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The Power of Youth Voice in Realizing Health Equity in the City of Richmond & WCCUSD Schools

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ISSUE

To review a decade of positioning youth civic engagement and high-quality education as an essential component of urban and metropolitan vitality to create equitable, healthy, and sustainable communities for all in Richmond, CA.

| Assessment | |
|----------------------|---|
| Objective 1A: | To what degree and in what ways did young people affect policy change? <i>Understanding and lifting up the role that young people play in driving healthy, equitable policies in their schools and cities</i> |
| Objective 1B: | To what degree and in what ways did civic leaders' capacity to make policy and city planning decisions for and with young people improve? <i>Assessing how PLUS & Y-PLAN prepare civic leaders to respond to the needs of young people when crafting policy</i> |
| Measures | |
| Objective 2: | What measures are relevant and helpful in both systematizing and sustaining this work? <i>Envisioning how cities and schools collect and utilize data to demonstrate positive outcomes for young people and communities</i> |

METHODS

This landscape review includes a document and policy review of policies and programs across the City of Richmond, West Contra Costa Unified School District, The California Endowment, and other local community organizations. Additionally, the review encompasses:

- 15 PLUS projects from 2008–2018 for 4 clients: City of Richmond, WCCUSD, The California Endowment, and the City of San Pablo
- 27 Y-PLAN projects from 2006–2019 across 3 high schools, 45 classrooms, and 1,431 students
- 13 stakeholder interviews conducted with current and former staff at the City of Richmond, WCCUSD, TCE, RYSE, Richmond Promise, and former Y-PLAN student participants



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FINDINGS

Relationships are both essential inputs & critical outputs: Relationships are essential in driving youth-centered work in city and district planning. These relationships are cultivated across professional sectors (i.e. City and District leaders), between these leaders and young people, and between these leaders and the broader community. As a result of forming connections and maintaining collaboration, cities promote transparency, build trust, align on a youth-centered vision of health and well-being, and ultimately advance the well-being of the city at large.

Local action leads to system-level change: Young people have meaningfully contributed to city-wide and district-wide policy over the past decade; at the same time, city and district leaders have implemented and institutionalized systems-level policies based on localized initiatives and pilots.

Schools are *integral* institutions for addressing local health needs: Schools exist in a unique space in which they can foster the creativity and insight from young people in the place where many young people already spend time. Through civic learning in schools, young people can investigate and advocate for highly localized needs, thus advancing truly *equitable* change. Finally, schools are able to institutionalize and sustain these efforts and thus more effectively measure long-term gains in health and well-being.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Aligning initiatives across City & District policies and programs:

- WCCUSD adopts a Health in All Policies (HiAP) framework
- WCCUSD revisits the District Health and Wellness Policy, building upon and implementing the recommendations from the school-year 2013-2014 advisory group, while utilizing a HiAP framework and expanding “wellness” to address social determinants of health
- City includes schools in Community Health and Wellness Element, such as by including schools as a mechanism to increase access to medical services for youth and families

Aligning health measures, integrating data collection strategies, & collaborating on findings:

- WCCUSD collects health indicators in an annual survey (e.g. Youth Truth)
- City includes youth under the age of 18 years in biennial Community Health Survey
- WCCUSD & City share findings and collaborate on future opportunities

Systematizing school-level structures that elevate youth voice for actionable change

- WCCUSD strengthens Youth Commission to elevate school-based youth advocacy
- WCCUSD supports sustained leadership at individual schools, in particular by supporting principals to leverage School Community Outreach Workers (SCOWs) and School-Based Health Center Coordinators and maintain relationships with community-based organizations
- Schools build on Youth Truth Survey results and past Y-PLAN successes to regularly collect feedback and take action on changes proposed by students
- City collaborates with schools to regularly measure and collect data on student health and well-being to inform initiatives and advance student health equity



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