**CIVIC SPRING PROJECT**
**GRANT APPLICATION**

* required answer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN CONTACT FOR PROPOSAL</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You should be a representative of the lead partner of the proposal (i.e. the organization within the proposal that holds either 501(c)(3) status or fiscal sponsorship.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Name*</td>
<td>Rachel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Name*</td>
<td>Belin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email*</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rbelin@prichardcommittee.org">rbelin@prichardcommittee.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELIGIBILITY SCREENING</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please confirm your eligibility for consideration by selecting all statements that apply to your organization/partnership or proposal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you receive a grant? *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Does at least one applicant have 501(c)(3) status or the engagement of a fiscal sponsor with the ability to receive, manage and report on the use of grant funds?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you meaningfully and constructively engage youth? *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Does your proposal include partnership(s) with youth-ke and youth-driven organizations (s)? Groups that do not have civic education experience per se, but that do have a demonstrated passion for</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a mission consistent with the goals of the project and a desire to constructively engage youth in their mission, are also encouraged as partners.

- Does at least one member of your partnership have experience partnering with young people?
- Was there meaningful youth participation in the development of the proposal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you have the capacity to deliver in the current context over the summer timeframe? *</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is one of your partners an existing organization that already operates well in the civic learning space, engages with young people and has demonstrated a passion for the project goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does at least one member of your partnership have experience working with the population(s) whom you intend to serve? (e.g. students, seniors,</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<p>| Yes |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>domestic abuse victims, etc.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Does each of the partners have senior officer with decision-making power involved in the project?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Do you have the virtual, technical, and technological capacity to operates in the current COVID-19 environment? (This includes ensuring broadband/Wi-Fi access to participants, either through the grant or with existing infrastructure, where required)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Will you meet a local need?</strong> *</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Do you have local partner(s) with experience connecting/working with the populations whom they want to serve? The local element of this program is essential. Applicants can be local organizations OR national organizations partnering with local organizations.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Organization Details**

*Please note: this page is exclusively for the details of the lead partner making the proposal. There will be the opportunity to provide details for the other organizations within your proposal as you proceed through the application process.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Name *</th>
<th>Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this a 501(c)(3) entity, or fiscally sponsored? *</td>
<td>501(c)(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City *</td>
<td>Lexington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State*</td>
<td>KY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zip</td>
<td>40507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission statement</td>
<td>Since 1983, the Prichard Committee has worked to study priority issues, inform the public and policy makers about best practices and engage citizens, business leaders, families, students, and other stakeholders in a shared mission to move Kentucky to the top tier of all states for education excellence and equity for all children, from their earliest years through postsecondary education. Thanks to the efforts of the Committee and dedicated citizens, Kentucky has moved from the bottom of the national rankings in education to the middle and above. Our ambitious goal is to move to the top tier of all states within this generation. To accomplish this goal, the Committee focuses on three overarching priorities to ensure that Kentucky achieves excellence in education. We are committed to equity for students of all backgrounds to ensure that students in the groups that have had less opportunity to excel catch up with their peers. A Strong Accountability System We demand excellence through meaningful standards and robust accountability about quality and student progress from early childhood through postsecondary education. High expectations and transparency are critical components for Kentucky’s educational success. Adequate and Equitable Funding We advocate for efficient use of resources and equitable funding that is adequate to assure excellence in education from early childhood through postsecondary. Sustained and Expanded Engagement We work to engage Kentucky citizens on education issues. Informed and empowered students, parents, communities, and business leaders will demand continued progress for education across the Commonwealth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web address</td>
<td><a href="http://www.prichardcommittee.org">www.prichardcommittee.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States organization is active in:</td>
<td>KY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated number of young people served annually</td>
<td>100 directly; 10,000 indirectly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated annual budget ($)</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of permanent staff</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of volunteers (annual basis)</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select practices of the organization</td>
<td>School climate reform, action civics, student school governance, news media literacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROPOSED PROJECT DETAILS**

*Now for the information about your proposal’s program - starting with the questions below. Please fill in the requested information about the location(s) and community(ies) that you intend the proposed program to serve.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State(s) of intended delivery</th>
<th>KY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community(ies) of intended delivery</td>
<td>rural, urban, suburban</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### PROPOSED PROJECT DETAILS

*Longer format questions, describing your proposal in detail.*

1. Please provide your project narrative.*

   Define project deliverable(s) (i.e. civic actions, performance, learning content delivery, etc.) and project-specific outcome measurements as they connect to the goals of the Civic Spring Project

The “Coping with COVID Student-to-Student Study” is a student-driven initiative launched in the wake of statewide school closures to understand Kentucky students’ social-emotional and learning experiences during the first months of the COVID-19 crisis. We know that the critical civic and sociopolitical development of young people today is deeply intertwined with issues of social justice and the design of learning environments and opportunities (See Kirshner, 2015). That is among the reasons why, through this study, we will integrate diverse student voices into the broader discourse around education policy, practice, and decision-making.

In being intentional about amplifying and elevating the students who are least heard and most marginalized in our school systems and in designing ways to support more young people to participate in decisions around school policy and action, we aim to create a new, more equitable normal, in which students are not seen as passive consumers of their education but as active partners in creating it. The hope is that by supporting student-led research in this way, we will bolster the capacity of our Team to be effective civic leaders and ensure that students, schools’ primary stakeholders, inform education policy during and beyond the pandemic.

This study is being led by approximately 100 secondary school students who make up the Prichard Committee Student Voice Team, and it engages over 13,000 other Kentucky high school students. Its design consists of two parts, bridging the head and the heart around the student experience:
Part One builds on a statewide survey co-designed by students and adult research advisors and disseminated May 11-22, 2020. Supported by a network of statewide youth leadership groups and adult allies, the Student Voice Team reached geographically and culturally diverse populations. When the survey window closed, 12,961 students from all 120 counties in Kentucky had responded, a testament to the social capital inherent in over 100 partnerships we developed with local educators, administrators, youth leadership organizations, and community groups over the past several years. We are now building capacity for student leaders to analyze the data, report solution-driven findings, and inform action to improve Kentucky schools. In doing so, we also seek to provide an open-sourced model for other organizations in Kentucky and across the country who have expressed interest in adapting the survey and the student-driven process behind it to better understand their students’ experiences.

Part Two will consist of 50 peer-to-peer interviews with secondary school students identified to represent diverse voices and nuanced stories around issues of education (in)equity in Kentucky during and beyond the pandemic. Among the central questions we will explore:

- How are middle and high school students experiencing formalized learning in the time of COVID-19? How do these situated experiences differ across the state of Kentucky (e.g., in rural, low-income communities of Appalachia, a highly educated university town, and a socioeconomically diverse urban center)?
- How, if at all, is the COVID-19 crisis (re)shaping students’ ideas and imaginations about learning and effective education?
- How can our student-led community-based youth organization, in a predominantly rural state, bridge the gap between student and adult voices to influence educational practice and policy during and after COVID-19?

The Student Voice Team (hereafter Team) has worked to secure a place on the agenda of the Kentucky Board of Education for their August 7, 2020, meeting and we are committed to delivering an outward-facing report of initial survey findings by that date. The Team will present and release additional analyses, as well as the story behind how we as citizen student researchers conducted the study, to other students, educators, education advocates, and policymakers, so that they can apply our findings and strategies to their work and advise schools about how to be responsive to diverse student needs as we move through and beyond the COVID-19 crisis.
2. Please provide a brief description of each partner organization, including:*
   a. Mission and vision
   b. Organizational goals
   c. Annual budget (2019/20)
   d. Leadership structure and number of staff
   e. Community/ies served
   f. Experience working with and/or being led by youth, where applicable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>About the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence (Committee) is an independent, non-partisan citizens’ advocacy group. Composed of volunteer civic and business leaders from across Kentucky, the Committee has worked to improve education for Kentuckians of all ages since 1983.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To accomplish this goal, the Committee focuses on three overarching priorities: [1] demanding excellence through meaningful standards and robust accountability about quality and student progress from early childhood through postsecondary education; [2] advocating for efficient use of resources and equitable funding that is adequate to assure education excellence; and [3] engaging Kentucky citizens on education issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Committee’s 2020 operating budget is $31138,645.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Prichard Committee comprises 120 citizen members across the state who dedicate themselves to learning about the issues, educating leaders in their own regions, and advocating for policies that support Kentucky’s education progress. The executive board consists of 16 members who bring extensive knowledge of finance, education and policy to the organization. The Prichard Committee maintains a professional staff of nine with expertise in policy, implementation, engagement, and communications. Volunteers are often utilized from the thousands of parents that the Committee has trained in leadership and advocacy skills through the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership and the hundreds of young people who work as education partners through the Student Voice Team.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>About the Prichard Committee Student Voice Team</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Prichard Committee Student Voice Team supports students as research, advocacy, and policy partners in the Prichard Committee’s efforts to improve Kentucky schools. At any given time, approximately 100 self-selected Kentucky students, ages 13-21, make up our group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Team was launched and co-created by high school students and adult volunteers who spent a year researching why young people needed to be partners in the Prichard Committee’s efforts to engage the public in public school improvement. We considered the impact of student-led education improvement efforts and made the case for the establishment of a student-driven arm at the Committee’s spring 2013 annual meeting. With the Committee’s incubation and intergenerational collaboration, we have been</td>
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expanding our ranks and gaining support and traction among students, families, educators and other civic and business leaders in the nearly eight years since.

The Team came to national prominence in 2015 when we advocated for the inclusion of students on superintendent screening committees and again in 2016 when our Powerball Promise Campaign led to the restoration of $14 million in scholarship money from the state lottery for over eight thousand low-income students. We derive significant success from working at the grassroots level.

In addition to creating and facilitating Voices from the Front and Get Schooled, an independent student-produced blog and podcast respectively, with each fostering youth feedback on Kentucky’s education system, we have researched, released, and actively engaged students, educators, and policymakers around a variety of publications. Signature ones include: [1] College Tripwires, a policy brief focusing on the inequities inherent in the college admissions process; [2] Ready or Not, our team’s first book which amplifies and elevates stories we collected from students throughout Kentucky about how they are preparing for and navigating life after high school [3] Students as Partners, a brief making the case for integrating student voice in school governance bodies; and, [4] our first Student Voice Audit exploring discrepancies in student and staff perceptions of school climate in one Kentucky junior high school.

More recently, we have been scaling elements of our work to ensure we can amplify and elevate even more diverse student voices in all that we do. We specifically launched an Edquity fellowship to engage more under-represented students and targeted more training and coaching for more students from geographically diverse schools to facilitate their own student-led school climate audits. During the COVID-19 crisis, our team pivoted our school climate work to develop a qualitative and quantitative study of how high school students are navigating school at home since Kentucky closed its schools.

About the Adult Partner Research Advisory Team and the University of Kentucky
Our interdisciplinary team of researchers is primarily based at the University of Kentucky. They offer distinct but overlapping research interests and are well positioned to partner with the Student Voice Team to support and guide us as they carry out this project. They are:

- Beth Goldstein is a Professor Emeritus (Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation) at the University of Kentucky, with expertise in qualitative and participatory action research focused on
educational practices, and policy development, implementation and formative evaluation. She will provide training workshops and ongoing support to build the capacity of the SVT members in interview methods and qualitative data analysis, as well as support the team’s dissemination of what emerges from their research.

- Daniela DiGiacomo is an Assistant Professor in School of Information Science at University of Kentucky and offers expertise in the learning sciences, youth development, and civic engagement in the digital age. With a research and practice emphasis on the design of equity-centered youth-adult partnerships and learning environments, Dr. DiGiacomo will coordinate intergenerational team communication and support research efforts around the examination of COVID-19’s impact on informal and formal learning relations and experiences, including the civic and sociopolitical development of youth.

- Ellen Usher, a Professor in Educational Psychology, is an expert on motivation and learning. She will support quantitative analyses and data visualization, and project components related to higher-level statistical inferences and interpretation. She will also coordinate the involvement of undergraduate and graduate student researchers from the University of Kentucky on the project.

- Samantha Holquist, a researcher at McREL International, offers expertise in student voice, community engagement, education advocacy, and evaluation. She will support SVT in developing and sharing the research report, policy briefs, and the digital toolkit with policy-makers, educators, students, and community members through multiple mediums, including community gatherings. She will also support SVT in planning and meeting evaluation requirements provided by the grantor.

These scholars have established commitments to community and partnership-driven work as well as a track record of building student capacity to lead research, training, and advocacy efforts.

As the central host institution of three of the four adult research team members, the University of Kentucky (UK) will be our primary institutional partner for this project. As an institution, UK is the premier land grant institution of the state of Kentucky and takes seriously its role in community service and engagement. Indeed, its strategic vision is as follows:

“As Kentucky’s indispensable institution, we transform the lives of our students and advance the Commonwealth we serve – and beyond – through our teaching and learning, diversity and
inclusion, discovery, research and creativity, promotion of health, and deep community engagement.”

Relatedly, its strategic objective related to Outreach and Community Engagement is to “leverage leading-edge technology, scholar technology, scholarship, and research in innovative ways to advance the public good and to foster the development of citizen-scholars.”

This project directly supports the vision and objective of the University of Kentucky, and as such, the collaboration will be mutually supportive of both of the civic priorities of the Student Voice Team and its local University. The three university faculty that we have chosen to support our Team on this project also have strategic affiliations with Centres and Groups that align well with our mission and vision as a Team. These include UK’s Center for Equality and Social Justice, of which DiGiacomo, Usher, and Goldstein are faculty affiliates.

Dr. DiGiacomo also works in collaboration with UK’s Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement. Dr. Goldstein participates in the College of Education’s Education Evaluation Center. And Dr. Usher is the Director of the intergenerational P20 Learning and Motivation Lab, of which Dr. DiGiacomo is also a member. Together with the evaluation and practice-centered expertise of Dr. Holquist, the research advisory team has strong connections with local and national venues for dissemination and will serve as key allies for us as we move this project forward.

3. Define youth representation and impact of the proposed project, including:
   a. The depth, breadth, and diversity of youth participants;
   b. The depth, breadth, and diversity of youth impacted beyond those participating directly;

In the Student Voice Team, students design and refine the internal organizational structure that determines how work gets done efficiently and in a way that engages peers and adult partners. Relying heavily on a range of digital tools to lower participation barriers and the need for in-person, synchronous communication, students design and facilitate meetings and their own professional learning, frame and write internal and external communications, plan and evaluate programming, and help write fundraising proposals, such as this one.

The Team’s organizational flow chart reflects a “flatarchy” we developed in which 15 self-selected leaders with defined roles comprise a “Mobilization Circle” that supports other youth in engaging in the work. The Circle in turn is supported by the adult director who is a part of the Prichard Committee staff, a student
| **c.** Outreach to and/or the inclusion of youth from communities historically excluded from civic opportunities; | co-director, and a “Yoda Corps,” peer mentors who choose to remain deeply committed to the Team’s vision after graduating high school. The Circle is also supported by our “Research Advisory Dream Team” consisting of adult research advisors, such as those engaged in this project, and other assorted allies from the education, nonprofit, business, and media sectors with whom we regularly consult. Additionally, and in recognition of a self-selection process that draws members who skew academically high achieving and from higher socio-economic backgrounds, we launched a paid “Edquity” fellowship program. Managed by our team’s student director, the fellowship recruited eight high school students from under-represented backgrounds for the initial cohort and two seasoned team members from minority communities to help with the coordination. The goal was to provide extra intentional support for students who might otherwise not be able to join the Team. In the last year, the pilot has affirmed that we need to continue to fundraise for this effort as the contributions of these students in our first cohort have been invaluable. It is important to note for the purposes of this proposal that a leadership structure has emerged within the existing structure to manage this particular project. In the last two weeks, six high school members have self-identified as our research “core six” who are charged with taking a lead on quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis and building the capacity of the broader membership and our Edquity Fellows around the proposed project through the summer. They have enlisted the support of designated postsecondary members of our Yoda Corps and our Research Advisory Dream Team who are providing capacity building support around research and advocacy for our members, which the core six help define. It is also essential to underscore that the Student Voice Team is committed to amplifying and elevating the voices of students other than ourselves and who are among the least heard in our school system. Our survey dissemination involved dedicated outreach to historically marginalized students--including Appalachian and African American students, English Language Learners, and students with special needs--and the adults who work with them. This focus on increased equity and inclusions is reflected in our survey results and is something we will continue to strive for and be reflective upon as we continue our work. Our hope is that our research and subsequent dissemination efforts lead to better learning experiences for Kentucky’s 656,000 students as well as increased integration of student voices in Kentucky’s state and local education decision making. |
| **d.** Area(s) of civic learning specifically targeted, including but not limited to: dispositions, skills, knowledge, capacities/social capital | |
Project-Specific Civic Dispositions

Aligned with the Civic Spring Project, developing civic skills and dispositions is a natural byproduct of our youth-led work to promote high quality and equitable public schools. Our success is propelled by students who develop four types of civic skills and dispositions, which we plan to capture students’ self-reported progress towards for this initiative as noted in the project deliverable section:

1. Civic learning, or the ability to apply learned knowledge and proficiencies (such as written and oral communication, digital literacy, teamwork, critical and creative thinking, information literacy, intercultural competency, quantitative skills, and qualitative skills) in service of a civic/community aim;
2. Civic self-understanding, or the ability to evaluate one’s learned knowledge and proficiencies (such as written and oral communication, digital literacy, teamwork, critical and creative thinking, information literacy, intercultural competency, quantitative skills, and qualitative skills) in service of a civic/community aim;
3. Civic action, or the commitment to pursue civic, community and work roles that uplift members of the particularly, particularly those traditionally marginalized by systemic injustices; and,
4. Civic self-efficacy, or the confidence in one’s ability to contribute effectively to civic and community endeavors.

We want all students to be informed citizens who know how to conduct research on issues that matter to them, conduct power analyses on those issues, come to understand themselves as historical and civic actors, and use their voice in the public square in ways that make a difference. And we also want students to take advantage of new and digital media to amplify and magnify their impact. We know, too, that schools currently do not provide routine nor equitable opportunities for this type of civic education today, and yet developing and empowering civically prepared and minded youth has perhaps never been more critical.

Additionally, in recent times, scholars have argued that civic education must be redesigned to attend to the new forms of participation enabled by digital media (Kahne, Hodgin, & Eidman-Aadahl, 2016). Early
studies indicate that a combination of opportunities that help students to develop digital literacies (such as capacities to find, assess, use, share, and create data or media) alongside civic learning opportunities (such as opportunities to learn about and work to address societal problems) can meaningfully augment both the quantity and the quality of youth civic and political engagement (Hobbs, 2007; Kahne, Feezell, & Lee, 2012).

As a Team, we have leveraged a type of these “participatory politics” to take action based on the inquiries into educational inequity that we conduct. We know that participatory politics are among the most common type of political participation today, especially for young people as they are interactive, peer-based, and not guided by any deference to institutions or traditional elites (Kahne et al., 2016).

Since our inception, we have used gained political capital combined with the power of digital media to “bridge voice to influence” (Allen & Light, 2015; Hodgin, 2019) and participate in civic and political life. What we need now is the increased support and resources, in particular from our intergenerational research team, to deepen, extend, and scale our capacities, skills, knowledge, and dispositions.

Our Team is confident that this project will deepen our own civic capacity and knowledge and bolster our ability to engage in meaningful forms of local civic action, particularly around public education and particularly now, during the COVID-19 crisis when inequities in the system have been laid bare and young people can offer invaluable feedback on how it impacts their learning and lives. We are also hopeful the project will serve as an inspiring illustration of how others can harness the power of youth voice for social change.

REFERENCES


Cammarota, J. & Romero, A. (2010). Participatory action research for high school students:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Proposed project budget, including:* (File format accepted: xls/xlsx/pdf/zip, Maximum file size 1 MB)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Staffing expenses broken out by individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Cost assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Youth compensation structure, if any (e.g., percentage of grant funds to be paid to youth on staff or through microgrants to youth-led partnerships);</td>
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Attached
5. Describe community impact of the proposed project, including:
   a. Acuteness of need being addressed in Project
   b. Proposed project’s impact on this need (output, outcomes, efficacy, impact)
   c. Integration of local planning and response as part of Project

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Proposed Project’s Impact on the Need</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students are the subjects and recipients of education policymaking but are seldom agents in crafting those efforts. However, what we know from a range of emerging research and promising practices, including Stanford’s D. Lab, the Harwood Institute, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Measuring Effective Teaching study, is that co-designing strategies of engagement with the intended targets is among the most effective ways to ensure impact. This problem alone should compel us to consider ways to more meaningfully include students in the education design and decision-making processes. However, there is also compelling historical evidence showing that students can drive authentic, systemic change in our schools. From the Little Rock Nine who put their high school experience on the line to integrate Arkansas schools in 1957 to the modern-day DREAMers fighting for the rights of Latinos brought to the United States as undocumented children to continue their education to the students of Parkland, Florida who have launched the movement to ensure safer schools, young people backed both by personal stories and research knowledge that contextualizes their experience have proved among the nation’s most effective education advocates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>This proposal seeks to embed the perspectives and innovations of students in the research and communications efforts that drive education policy, practice, and decision-making. It is built around the prototype our Team developed which emerged in response to the recognition that inequities pervade public education and our mission to amplify and elevate the voices of students least heard in Kentucky’s school system so that policymakers are held accountable for considering students when making decisions that affect them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over the last few years, it has become increasingly clear that our Team’s prolific and student-led advocacy stems largely from extraordinary student-initiated research. In nearly every instance, before members of the Student Voice Team have successfully addressed education policy issues, we have conducted extensive and often original research. From designing and disseminating student surveys to facilitating focus groups to observing classrooms then analyzing existing research with adult experts, the process has cultivated our ability to respond thoughtfully and publicly to pressing education issues as they arise.</td>
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It is this history of research, communication, and collaboration that allowed us to respond so quickly to the COVID-19 crisis. We know this is a moment in time when pre-existing inequities are affecting learning in drastically uneven ways.

We further know that inequitable learning experiences happen by design. Systems and opportunities are organized—socially, culturally, and politically—to lead young people from historically excluded communities to have vastly different learning experiences and trajectories. This is especially true in our nation’s public schools in which social institutions have a history of privileging the knowledge and literacies of some students while oppressing and marginalizing those of others (Moll, 1998; Tyack, 1974). Furthermore, it is by virtue of being marginalized that students who are most impacted by inequitable learning experiences are also the most often silenced.

Communities, policymakers, and researchers perpetuate inequalities in education when they ignore students’ voices about their experiences. A critical way to reduce inequalities is to integrate students’ voices, particularly those that are least heard, into public conversation. The framework of this proposal hinges on the belief that students can effect lasting social change when they have an opportunity to call attention to injustice and also work as solutions-oriented partners to mitigate it.

Our proposed project was designed by students in consultation with adult research experts throughout Kentucky and the country. It was powered by the over 100 youth and adult school and community partners, such as the YMCA of Kentucky, Kentucky Youth Advocates, and the Kentucky Student Council Association, who supported and promoted our Coping with COVID survey throughout the state. And it was profoundly shaped by the nearly 13,000 young people who responded to our survey and the simple request to make their voices heard by policy makers considering ways to navigate the COVID-19 crisis. We wrote the proposal knowing that a significant number of Kentucky students have a measurable desire to be a part of that process. In describing the ways we want to capture student voice around the impact of the pandemic on young people’s lives and share results with policy makers and the public at the state and local levels, we seek to honor the expressed support for this work and above all ensure Kentucky students representing the full diversity of our state’s young people better inform education decision making.

6. Any other relevant information
Following are some of the talking points developed with members of the Student Voice Team as various ways to communicate the importance of the proposed idea:
You may be asked to provide additional materials to confirm what you have said in this application.

- Inequities in education are among the most pressing issues we face. Yet students who are in some of the best positions to identify and mitigate them are overlooked as the potential resources that we are.
- Students leading research on education inequities is a strategy for bridging education policy and practice.
- Rather than supporting students to be passive consumers of our schools, why not support us to be co-creators of a more equitable system?
- Student-led education research confronts the absurdity that in school we examine and dissect essentially everything but school itself.
- Students acting as education research, policy, and advocacy partners is the best if not only way to ensure our public schools are the best they can possibly be.
- Power structures from the world of politics to the world of education are flattening, giving way to the possibility of increased transparency and a new wave of opportunities to influence them from the inside out. Students armed with new technologies, a realization that democratic institutions require our vigilance, and a heightened sense of agency over our own futures can and must be part of the work to improve our public schools.
- Just because most students are too young to vote does not mean we are too young to have a voice in public life.
- As primary stakeholders, students are uniquely positioned to question what is working--and what is not--in our schools. Public education can benefit from enlisting students as partners in school improvement efforts.
- Who better to examine the efficacy of public education than those for whom it is designed--students ourselves?
- Our schools are meant to foster scientific inquiry and critical thinking in our students. Why not support us to apply those very capacities to the real-world challenge of improving schools themselves?
## Youth Compensation ($26,750)

- **Student Voice Team Summer Research Fellows**: Responsible for coordination with adult partners and capacity building of other youth in research methods and recruitment and coordination of regionally-targeted qualitative interviews 6 @ $2,000 each for $12,000  
  **Total**: $12,000.00
- **High School student project team**
  - Student Project Team: 15 students @ $500 each  
  - Student interviewees, 50 @ $25 each per interview for $1,250  
  - Student Graphic Design, $1,000  
  - Edquity Fellowship Stipends, 10 @ $500 each, $5,000  
  **Total**: $12,000.00

## Prichard Committee Staffing ($20,000)

- **Rachel Belin**: Prichard Committee Student Voice Team senior director, Full Student Voice Team project and program direction in collaboration with youth leadership team and in coordination with the Prichard Committee; professional learning curriculum design and support, youth development $10K  
  **Total**: $10,000.00
- **Jessica Fletcher**: Prichard Committee Communications Director, promotion, graphic design support  
  **Total**: $5,000.00
- **Melody Brooks**: Prichard Committee grants and finance director, grant management  
  **Total**: $5,000.00

## University of Kentucky and McRel Staffing ($32,000)

- **Daniela DiGiacomo**: Research coordinator for intergenerational team communication and support of research efforts around the examination of COVID-19’s impact on informal and formal learning relations and experiences, including the civic and sociopolitical development of youth.  
  **Total**: $8,000.00
- **Ellen Usher**: Student support of quantitative analyses and data visualization, and project components related to higher-level statistical inferences and coordination of undergraduate and graduate student researchers from the University of Kentucky on the project.  
  **Total**: $8,000.00
- **Samantha Holquist**: Student support for developing and sharing the research report, policy briefs, and the digital toolkit with policy-makers, educators, students, and community members through multiple mediums, including community gatherings. Student support in planning and meeting evaluation requirements provided by the grantor.  
  **Total**: $8,000.00
- **Beth Goldstein**: Training workshops for students around interview methods and qualitative data analysis and qualitative research dissemination support.  
  **Total**: $8,000.00

## Other expenses TOTAL, $16,000

- Printing  
  **Total**: $4,000.00
- Documentation: video, transcription service, publications  
  **Total**: $6,000.00
- Social media promotions and other marketing  
  **Total**: $2,000.00
- Research Software, apps  
  **Total**: $2,000.00
- Hardware, organizational laptop  
  **Total**: $3,000.00
- Additional Cloud storage  
  **Total**: $1,000.00

**TOTAL GRANT BUDGET**: $96,750.00
Civic Spring Project Final Grant Report – Prichard Committee SVT

Name: Rachel Belin and Emanuelle Sippy  
Organization: Prichard Committee Student Voice Team; Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study  
Date: November 15, 2020

I. OUTCOMES FEEDBACK: Please list the outcomes proposed in your Civic Spring Project application and fill out the following table.*

*For more information about the outcomes discussed in the final grant report, see the included Student Voice Team Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study Evaluation Report by McREL International.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Outcome Details:</th>
<th>How did you do on this outcome?</th>
<th>Lessons learned related to this outcome:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Student voice team members self-report an increase in civic learning, civic self-understanding, civic action, and civic self-efficacy during the summer/fall of 2020.</td>
<td>We developed a pre- and post-electronic survey to gauge how members’ who participated in activities related to the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study perceived their knowledge, skills, and capacities across the four dimensions of civic engagement.</td>
<td>Fifteen Student Voice Team members shared perceptions of their civic engagement before and after engaging in Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study activities. On average, members self-reported an increase across all six measures of civic learning, which included research skills, communication, teamwork/leadership, critical thinking, information literacy, and intercultural competency, after participating in study activities. In addition to civic learning, members, on average, self-reported an increase in civic action and civic self-efficacy after participating in</td>
<td>Engaging youth in a complex project-based learning activity aimed at improving their local and state community may increase their knowledge, skills, and capacities to be civically engaged citizens. Through the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study, Student Voice Team members were not only able to learn new skills, such as analyzing qualitative and quantitative data or reporting on data to decision makers, but also were able to demonstrate these skills as they were encouraged to complete complex tasks with limited guidance from adult researchers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Adult participants self-report an increase in their capacity to support youth in conducting education research.</strong></td>
<td>We conducted a focus group with five adult researchers who participated in the study to capture their perceptions of how they supported youth in conducting research. We also conducted a focus group with five SVT members to understand their perceptions of how adults supported them. We added this outcome following the submission of our application.</td>
<td>Adult researchers viewed their role in the <em>Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study</em> as supporting youth researchers in conducting research. Therefore, the actions that adult researchers took within the study were often in response to youth researcher requests for support. Adult researchers provided youth researchers with training on how to conduct quantitative and qualitative research and provided guidance as youth researchers undertook activities. When differences arose between youth and adult researchers in executing study activities, adult and youth researchers engaged in open discussions about the differences and decisions were made that prioritized youth desired outcomes. Adult researchers reported that participation in the study increased their capacity to not only support youth in conducting education research, but also build their own.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Creating a strong youth-centered community where adults understand their roles helps ensure that youth and adult partnership research remains youth-led. Prior to the <em>Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study</em>, the Student Voice Team had a strong commitment to fostering a youth-centered community and had built this community over several years. Student Voice Team members viewed their community as a place where youth voices led decision making and adults provided support to youth in making and executing decisions. The Student Voice Team's long-term commitment to this youth-centered community created the foundational structure necessary for adults invited into the community to understand their role as “partners” and not “leaders.” With the knowledge that youth would be leading the work for the study, adults could</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. At least 3,000 individuals engage with the research findings from the <em>Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Research Study</em>.</td>
<td>We collected administrative data on the type and number of dissemination activities that the Student Voice Team used to share study findings with the community.</td>
<td>The Student Voice Team used three avenues to disseminate <em>Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study</em> findings to local and national audiences: (a) local and national media coverage, (b) student-delivered presentations to</td>
<td>Education stakeholders may be interested in research conducted by youth on students’ experiences in learning. A vast majority of the dissemination activities for the <em>Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study</em> occurred</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

qualitative and quantitative research skills.
Youth researchers also viewed adult researchers’ role in the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* primarily as providing them with support for conducting research. Youth researchers perceived adult researchers as “partners” and “allies” in their work. Because most of the youth researchers engaged in the work did not have previous research experience, they felt more comfortable asking adults researchers for support and guidance. Youth researchers reported that adult researchers also helped build youths’ confidence that they had the capacity to conduct research by treating youth as “partners in research.”

Youth may be more comfortable participating in projects where they need to learn new skills from adults when they believe that their peers also will be learning new skills alongside them. Youth researchers on the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* reported that they felt more comfortable asking for support from adult researchers, particularly in group settings, because they knew that all of the youth on the project were learning how to conduct quantitative and qualitative research. Additionally, the belief that they were learning together helped youth feel more confident in trying out newly learned skills, which helped build their self-efficacy as researchers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. At least 100 community members participate in student-facilitated presentations about study findings.</th>
<th>We collected administrative data on the number of participants that attended student-facilitated presentations about study findings.</th>
<th>As noted above, Student Voice Team members delivered over 25 presentations on findings from the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study to local and national audiences. Sixteen presentations were to local audiences and 13 were to national audiences. In total, over 1500 people attended these presentations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5. Education stakeholders self-report a greater capacity to understand youth experiences and support youth learning during the COVID-19 pandemic based on study findings. | We developed an electronic survey to understand how education stakeholders (such as school board members, school administrators, legislators, non-profit leaders, teachers, and students) perceived and used | Twenty-seven education stakeholders shared how they engaged with the findings from the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study on the stakeholder engagement survey. Most education stakeholders because education stakeholders were interested in learning about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected students’ learning from research conducted by youth. The Student Voice Team was invited to provide quotes for articles based on their research as well as deliver presentations and write articles about their research for local and national audiences. In total, the Student Voice Team was invited to share their research through over 65 different outlets. The number of dissemination requests received by the Student Voice Team shows that there may be a local and national interest for youth conducted research in education. 

*Sharing research conducted by youth with education stakeholders may increase their understanding of students’ learning experiences.* A vast majority (97 percent) of education stakeholders reported that findings from the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study increased their understanding of the experiences of youth. Supporting education stakeholders in understanding the opportunities and challenges
findings from the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study.*

We added this outcome following the submission of our application.

reported that information shared from the study increased their capacity to understand youth experiences and support youth learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Education stakeholders reported that the study helped them understand how COVID-19 is affecting students' learning and development in Kentucky. Many education stakeholders took or plan to take actions based on information shared from the study.

students’ encounter in their learning is important for ensuring that decisions made positively affect students’ learning experiences. To support education stakeholders in gaining a deeper understanding of students’ learning experiences, it may be important to continue conducting youth-led research projects.

*Sharing research conducted by youth with education stakeholders may lead to future collaboration with youth in decision making.* Education stakeholders who received findings from the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* either collaborated with youth (37 percent), were in the process of collaborating with youth (15 percent), or planned to collaborate with youth (19 percent) to make decisions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. By comparison, only 15 percent of education stakeholders who received findings from the study reported that they do not plan to collaborate with youth to make decisions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it could be possible that research conducted
by youth not only increases education stakeholders’ understanding of students’ learning experiences, but also increases their willingness to collaborate with youth in decision making.

6. At least 3,000 individuals engage with the digital toolkit on conducting student-led intergenerational education research.

Dissemination activities related to the study findings changed over the course of the project as we received several requests by local and national community members to present findings that were not originally planned. To better support education stakeholders in understanding students’ experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, we decided to focus on dissemination activities, such as reports and presentations, about the study findings and forgo creating the toolkit.

The Student Voice Team also is in the process of developing a microsite to share the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* findings and other materials with the public at large.

II. **MAJOR LESSONS LEARNED RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING**: Please share your reflections on each of the following categories listed in the left-hand column below. There are examples for a few to help you get started - please erase them as you fill in the table yourself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lessons Learned/Takeaways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The original focus for the Student Voice Team’s dissemination activities was to provide individual reports and presentations to specific communities across Kentucky. Due to the volume of our data, they realized that accomplishing this task would be challenging and, therefore, they transitioned to providing reports and presentations for larger audiences. By transitioning to a broader audience for our reports and presentations, the Student Voice Team was able to reach a larger local and national audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supporting youth to develop and complete a large project, such as the <em>Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study</em>, helps build youths’ sense of community within a broader organization as they are all learning at the same time and working towards a similar goal. By dividing the study up into smaller pieces and dividing the work amongst small teams, the Student Voice Team was able to secure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the commitment of over 30 youth members to complete study activities. Within their small teams, youth formed strong relationships with their peers and the adult researchers that were supporting their work. These strong relationships carried over into the larger organization as small teams began to collaborate with one another as the study progressed. Through the formation of relationships with peers and the adult researchers, youth felt more confident to ask questions, execute study activities, and brainstorm innovative ideas.

- Fostering an youth-centered environment where adults understand their role as providing support to youth enables adults to provide more specific and direct training and guidance to youth to help build their capacity. Further, youth felt comfortable asking adults for the specific support they needed to complete study activities.
- Creating space for reflection and connection throughout the process gives youth more confidence in innovating and creates a more collaborative environment overall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Environment/Context of your project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The Student Voice Team’s ability to pivot planned work to focus on an issue with great urgency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, gave the organization great messaging power and relevance during a difficult time in K-12 education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The fact that students, as our schools’ primary stakeholders, are also unexpected messengers around education research and policy added even more interest to what the Student Voice Team had to say.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The election season granted the Student Voice Team an opportunity to generate additional relevance for the <em>Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study</em>, and provided members additional opportunities to engage with future education policymakers. SVT took advantage of the election season by facilitating five town halls with local school board candidates across the state and used the study’s research data to frame the conversation and prompt the candidates to consider student voices and perspectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Local Community</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The Student Voice Team realized they could do ambitious and impactful work as education researchers without gaining formal permission from policymakers, educators, or other researchers and without being anointed with the authority to do so by others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVID-19</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- COVID-19 provided more time for youth to participate in the project as more typical other outside commitments, such as school and summer programs had been cancelled or made virtual and were no longer competing factors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. **IMPACT OF YOUR PROJECT ON THE FOUR BUCKETS OF CIVIC LEARNING**: We took a stab at filling this table out for you, hoping that having something to edit is easier than coming up with content first. However, there is NO pride of authorship so please review the draft language below and make edits directly to the table. We will use your revised version in our future publications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition:</th>
<th>How does it increase civic knowledge?</th>
<th>How does it increase civic skills?</th>
<th>How does it increase civic dispositions?</th>
<th>Does it also increase civic capacities?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An understanding of government structure, government processes, relevant social studies knowledge and concepts, and American history and political thought in a global context.</td>
<td>Competencies in the use of one’s voice, including basic writing, speaking, and listening skills and skills of research, investigation, and critical thinking; competencies in the use of practices of democratic coordination, political institutions, and media literacy.</td>
<td>Attitudes important in a democracy, such as a sense of civic duty, sense of efficacy, concern for the welfare of others, and commitment to trustworthiness and bridge-building.</td>
<td>Access to networks, opportunities to participate, and other forms of social capital that promote civic agency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lexington, KY</td>
<td>The Prichard Committee Student Voice Team, led by the “Core Six” – a committee of six dedicated high school students – engaged in quantitative and qualitative data analysis, sophisticated critical thinking, state and federal policy analysis, and communication with education decision makers and stakeholders. They analyzed quantitative data from 13,000 student survey responses and collected 50 qualitative interviews with students from around Kentucky. The SVT engaged with the state Board of Education and the Kentucky State Legislature’s Interim Joint Education Committee to present their initial findings, advocated for themselves as well as students across Kentucky, and articulated the importance of youth voice in the creation of policy that impacts their lives and the lives of students across the state.</td>
<td>The Prichard Committee Student Voice Team members are empowered, mobilized and educated, with the skills to engage elected officials, policy makers and local and state-level stakeholders in sophisticated conversations about education policy and research. The youth are committed through research and policy work to elevate and amplify the voices of historically marginalized populations in Kentucky. They are deeply committed to bettering the education system for all Kentucky students.</td>
<td>The Prichard Committee Student Voice Team has access to a network of SVT alumni that help support their work. SVT also has a large external network of adult partners who help support their work. This network includes: state-level education decision makers, such as the Kentucky Board of Education, local-level education decision makers, university professors, graduate students, federal education decision makers, local and state policy makers and elected officials and journalists and social media influencers.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of contents

01 Introduction
02 Capturing the youth participatory action research process
03 Supporting youth in becoming civic agents
04 Helping adults become effective partners
05 Understanding the external impact
06 Lessons learned
Introduction
Introduction

A new approach to civic engagement

Using youth-driven research to support youth in engaging in and leading systemic education improvement efforts.

The Prichard Committee Student Voice Team believes that youth participatory action research (YPAR) could be an innovative model for supporting youth in building their civic engagement. YPAR encourages youth to participate in research practices aimed at understanding community injustices and creating safe, vibrant neighborhoods.

The Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study was a YPAR project launched in the wake of statewide school closures to understand Kentucky students' social-emotional and learning experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Youth researchers, who led both the study, were aided by a team of adult researchers primarily based at the University of Kentucky.

About the Prichard Committee Student Voice Team

The Prichard Committee Student Voice Team supports students as research, advocacy, and policy partners in the efforts to improve Kentucky schools. They actively engage students, educators, and policymakers through publications and through their professional development workshops and school climate audits. The Student Voice Team is generously supported with awards from the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation's Civic Spring Project, Teach for America, National Geographic, Pathway 2 Tomorrow, and Project AWARE.

The Student Voice Team is an initiative of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, an independent nonprofit whose mission is to study priority issues and inform and engage Kentuckians to improve education.
Growing youths’ civic engagement

The purpose of this evaluation

To understand how youth participatory action research may support youths’ civic engagement, McREL International conducted this evaluation to investigate how the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study supported youth in building their civic engagement. The evaluation is driven by three main questions:

- How did youth researchers’ perceptions of their civic engagement shift during the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study?
- How did adult researchers perceive their ability to support youth researchers’ in developing their civic engagement during the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study?
- How did external education stakeholders engage with the findings from the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study?

Evaluation findings are explored throughout the following sections:

1. Executive summary
2. Capturing the youth participatory action research process
3. Supporting youth in becoming civic agents
4. Helping adults become effective partners
5. Understanding the external impact
6. Lessons learned
Executive Summary

Youth as civic agents

On average, youth self-reported an increase across all six measures of civic learning, which included research skills, communication, teamwork/leadership, critical thinking, information literacy, and intercultural competency, after participating in the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study. Youth, on average, also self-reported an increase in civic action and civic self-efficacy after participating in study activities.

Adults as partners

Adult researchers viewed their role in the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study as supporting youth researchers in conducting research. Adult researchers provided youth with training and guidance on how to conduct research. Adult researchers reported that participation in the study increased their capacity to not only support youth in conducting education research, but also their confidence in conducting their own research.

External impact

The Student Voice Team disseminated Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study findings to local and national audiences through (a) media coverage, (b) student-delivered presentations, and (c) student-written publications. In total, the Student Voice Team was invited to share their research through over 65 different outlets, reaching over 1,500 people.

Education stakeholders reported that information shared from the study increased their capacity to support youth learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many education stakeholders took or plan to take actions based on information shared from the study.

Student Voice Team members, on average, self-reported an increase in civic learning, civic action, and civic self-efficacy after participating in the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study.
Capturing the youth participatory action research process
Capturing the youth participatory action research process

Supporting partnership between youth and adult researchers

The Student Voice Team created an intergenerational research team to guide the youth participatory action research process.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for the Prichard Committee Student Voice Team to partner with adult researchers to learn from their expertise and expand their local and national network of adult allies. Through the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study*, the Student Voice Team created a youth participatory action research process that was led by youth and support by adults.

**The intergenerational research team**

The intergenerational research team consisted of 30 Student Voice Team members and 9 adult researchers from the Prichard Committee, the University of Kentucky, and McREL International. The research team was led by the “Core Seven,” which consisted of a group of 7 Student Voice Team members.

Smaller teams were developed to execute study activities:

- The quantitative team analyzed quantitative survey data.
- Three open-response question (ORQ) teams analyzed qualitative survey data.
- The qualitative team conducted the data collection and analysis of qualitative interview data.

In the following, the youth participatory action research process is outlined in more detail.
Capturing the youth participatory action research process

To ensure the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study activities remained youth led, the “Core Seven” directed the activities of the intergenerational research team with support from adult researchers.

Study Conceptualization

The Student Voice Team conceptualized that idea for the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study when the spread of COVID-19 impacted schools in March 2020. Observing that education leaders were not authentically including students’ experiences in decision making regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, members decided to conduct a quantitative and qualitative study to provide education leaders with data on students’ experiences to help inform their decision making. Members embarked on executing this ambitious study with a deep desire to better students’ experiences in learning.

Researcher Recruitment

Youth researchers were recruited from the Student Voice Team’s membership and alumni networks. Youth recruitment occurred via information blasts and personalized messages via Slack and email. Any members of the Student Voice Team could serve as researchers.

Adult researchers were recruited through personal connections that the Student Voice Team had with researchers at the University of Kentucky and McREL International. Adult researchers were recruited based on their expertise and willingness to partner with youth.

Youth Leadership

The “Core Seven” used multiple strategies to organize and direct study activities to center youth leadership and experiences.

- Weekly meetings amongst the “Core Seven” to organize activities, discuss successes and challenges, and identify areas for youth development.
- Fostering space for open and direct communication between youth and adults to discuss study activities.
- Providing opportunities for youth researchers to lead study activities, such as analyses and dissemination.
Activities for *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* were divided into two categories: (a) data collection and analysis activities and (b) dissemination activities.

Data collection and analysis activities:
- Develop and administer *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student survey*
- Analyze qualitative and quantitative survey data
- Develop and conduct *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student interviews*
- Analyze qualitative interview data

Dissemination activities:
- Build network of education stakeholders interested in study findings.
- Communicate study findings through intergenerational developed and delivered reports, articles/blogs, presentations, and podcasts to local and national audiences.

Originally study activities were planned to be completed by November 2020. However, due to the volume of data received from the survey (with over 9,000 student responses), it took longer to clean and analyze qualitative and quantitative survey data than previously planned. Study activities are planned to be completed by May 2021.
Capturing the youth participatory action research process

The intergenerational research team primarily completed the data collection and analysis activities for the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* through five small teams.

**Data collection and analysis activities**
- Develop and administer *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Survey*
- Analyze qualitative and quantitative survey data
- Develop and conduct *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student interviews*
- Analyze qualitative interview data

**Small team structure and communication**
- The quantitative team, ORQ teams, and qualitative team were each led by at least one Student Voice Team member and supported by at least one adult researcher. Student Voice Team leaders collaborated with members and adults to determine meeting times, agenda items, and training needs. Teams communicated via Slack and email to complete study activities.

**Weekly meeting for the intergenerational research team**
- Weekly to bi-weekly meetings for the quantitative team (meetings added as needed)
- 3x weekly meeting for the ORQ teams (meetings added as needed)

**Research Process**
- Spring 2020
- Summer 2020
- Fall 2020 to present
Capturing the youth participatory action research process

Dissemination activities for *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* primarily were youth-led with adult researchers providing support as requested.

- **Leveraging Pre-Existing Network**
  Since 2012, the Student Voice Team has developed an extensive local and national network of education stakeholders, such as state policymakers, local administrators, community leaders, and media. In distributing findings for the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study*, the Student Voice Team leveraged their local and national network to build interest in and share study findings.

- **Cross Small Team Collaboration**
  While data collection and analysis activities largely occurred in smaller teams, writing and distribution of study findings occurred across teams. This cross-team collaboration enabled the smaller teams to learn more about each other’s work and understand how to combine quantitative and qualitative research to provide a more nuanced depiction of students’ experiences in learning.

- **Building Youth Leadership**
  The Core Seven decided to encourage Student Voice Team members outside of the study’s leadership team to lead dissemination activities. This decision was made to build members’ capacity and comfort to communicate research to a multigenerational audience, particularly local and state education leaders, which much of the Core Seven had experience with through past Student Voice Team initiatives.

**Research Process**

Spring 2020

- **Build network of education stakeholders interested in study findings.**

Summer 2020

- **Communicate study findings through intergenerational developed and delivered reports, articles/blogs, presentations, and podcasts to local and national audiences.**

Fall 2020 to present

- **Leveraging Pre-Existing Network**
- **Cross Small Team Collaboration**
- **Building Youth Leadership**
Supporting youth in becoming civic agents
Supporting youth in becoming civic agents

Building youths’ civic engagement

The Student Voice Team desired to support members in becoming stronger civic agents in their local and national communities.

The Prichard Committee Student Voice Team conducted the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study to build members’ civic engagement in their local and national communities. The COVID-19 pandemic limited access to many of the networks that supported members’ in developing their civic engagement. The study provided an opportunity for members to develop their civic engagement. Therefore, understanding how members grew in their perceptions of their civic engagement was important.

Civic engagement is defined broadly as youth actively addressing issues of public concern.¹

Capturing members’ perceptions of their civic engagement

To capture members’ growth across dimensions of civic engagement, the evaluation team proposed the following inquiry: How did members’ perceptions of their civic engagement shift during the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study? The evaluation team analyzed data from two sources to gain insights into this inquiry:

- Quantitative and qualitative survey data on how members perceived their civic engagement before and after engaging in study activities.
- Qualitative focus group data on how members perceived their ability to conduct research after engaging in study activities.

In the following, findings from the analyses of these data are summarized.
Supporting youth in becoming civic agents

Dimensions of civic engagement

Civic learning
the ability to apply learned knowledge and proficiencies (such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, information literacy, intercultural competency, quantitative skills, and qualitative skills) in service of a civic/community aim.

Civic action
the commitment to pursue civic, community and work roles that uplift members of the particularly, particularly those traditionally marginalized by systemic injustices.

Civic self-understanding
the ability to evaluate one’s learned knowledge and proficiencies (such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, information literacy, intercultural competency, quantitative skills, and qualitative skills) in service of a civic/community aim.

Civic self-efficacy
the confidence in one’s ability to contribute effectively to civic and community endeavors.
Supporting youth in becoming civic agents

Dimensions of civic engagement

Civic learning
the ability to apply learned knowledge and proficiencies (such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, information literacy, intercultural competency, quantitative skills, and qualitative skills) in service of a civic/community aim.

Civic learning was captured across six measures

Research skills
the ability to conduct qualitative and quantitative research.

Communication
the ability to use written and oral communication tools.

Teamwork/leadership
the ability to lead a team of youth and/or adults.

Critical thinking
the ability to objectively analyze and provide solutions for an issue.

Information literacy
the ability to find, evaluate, and use information.

Intercultural competency
the ability to communicate with people of other cultures, backgrounds, and experiences.
Youths’ perceptions of their civic engagement

Fifteen Student Voice Team members shared perceptions of their civic engagement before and after engaging in *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* activities.

**Method**

McREL International developed a pre- and post-electronic survey, titled the *Student Voice Team Civic Spring Evaluation Pre- and Post- Survey*, to gauge how members’ who participated in activities related to the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* perceived their civic engagement knowledge, skills, and capacities across the four dimensions. The Student Voice Team provided McREL International with the contact information for 30 youth who participated in study activities. Using Qualtrics, McREL International administered the pre-electronic survey in July 2020 and the post-electronic survey in October 2020. Fifteen members took both the pre- and post-electronic survey.

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**Civic Engagement Survey Respondent Demographics**

- During school year 2019-2020, 11 respondents were in grade 11, 3 in grade 9, 3 in grade 10, and 1 in grade 12.
- Twelve respondents identified as female and 3 as male.
- Nine respondents identified as White and 6 as non-White.
- Eight respondents reported to live in a suburban community, 5 in urban, and 2 in rural.
- All respondents were enrolled in dual credits or AP classes and planned to attend a 4-year college/university.
Civic Engagement Survey | Civic Learning

On average, Student Voice Team members self-reported an increase across all six measures of civic learning after participating in the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* activities.

Student Voice Team members grew the most in research skills, with a mean difference of 0.690 between the pre- and post-survey. This growth in research skills shows that the activities that members engaged in successfully built their perceived capacity to conduct research. Growth in research skills is important as most activities focused on building members’ quantitative and qualitative skills.

Student Voice Team members grew the least in intercultural competency, with a mean difference of 0.094 between the pre- and post-survey. Growth is likely smaller for intercultural competency because members reported a high average score on the pre-survey and, therefore, there was limited room for them to develop their abilities in this area.
Civic Engagement Survey | Civic Action and Civic Self-Efficacy

In addition to civic learning, Student Voice Team members, on average, self-reported an increase in civic action and civic self-efficacy after participating in the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study activities.

Student Voice Team members grew in their civic self-efficacy, with a mean difference of 0.416 between the pre- and post-survey. This growth may suggest that members have an increased belief in their ability to address after problems in their community after participating in study activities.

Student Voice Team members also grew in civic action, with a mean difference of 0.136. Like the intercultural competency measure, growth is likely smaller because members reported a high score on the pre-survey.
Civic Engagement Survey | Civic Self-Understanding

Most Student Voice Team members reported gaining the knowledge, skills, and experience to conduct qualitative and quantitative research during the summer/fall of 2020.

Aligning with findings for civic learning, almost every Student Voice Team member shared that they learned how to conduct qualitative and quantitative research through their participation in the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study activities.

Student Voice Team members also shared that they learned how to communicate data to community members, work with an intergenerational team, organize a team, and identify issues in their community.

“I learned how to manage a six-figure budget, direct a team of 30+ youth and adults to conduct 50 peer-to-peer interviews, analyze and synthesize two types of qualitative data, and work very closely with a group of highly active people. I was able to deepen and cultivate complex interpersonal and enduring relationships due to the intense and collaborative nature of our work.”

Youth as civic agents
Civic Engagement Survey | Civic Self-Understanding

A majority of Student Voice Team members reported a strengthened ability to collaborate with a team to address problems in their community.

Aligning with findings from civic learning, civic action, and civic self-efficacy, Student Voice Team member identified a wide range of ways that participation in the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study activities strengthened their ability to civically engage in their community.

"I've learned how to systematically deconstruct and communicate about complex issues, both new and old, that may exist around me. From that, I think I'm better able to make change with those issues, even if I'm not necessarily in a position of power to do so."

Youth as civic agents
Civic Engagement Survey | Civic Self-Understanding

Many Student Voice Team members reported planning to use the knowledge, skills, and experiences gained to collaborate with students or community members to address problems in their community.

In looking toward the future, Student Voice Team members shared four ways in which they hoped to use the skills they gained to address problems in their community:

- Collaborate with community members,
- Conduct research,
- Work with community leaders, and
- Tell the stories of those impacted by problems.

"I hope to put the skills I’ve learned in data analysis, communication, and organizing to work toward change within my smaller community. The confidence I’ve gained is what is enabling me to work toward hosting a town hall with school board members in my county."

Youth as civic agents
Youth Researcher Focus Group

Youths’ perceptions of their ability to conduct research

Five Student Voice Team members shared perceptions of their ability to conduct research after engaging in *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* activities.

**Method**

McREL International developed a semi-structured focus group protocol to guide a discussion about members' experiences participating in the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* and how it shaped their ability to conduct research on community issues. The Student Voice Team provided McREL International with the contact information for 5 youth who participated in study activities and were interested in participating in a focus group. These youth did not belong to the Core Seven that led study activities. McREL International facilitated the one-hour focus group via Zoom. Open coding was used to identify common themes discussed by youth during the focus group.

**Youth Researcher Focus Group Questions**

- Before participating in the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study*, what were your perceptions of research?
- How have you perceived your ability to conduct research change because of participating in the study?
- How have you perceived your ability to disseminate research change because of participating in the study?
- How did adult partners support you in carrying out the work of the study?
- How did you support adults in carrying out the activities of the study?

*Youth as civic agents*
Youth Researcher Focus Group

Prior to participating in *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* activities, Student Voice Team members did not feel confident in their ability to conduct quantitative and qualitative research on problems in their community.

**Limited access to conduct research**

Student Voice Team members had limited exposure to conducting research prior to participating in the study. Their exposure to research consisted of completing labs in science courses and conducting literature reviews in language arts courses. Members believed that to properly conduct research, they needed to be at least graduate students in college.

**Conception that research is impersonal**

Student Voice Team members also held the belief that research was impersonal, or disconnected from the experiences of everyday people. Members equated research with “the worst parts of math and science” that focused entirely on data analysis and statistics. Because they viewed research as impersonal, members also believed it was boring.

**Belief that research is too complicated**

Finally, because they did not view themselves as “good” at math and science, Student Voice Team members worried that research would be too complicated for them. As previously noted, members traditionally viewed research as something done by experts, which not easily accessible for high school students to understand or conduct.

“I always saw research as something grad students and PhDs did, and not something that I ever did. Because my high school isn’t great at getting us to go out and do our own thing and make our own original research. So, jumping in with this kind of gave me that confidence and shifted my perception of like, ‘Oh, I don’t have to be gunning for a PhD to actually do what I need to do and do what I want.’”
Youth Researcher Focus Group

After participating in *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* activities, Student Voice Team members changed their views on research and felt more confident in their abilities to conduct research.

“*It was mostly just I realized with myself, I can go after and learn about anything I want to. I don’t need a certain education level to do that. I can just go ahead and do it, if I have a good team behind me and I want to make it happen. It’s not something I need to be invited to, it’s not a club I join, it’s just something I do if I want to. I get a question, I go out and find some data, and then I make it work.*”

**Belief that research is accessible**

Student Voice Team members saw research as more accessible to high school students after participating in study activities. Through gaining experience conducting quantitative and qualitative research, members shifted their mindset into believing that anyone could conduct research as long as they have a question to ask. Members also felt that they had a stronger ability to understand research conducted by others.

**Conception that research is dynamic**

Student Voice Team members realized that research was not necessarily impersonal and boring, but instead was “fluid and dynamic.” In learning how to conduct research, members began to view research as a “living organism” that was constantly growing and providing them with deeper insights into students’ experiences. Members expressed an appreciation for how research provided a systematic process to gain a better understand of their community.
Youth Researcher Focus Group

The Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study activities supported the Student Voice Team in building a community where youth felt comfortable learning and working together to address a problem in their community.

Learning together as a community

Initially, Student Voice Team members were nervous to engage in the project because they felt that their peers already understood how to conduct research. However, when they realized that their peers would be learning alongside them, members felt more comfortable engaging in challenging tasks without the social anxiety of failing. Members viewed their community as a place to learn and experiment.

Growing together as a community

Additionally, the study brought together Student Voice Team members who had not collaborated on past projects. Traditionally, members worked in teams to complete projects in specific work areas, such as policy or podcasts. Due to the study’s complexity, members were asked to collaborate outside these teams to complete study activities. This collaboration resulted in members becoming more connected and a stronger community.

“Knowing that other people also didn't know what was going on, it made it feel as if it was okay to make mistakes. And it created this environment where instead of chastising myself when I did something wrong, I could share it with someone and they would be able to laugh with me. I feel as if just collectively knowing that we all don't know what's going on, we're going to learn as we go about it, it created this sense of unity that just made the project so much fun.”
Helping adults become effective partners
The Student Voice Team wanted to support adults in becoming stronger partners for youth in conducting research.

The Prichard Committee Student Voice Team engaged adult researchers in the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study to learn from their expertise and build adults’ capacity to support youth in conducting research. The COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for youth and adult researchers to partner at a deeper level as there were less more typical outside commitments, such as school or summer programs. Therefore, understanding how adults grew in their capacity to partner with youth was important.

A majority of adult researchers supporting the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study had not previously partnered with the Student Voice Team.

Capturing adults’ capacity to partner with youth

To capture adults’ perceived capacity to partner with youth in conducting research, the evaluation team proposed the following inquiry: How did adult researchers perceive their ability to support youth researchers’ in developing their civic engagement during the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study? The evaluation team analyzed data from two sources to gain insights into this inquiry:

- Qualitative focus group data on how adult researchers perceived their ability to conduct research after engaging in study activities.
- Qualitative focus group data on how youth researchers perceived adults’ ability to support their ability to conduct research after engaging in study activities.

In the following, findings from the analyses of these data are summarized.
Adult Researcher Focus Group

Adults’ perceptions of their ability to support youth in conducting research

Five adult researchers who supported the Student Voice Team during Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study shared their experiences with supporting youth in conducting research.

Method

McREL International developed a semi-structured focus group protocol to guide a discussion about adult researchers’ experiences participating in the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study and how it shaped their ability to support youth in conducting research. The Student Voice Team provided McREL International with the contact information for the 9 adult researchers who participated in study activities. McREL International facilitated the one-hour focus group via Zoom. Open coding was used to identify common themes discussed by adult researchers during the focus group.

Adult Researcher Focus Group Questions

- How did you support youth to carry out the activities of the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study?
- How have perceived youths’ abilities to conduct and disseminate research change as they participated in the study?
- Before participating in the study, what were your perceptions of youths’ abilities to conduct and disseminate research?
- How did students support you in carrying out the activities of the study?
- How has participation in this study changed, if at all, the ways in which you conduct research?
Adult Researcher Focus Group

Adult researchers viewed their role in the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* as supporting youth in conducting research and reaching their goals.

Providing support when requested

The actions that adult researchers took were often in response to youth researcher requests for support. As asked, adult researchers provided youth researchers with training and provided guidance as youth undertook activities. Adult researchers also were regularly available via phone, Slack, or Zoom to answer questions or discuss challenges identified by youth.

Acknowledging the adult power dynamic

While the Student Voice Team was a youth-centered community where youth held the power, adult researchers still acknowledged that a power dynamic existed between adults and youth. To navigate this power dynamic, adult researchers strove to only suggest alternative paths or ideas when requested, and always deferred to youth on what choice would be made.

Adjusting to platforms of communication

The Student Voice Team primarily used Zoom and Slack to communicate about study activities. While Zoom was familiar to adults participating in the study, Slack was less familiar. Adult researchers had to adjust to using Slack to communicate rather than email. This adjustment was important as adult researchers prioritized youths’ forms of communication over their own forms, which were more comfortable.

“This was a new experience for me acting as an adult ally. [I would] nudge when needed but ultimately always deferring to what the students think they need to do because they have the expertise in the experiences that they're talking about whereas we can guide and give knowledge when they need it to help them get to their goals.”

Adults as partners
Adult Researcher Focus Group

Adult researchers reported that participation in the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* increased their capacity to not only support youth in conducting education research, but also have more confidence in themselves in conducting their own research.

“There’ve had meetings where some adult allies wanted a certain outcome and the students didn’t want that, it didn’t match their goals and the students were so willing to say that to adults, people who have been doing research for many years. I really admire that because that makes me much more empowered to do the same thing in my own life so I feel like I have really taken that from them but that also makes us better researchers because it means that the point of youth participatory action research is really being followed.”

Appreciation of youths’ research ability

For several adult researchers, this study was their first time partnering with youth to conduct research. By providing training and guidance to youth, these adults gained a deeper understanding of youths’ abilities and gained a stronger sense of confidence in themselves to conduct research.

Open communication between researchers

When differences arose between youth and adults in executing study activities, adult and youth researchers engaged in open and honest discussions about these differences. These discussions helped adult and youth researchers understand one another better and helped move activities forward.

Youths’ willingness to be flexible

Adult researchers appreciated youths’ willingness to be flexible as they managed family and work responsibilities alongside supporting the study. Youth collaborated with adults to find common meeting times that worked with everyone’s schedules.
Youth Researcher Focus Group

Youth perceptions of adult researchers

Five Student Voice Team members shared perceptions of how adults built their capacity to conduct research after engaging in Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study activities.

Method

McREL International developed a semi-structured focus group protocol to guide a discussion about members’ experiences participating in the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study and adults supported their ability to conduct research. The Student Voice Team provided McREL International with the contact information for 5 youth who participated in study activities and were interested in participating in a focus group. These youth did not belong to the Core Seven that led study activities. McREL International facilitated the one-hour focus group via Zoom. Open coding was used to identify common themes discussed by youth during the focus group.

Youth Researcher Focus Group Questions

- Before participating in the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study, what were your perceptions of research?
- How have you perceived your ability to conduct research change because of participating in the study?
- How have you perceived your ability to disseminate research change because of participating in the study?
- How did adult partners support you in carrying out the work of the study?
- How did you support adults in carrying out the activities of the study?
Youth Researcher Focus Group

Youth researchers also viewed adult researchers’ role in the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study primarily as providing them with support for conducting research.

Viewing adults as “partners” and “allies”

Youth researchers perceived adult researchers as “partners” and “allies” in their work. Youth researchers reported that adult researchers helped build youths’ confidence that they had the capacity to conduct research by treating youth as “partners in research” rather than “students in research.”

Learning together from adults

Because most of the youth researchers engaged in the study did not have previous research experience, they felt more comfortable asking adults researchers for support and guidance. Youth felt less anxiety or embarrassment about the possibility of asking a “silly” question in front of their peers or adults.

Providing space for reflection

By creating space for reflection and connection, youth researchers gained more self-assurance to reflect on their learning and suggest new ways of executing study tasks. This space provided more opportunities for innovation and collaboration between the youth and adult researchers.

“...they were very helpful in taking our ideas and listening to us and saying, ‘All right, you guys want to do X, Y and Z, so you may want to do it through steps A, B and C.’ So, they were giving us a plan of execution without necessarily saying, ‘Here’s what you should do.’ They always left it up to us to know what to do. They gave that guidance in case we wanted to use it and we thought, ‘Hey, that’s actually a good idea and we should go along with it.’ We knew that they had the expertise that could actually pull us through, but we didn’t have to use it if we didn’t need to.”

Adults as partners
Understanding the external impact
Understanding the external impact

Sharing study findings with the community

The Student Voice Team desired to support education stakeholders in understanding students’ experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Prichard Committee Student Voice Team conducted the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study to support education stakeholders in understanding and making decisions to improve students’ experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, capturing how education stakeholders engaged with the findings from the study was important.

**External impact**

**Education stakeholders included school board members, school administrators, legislators, non-profit leaders, teachers, and students.**

**Capturing stakeholder engagement**

To capture the external impact of the study, the evaluation team proposed the following inquiry: How did education stakeholders engage with the findings from the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study? The evaluation team analyzed data from two sources to gain insights into this inquiry:

- Administrative data on the type and number of dissemination activities that the Student Voice Team used to share study findings with the community.
- Quantitative and qualitative survey data on how education stakeholders perceived and used study findings.

In the following, findings from the analyses of these data are summarized.
Dissemination

Sharing *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* findings

SVT used three avenues to disseminate *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* findings to local and national audiences.

01  Local and national media coverage

02  Youth-delivered presentations to local and national audiences

03  Youth-written publications for local and national audiences

External impact
Dissemination

Media coverage

Over 25 local and national media outlets published articles highlighting the findings from the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study*.

Example local and national media outlets included:

- Local media outlets included WPSD, KET, Lex 18, West Kentucky Star, Grant County News, University of KY Press, Richmond Register, Lexington Herald Leader, Louisville Courier Journal, and Swift Creek Courier.


![Bar chart showing count of local and national media coverage](image)

Note: Data accurate as of November 15, 2020.
Source: Author’s calculations based on data provided by the Student Voice Team.
Dissemination

Youth-delivered presentations

Student Voice Team members delivered over 25 presentations on findings from the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study to local and national audiences.

In total, over 1,500 people attended these presentations.

Example local and national audiences included:

- Local audiences included Kentucky Board of Education, Interim Joint Education Committee, and townhalls with school board candidates.
- National audiences included Aspen Institute, National School Climate Center Summit, Regional Educational Laboratory West, and PIE Network.

Note: Data accurate as of November 15, 2020. Source: Author’s calculations based on data provided by the Student Voice Team.
Dissemination

Youth-written publications

Student Voice Team members published over 20 reports, articles and blogs, and podcasts related to the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study*.

Student Voice Team members published articles and blogs in local and national media outlets.


- National media outlets included Rural Assembly, Washington Post, 74 Million, and Hechinger Report.

![External impact graph]

*Note: Data accurate as of November 15, 2020.*

*Source: Author’s calculations based on data provided by the Student Voice Team.*
Perceptions and use of *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* findings

Twenty-seven education stakeholders shared how they engaged with the findings from the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* on the stakeholder engagement survey.

Method

McREL International developed an electronic survey, titled the *Student Voice Team Civic Spring Evaluation External Stakeholder Survey*, to understand how education stakeholders (such as school board members, school administrators, legislators, non-profit leaders, teachers, and students) perceived and used findings from the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study*. The Student Voice Team provided McREL International with the emails of 80 education stakeholders who either attended presentations or received reports related to the study. In October 2020, McREL International administered the electronic survey using Qualtrics to these 80 education stakeholders. The electronic survey had a response rate of 33 percent.
Stakeholder Engagement Survey

Most education stakeholders reported that information shared through the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* increased their capacity to understand youth experiences and support youth learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the study findings shared by the Student Voice Team,

- 97 percent of stakeholders reported an increased understanding of the experiences of the youth that their agency, organization, or school serves.

- 96 percent of stakeholders reported a greater capacity to support youth learning and development during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 86 percent of stakeholders reported a greater capacity to use research on student experiences to inform decisions about policies or practices in their agency, organization, or school.

Note: A majority of education stakeholders reported to strongly agree or agree with survey items. No education stakeholders reported to strongly disagree with survey items.

Source: Author’s calculations based on data from the Student Voice Team Civic Spring Evaluation External Stakeholder Survey (n=177).

External impact
Stakeholder Engagement Survey

Many education stakeholders took or plan to take actions based on information shared through the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study*.

Based on the study findings shared by the Student Voice Team,

- 37 percent of stakeholders reported having collaborated with youth within or outside their agency, organization, or school to make decisions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 33 percent of stakeholders reported using data in new ways to inform decisions in their agency, organization, or school.

- 30 percent of stakeholders reported using SVT’s research to inform decisions in their agency, organization, or school.

Note: A majority of education stakeholders reported to strongly agree or agree with survey items. No education stakeholders reported to strongly disagree with survey items.

Source: Author’s calculations based on data from the Student Voice Team Civic Spring Evaluation External Stakeholder Survey (n=27).
Stakeholder Engagement Survey

Education stakeholders reported that the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* helped them understand how COVID-19 is affecting students' learning and development in Kentucky.

Stakeholders identified four aspects of the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* that they found helpful. These aspects included:

- Understanding how COVID-19 was affecting students' learning.
- Hearing direct insights from students on learning during COVID-19.
- Being reminded of the importance of student voice in decision making.
- Data reaffirming the importance of focusing on students' mental health needs.

“"The aspect of the study that was the most helpful to me was being reminded that students need to be part of the solution. Educators must listen to the students who are at the center of the issue."
Stakeholder Engagement Survey

Education stakeholders reported wanting to have access to more data from the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study*. Stakeholders also identified several areas where they wished for more information from the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study*. These areas included:

- More information on how different demographics of students responded to the questions.
- Stronger recommendations for decision makers that were based on the study data.
- A desire for more testimonials from students.
- More data from other areas of the study that were not focused on social and emotional learning or mental health.

“We the aspect of the study that I think could have been improved were the recommendations. I felt that they could have been stronger and more direct in order to better support decision makers.”

The aspect of the study that I think could have been improved were the recommendations. I felt that they could have been stronger and more direct in order to better support decision makers.”
Lessons learned
Lessons Learned

Important takeaways from the work

Using youth participatory action research, the Student Voice Team showed the power that youth possess to address critical local, state, and national community issues.

The Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study was an ambitious and impactful youth participatory action research project undertaken during a critical time in our educational history. The Prichard Committee Student Voice Team’s ability to pivot planned work to address educational challenges raised by the COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies youths’ capacity to shift their priorities in order to respond to an issue of great urgency in their community.

Further, the Student Voice Team was not asked to conduct the study by any individual or group in an authority positions, such as educators, policymakers, or other researchers. Instead, youth conceptualized the study on their own from a problem of practice that they directly observed as high school students.

Ultimately, as one of the only youth-led statewide research studies that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, findings from the study helped shape education decision making across Kentucky and the United States as leaders used findings to alter educational practices to respond to students’ needs. The Student Voice Team showed that youth, in partnership with adults and on their own, can instigate positive community change at the local, state, and national level.

In the following, lessons learned from the Student Voice Team’s work on the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study are summarized.
Lessons Learned

Youth as civic agents

1. Engaging youth in a complex project-based learning activity aimed at improving their community may increase their knowledge, skills, and capacities to be civically engaged citizens.

Through the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study, the Student Voice Team members learned new skills, such as analyzing qualitative and quantitative data, and demonstrated these skills as they were encouraged to complete complex tasks with limited guidance from adults. Because of these opportunities to demonstrate their skills, members felt more confident in their abilities and planned to use the skills that they learned to address problems in their communities.

2. Supporting youth to develop and complete a complex projects builds youths’ sense of community within a broader organization as they learn at the same time and work towards a common goal.

By dividing the study work up amongst small teams, the Student Voice Team was able to secure the commitment of over 30 youth and 9 adults to complete study activities. Within their small teams, youth formed strong relationships with their peers and adults. These relationships helped youth feel more comfortable to ask questions, execute study activities, and brainstorm innovative ideas. These relationships also carried over into the broader organization as small teams collaborated as the study progressed.
Creating a strong youth-centered community where adults understand their roles helps ensure that youth and adult partnership research remains youth-led.

Prior to the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study, the Student Voice Team had a strong commitment to fostering a youth-centered community and had built this community since 2012. The Student Voice Team’s long-term commitment to this youth-centered community created the foundational structure necessary for adults invited into the community to understand their role as “partners” and not “leaders.” With the knowledge that youth would be leading the study, adults could execute their supporting role in providing training and guidance to youth.

Youth may be more comfortable participating in projects where they need to learn new skills from adults when they believe that their peers also will be learning new skills alongside them.

Youth researchers on the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study reported that they felt more comfortable asking for support from adult researchers, particularly in group settings, because they knew that their peers also were learning how to conduct quantitative and qualitative research. Additionally, the belief that they were learning together helped youth feel more confident in trying out newly learned skills, which helped build their self-efficacy as researchers.
Lessons Learned

External impact

Education stakeholders may be interested in research conducted by youth on students’ experiences in learning.

A vast majority of the dissemination activities for the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study occurred because local and national education stakeholders were interested in learning about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected students’ learning from research conducted by youth. In total, the Student Voice Team was invited to share their research through over 65 different outlets. The number of dissemination requests received by the Student Voice Team shows that there may be a local and national interest for youth conducted research in education.

Sharing research conducted by youth with education stakeholders may increase their understanding of students’ learning experiences.

A vast majority (97 percent) of education stakeholders reported that findings from the Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study increased their understanding of the experiences of youth. Supporting education stakeholders in understanding the opportunities and challenges students’ encounter in their learning is important for ensuring that decisions made positively affect students’ learning experiences. It may be important to continue conducting youth-led research projects to support education stakeholders in understanding students’ learning experiences.
Lessons Learned

External impact

Sharing research conducted by youth with education stakeholders may lead to future collaboration with youth in decision making.

Education stakeholders who received findings from the *Coping with COVID-19 Student-to-Student Study* either collaborated with youth (37 percent), were in the process of collaborating with youth (15 percent), or planned to collaborate with youth (19 percent) to make decisions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. By comparison, only 15 percent of education stakeholders who received findings from the study reported that they do not plan to collaborate with youth to make decisions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it could be possible that research conducted by youth increases education stakeholders’ understanding of students’ learning experiences and increases their willingness to collaborate with youth in decision making.
McREL’s purpose is to improve education through applied research and development. In operation since 1966, McREL houses expertise in numerous facets of research and development including conducting research and evaluation; developing resources, tools, and standards-based programs; providing technical assistance, professional and leadership development; consulting in system improvement; evaluating policy studies; and engaging in strategic planning.
Footnotes


