

Defining a Healthy School to Build a Healthy Detroit

Detroit, Michigan

Detroit Public Schools 21st Century Program



ISSUE

Detroit is recognized as one of the largest food deserts in the country, a poster child for the economic decline of shrinking cities, and arguably home to one of the most challenged public school districts. Equity advocates, city planners, and education reformers are coming together to create a healthy, vibrant Detroit after decades of disinvestment. This Y-PLAN project builds on three years of Y-PLAN Detroit, engaging over 300 Detroit Public School students across four middle schools in defining key priorities and proposals to build healthy schools and a healthy Detroit. Initiated by a partnership with Kellogg Foundation funded Diversity Data Kids Project, the Y-PLAN Detroit initiatives enables students to develop 21st century skills, such as STEM, through the use of innovative strategies including animation, cartooning, and community journalism to create proposals and help peers understand critical community issues such as the impact that chronic illnesses like diabetes and obesity have on Detroit residents.

Through Y-PLAN, the one thing that you really find out about these kids, is that they love Detroit - they love this city. It's where they live – the pride is there. To them it's not bringing it back, it's their future. They want to make it a place they want to stay, graduate from high school and college and still be part of it."
– Ron Simpkins, Y-PLAN Instructor

QUESTION

How can the City of Detroit and Detroit Public Schools partner with young people to improve public schools, and make Detroit a healthier space to live, work, and play?

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: Y-PLAN TEAM

Y-PLAN Instructors: Ron Simpkins, Torrey Henry, Terrance R. Campbell

Students: Middle School students at: Burton International, Mann, Holmes, Thirkell, and Wayne.

Clients: Detroit Public Schools, City of Detroit

Community Partners: Wayne State University – VAC Program, Detroit Public Schools 21st Century Program, Detroit Housing Commission

YOUTH DRIVEN DATA AND INSIGHTS

In partnership with Diversity Data Kids at Brandeis University, the Center for Cities + Schools partnered with Wayne State University VAC Program and the Detroit Housing Commission in 2010 to engage young people in Y-PLAN to define the Seven Healthy Elements of a Healthy Detroit. Students mapped and surveyed their community to define what have now become the seven guiding principles for the growing Y-PLAN Detroit initiative.

SEVEN ELEMENTS OF A HEALTHY DETROIT

1. Active Living
2. Good Nutrition and Healthy Foods
3. Comprehensive Healthcare
4. Quality Education
5. Safe and Inviting Neighborhoods
6. Strong Relationships and Social Networks
7. Access to Economic Opportunity

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Burton International: Create access to healthy, fresh foods, and healthier school lunch options
- Mann: Decrease the amount of trash and blight in the community
- Holmes: Create healthier lunch options
- Thirkell: Use community journalism as a tool to help our peers better understand the impact of chronic illnesses such as diabetes and obesity on the community
- Wayne: Use SKRATCH STEM Technology, animation and cartooning, as a tool for helping our peers better understand the seven elements of a healthy Detroit, and the impact of chronic illnesses on the community



NEXT STEPS

Students presented proposals to school administration and district representatives of Detroit Public Schools.

For more information on Y-PLAN, contact Jessie Stewart, Y-PLAN National Coordinator: jessie.stewart@berkeley.edu