

YOUTH VOICES:

YOUTH IN METROPOLITAN DETROIT SPEAK OUT

Report by:
Metropolitan Youth
Policy Fellows-Youth
Working Together Toward a
Better Metropolitan Detroit

“THE YOUTH {ARE} THE FUTURE;
{YOU} NEED TO START PAYING
ATTENTION TO THEM.”



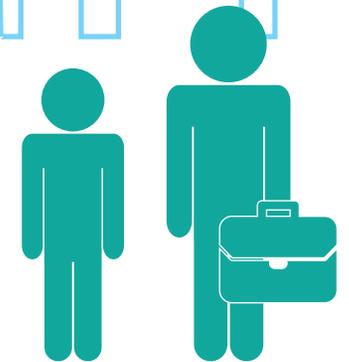
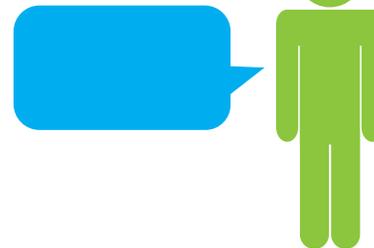
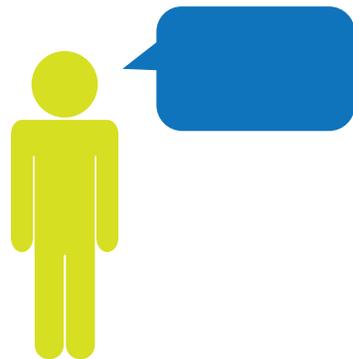
Community Foundation

FOR SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN



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INTRODUCTION

“The youth (are) the future; (you) need to start paying attention to them”

WHO ARE WE?

We, the Metropolitan Youth Policy Fellows, are a diverse group of youth working together for a better metropolitan Detroit. We represent multiple communities—across cities, neighborhoods, and suburbs—that formed in order to participate in issues that impact our lives.

Many of us began our involvement through participation in the Youth Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity in Metropolitan Detroit Program, a program that involves youth learning and working together around issues of diversity in the metropolitan Detroit region, and the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan’s Youth Advisory Council. Through these programs, we began to think about the issues that are affecting our region and the roles that youth can play in creating change.

We believe that there are decisions being made every day in metropolitan Detroit that impact the lives of youth in both the city and the suburbs. We think it is important that youth have a voice in these decisions. Youth know what is going on in their communities and they have ideas for solutions.

Over the last year and a half, we have been meeting regularly to talk about the issues that we as youth see in our communities. Youth in metropolitan Detroit face issues every day and we wanted to start working towards solutions.

As Metropolitan Youth Policy Fellows and leaders, we wanted to step forward to use our voice and to help other youth use their voices in identifying critical social justice issues in the region. Our voices are important but we’re only a few. We needed the voices of others.

YOUTH KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AND THEY HAVE IDEAS FOR SOLUTIONS.



METHODS

In our initial meetings, we began by talking about why we wanted to get involved. We each thought about words that represented our interests in being Policy Fellows and shared them with each other. Our words included:

- “For future generations ”
- “Youth can make change”
- “Youth voice is important!”
- “Stronger communities”
- “Groundwork for guiding change”
- “Community love”

With support from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, we created a social justice survey. After many meetings to discuss the survey, we developed the questions that seemed to reflect the issues that impacted us and our peers the most. The questions focused on key areas like schools, community involvement, safety and opportunities. We asked youth to tell us their thoughts and ideas on these topics.

Our goal was to hear from as many youths as possible. We had hoped that once we gathered this information, we would be able to see what change youth wanted to see in the region. We believe that youth know what’s going on in their communities and that they have ideas for solutions.

We decided to launch our survey online. To help spread the survey, we generated multiple maps of our networks and contacts that would help ensure a broad and diverse set of youth respondents. We then began to share the survey link through our networks, through social media, and through networks that our adult allies had. It was important to have a diverse set of youth respondents to help identify issues across various communities in the Detroit metropolitan region.

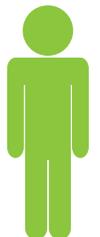
We created a short video to accompany the survey link. The video talked about why youth should participate and have their voices heard. In some cases we developed paper copies that were distributed to community organizations and other groups. This helped ensure that we were reaching all youth—not just youth with access to the internet.

In total, over 1,100 youth from across the metropolitan Detroit Region gave us their thoughts, feedback, and ideas through the survey and follow up focus groups (see Assessment by Numbers for more specifics).



IN TOTAL, OVER 1,100 YOUTH FROM ACROSS THE METROPOLITAN DETROIT REGION GAVE US THEIR THOUGHTS, FEEDBACK, AND IDEAS.

YOUTH IN METRO DETROIT FACE ISSUES EVERY DAY AND WE WANTED TO START WORKING TOWARDS SOLUTIONS.



After gathering our information, we compiled the initial findings. We used computer software to develop the statistics and then spent time in our group analyzing and generating themes from our data.

Based on our findings, we decided that we needed to do focus groups to go more in depth on specific ideas and issues raised from the survey. To do this, we were trained on how to lead focus groups. We then worked as a team to generate focus group questions and prepare a script. In each of the focus groups we worked with community partners to select a variety of participants and gather appropriate consent from the participants.

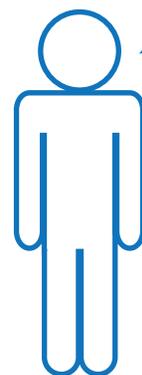
Working in teams, we then conducted the focus groups. In each focus group, there were two note takers to ensure that we captured information accurately. All comments and notes were kept anonymous. In total, we conducted 8 focus groups with 53 youth participants across the Metro Detroit area.

After each focus group, the notes were typed up. After all the focus groups were completed, we looked across all of our notes to see what youth had said. We worked in small groups to analyze the information and generate key ideas and themes. We then discussed the themes and created a list of top findings.

Using the top findings, combined with the survey findings, our group worked to generate recommendations and ideas for change. We spent many meetings refining our ideas,

using methods such as sticker voting (giving people stickers to use to vote on their choices) to achieve consensus. In the end we generated a set of key conclusions, many of which are presented in this report and in our accompanying video.

Our report is broken into four major sections which reflect our four major findings:



- 1) COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORTIVE ADULTS
- 2) MORE EQUITY, INCREASED ENGAGEMENT, AND HIGHER EXPECTATIONS IN SCHOOLS
- 3) CREATING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
- 4) MEDIA AND SEGREGATION IMPACTS INTERACTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING OF OUR DIVERSITY

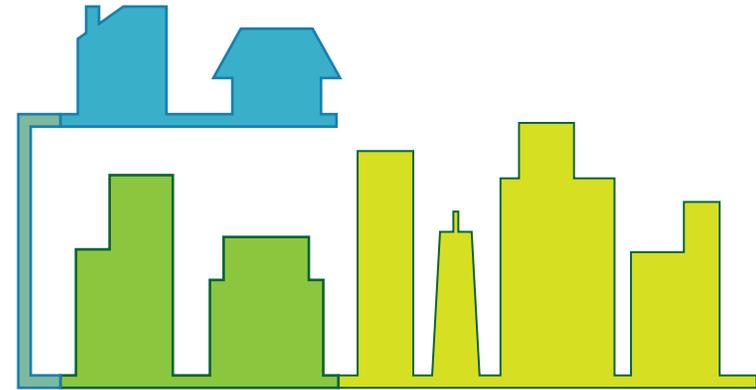
In each section we report our findings and discuss our recommendations for what can be done.

Our closing, "Our Vision for the Region" reiterates our major findings and discusses our thoughts for the future.

ASSESSMENT BY NUMBERS

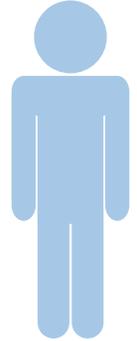
- 1191 surveys completed
- 8 focus groups done
- 15 metropolitan Youth Policy Fellows led focus groups by facilitating or taking notes
- 53 youth participated in focus groups*
- 16 high schools were represented by focus group participants*

*these numbers do not include the Metropolitan Youth Policy Fellows who led the focus groups



FOCUS GROUPS

-  15 METROPOLITAN YOUTH POLICY FELLOW FACILITATORS
-  53 YOUTH PARTICIPANTS
-  16 SCHOOLS REPRESENTED BY FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS



OUR LEARNING

As much as we learned from other youth about their ideas, we also learned a great deal about ourselves and what it means to work towards change. Here are some of our thoughts about what we learned, why this work matters, and what we want others to know about youth involvement in community assessments.

What we learned about ourselves:

- How to compromise and incorporate everyone's ideas
- Different skills, such as creating a survey and leading focus groups
- Together we can make change
- All the stuff we've done gives me more desire to want to do more because I see I can make a change
- We've shown that we can do the same stuff that adults do- but we're coming up with new ideas, new voices, and new innovations.
- The region has been stuck- but kids aren't given the opportunity- and we can bring new ideas to solve problems in the region when we're given the chance

Why this work matters for youth:

- It's empowering to young people
- It's about young people changing the lives of young people
- It opens eyes to young people that they can change stuff
- We realize we are all interconnected- we're all tied together
- If people ask me what I can do I have something to say
- I learned a lot about myself and others

What we want others to know:

- We want to talk about policies- they affect us and we're not involved
- We (Youth) want to be respected.
- We have great ideas!
- We have something to say.
- We care.



WE REALIZE WE ARE ALL INTERCONNECTED-WE'RE ALL TIED TOGETHER.



WE HAVE GREAT IDEAS!



WE'VE SHOWN THAT WE CAN DO THE SAME STUFF THAT ADULTS DO-BUT WE'RE COMING UP WITH NEW IDEAS, NEW VOICES, AND NEW INNOVATIONS.

FINDINGS

FINDING 1: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORTIVE ADULTS

THE ISSUE

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE MATTERS TO US (AS YOUNG PEOPLE). WE WANT A VOICE. WE NEED ADULTS TO SUPPORT US IN OUR EFFORTS.

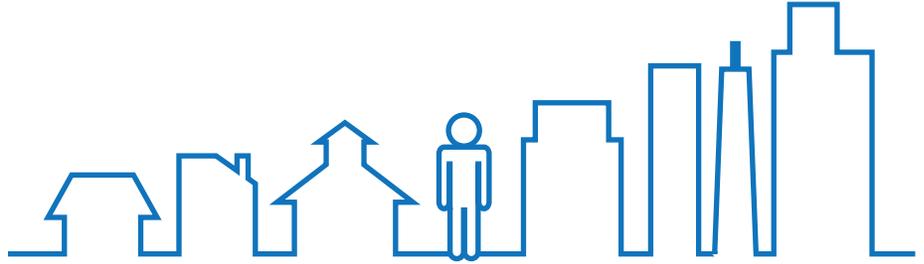
We want:

- Adult allies to encourage, support, and be committed to us and our ideas
- Adults to share power and decision-making
- A space where we are listened to without judgment

What does this mean and why does it matter?

It is important for us, as youth, to be engaged in our communities- that we experience success and that we have avenues in which to make decisions and bring about change. This could be in a neighborhood program, in a group at school, or elsewhere. That being said, we cannot experience success, affect change, and be a part of decision making without supportive adults.

Community engagement by youth is important to us as youth because we recognize that both the community as a whole and youth as individuals are better off when youth in communities are engaged. Youth are often seen as “problems” in communities when in fact we are experts on our communities and should be seen as an important part of



solutions. When we are a part of solutions in the community, we are able to collaborate, we offer a unique perspective, and we can assess how a solution will be perceived by other youth in the community. When youth are seen as part of the solution rather than part of the problem it strengthens a community.

As youth step into roles in which we experience success, affect change, and make decisions, the role of supportive adults is crucial. Supportive adults are those adults who listen to the ideas of youth and take them seriously. They work hard to build relationships and provide guidance and encouragement to youth. Youth need adults to help create these opportunities—which means that adults need to use their power to advocate for a space for the voices of youth. Youth need this space to be a place where they can be listened to without judgment. It also means that adults have to share power and decision-making with youth. We need adults to encourage us, support us, and be committed to us and our ideas.

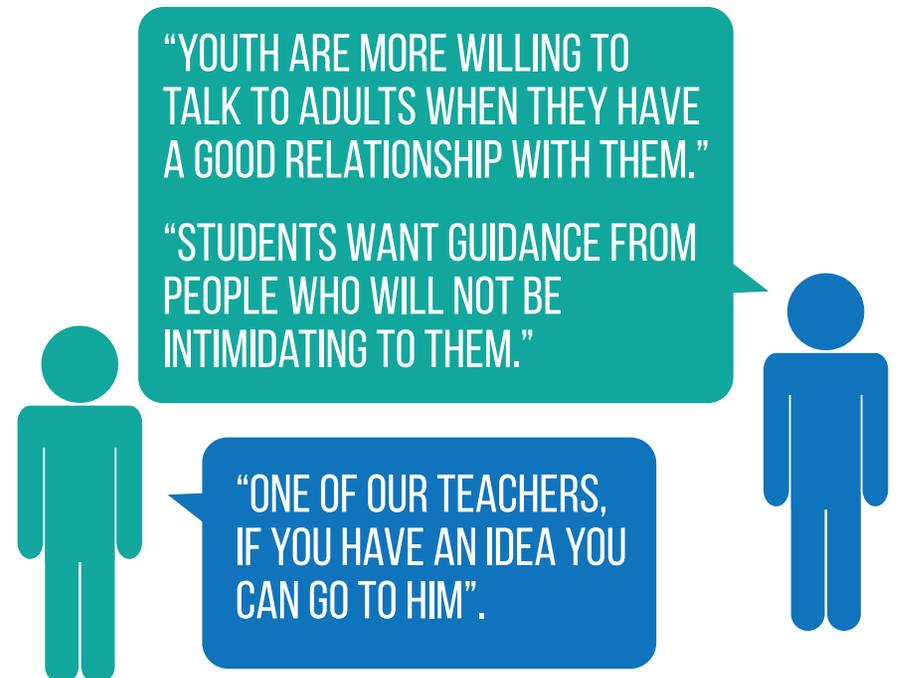
What does the data say?

- 78.4% of youth agreed with the statement “All young people deserve a voice in the planning and decision-making that impacts their community”
- 20.3% of youth disagreed with the statement “My thoughts and opinions are respected by adults (teachers, admin, etc.) in my school”

- 74.3% of youth agreed with the statement “Adults in my school have high expectations of me”
- “Youth are more willing to talk to adults when they have a good relationship with them”
- “Students want guidance from people who will not be intimidating to them”
- “Students want their teachers and administrators to be open minded, supportive, motivational and encouraging”
- “One of our teachers, if you have an idea you can go to him”
- “In the 9th grade, we wanted to have a fun day. I went to my teacher, he’s like us, and he took it to the principal and it happened”
- “Our social worker will take ideas we have to our principal”
- “At my school it’s their way or the highway”
- “Adults who feel like we shouldn’t have a voice. Parents who say stay in a child’s place. They think we’ll abuse the power”
- “I can always go to the administration...(name of administrator) would always sit down and LISTEN to my ideas”
- “(They) see us as immature”
- “They (adults in school) act like they listen, but they don’t”
- “Listen to youth before you make a decision because they are part of the city”
- “Listen to what everyone has to say. Don’t give up on us”

Specific Recommendations

- Give youth, who are not of voting age, the ability to vote on decisions that affect them and the whole community (i.e. school bonds)
- Have positions for youth on the school board, alongside adults
- Mandate a bi-annual community report done by youth to help inform the Mayor in making policy decisions
- Create workshops for adult leaders around concepts of power and privilege related to age
- Have youth create and lead tours of their schools and community spots as a mandatory, yearly experience for school and city board members



FINDING 2: MORE EQUITY, INCREASED ENGAGEMENT, AND HIGHER EXPECTATIONS IN SCHOOLS

THE ISSUES

ISSUE A: WE ALL, AS STUDENTS, NEED TO HAVE ADEQUATE RESOURCES, SUPPORT, AND OPPORTUNITIES TO THRIVE IN SCHOOLS REGARDLESS OF ACADEMIC STANDING, PARTICIPATION IN ATHLETICS, AND PREVIOUS INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES.

ISSUE B: AS OVER EMPHASIS ON DISCIPLINE DEVALUES EDUCATION. EDUCATION SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED OVER DISCIPLINE.

ISSUE C: MANY OF US, AS STUDENTS, DO NOT FEEL LIKE WE HAVE A VOICE OR THAT WE CAN MAKE CHANGE IN OUR SCHOOL. WE SHOULD HAVE A VOICE AND BE ABLE TO WORK TOWARDS CHANGE ON ISSUES THAT IMPACT OUR EDUCATION.



ISSUE D: THERE IS A PERCEPTION THAT EDUCATION IS NOT IMPORTANT TO US AND THAT WE DON'T WANT TO LEARN. EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT TO US AND WE WANT TO LEARN.

We want:

- Adequate resources that support innovative student learning
- To focus on learning rather than on disciplinary practices that do not address the real problems
- A voice in what we need from our education and how we are taught
- Curriculum that reflects our diversity, promotes critical thinking and innovation, and is not driven by standardized tests
- Adults in school that can see the potential in all students
- Quality teachers and quality opportunities for all students (not just for those in honors or AP classes or IB programs)
- Opportunities to contribute and lead, in non-tokenistic ways, at all levels (i.e. the school board)
- An environment that welcomes the concerns and ideas of all- teachers and students

What does this mean and why does it matter?

Schools are central to our success. They are the institutions where we spend the most time. Schools are the place where we develop critical skills, learn about the world, develop first friendships, and set a path for our future. Yet in our region, youth face unequal opportunities in education and in schools. Some go to schools that are highly resourced with many opportunities for innovative learning and others go to schools with far fewer resources that limit innovative practices. Some youth go to schools that hold high expectations for all of their students, and others go to schools where not everyone is held to the same expectations. Too many schools have overemphasized discipline and testing, which takes away from learning. Schools are where students should learn, not be overly disciplined.

For our region to thrive, we need an education system that helps all youth excel. When asked, most youth want excellent schools that have high expectations of them and that focus on their learning.

One component to creating excellent schools for all is to engage youth as active participants. We should be seen as experts in our schools—we know what students need, we know what makes programs successful, and we know what contributes to failures. Yet, too often school decisions are made without the involvement of youth. Most of the educational policies, practices, and programs are conceived by adults on behalf of youth without consultation or engagement of youth in the process. What would our schools be like if youth could have a more active role in decision making at the school or district level? Youth want to have a voice. Schools and educational systems should create spaces where youth are given the opportunity to step forward.

FOR OUR REGION TO THRIVE, WE
NEED AN EDUCATION SYSTEM
THAT HELPS ALL YOUTH EXCEL.



What does the data say?

Our Survey data tells us:

- 86.6% of youth indicated that “schools” were an issue that the Detroit metropolitan area faces
- Approximately 1/3 of students felt discipline was unfair or ineffective in their schools
- 79.1% of youth agreed with the statement “All young people should be able to have a voice in their education”
- Over 36% of youth did not feel like they could make a change in their schools
- 88.2% of youth indicated that an ideal school would include “A positive learning environment.”
- Almost 80% of respondents indicated that an ideal school would include “A variety of classes that are interesting and academically challenging.”
- 81.9% of youth said that their ideal school would include “Classes that are applicable to the real world.”
- “Most teachers favor smart kids and athletes.”
- “It seemed as though there was a divide as to who was involved/used their voice—often the IB/AP/ Honors kids.”
- “All students should have the ability to have the best teachers, clubs, and a say.”

- “Students should tell teachers how they learn best.”
- “Students should have a voice in how teachers are teaching.”
- “A school with youth voice would allow students to have a say in lesson plans. Deciding how they want to be taught.”
- “Teach in different ways that are innovative.”
- “More classes, have more freedom with classes, more diverse classes...”
- “(Youth) should have a voice, but often not listened to.”
- “(Youth should have a say in school board decisions.”
- “Put student on the school board. Students understand students better than adults.”

Specific Recommendations

- Have school administrators host informational sessions for parents and students around options at the school (i.e. AP/IB/Honors) in an effort to increase participation in higher level learning.
- Require social justice trainings/workshops for all teachers in order to ensure respect for all students.
- Have students complete mid-semester reviews/surveys of teachers and then end-of-semester follow-ups. The first should ask questions regarding what is working and what is not and the second should look for changes.
- Create a database with student profiles (regardless of current/previous involvement) so that when opportunities arise all students can be connected based on interest.
- Get student suggestions on ways to improve disciplinary practices either through surveys or focus groups

- Re-write dress codes with student input
- Deal with student tardies one-on-one with students outside of class time, so that class time is not wasted on these issues
- Change detentions so that the time is spent in meaningful ways- i.e. conferences between students and administration
- Have students (i.e. student council) create teacher evaluations that administration would use in teacher reviews
- Have school administration hold regular student forums where students can bring up issues and concerns
- Create a youth committee that would assess/evaluate the commitment to and consideration of youth voice in the decisions of school boards
- Modify graduation requirements with youth input so that students can choose classes that are more suited to what they would like to do later in life
- Include a “diversity requirement” that could be fulfilled by taking courses such as gender studies, African American studies, Latin American studies, Native American studies, etc.



WHAT WOULD OUR SCHOOLS BE LIKE IF YOUTH COULD HAVE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN DECISION MAKING AT THE SCHOOL OR DISTRICT LEVEL?

FINDING 3: CREATING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

THE ISSUES

ISSUE A: EVERYONE DESERVES TO LIVE IN A COMMUNITY THAT PROMOTES HEALTHY LIVING. MANY OF OUR COMMUNITIES DON'T PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVING.

ISSUE B: WE NEED OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPACT, CONNECT, AND GROW IN OUR COMMUNITIES. WE DON'T ALWAYS FEEL THAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE ACCESSIBLE OR AVAILABLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

ISSUE C: MANY COMMUNITIES LACK ADEQUATE/NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE LIKE ROADS AND LIGHTS. THIS LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE NEGATIVELY IMPACTS QUALITY OF LIFE.

We want:

- Billboards and advertising that endorse a healthy lifestyle
- Access to affordable and healthy food options
- Fitness facilities and green spaces (parks, trails, bike lanes, etc.)
- Systems/committees that address street lights, adequate roads, abandoned and burned down houses and buildings
- Engaged and equitable emergency systems (police, fire, and ambulance)
- Opportunities that meet the needs of youth and that are affordable



- Reliable and accessible transportation across the Metro Detroit area

What does this mean and why does it matter?

A healthy community stimulates healthy development. Healthy development, especially of youth, leads to better outcomes: better health outcomes, better school outcomes, and better life outcomes. We think of healthy communities as communities where all youth have access to healthy and fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables. We think healthy communities are places where there are accessible parks, sports and fitness fields, sidewalks for walking, community gardens, and street lights for safety. In addition to health and safety, we think healthy communities also include opportunities for affordable social activities and reliable transportation for youth.

FOR THE REGION TO THRIVE, POLICY MAKERS NEED TO CARE ABOUT CREATING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES—COMMUNITIES IN WHICH ALL YOUTH CAN THRIVE AND CAN DEVELOP TO THEIR MAXIMUM POTENTIAL.



Unfortunately, we know that not all youth live in healthy communities. Many of us grow up with unequal access to parks, healthy foods, and educational and social activities that enrich our minds. Too many youth experience unsafe neighborhoods that lack basic infrastructure like street lights, sidewalks, and clean streets.

For the region to thrive, policy makers need to care about creating healthy communities—communities in which all youth can thrive and can develop to their maximum potential. To do this, policy makers should focus on basic issues such as safety and infrastructure, health and well-being, and transportation and accessibility to opportunities.

What does the data say?

Access to Safe and Healthy Communities

- 82.1% of youth indicated that “safety” is an issue in the Detroit metropolitan region
- 93% of all respondents agreed that all youth deserve to live in neighborhoods that are safe and vibrant
- When asked what an excellent metro area would include 78.5% of respondents indicated that it would include “All communities/neighborhoods (would be) safe”
- Over 1/4 of youth who responded said that they do not have access to healthy and affordable foods on a regular basis

46.5% OF YOUTH SURVEYED AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED WITH THE STATEMENT “ISSUES WITH TRANSPORTATION LIMIT MY ABILITY TO DO THE THINGS I WANT OR NEED TO DO.”

- 82.9% of youth surveyed indicated that “health” is an issue in the Detroit metropolitan region
- “I would tell the mayor – have more community events to help people clean the streets and knock down abandoned houses and build new ones.”
- (Issues we face) Abandoned buildings, lack of street lights, stray dogs

Reliable and Accessible Transportation across the Region

- 92.7% of youth surveyed agreed with the statement “All youth deserve to have access to transportation that is safe, affordable and easily accessible”
- 46.5% of youth surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Issues with transportation limit my ability to do the things I want or need to do.”

93% OF ALL RESPONDENTS AGREED THAT ALL YOUTH DESERVE TO LIVE IN NEIGHBORHOODS THAT ARE SAFE AND VIBRANT.



91.5% OF YOUTH SURVEYED AGREED WITH THE STATEMENT “ALL YOUTH DESERVE TO HAVE ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES THAT EXPOSE THEM TO NEW AND CHALLENGING EXPERIENCES.”

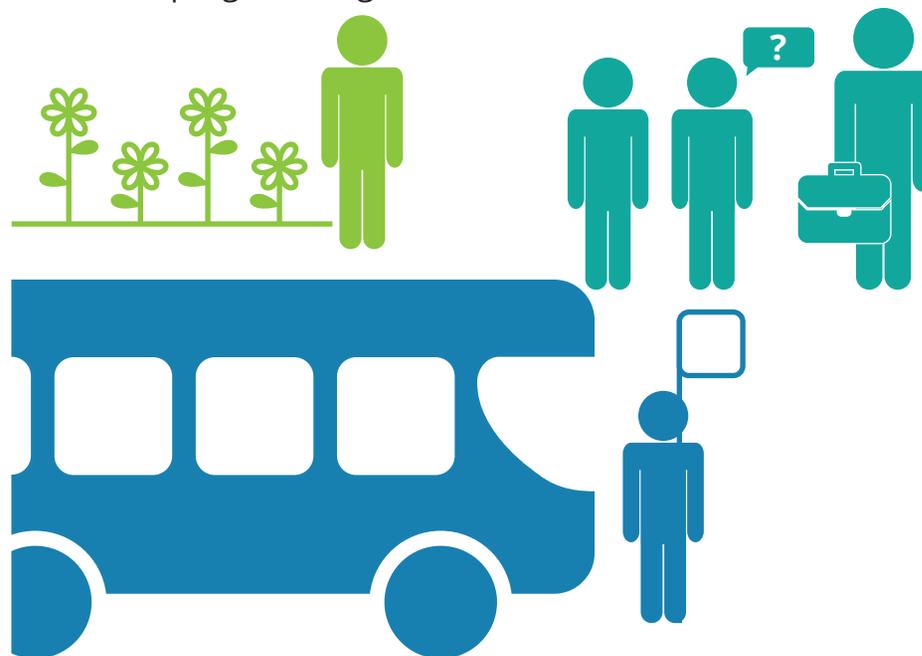
Opportunities for all to grow and thrive in the Region

- 77.3% of youth indicated that “Recreation spaces in all communities/neighborhoods (ex. parks)” would be included in an excellent metropolitan region
- 91.5% of youth surveyed agreed with the statement “All youth deserve to have access to opportunities that expose them to new and challenging experiences.”
- “(We) Want to form many initiatives in the community, but aren’t many resources”
- “More activity centers. I know a decent number of community centers but they’re all about graphic design and computers... And if you want more teens to come you need to appeal to them... have sports, dance, arts...”
- “More places for young to hang out, bring everything back to the city. People can’t get to places...”
- There are some opportunities to get out of the community- but not enough and not advertised
- More activities for teens, competitions, need resources, community centers, transportation, share cross community experiences

Specific Recommendations

- Encourage student groups to work with community leaders to clean up and regulate green spaces that are accessible to the whole community
- Have city council (and similar groups) create youth committees focused on acquiring healthy vending machines for city buildings (i.e. libraries, community centers, etc.)
- Bring health professionals to schools to speak to youth

- Allocate funding for youth and community leaders to start and continue community gardens
- Fund “clean up” events
- Encourage communities to hold police officer evaluations that would include things like response times, dedication, demeanor, attending community relations meetings, etc.
- Allocate funding for programs that provide healthy and educational opportunities for youth
- Utilize funds to award stipends to youth to increase participation in programs
- Hire translators for students with language barriers to help increase their participation
- Provide bus passes, or other forms of affordable, reliable, and safe transportation, for youth to attend programming



FINDING 4: MEDIA AND SEGREGATION IMPACTS INTERACTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF OUR DIVERSITY

THE ISSUES

ISSUE A: MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS AND STEREOTYPES OF DIFFERENT GROUPS ARE VERY PRESENT AND ARE VERY DAMAGING.

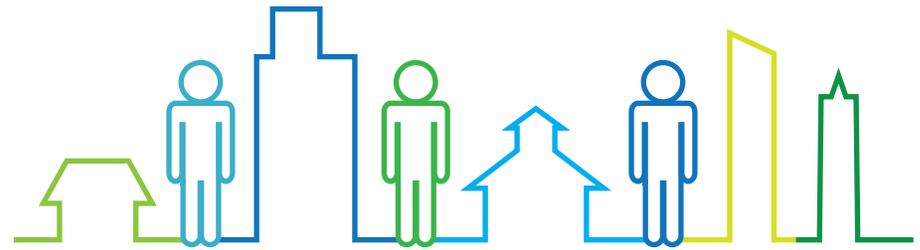
ISSUE B: COMMUNITIES ARE DIVERSE BUT SEGREGATED AND SEGREGATION LIMITS OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO INTERACT ACROSS DIFFERENCES.

We want:

- To produce and disseminate our own narratives
- Individuals and groups in media to be educated on the diversity of peoples' experiences
- To understand ourselves and communities and how this impacts how we interact with others
- More programs that give youth opportunities to come together

What does this mean and why does it matter?

Metropolitan Detroit is arguably one of the most segregated metropolitan regions in the United States. A history of racial tension and racism has led to segregated communities and neighborhoods. Many of us grow up in the region with few substantive relationships with people who are different than ourselves.



We know that we lose a lot by not having opportunities to interact across differences—and that we would all benefit from a diverse metropolitan region, a region in which people can engage across differences and across communities. A region where schools focus on diversity and provided opportunities to celebrate and learn from each other's backgrounds.

One component to examining the impact of segregation is exploring the role of the media. The media is a powerful institution in our region. It is through the media (including newspapers, television, radio, internet) that we learn about our region and what is happening within it. While these sources can be a tool to create positive stories about the region, too often they promote and reinforce stereotypes about groups of people and about communities. The media's power is impacted by segregation—it can shape people's perspectives and can lead to further separation out of misunderstanding.

For our region, we feel that there must be new opportunities for education, for learning about each other, and for opportunities to interact across difference. We want the media to be an outlet for sharing positive stories about communities and enabling youth to tell their own story. We want a region in which media could help bring people together rather than continue to divide us.

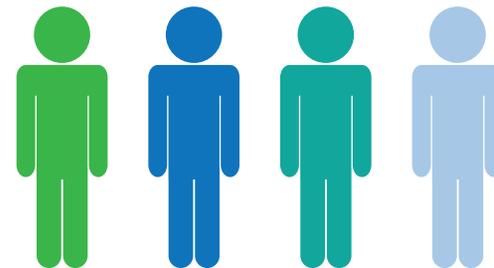
What does the data say?

- 79.6% of youth surveyed agreed with the statement “All youth deserve the opportunity to interact with people who are different from themselves.”
- 76.2% of youth said that “diversity” is an issue in the Detroit metropolitan area
- 68.1% of youth said that their ideal school would include “A diverse student body”
- 73.9% of respondents indicated that an excellent Metro area would include “Collaboration among city and suburban communities.”
- 74.5% of respondents indicated that an excellent Metro area would include “Opportunities to engage with people who are different (culturally, racially, socioeconomically).”
- “People outside of Detroit say negative things because the media is only focusing on negative things.”
- “When you tell people good things about Detroit, they’re often surprised.”
- “(We) Want to change outside view of Detroit by meeting others.”
- “(We need to) change (the) media’s view.”
- “The perfect school would not be segregated.”
- “(Our community is) Diverse but segregated, segregation gets in the way of opportunities.”
- “I go to an all Hispanic school and I want to know more about others.”
- “(Our community is) Diverse but segregated, want to meet people from different places.”

Specific Recommendations

- Fund and promote programs that bring different racial/ethnic groups together
- Host cultural days at schools and community centers
- Allocate a certain percentage or number of stories in the media to positive representations of Detroit
- Dedicate a certain percentage or number of stories to showing a variety of ethnic/racial groups participating in positive community events
- Hold media literacy classes

**THE MEDIA’S POWER IS IMPACTED BY SEGREGATION
—IT CAN SHAPE PEOPLE’S PERSPECTIVES AND CAN
LEAD TO FURTHER SEPARATION OUT OF
MISUNDERSTANDING.**



**79.6% OF YOUTH SURVEYED AGREED WITH THE
STATEMENT “ALL YOUTH DESERVE THE
OPPORTUNITY TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE WHO
ARE DIFFERENT FROM THEMSELVES.”**

OUR VISION FOR THE REGION

In closing, we think that youth know what is going on in their communities and that they have great ideas for solutions. Youth want youth to be engaged in their communities and to be supported by adults in their efforts. Youth want more equity, increased engagement, and higher expectations in all schools. Youth want communities that are healthy for everyone. Youth also want communities that have positive media messages surrounding difference and diversity and youth want communities and schools that are less segregated.

What we learned about the region...

- We are more alike than different
- Education was a huge area of importance to youth
- We have the same vision and we want the best for others and ourselves
- Voices are expressed through schools—young people need and want to be heard
- Cool to see that no matter where we are from, we all have similar hopes and dreams—manifested in different ways—but still the same



GOING FORWARD WE HOPE THAT MORE YOUNG PEOPLE WILL STEP FORWARD TO SHARE THEIR VOICES WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS BOTH IN CALLING OUT ISSUES AND IN CREATING SOLUTIONS.

In taking the survey and attending focus groups, youth across the regions shared their thoughts with us. Going forward we hope that more young people will step forward to share their voices with their communities and schools both in calling out issues and in creating solutions. We hope that adults will encourage them, support them, and listen to them.

What we hope youth will do with this information....

- Feel empowered
- Continue to advocate for their ideas
- Advocate for change and for having a voice
- Contact resources and policy makers
- Get involved
- See that other youth have done something, be inspired and take the next steps
- Give feedback to our report, and give their ideas for change

What we hope adults will do with this information....

- Involve youth more
- Make a genuine effort to listen to youth
- Look to create and maintain relationships with youth to work together and do good things
- See that young people can voice their ideas and have them be taken seriously
- See that adults do this too!
- See our hard work and dedication
- Trust us and all youth



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