

# yes

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SUMMIT



## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SUMMIT SUMMARY

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SATURDAY, AUGUST 24, 2019

UMSL - BELLERIVE HALL

NOON - 4:00PM





108 teens representing 50 schools and organizations from across the St. Louis region participated in the 2019 Youth Empowerment Summit

The inaugural Youth Empowerment Summit was held on Saturday, Aug. 24, 2019, from Noon to 4 P.M. in Bellerive Hall at the University of Missouri – St. Louis. As a part of #StLYES, youth learned leadership skills to assist in their efforts to make positive changes in their schools and communities. Participants also generated suggestions to improve policies affecting youth in the region. #StLYES was free to teens 13-19 years old through the support of a collaboration of youth organizations in addition to the sponsorship and donations of regional agencies and funders.

Participants had the opportunity to select training on one of the following leadership topics: Skills for Success; Creative Thinking & Decision Making; and Dealing with Conflict. Policy suggestions centered on Educational Access & Equity; Diversity & Inclusion; and Law Enforcement & Community Engagement.

Organizers provided bus transportation from five designated locations to help teens travel from their home communities to UMSL and back. Attendees heard from Senator Brian Williams and St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Wesley Bell. At the summit conclusion, teens presented their policy suggestions to a panel of decision makers to help ensure that their work results in action.



157 youth registered  
**108 TOTAL YOUTH ATTENDEES**  
from 50 schools and organizations

**THREE (3) LEADERSHIP TOPICS:**

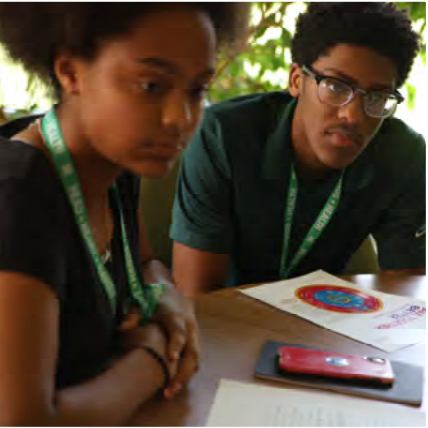
- ♦ **SKILLS FOR SUCCESS**
- ♦ **CREATIVE THINKING & DECISION MAKING**
- ♦ **DEALING WITH CONFLICT**

*"It started with a course that gave me confidence in myself helping me speak and contribute to others on my team in the second activity."*

**TWELVE POLICY TOPICS FROM THREE (3) OPTIONS**

- \* **DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**
  - PARENTAL STATUS
  - GENDER IDENTITY
  - RACISM / PREJUDICE
  - MENTAL HEALTH
  - RACE
- \* **EDUCATIONAL ACCESS & EQUITY**
  - EDUCATIONAL ACCESS
  - SCHOOL FUNDING
  - PRIVATE/PUBLIC SCHOOL, CLASSISM
  - SOCIO-ECONOMIC
- \* **LAW ENFORCEMENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
  - BODY CAM ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY
  - REQUIRING POLICE OFFICERS TO ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY
  - POLICE-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

*"I loved hearing everyone's opinions and thoughts on different topics. I also loved how there were people from different areas letting me see how their community is from their perspective."*



*"I liked the fact that the issues tackled were relatable to the students."*







# LEADERSHIP TRAINING

*“I will use the communication and active listening skills that I learned to evolve and strengthen because of this experience.”*

A main objective of the summit was for youth to learn the leadership skills they need to make the positive changes in their community. The goal was for this summit to be possibly be the continuation or even the start for youth to know they can make changes in their community, feel supported and then have access with other teens that are also working towards improving their community.

A survey was conducted asking which leadership training and topics they wanted to experience at the summit. More than 20 youth completed the survey and selected the following topics:

- Skills for Success
- Creating Thinking & Decision Making
- Dealing with Conflict

The leadership training curriculum was strength-based so teens learned about their natural talents as leaders. Activities, discussions, and reflection time with journal writing helped teens discover their talents and strengths. Adult facilitators worked with the teens to have them create a framework and pathway on how leaders work within communities and groups to make changes.



## Skills for Success

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Learn different skills for being a successful leader.
- Examine the characteristics of effective team leaders and their impact on team development.

Teens attending this session participated in an activity that showcased the unique differences of humans and got them to think about on how those differences are special to them. This led to an activity to get the participants to determine their skillset and how these skills have helped them in leadership situations previously.

As a reflection, teens were asked to write in the journals on how they can further use their natural born skills in the future and when would it be necessary to work with others that have their own unique skill set.



## Creative Thinking and Decision Making

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Recognize the importance of seeking information before making a decision.
- Be presented with a problem to solve through a series of decision-making activities.
- Develop creative thinking abilities.

Teens attending this session participated in a creative thinking activity that encouraged them to think outside of the box to solve a particular issue. Participants presented the solution to the full group for comment and feedback.

As a reflection, teens were asked to write in the journals on how this thought process would work in other situations.



## Dealing with Conflict

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Recognize their feelings.
- Define ways to handle conflict.
- Define strategies to deal with conflict.
- Identify productive and destructive behaviors for emotions.

Teens attending this session participated in an activity requiring them to work in teams to complete an exercise. Groups were asked to perform the exercise again and again to determine how interactions improved with practice and with more or less team members.

As a reflection, teens were asked to think about what they learned about themselves and how to handle conflict as they arise. Participants were asked to think about how they might now confront difficult situations.







*“I liked the fact that we got to talk about very real and serious issues.”*

After the leadership training, attendees participated in break-out groups centered around providing suggestions for policies that affect their daily lives. The policy groups were:

- Diversity & Inclusion
- Educational Access & Equal Resources
- Law Enforcement & Community Engagement

The structure for the Policy Break Out Groups provided the opportunity for adult facilitators to give an overview of the importance of policy and discuss their policy topic prior to breaking into smaller groups to determine their specific suggestions to address the issue.

The small group discussions were student led in each policy area. Adult facilitators were there to keep students on track and give topics for discussion if the conversation became stagnant.

Each group completed a policy workshop and presentation poster to share to a panel of local decision makers and stakeholders.



## Diversity & Inclusion

Youth participating in Diversity & Inclusion were asked to determine what issues and topics they wanted to address. The below list of topics were starting points to the discussion:

### DIALOGUE TOPICS:

- Race/Ethnicity
- Immigration
- Religion
- Socioeconomic Status

**36 teens** participated in this breakout coming up with policies on Race, Gender Identity, Parental Status, Socioeconomic Status, Racism/Prejudice, and Mental Health.



## Educational Access & Equity in Resources

Youth participating in Educational Access & Equity in Resources were enlightened on the difference between equity and equality before being asked to determine what issues and topics they wanted to address. The below list of topics were starting points to the discussion:

### DIALOGUE TOPICS:

- Barriers to Equal Education
  - Class, Gender, Language, Race, Homelessness
- Curriculum and Policies
- Failed Solutions & Ideas for Change

**40 teens** participated in this breakout coming up with policies on School Funding, Educational Access, Private/Public School, Classism.



## Law Enforcement & Community Engagement

Youth participating in Law Enforcement & Community Engagement discussed current issues and regional inequities before being asked to determine what issues and topics they wanted to address. The below list of topics were starting points to the discussion:

### DIALOGUE TOPICS:

- Concerns, Issues, and Problems being faced
- Ideas for Strengthening Trust and their Challenges
  - How can youth directly engage in these?

**32 teens** participated in this breakout coming up with policies on Police-Community Engagement, Require Police to Engage with Community as part of mandatory training, and Body Cam Accountability and Transparency.





Gender Identity

DESCRIPTION OF CONCERNS:

- Misunderstanding of gender identity
- Awareness for people to be comfortable in public situations

ANTICIPATED IMPACT:

- LGBTQ+ to gain confidence

REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- Having respect - respecting differences between people
- Equity versus equality - giving opportunity to all

SOLUTIONS:

- Classes on Gender awareness for young kids
- Getting the information out to older generations, people stuck in their ways
- Finding different ways to talk about it (social media, etc)

WHO TO ADDRESS:

- The local government can be the starting point of addressing this situation, then move up from there.

PANEL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS:

- Question/Comment: *Do you think there is a difference in terms of perception of gender identity based on generation? How would you account for that?*  
A: You can't take same approach with different people based on their experiences or age. People who grow up in it are more accustomed to it.



Parental Status

DESCRIPTION OF CONCERNS:

- Race
- Language
- Family History
- Stereotypes
- Employment

ANTICIPATED IMPACT / REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- Less judgement for the children
- Better opportunity for parents and children

SOLUTIONS:

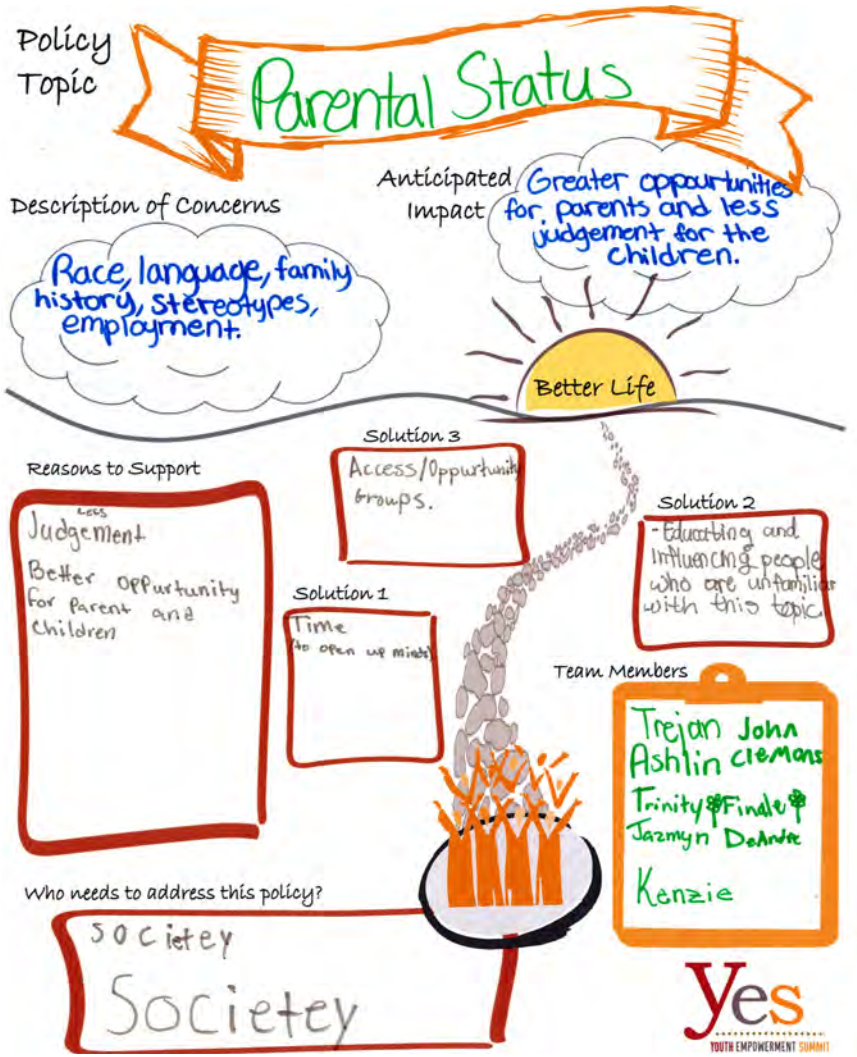
- Challenging to force people to be more accepting - Solutions over time
- Access/Opportunity Groups (not support groups) – Group where you can talk about a broad range of issues
- Education and influence about differences, understanding reasons for differences

WHO TO ADDRESS:

- Society as a whole has to address this issue, not just the government

PANEL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS:

- Question: *What type of exposure have you had that helps you understand this issue?*  
A: We've seen how other people behave with students who are in different groups. Understand how different students judge each other.





# Racism / Prejudice

## DESCRIPTION OF CONCERNS:

- Difference in discipline between races (detention versus suspension based on race)
- Being judged based on race – who is responsible based on race
- Separation by race within schools is not good for school communities, and between schools

## REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- Mentally, Physically, socially safe at school

## SOLUTIONS:

- Instead of talking to teacher, have student body talk to students about incidents
- Dealing with this now. Talking about it. Student/teacher organization
- Students having opportunities to talk about the issues themselves. Student with experience talking, not someone talking for them

## WHO TO ADDRESS:

- The kids who support anti-racism going to the Board of Education and we mean a big group of kids talking to them.
- Organizations that support student equality and equity.

## PANEL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS:

- Question: *Did you consider the ratio of white/black suspensions? Do you think racism impacts the length of suspensions?*  
A: Yes it does. Black students get more suspensions than white students, similar to how blacks get put into jail more than whites, as well as the portrayal in the media. We want to address this through students and student council.



# Socio-Economic

## DESCRIPTION OF CONCERNS:

- Lack of structure and resources in low-income areas that prevent people from being financially free

## ANTICIPATED IMPACT:

- Low income individuals will be given the opportunity to have better access to educational tools, healthier food, professional dress, transportation, and overall a more structured healthy environment.

## REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- Get kids out of the streets
- Better opportunities for education

## SOLUTIONS:

- Neutral Zone: A hub located in center of low-income area with resources – multi-purpose area, store, access to transportation
- Store in Central Area: Providing better food choices for low-income neighborhoods
- Multi-purpose room for children for homework, activities, computer access
- Transportation: Bus available to community members for jobs, etc.

## WHO TO ADDRESS:

- Local Government will support.
- Paid employees and volunteers.

## PANEL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS:

- Question: *Did you consider community gardens to teach kids how to plant their own food?*  
A: Yes, this would help unite kids.
- Question: *How to mitigate the amount of unhealthy food in the area?*  
A: Educate and provide info to kids on healthy food.





## Race

### DESCRIPTION OF CONCERNS:

- Police Brutality - The probability of being of color unarmed and shot by police is 3.5 times higher than whites.
- Treatment - a \$10,000 increase in income for white Americans increases their home equity by 17,700 while the same increase in income only increases the home equities for Asians by 9,500, Hispanics by 15,150 and African-Americans by 15,900.

### ANTICIPATED IMPACT:

- Equality
- Peace among everyone

### SOLUTIONS:

- Create Awareness, create awareness through public seminars on how to treat with respect

### REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- Better Community
- Equality
- Change in the world

### WHO TO ADDRESS:

- Youth
- Government
- Everyone

### SOLUTIONS:

- Create Awareness - classes and seminars.
- Open-mind Set - stop being stuck in your ways
- Mutual Respect - it's OK to be different

### PANEL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS:

- Comment: Appreciate the stats because that's how you get people to listen.



## Mental Health

### DESCRIPTION OF CONCERNS:

- Suicide because people don't get the help they need
- Long lasting issues
- People won't listen, they'll never get treatment or get better

### ANTICIPATED IMPACT:

- Happier people who feel they will get the help they need
- Healthier community with happier people who have the support they need
- Support of communication - people who will listen, who you can talk to

### REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- If we support this, it may save lives
- It will stop this issue from spreading
- This will better our younger generation

### SOLUTIONS:

- Making a mental health facility where you could talk to a counselor - free service nationwide
- Advertisement: Public Service Announcement to make people aware of the service
- Required class in school at a young age (6th Grade). Middle school is where problems can start

### WHO TO ADDRESS:

- Everyone - school boards, government, public business, homes, famous people

### PANEL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS:

- Question: Who do young people go and talk to first at this time, and would this person be in the community center? Generally do kids talk to peers?  
A: Sometimes it is a trusted adult like a teacher or counselor. Sometimes friends would be in the community center to talk.





# Educational Access

### DESCRIPTION OF CONCERNS:

- How schools are funded
- Lower income families lack of awareness, quality of education

### ANTICIPATED IMPACT:

- Equal quality of education
- Lift all schools

### REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- Kids with potential being left behind
- School overcrowded and underpaid

### SOLUTIONS:

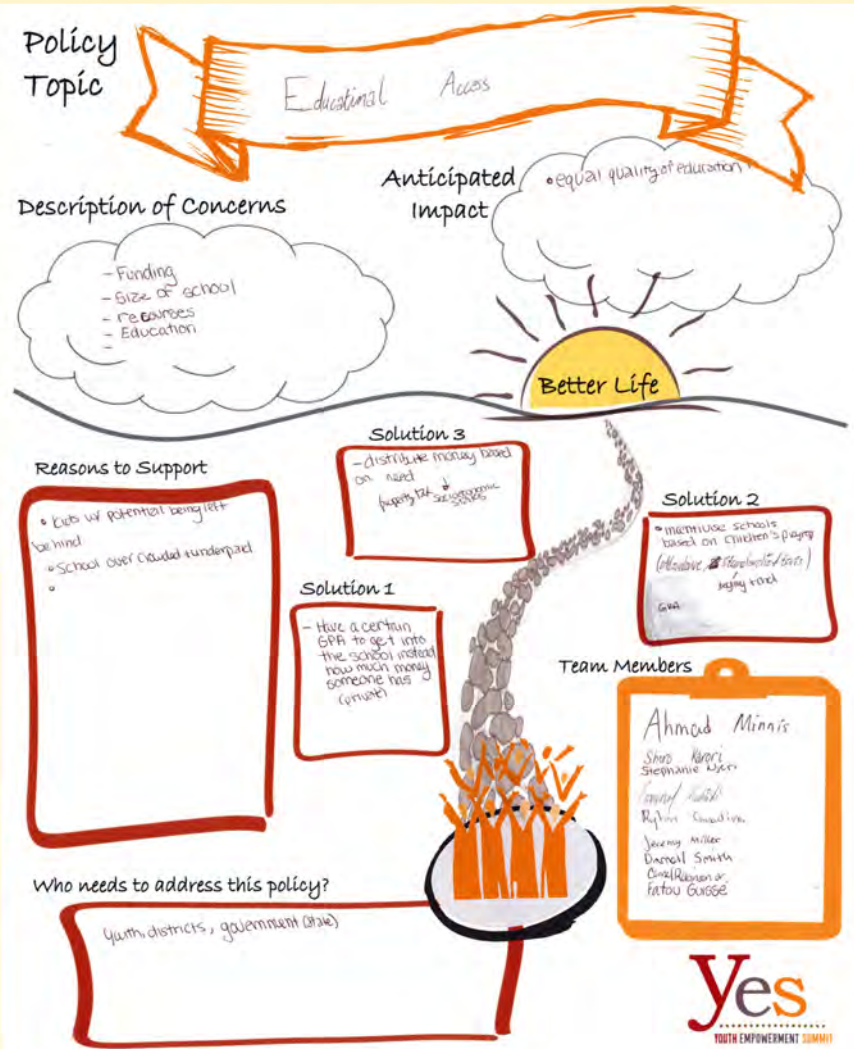
- Distribute money based on need, not just on property taxes
- Private schools – admit more lower income students based on merit
- Incentivize schools to work on child's progress as a whole, not just testing. Schools that show progress are funded more

### WHO TO ADDRESS:

- Youth
- School Districts
- Government Officials (state)

### PANEL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS:

- Question: *Schools should be funded based on growth of students or based on property taxes?*  
A: A combination of both. Fund lower property tax areas. Student progress would be an incentive.



# Private/Public School, Classism

### DESCRIPTION OF CONCERNS:

- Public schools have lack of resources versus private schools
- Underfunded schools
- Quality of Education: Teachers have more incentive to teach well if paid more
- Parent involvement with more resources
- Sports team resources, etc.
- Property Taxes: Better public schools funded more through property taxes

### ANTICIPATED IMPACT:

- Better behavior expectations of students
- More programs implemented in public schools
- Teachers care about students well-being

### SOLUTIONS:

- State incentives to bring qualified teachers to public schools
- Bring tutoring programs to public schools
- Solution for property taxes in specific districts – have property taxes raised on renters, lower overall tax rate, incorporate job training programs as incentives for homebuyers in area. Start small with one school district

### REASONS TO SUPPORT:

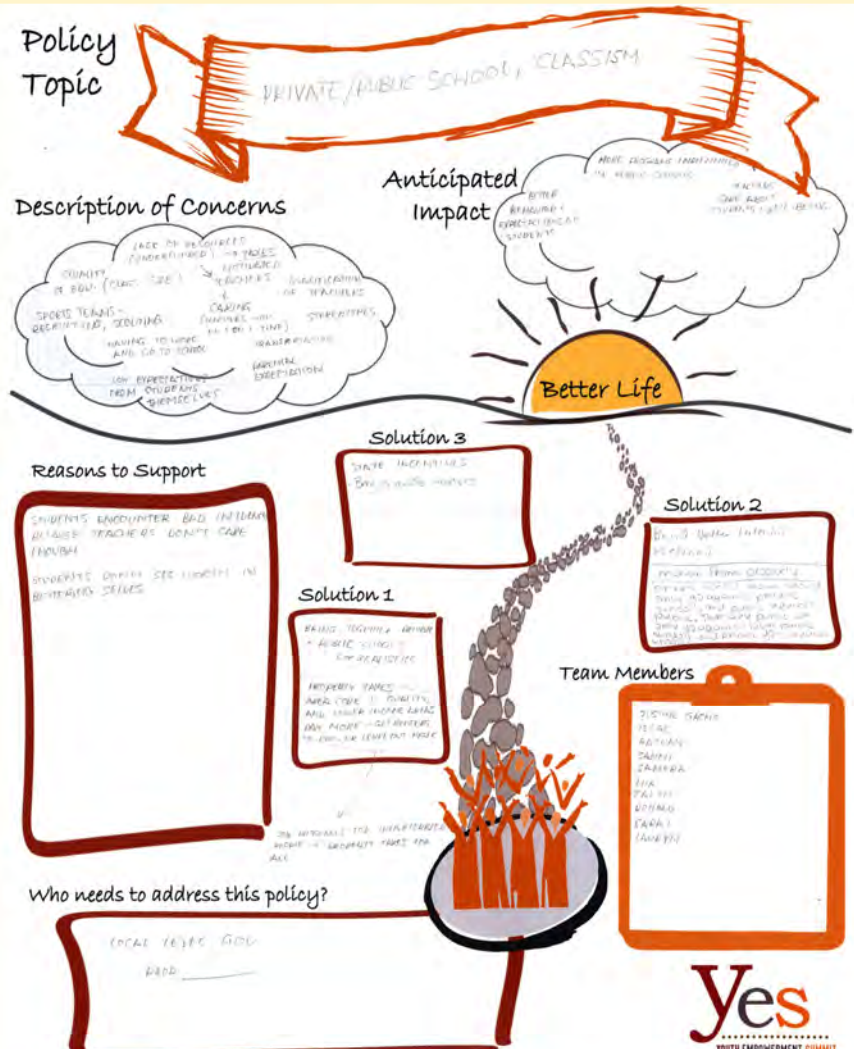
- Students encounter bad influence because teachers don't care enough
- Students don't see worth in bettering themselves

### WHO TO ADDRESS:

- Local level government

### PANEL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS:

- Comment: Landlords put taxes into the rental cost.





# School Funding

## DESCRIPTION OF CONCERNS:

- Quality of education lower due to lack of funding
- Quality of environment is lower
- Lack of experiential learning due to lower resource
- Lack of clubs, etc –

## REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- Parent teacher support
- Increasing investments in students
- Knowing your future
- Focus on Equity instead of equality

## SOLUTIONS:

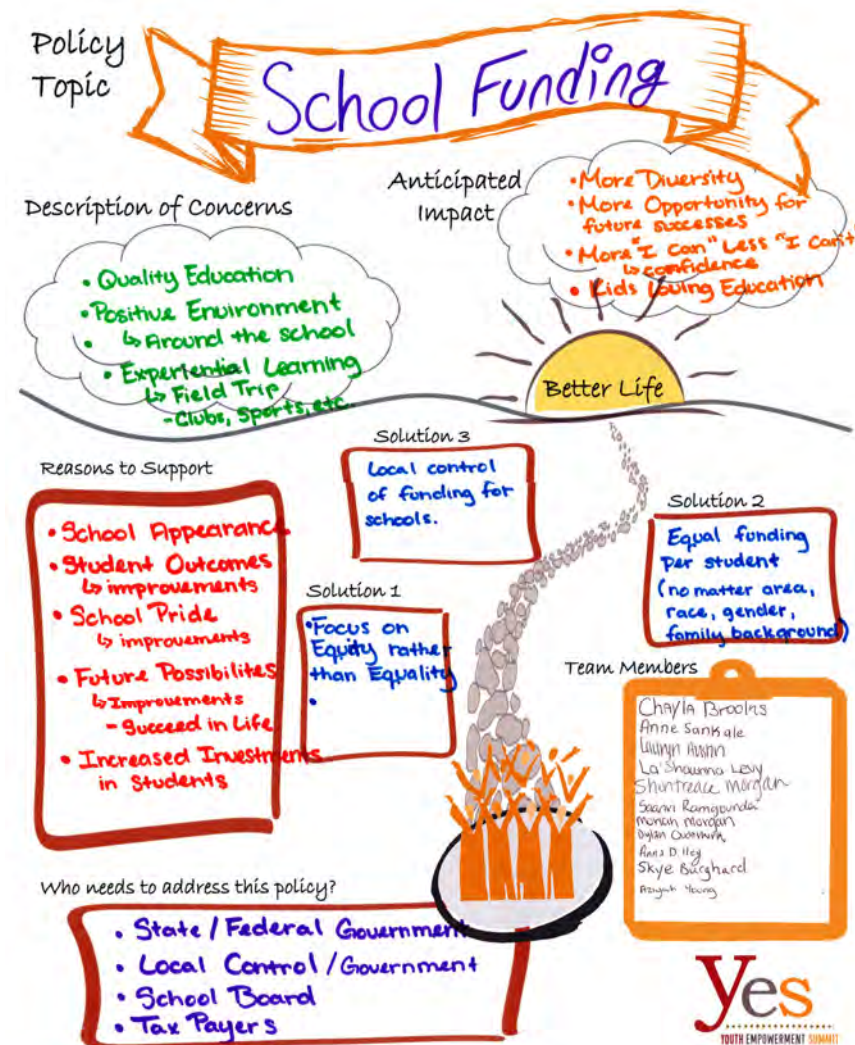
- Schools get funding based on need – funding is redistributed based on need
- Parents, teachers involvement
- More “I cans” than “I can’ts”

## WHO TO ADDRESS:

- Focus to federal, state, local government, focus at local level because they understand issues
- Tax Payers

## PANEL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS:

- Question: *Would you be willing to go to Jefferson City?* A: Yes
- Question: *Did you compare lack of funding and its effects?*  
A: Clayton; \$22,000 per student, Normandy gets about \$12,000 per student. These are two different kinds of communities. We want it to be more even where all students get equal resources.
- Question: *Do you think youth should have input in how money is spent?*  
A: Yes because students experience the problems. They should have a say in how the money is spent.



# Body Cam Accountability and Transparency in St. Louis

## DESCRIPTION OF CONCERNS:

- Police and citizens being immoral
- Wrong people being convicted
- How to make sure cameras are always on and charged?
- How to get funding?

## REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- Important to have evidence and accountability for who is convicted
- Closes gap between police and community
- Creates sense of security

## SOLUTIONS:

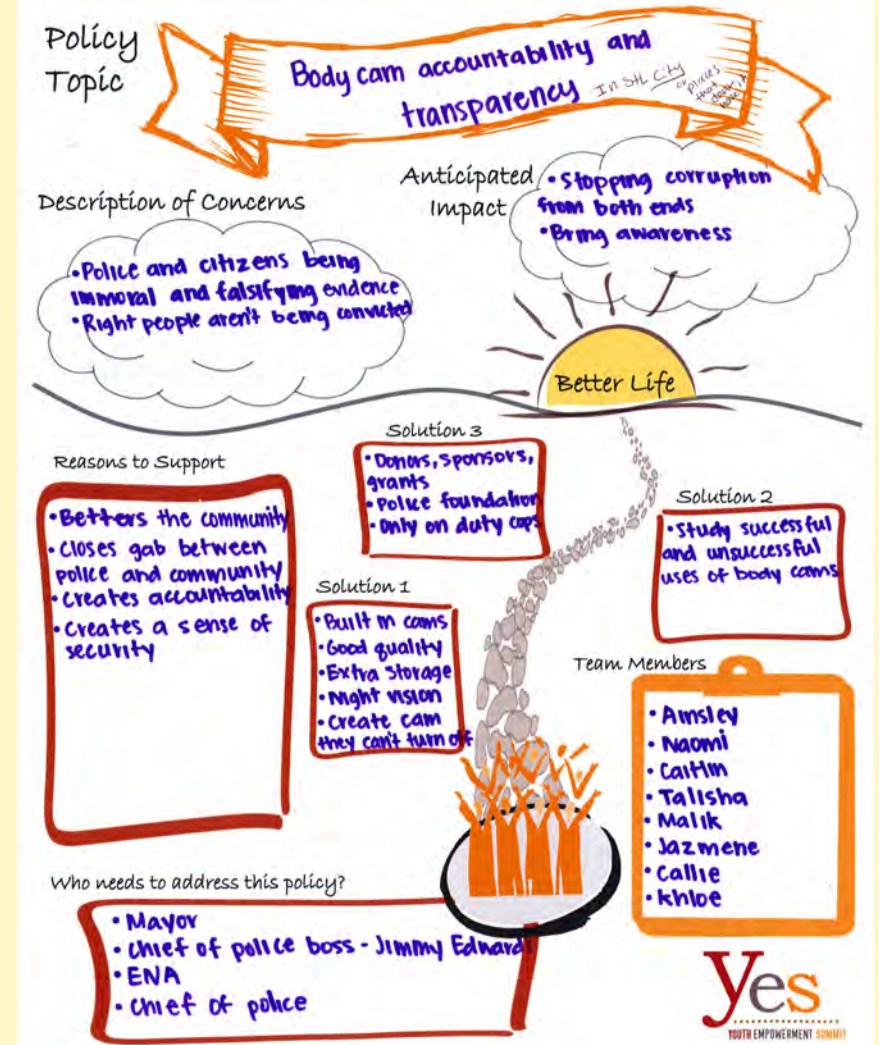
- Body Cams - Only on-duty cops will be wearing these cameras
- Build cameras into uniform, cameras cannot be turned off, backed up to cloud
- Study successful and unsuccessful uses of body cams in other places
- Funding: Donations, sponsors, grants, police foundations

## WHO TO ADDRESS:

- Mayor, Jimmy Edwards, Chief of Police

## PANEL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS:

- Comment: You run into cost, like the cost of storage. Look into other agencies and how they overcome hurdles. Take into account times when the officer may want to turn off camera.
- Question: *Should each community levy a tax for body cams or should it be universal?* A: Haven't fully identified funding sources, but there is a need to look at places where it has or hasn't worked.
- Comment: Privacy question for victims as well as officers.
- Comment: Need a strong body cams policy. Sunshine Law must be considered in terms of how long materials are kept and privacy for victims.
- Questions: *Have you researched communities of the same size and the success of body cams?* A: Not yet.





# Trust between Community and Police

## DESCRIPTION OF CONCERNS:

- Lack of trust
- Pre-judged issues

## SOLUTIONS:

- Require police to engage with community as part of mandatory training
- More community events for officers;
- Officers attend events for 36 hours per year during training
- Officers stay in assigned community areas

## REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- Safer communities and more trust
- Less murders and shootings
- Officers attend in plainclothes events with community members
- Would cost only hours, not dollars

## WHO TO ADDRESS:

- Local government to make it an official policy at the local level
- Police force

## PANEL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS:

- Question: *How do you think the community would respond to this policy?*  
A: Not sure how everyone would respond, but mostly positive. Meeting officers in plain clothes would take away the separation between community and officers. We need to learn about each other as people. Officers would understand the people they are stopping and protecting, which could avoid tragedy



# Police-Community Engagement & Analysis/Accountability

## DESCRIPTION OF CONCERNS:

- Police disconnected from community, leads to brutality

## SOLUTIONS:

- Reduce division between community and police
- Have gathering with police at community check-point – police have to come
- Yearly interviews with officers and community – how has officers engaged with community, raises and promotions used as incentive
- Establish Community Comstat to look at problems in neighborhoods outside of violence

## REASONS TO SUPPORT:

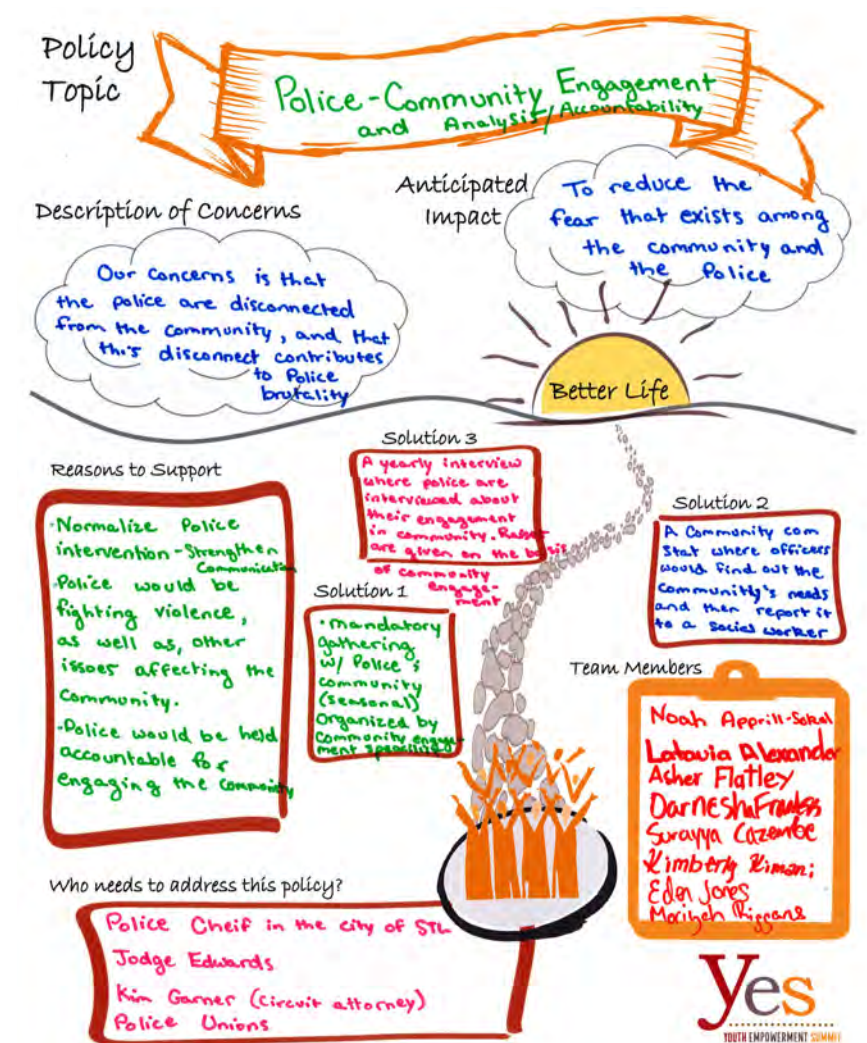
- Bringing police and community together

## WHO TO ADDRESS:

- City of St. Louis
- Judge Edwards
- Counties

## PANEL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS:

- Comment: Basing promotions on community engagement is great.
- Comment: Community should have a say in who is policing their community; some of this is happening with social workers already.







## NEXT STEPS

### YES SUMMARIZED & SHARED

- Develop summit report to share with participants, sponsoring organizations, decision makers, and other stakeholders.
  - Pictures posted
  - Press release developed
- **GOAL: HOST PRESS CONFERENCE WITH TEENS & DECISION MAKERS SHARING SUMMIT FINDINGS & NEXT STEPS.**

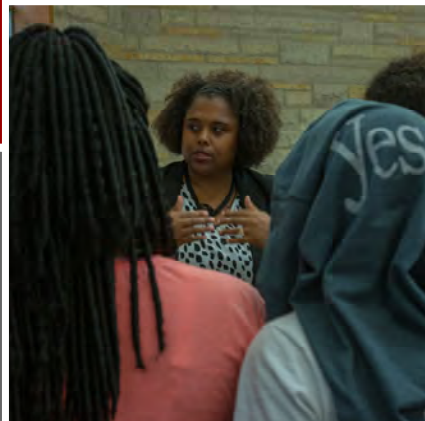
### ENGAGE & RECONVENE PARTICIPANTS

- Invite summit participants to join in the continued advocacy of the policy suggestions.
  - Form a #StLYES Teen Advocacy Committee
- Schedule meetings with local, regional, and state decision makers.
- **GOAL: DEVELOP TRACTION & QUANTIFIABLE RESULTS IN AT LEAST ONE (1) POLICY TOPIC FROM EACH OF THE OPTIONS.**

### SUSTAIN THE MOMENT AND MOMENTUM

- Continue the momentum of the 4-hour summit by informing participants of progress made in making their suggestions into policy.
- Make the StL Youth Empowerment Summit an annual event
  - **Save the Date for Saturday, August 22, 2020**
- **GOAL: EDUCATE TEENS FROM THE ST. LOUIS REGION ON THEIR LEADERSHIP SKILLS & THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICY.**

*“I will use the communication and active listening skills that I learned to evolve and be stronger because of this experience.”*



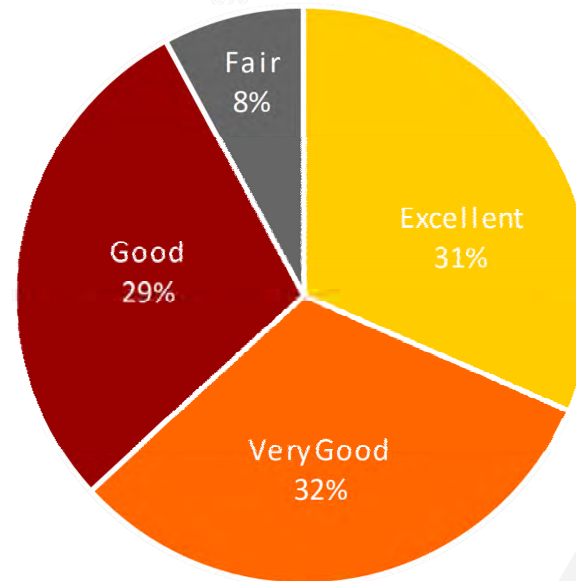
*“I now know how to step back more and keep an open mind when discussing difficult topics.”*



# yes

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SUMMIT

OVERALL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE EVENT?



FEEDBACK

55%

felt the event length was about right

97%

somewhat, very or extremely likely to attend similar event in the future

*“I liked getting to talk to new people my age about topics that are so important and feeling like we are doing something to create change for the better.”*

63%

rated the event as excellent or very good

*It was great! Amazing job.*

### WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT THE EVENT?

- *I liked the diversity in subject matter from successful life skills to mental health issues.*
- *The diversity of the youth in regards to their backgrounds and ideas they had to offer about issues that they will be solving.*
- *I like that I was able to become social and talk to people that I never knew.*
- *I liked the fact that the issues tackled were relatable to the students there.*
- *I enjoyed the food. I also enjoyed working with people I don't know to achieve a common goal about law enforcement and community engagement.*
- *The opportunity to gain feedback from adults and leaders in the St. Louis area.*

### IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE ABOUT THE EVENT?

- *I'd love if there a way for the teens to be a part of some sort of advisory group to make sure the proposed changes happen and also just to be more involved in the St. Louis community.*
- *Please make this an ongoing event; maybe every semester or a two-day event during summer break.*
- *I feel like time for coming up with policies should be shorter since we had to cut the time for the presentations.*
- *I will advocate for things I want to change in my school and community that need somebody to advocate for them to be changed. I will help friends and peers understand the importance of positive change.*

**yes** to Engagement  
to Leadership  
to Advocacy



## Facilitators and Panelist

- ## LEADERSHIP TRAINING:

- Skills for Success:  
Peter Dry & Dwayne T. James
- Creative Thinking & Decision Making:  
Raghib Muhammad & Cornita Robinson
- Dealing with Conflict:  
Brandon Haynes & Karen Taylor-Liggins

**POLICY DISCUSSION:**

- Educational Access & Equity in Resources:  
Ida Casey, Peggy Hull, Felice McClendon,  
Lisa Thompson, & Christina Sneed
- Diversity & Inclusion:  
Christina Brown, Donna Garcia & Philip Hatten
- Law Enforcement & Community Engagement:  
Aaron Harris & Marcel Scaife

## POLICY PANEL:

- Councilwoman Fran Griffin
  - Councilwoman Ella Jones
  - Councilman Gary Johnson
  - Captain Perry Johnson
  - Commander Frank McCall
  - Lisa Thompson
  - Cora Faith Walker
  - Aaron Williams
- 
- Timekeeper: Serena Muhammed
  - Note Taker: Adam Brown



## Thank You to our Volunteers



- Khaliah Booker
- Aaron Harris
- Philip Hatten
- Peggy Hull
- Dwayne T. James
- Felice McClendon
- Tony Merritt
- Terry Olishile
- Marcel Scaife
- Alexis Tardy

## SPECIAL THANKS:

- Sharon Johnson
- Tivoli Majors
- Jody Squires
- Julius B Anthony
- Marlon Chambers
- Trayvond Jacobs
- Doug Hoff
- Paula Gaertner
- Christopher Geden

**EVENT VOLUNTEERS:**

- Better Family Life
- Melanie Fisher Duffy
- Albert Harrold
- Karen Jamerson
- Brittin Haury LaMar
- Steve Lawler
- Jorja McAfee
- Amanda Meek
- Laticia Ramsey
- Bretta Williams
- Kurt Shillinger
- Pete Paciorek
- Gus Robinson
- Arika Parr
- Geoffrey Soyiantet

PHOTOGRAPHERS:

- Jacob Chabot
- Tony Chambers
- Bishoppe Kamusinga

*“Thank you so much for allowing me to shoot the Youth Empowerment Summit. Not only was it great to shoot but the presentations and ideas the youth gave were inspirational. I work in mental health and the group who presented on that subject have ideas that are realistic & relevant.”*





yes to Engagement  
to Leadership  
to Advocacy

*"I will present the suggestions  
I heard at the summit to  
the local government  
& bring change to  
the areas we  
need most."*

#stlYES