

National School-Based Health Care Conference 2024

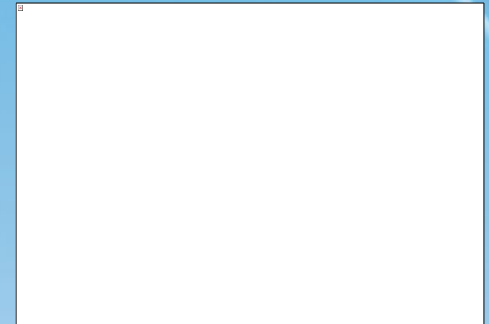
# Empowering Students through Health-Focused Youth Advisory Councils (YACs)

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## CME and CE Information

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- Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR)

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# Introductions

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Advancing Evidence.  
Improving Lives.

# Background

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# Purpose of CDC DASH Youth Empowerment Project

Deepen understanding of best practices for youth empowerment





# What is a Youth Advisory Council?

*A **youth advisory council** is a body of diverse youth who vocalize the health needs of adolescents and who are engaged in planning and implementing projects to address structural barriers to adolescent health in their schools and communities.*



# How Do Youth Advisory Councils Balance Youth Leadership With Support?

Balancing adult support with youth leadership can be hard. It takes **practice**. It takes **relationship building**. Adults should listen to and respect young people's role in making decisions. Adults also must understand that youth need ongoing support.





# Potential YAC Project Topics

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Mental health

Reducing HIV and STD infection

Decreasing risky sexual behavior

Substance use

Creating safe spaces for youth

Sexual identity

Physical and sexual violence

Increasing condom usage

Pregnancy prevention

Health equity

Social justice



# Focus for Youth Advisory Councils

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YACs might focus, for example, on preventing drug abuse, improving mental health, or decreasing sexual health risks.

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YACs could focus on creating safe spaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ+) youth, students with disabilities, and other youth within a specific school district.

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YACs focused on decreasing the sexual health risks of students could inform education programs and counseling, testing, or treatment services for students.

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Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yac/>

# Small Group Activity

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How has your district and/or community engaged youth in decision-making or policy-making or program improvement?





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# YACs in Action

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# CDC DASH Youth Empowerment Project Sites

## Year I – 2021-2022

- Genesee Independent School District Consortium (MI)
- Chicago Public Schools (IL)

## Year II – 2022-2023

- Greene County Schools (AL)
- Corbin Independent School District (KY)
- Spartanburg County School District Consortium (SC)

## Year III – 2023-2024

- City of New York, Board of Education (NY)
- Pagosa Springs High School (CO)
- Uniondale School District (NY)

# Transgender Student Rights

## Pronoun and Name Changes

You can change your name and pronouns in your email, in ASPEN, and on attendance sheets. The changes will also appear on the parent portal.

## Steps on how to do this

- Go to a social worker
- Go to a counselor
- Go to a trusted teacher
- Go to your GSA/LGBTQ+ club (if one exists) and talk to the adult watching over

## Restroom and Locker Room Spaces

All students can use any restroom and locker room that corresponds with their gender identity. **NO** student can be forced to use a restroom or locker room because of their identity.

## Dress Code

Every student has the right to dress in a manner consistent with their gender identity or gender expression within the constraints of the dress codes adopted for all students at their schools.

## Gender-Neutral Facilities

### Steps on how to help or advocate

- **If you don't have a gender-neutral facility:**
  - Talk to a student rep, student voice club, or a GSA/LGBTQ+ club
  - Talk to a supportive adult at school
- **If you have gender-neutral facilities:**
  - Let students know they have this option
  - Let the locations be known
  - Make a map and post it at school

This poster was designed by the 2022 Health & Wellness Youth Advisory Council

## Scan for Resources:



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**HEALTHY CPS**  
— OFFICE OF STUDENT HEALTH & WELLNESS —



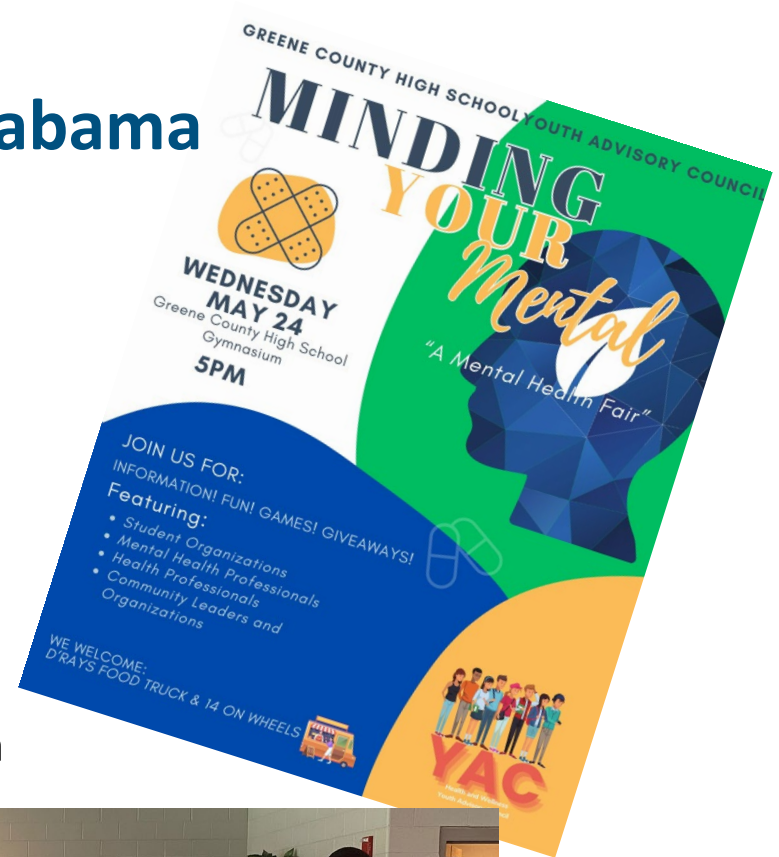
# Chicago Public Schools

- 4 Small Group Topics:
  - LGBTQ+ Support
  - Mental Health Awareness
  - Sexual Health: Youth Rights
  - Gardening as health promotion
- Final Projects:
  - Student-made video on school gardens
  - Student-designed poster campaigns



# Greene County Schools (GCS), Alabama

- **Site Context** – One high school with approximately 300 students
- **YAC Membership** – 15 students: freshmen through juniors
- **Final Project** – *Minding Your Mental* community project focused on mental health



Images courtesy of GSC

# Spartanburg County School District (SCSD) Consortium, South Carolina



Images courtesy of SCSD

- **Site Context** – Partnership between Connect Spartanburg (community foundation) and a consortium of 5 school districts comprising a Community Advisory Board
- **YAC Membership** – 19 Youth Ambassadors from multiple districts: freshmen through seniors
- **Final Projects** – *National Adolescent Health Month* social media campaign, *You Day* celebration, *Frozen Youth Summit*, and *Photovoice* visual art project



# Uniondale Union Free School District, New York

- **Site Context** – One high school with approximately 2,000 students
- **YAC Membership** – 15 students: freshmen through juniors
- **Final Project** – School-wide Social Emotional Learning (SEL) day



Image courtesy of Kathy Terry



# Group Brainstorming

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- What are some areas in your district or community that need student voice to effect change?
- What supports do you think you need to start a YAC in your district or community?



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Improving Lives.

# Lessons Learned

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# Process Evaluation

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- YAC Planning
- YAC Recruitment
- Shared Leadership
- Impact on YAC Members
- Impact on School District
- Sustainability of YAC





# Data Collection Methods

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- Key informant interviews with district liaisons
- Focus groups with youth YAC members
- Content analysis of meeting notes/transcripts



# Lessons Learned for Site Implementation

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## Orientation & Context

- Consortia need to secure buy-in from multiple districts
- Adults and students alike are learning how the district/consortia works

## YAC Planning

- Staffing is critical
- Bureaucracy affects planning
- Planning takes time
- Determining how much to compensate youth can be challenging



# Lessons Learned for Site Implementation

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## Youth Recruitment, Selection, & Onboarding

- Use different methods to reach a broad, diverse group of youth
- Support students with the onboarding process
- Team building is critical for YAC members
- Share the district's decision-making processes





# Lessons Learned for Site Implementation

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## Project Planning & Implementation

- Adults and students are learning how to share power
- Adults and youth alike need skills to use data
- Frequent meetings may be needed
- Disempowered adults cannot empower young people

## Sustainability Planning

- Sustainability needs to be planned from the beginning
- YAC  $\neq$  a program

# Lessons Learned for Technical Assistance (TA)

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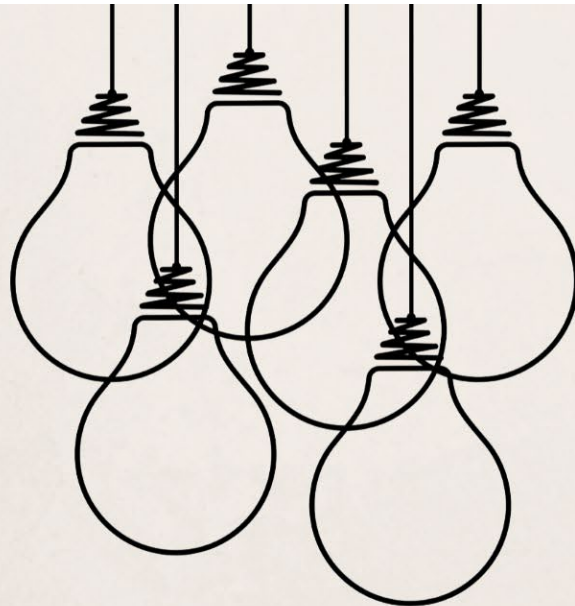
- Understanding site context is essential for all aspects of YAC planning and implementation
- Sites can have strengths with programming and weaknesses with partnerships
- Internal dynamics affect communication and implementation of TA
- TA sessions can be used to help sites get on the balcony, share information, reflect, and strategize



# Lessons Learned for Technical Assistance (TA)

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- Timing of site visit depends on the readiness of the site
- Sites need a continuous stream of funding to support sustainability





# Web Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yac/>

## Youth voices can make a difference.



Youth can work with supportive adults to improve schools and communities. Youth advisory councils (YACs)—sometimes called youth advisory boards—allow youth and adults to make decisions together and have a positive influence on others.



Youth Advisory Councils Structure



Using Data to Make Decisions



Youth Advisory Councils Action Plans

# Q & A

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# Contact Information

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