the integration of engagement measures were made available from the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University.

- This process was supported by small integration grants to seed programmatic and organizational rollout.
- In the initial Imagine U pilot, these grants ranged from $3,000 to $4,000 to offset the cost of professional learning and underwrite such things as purchase or development of curriculum, personal development and training systems and videos for ongoing staff, technology, packaging, and printing.

Edmond-Verley, C. (2016) Systems Change Model.

Imagine U logic model

JOCELYN FRIEDLANDER
Research Assistant
Achievement Gap Initiative
at Harvard University

INPUTS

- Extended learning network providers
- Financial supporters
- Content and measurement technical assistance
- Program management and professional learning community (PLC) facilitation
- Communications team
- Youth community data center (YCDC)

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

ACTIVITIES

- Implementation of Imagine U plans in ELO Network programs
- Providers submit implementation plans that are aligned with YPQA
- **In the context of a professional learning community:**
  - Activities that introduce providers to up-to-date thinking in four key areas: Future Orientation, Mindsets, Social Emotional Learning, and Communication
  - Activities that help providers develop implementation plans that target indicators in each of the four areas.
  - Opportunities for providers to brainstorm, share feedback, and learn from each other's implementation experiences
  - Ongoing technical assistance and coaching supports
- Providers upload data to YCDC site
- Integration grants awarded
- Communication activities

OUTPUTS

- Students participate in up to three months of Imagine U experiences
- Nine PLC meetings held and Imagine U integration plans submitted
- Imagine U programs are represented in YCDC database and directory
- Coordinated Imagine U branding

OUTCOMES

SHORT TERM

STUDENT LEVEL
- Increased engagement
- Growth in future orientation, success mindsets, SEL, and communication skills

SETTING LEVEL
- Enhanced provider knowledge, skills, and strategies
- Focus on content that prepares students for their futures
- Improved program quality
- Improved provider capacity for outcome monitoring/evaluation

SYSTEM LEVEL
- Broad-based awareness of Imagine U brand and associated concepts
- Common program goals
- Tracking of system-level outcomes (using YCDC)
- Stronger professional learning culture

LONG TERM

STUDENT LEVEL
Students are ready for school, work, and life

SETTING LEVEL
Continuous quality improvement

SYSTEM LEVEL
Greater investments in extended learning and summer learning

ASSUMPTIONS
- To be ready for school, work, and life, students need to develop future orientations, success-enabling mindsets, social emotional skills, and communication skills.
- These areas do not receive much attention in formal schooling.
- Extended learning settings can play an important role in supporting youth development in these areas.

EXTERNAL FACTORS
- Imagine U will build upon the extended learning network's previous work in the area of social emotional learning
- Imagine U will have a flexible design to accommodate the diversity of extended learning network programs

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BENEFITS TO THE SYSTEMS BUILDING VS DIRECT PRACTICE APPROACH

This approach positions the funder to both share in the responsibility of getting results—a hallmark of catalytic philanthropy—and potentially enjoy the following benefits:

- ***Broader ownership*** Builds upon work and investments of others while maintaining a position to share, influence, and bring experience to the table
- ***Larger reach*** Supports collective movement to impact larger numbers of young people in developing strong social emotional competencies; bigger than funding direct practice programming
- ***Alignment*** Promotes coordination and mutual reinforcement while providing a vehicle for shared measurement across an entire network of practitioners, many of whom are partners. Aligns in-school and out-of-school with Tripod-like measures and attendance. Aligns the work with other funders
- ***Grounding in evidence-based practice*** Provides sufficient opportunities for developing evidence-based interventions through connections and guidance with thought leaders and other researchers. Positions the work to get results.
- ***Integration and sustainability*** Provides opportunity to influence practitioner and organizational effectiveness across the network for deeper integration and sustainability
- ***Exit strategy*** Provides clear exit options for funding with declining investment

PHASED APPROACH TO PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Phase 1: Convene design team to create project plan, outline key milestones, and develop details

Phase 2: Engage learning related to social emotional development and best practice

Phase 3: Make meaning of the research and scaffold learning through deep dialogue and refinement of data collection instruments

Phase 4: Design a pilot intervention for one or more program components and design an integrative approach that embeds elements of important social emotional learning across organizations

Phase 5: Pilot interventions, collect data, analyze, and achieve impact

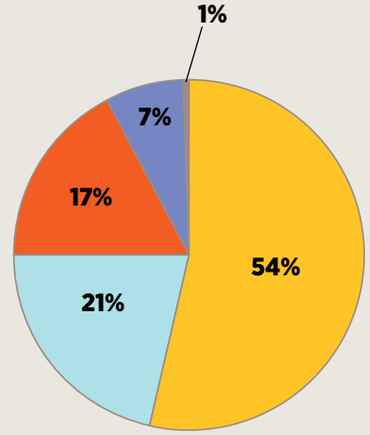
Phase 6: Foster a campaign and movement to encourage investment in young people's social emotional development

BUDGET

Below is a sample of two-year estimated cost projections as percentages of overall budget.

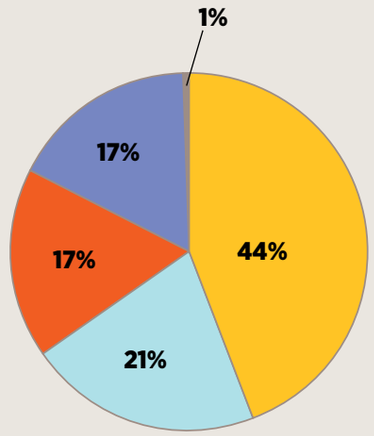
YEAR ONE

Social emotional systems building	54%
Thought leader consulting and technical support	21%
New practice integration grants	17%
Communications launch and proliferation	7%
Meeting support	1%



YEAR TWO

Social emotional systems building	44%
Thought leader consulting and technical support	21%
New practice integration grants	17%
Communications launch and proliferation	17%
Meeting support	1%

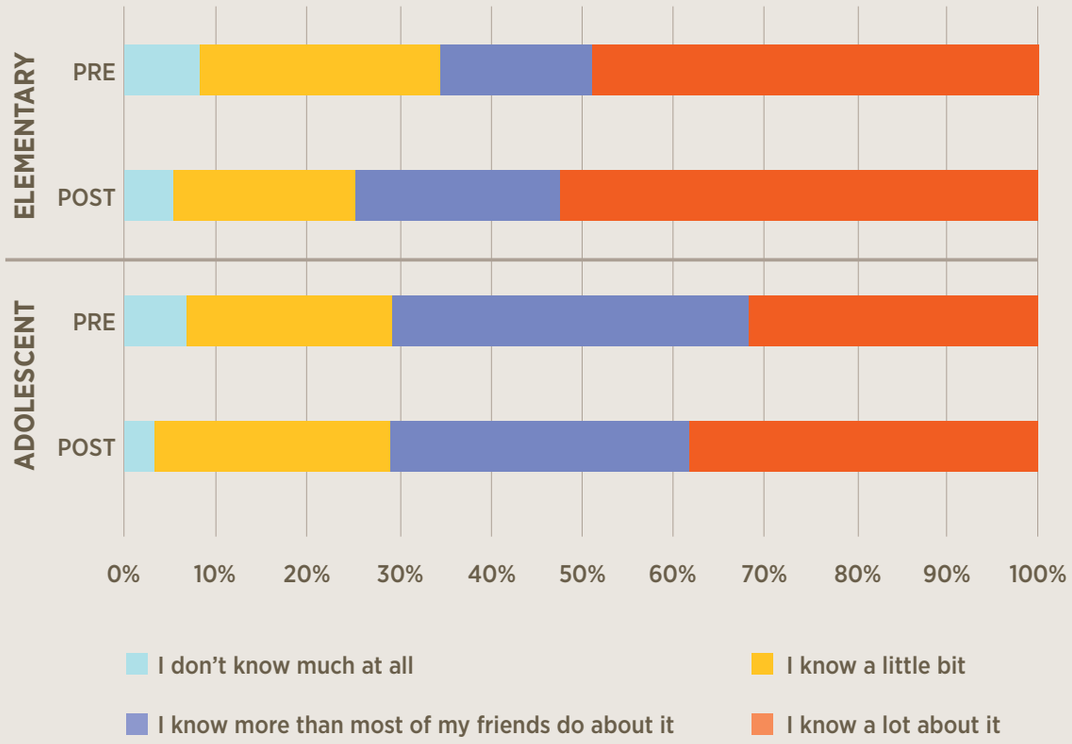


impacts

Analysis and reporting on the 2016 cohort of Imagine U program sites

Results: Increased knowledge in future opportunities

How much students know about jobs



SUMMARY ANALYSIS

- Students learned more about their preferred careers.
- What students report they learned helps predict the changes in their reported self-perceptions about identity from pre to post.
- There was variation across sites in both learning and changes in identity responses

Results: Which agency outcomes do programs affect?

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Imagine U sites where adolescents agree most with items that ask directly about learning tend to show larger pre-post identity status progress in the following domains:

- Managing emotions well
- Growth mindset
- Feeling self-esteem
- Having a sense of purpose
- Persisting in the face of difficulty
- Being concerned for other people

A reasonable interpretation is that these are domains where Imagine U sites, when effective, are making the most difference.

Analyzed by Ron Ferguson, June 2016
Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University

research literature review

Components of Agency in the Imagine U Program

Ronald F. Ferguson

AGENCY is the capacity and propensity to take purposeful action. Humans who have a sense of agency do not just surrender to difficult life circumstances. Instead, they tend to set goals, make plans, take initiative, and persist to achieve what they set out to accomplish.

Imagine U uses agency as the core organizing concept. Professional learning experiences for staffers who work with children and youth are organized around four developmental domains associated with agency: (i) purpose and future orientation, (ii) success mindsets, (iii) social and emotional skills, and (iv) communication skills. Purpose and future orientation inspire agency and give it direction. Success mindsets support agency, particularly in the face of difficulty or setbacks. Social and emotional and communication skills enable the expression of agency across different contexts.

Out-of-school-time (OST) programs are well-suited to cultivate agency. First, they do not face the same pressures as schools to address academic skills. So, they have more freedom to focus on other aspects of youth development. Second, youth in OST programs tend to develop trusting relationships with caring adults who can support their development of skills, mindsets, and interests over time (potentially multiple years). Finally, OST programs have a tradition of valuing youth voice and leadership, in other words, expressions of agency.

This literature overview has one section on each of Imagine U's agency-related domains, beginning with "Purpose and Future Orientation." Without purpose, agency has no meaning.

PURPOSE AND FUTURE ORIENTATION

There has been surprisingly little research on the role that purpose plays in the lives of youth. However, Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003) have provided helpful guidance on ways to conceptualize the relevant issues. For one, they clearly distinguish the role of "meaning" as a broad general concept, from purpose, which they regard as a narrower, more specific idea related to meaning. Their review emphasizes that most research on meaning and purpose have focused on adults. The few studies focused on young people have focused mainly on the negative effects of lacking purpose. They write that "the personal effects of purposelessness may include self-absorption, depression, addictions, and a variety of psycho-somatic ailments, and the social effects may include deviant and destructive behavior, a lack of productivity, and an inability to sustain stable interpersonal relations" (p. 120). Studies that explore the positive effects of purpose instead of the negative effect of purposelessness are quite rare and those that exist focus mostly on religiosity. For example, Francis (2000) administered a single-item scale, "I feel my life has a sense of purpose," to a sample of nearly twenty-six thousand 13- to 15-year-olds from across Europe, and found that youth who read the Bible more often agreed slightly more that their lives had a sense of purpose.

Some interesting work on the role of purpose appears in the literature on resilience among children in dysfunctional environments. A common theme is that resilient children in highly stressful environments develop a sense of efficacy linked to the bright future they envision for themselves. This vision serves to motivate and sustain their sense of resolve to overcome their circumstances. Bernard (1991) writes:

> *"Related to a sense of autonomy and self-efficacy and the belief that one can have some degree of control over one's environment is another characteristic of resilient children- a sense of purpose and future. Within this category fall several related attributes invariably identified in the protective factor literature: healthy expectancies, goal-directedness, success orientation, achievement motivation, educational aspirations, persistence, hopefulness, hardiness, belief in a bright future, a sense of anticipation, a sense of a compelling future, and a sense of coherence. This factor appears to be a most powerful predictor of positive outcomes." (p.6)*

Much of the work upon which this statement is based is ethnographic, grounded on detailed life stories of highly resilient children and their less resilient peers.

Damon, Menon, and Bronk (op. cit.) propose the following operational definition of purpose: "Purpose is a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful

1 Some discussions of agency-related literature in this paper are reproduced here with permission from Ferguson et. al. (2015).

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Components of Agency in the Imagine U Program

Ronald F. Ferguson

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to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self." They suggest that this definition highlights the following points (quoted verbatim):

1. Purpose is a goal of sorts, but it is more stable and far-reaching than low-level goals such as "to get to the movie on time" or "to find a parking space in town today."
2. Purpose is part of one's personal search for meaning, but it also has an external component, the desire to make a difference in the world, to contribute to matters larger than the self.
3. Unlike meaning alone (which may or may not be oriented towards a defined end), purpose is always directed at an accomplishment towards which one can make progress.

They assert that the "necessary characteristic" of their proposed definition is "not its concreteness, but the sense of direction that it provides in creating an objective for purpose.

SUCCESS MINDSETS

Success mindsets are important beliefs and habits of thinking that lead people to enact the types of behaviors upon which successful outcomes depend.

GROWTH MINDSET

A person has a growth mindset when he or she believes the brain is like a muscle that gets stronger with use. In other words, they believe that effort begets ability. There are ongoing debates concerning how much IQ can change (Heckman et al., 2014; Herrnstein and Murray, 1994; Flynn, 1987). Nonetheless, we know that whole nations have experienced IQ growth as their lifestyles have changed to be more focused on activities involving intellectual skill (Flynn, 1987; Dickens and Flynn 2001 and 2006; Dickens, 2005). So, we know that intelligence is malleable. At the individual level, how able any given person becomes depends to a substantial degree upon how hard they work and for how long they do so.

Growth mindset studies by Carol Dweck (2007) and others (see Yeager and Walton, 2011) have shown that simply getting youths to believe in effort-based ability can improve their performance. Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) used an eight-session workshop to teach middle school students that effort grows the brain like exercise grows one's muscles. A control group learned study skills. The treatment group experienced marked improvement in math performance that lasted through the rest of the school year. The matched control group did not.

It makes sense to expect that in real programs, high quality instruction can actually be a growth mindset intervention. Not only can a provider explain that the brain is like a muscle, she can also help students convince themselves of this notion. She can provide assignments and supports that get students to perform at levels they initially thought beyond their abilities.

Several experiences reaching goals once thought out of reach can convince students to cast aside old assumptions about fixed ability.

Indeed, it is not necessary for the process to be a highly conscious one. For example, Mueller and Dweck (1998) showed that simply altering the form of praise can make a difference. Their experiment began by having fifth graders solve some relatively difficult problems.

Afterward, a random sample of the students were given intelligence praise—remarking on how smart they were—while others received effort praise, pointing out that hard work resulted in solving the problems. Next, the students were given a very difficult set of problems on which all performed poorly, followed by a third set of problems whose level of difficulty was about the same as the first. The children who received the effort praise not only solved 30% more problems than the others, they also asked for more challenging work afterward. There was no explicit instruction on the topic of growth mindset, only an emphasis on effort instead of intelligence in the structuring of praise.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS AND CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Agency operates through the use of skills that neuropsychologists associate with executive functions. According to a research review by Jurado and Roselli (2007), there is general agreement that executive functions enable goal formulation, planning, executing goal-directed plans, and effective performance. Executive functions are brain functions. Early neuropsychological research on the topic focused on behavior changes among patients following brain injuries. For example, wounded soldiers with brain lesions in the frontal cortex developed difficulties completing goal-oriented actions

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Components of Agency in the Imagine U Program

Ronald F. Ferguson

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(Stuss & Benson, 1986). Based on a research review and many interviews with researchers, Tough (2012) emphasizes that foundations for executive functioning are established in early childhood through warmth and security between the child and primary caregiver, but they continue evolving across the life span.

Important executive function-related behaviors concern being organized, persistent, disciplined in time use, and focused on producing quality work. The same behaviors are associated with conscientiousness in the psychology literature on personality. Conscientiousness is one of the Big Five personality traits. The others are openness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

MacCann, Duckworth and Roberts (2009) conducted a study "to clarify the underlying facets of conscientiousness" and to identify how those facets correlate with academic achievement and behaviors. To produce data, 13- to 19-year-old high school students responded to items from a dozen distinct personality models that claimed to measure conscientiousness. The authors examined how each of the facets they identified related to each of behavior or achievement measures: class absences; sports absences; disciplinary infractions; high honors grades; and holding office in student organizations. Holding office in student organizations was the only one that was unrelated to any facet of conscientiousness.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines social and emotional skills in terms of five competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2016). Social and emotional skills are foundations for healthy relationships and emotionally balanced lives. They help individuals express agency because the initiative that agency entails is often expressed through skillful communication. People who possess the CASEL competencies are able to cope more effectively with stress and conflict. They collaborate effectively with others and take advantage of supports and opportunities. It is therefore not surprising that social and emotional skills are associated with achievement not only in school, but also in work settings (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011; Ivcevic & Brackett, 2014). Evidence collected through a meta-analysis indicates that social and emotional skills can be enhanced through targeted interventions and that academic skill improvements are among the associated outcomes (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011). Recent reviews suggest that social and emotional interventions are most effective when implemented not as stand-alone programs, but rather, integrated into program norms and routines (Jones and Bouffard, 2012). And because social and emotional skills are best learned in the context of relationships, educators' own social and emotional skills are an important input (Jones, Bouffard, Weissbourd, 2013). Imagine U activities focused on identifying and managing emotions relates to the first two CASEL competencies (self-awareness and self-management), while navigating social norms relates to the other three (social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making).

IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING EMOTIONS

Youth must be able to cope with negative feelings as well as modulate positive feelings that are "overwhelming or distracting" (Ivcevic & Brackett, 2014). Emotion regulation involves "monitoring and modifying emotional reactions in order to reach a goal, which can happen at any point in the emotion process, from selecting situations, changing situation appraisals, to modulating physiological and behavior reactions" (Ivcevic & Brackett, 2014). Interventions may teach youth emotion concepts ("feeling words") to help them better identify their own and others' emotions; provide strategies for managing emotions; and have students consider the consequences of particular strategies (e.g., Rivers, Brackett, Reys, Elbertson, Salovey, 2013).

NAVIGATING SOCIAL NORMS

It is human nature to want to be liked and to not stand out too much from peers. Indeed, people often mimic others in order to fit in and seem normal. Even though young people may say, "I'm just being myself," learning that their assumptions concerning what is normal among their peers is inaccurate can actually change individuals' behaviors (Berkowitz, 2004). One aspect of the

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impulse to belong is to punish peers who seem different (Craig, 2000). Indeed, when peer norms go awry, young people may face a great deal of pressure to behave in ways that are damaging to themselves and others (Crosnoe, 2011). Even when there is no explicit pressure, young people may feel heavily inclined to copy peers behaviors because they expect that doing so will help them fit in socially.

Interventions such as Imagine U can help participants develop the decision-making skills and courage to resist complying with counterproductive social norms. Among the most important lessons to be learned is that most peers actually have very positive values. Much of the negative behavior that youth perform actually conflicts with their personal values, but feels necessary to earn friends or avoid social rejection (Ferguson, 2016). Imagine U and similar programs can help young people learn the roles that norms play and make wise decisions about when, how, and whether to code switch as they move from one social environment to another.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Recent surveys of many types of employers show communication skills are in high demand. The same surveys also reveal that employers are not satisfied with the communication skills job applicants bring. This is most true of entry-level workers with high-school degrees, but is also the case for workers with two- and four-year college degrees (The Conference Board, 2006). Many communication skills that are important for professional settings are not explicitly taught in schools. Oral communication skills include being able to express thoughts and ideas clearly in conversation, such as during interviews or customer service activities as well as in public speaking. Forms of professional written communication include resumes, cover letters, emails, memos, and technical reports. Applied communications skills can be taught in OST programs in the context of activities focused on future orientation and career exploration.

The internet is changing how we search for, process, and share information. Online and offline reading draw on a set of overlapping skills but also differ in important ways. For example, using the internet to answer a question involves choosing effective search terms, assessing the relevance and quality of search results, and synthesizing information from multiple sources. A recent study by Leu and colleagues reported achievement gaps in online reading performance between seventh grade students from more and less advantaged schools (Leu, Foranzi, Rhoads, Maykel, Kennedy, & Timbrell, 2014). These gaps remained when controlling for offline reading skills. Their findings underscore the need for schools and programs to explicitly address online reading skills in addition to more traditional reading offline.

CONCLUSION

There is a great deal of social scientific evidence that the agency-related factors upon which Imagine U is focused are critically important for success in school and life. Different writers will use different semantics and emphasize different aspects of this collection of topics. However, all agree that they are important. Program professionals can be sure that their work in helping young people to develop agency is critically important and a tremendous service to the young people they work with in OST settings.

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Building bridges to successful futures: Imagining possible selves

THE DIFFERENCE between the futures students imagine for themselves and the realities they come to inhabit is called the aspiration-attainment gap. The aspiration-attainment gap describes the divergence between a student's preconceived plans and her realized outcomes. It characterizes the chasm between a young man's expectations for his future and the shape his future ultimately takes. When young people lack opportunities to develop future-oriented goals and explicit pathways to achieve them, they are left stranded at the edge of a divide with no way to get from where they are to where they want to go. "Possible selves" curricula provide evidence-based interventions with the potential to help students bridge that divide and achieve the successful futures they imagine.

Possible selves are imagined future identities that connect back to and evolve from the decisions a person makes in the present (Oyserman, 2008). Possible selves make a direct connection between a person's choices today and his or her outcomes tomorrow. The concept behind possible selves posits that helping students identify how they want to look and what they want to be doing later in life can help motivate them to make positive behavioral choices in the present (Laurence, 2015). That is, students who are taught to think about the futures they want, appreciating that the learning they do today influences the trajectory of their dreams, can experience improved academic and behavioral outcomes.

The concept behind possible selves is similar to the north star and compass analogy in Imagine U's future orientation learning domain. Possible selves are images of the self projected onto the fabric of the future, and as such they act as "north stars," providing direction and points of reference as students make choices to navigate opportunities and challenges in the present. Youth can construct possible selves that range from the positive, framing future lives of success and prosperity, to the negative, imagining futures of limitation and loss (Hock, Deshler, & Shumaker, 2003). The concept of balanced possible selves includes both positive self-projections worthy of pursuit and negative self-projections that youth would seek to avoid (Laurence, 2015). Equipped with these possible selves images, students can chart courses that will enable them to attain the futures they desire. These planned pathways operate as compasses to keep young people on the route to success.

Programs that implement these ideas are called possible selves interventions. They employ a variety of methods that show promise in teaching future-oriented planning skills, motivating youth to persevere in the face of adversity, and nurturing positive learning cultures.

One example of such an intervention is the school-to-jobs (STJ) curriculum developed by Daphna Oyserman and her colleagues. In this intervention, students complete a series of task-based sessions that help young people identify their strengths, recognize their desire to succeed, positively conceptualize challenges, and imagine future outcomes complete with pathways to achieve them (Laurence, 2015). Oyserman's intervention taps into students' natural desire to do well and equips them to further develop skills and plans that lead to success. STJ contains 11 different sessions; they are front-loaded so all the main ideas and competencies are trained in the first five sessions (Laurence, 2015). This front-loading means significant results may be achieved even when time or resource constraints inhibit full implementation. Further, the STJ intervention is flexible enough to be adaptable for both classroom and community-based settings, using materials as commonplace as markers and poster board. In a Detroit study of 264 middle school students, the STJ program demonstrated "lasting change on [possible selves], self regulation, academic outcomes, and depression" (Oyserman, et. al., 2006). STJ is a highly effective and accessible intervention with evidence that it gives young people tools—such as the ability to name more feared, more balanced, and more plausible academic possible selves—to help them successfully cross the aspiration-attainment gap.

Possible selves interventions work because they train youth to develop the kinds of future-oriented skills shown to improve academic outcomes and encourage goal-setting (Oyserman, 2015). Moreover, these programs do not project values and dreams onto students, but rather allow students to take the helm, generating their own future goals and pathways to success

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in supportive peer settings. The emphasis on students imagining their own futures, strategizing their own action plans, and building their own peer-based supports reinforces agency by providing ample opportunities for self-directed growth. Possible selves interventions put tools directly into students' hands and give them license to build positive futures. They enable young people to lead the charge in constructing a clear path between their choices and their goals, narrowing the aspiration-attainment gap over time.

One important strength of possible selves interventions: they are designed to train students and their peer groups to transform the way they understand their futures within the context of the present. They do this by teaching youth to understand that success in the present enables positive future outcomes. Further, possible selves interventions encourage students to work with one another in envisioning their future and designing action plans for the present. By creating opportunities for peer-based learning and group work, these interventions structure mutually-reinforcing supports for students using the curricula. Environment is key. Possible selves curricula can engage and empower entire learning communities by both generating individual cases of success and facilitating far-reaching cultural shifts. These interventions encourage students to dream together, plan together, and problem solve together because research shows that achieving group buy-in reinforces behavioral changes by making them seem socially desirable and identity-congruent. (Laurence 2015). Possible selves interventions help individuals succeed by empowering the group to succeed.

In having peers work together, the interventions promote cultures in which youth see success and growth as integral to their identities. For communities that have historically experienced lower rates of academic achievement, the intentional reinforcement of success as an identity marker is critical. It tells students two things: not only are their dreams possible, but achieving those dreams is integral to what it means to be a part of their identity group. For youth for whom systemic marginalization has been a legacy, particularly youth from urban, rural, and disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, possible selves interventions amount to permission to thrive.

A similar positive reframing is achieved in the way possible selves interventions explain the value of adversity. For example, in Hock, Deschler, and Schumaker's Possible Selves Program, students are encouraged to identify strengths and skills that can help them when challenges arise (as cited in Laurence, 2015). Oyserman highlights the importance of helping students to differentiate between difficulty and impossibility: when youth perceive challenges as being manageable rather than insurmountable, they are more motivated to make an effort (as cited in Laurence 2015). Further, teaching students to perceive difficulty as a cue that a task is worthy of effort helps them to see challenges as important and worthy of their time. Importantly, supportive peer environments encourage youth to feel that the effort used to overcome obstacles is consistent with one's self understanding or identity, so rather than feeling discouraged by difficulty, students learn to see challenges as important opportunities to use skills and grow into their possible selves (Laurence, 2015).

Teaching students about possible selves helps them imagine more possibilities and set more goals. Students who are able to imagine positive future scenarios and then make connections between their current behaviors and their future dreams are better positioned for success. Best of all, while these interventions are designed to teach sophisticated skills, the lesson goals can be accomplished using simple trainings and low-tech tools. With little more than a clear lesson plan, blank paper, and a writing utensil, students can become better equipped to begin building bridges to successful futures. By helping students concretely link their present to their future through realistic success imagery and strategic planning, possible selves interventions create a culture of learning in which all students can thrive.

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acknowledgements

theory + research

Ronald F. Ferguson, Ph.D., faculty director of the **Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University**, proposed an evidence-based framework for the cultivation of student agency: the capacity and propensity to take purposeful action. With his MIT degree in economics, decades of teaching and research on education and youth development, and a recent study of 300,000 student surveys, he has identified four categories of skills and mindsets for school and life success. Unlike other approaches that blur distinctions or omit key topics, Ferguson brings the picture into focus with a framework that satisfies both scholarly and practical requirements for helping move the field forward.

practice + integration

Lynn Heemstra, executive director of **Our Community's Children**, the City of Grand Rapids' office for children and youth, created a professional learning community (PLC) to apply Ferguson's theories in practice. For the professional learning pilot, Heemstra worked with ELO (expanded learning opportunities) Network, a coalition of community organizations providing quality after-school programs to more than 21,000 children at 180 sites. Three cohorts of providers designed activities to help develop the mindsets, motivation, and skills that Ferguson's research says they will need to transition successfully from school to career.

strategy + design

Chaná Edmond-Verley, senior program officer for Believe 2 Become, an initiative of the **Doug & Maria DeVos Foundation**, brings to the forefront a focus on scalable, sustainable, research-driven solutions that help young people discover their possible selves and bridge the gap from school to career. She has identified access to information as a critical lever limiting opportunity for so many desiring upward mobility in pursuit of the American dream. As a former systems engineer, experienced workforce development executive, and catalytic change maker, she knows that transformational solutions lie at the intersection of cultivating potential, reimagining structures, and harnessing collective will.