

from page to stage to screen and beyond

part 1: a behind-the-scenes evaluation preview of chicago youth media organizations

abstract: A group of Chicago youth media organizations have embarked on an evaluation process with adult program alumni to assess the degree to which hands-on media production and dissemination contributes to developing productive, independent, and engaged citizens. This report sets the stage for the evaluation, which began in late 2012 and will run through 2013, highlighting the work of youth media organizations in Chicago and exploring six dimensions, or outcome areas, that youth media organizations work within: journalism skills, news/media literacy, civic engagement, career development, youth development, and youth expression.



social IMPACT research center

november 2012



acknowledgments

Our enormous thanks to the executive directors and staff who spoke passionately about their organizations' history, mission, and program details, and to the youth who graciously shared their multimedia creations with us and provided a unique perspective on youth media programs.

paper information

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation supports the Social IMPACT Research Center's evaluation work with the Chicago Youth Voices Network.

authors: Suniya Farooqui and Amy Terpstra, Social IMPACT Research Center

The Social IMPACT Research Center (IMPACT) is a nonprofit organization that investigates today's most pressing social issues and solutions to inform and equip those working toward a just global society. IMPACT, a program of Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights, provides research, policy analysis, consulting, technical assistance, communications, and coalition building to projects in Illinois, the Midwest, and nationally. Visit www.heartlandalliance.org/research to learn more.

33 W. Grand Avenue, Suite 500 | Chicago, IL 60654 | 312.870.4949 | research@heartlandalliance.org

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SOCIAL IMPACT
RESEARCH CENTER

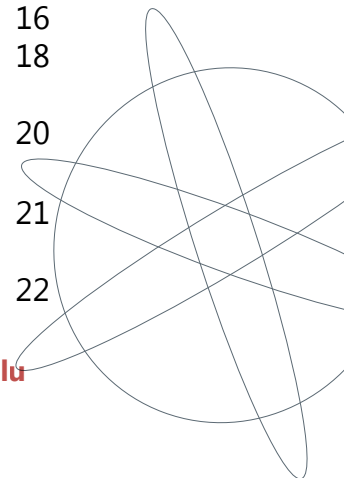
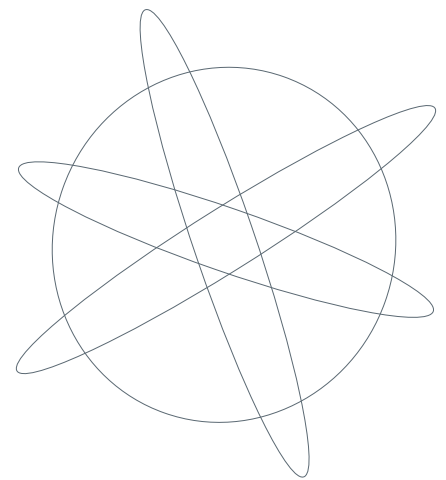


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click on *red text throughout the report* to access related online material





prologue this story of youth media is for you



If you work in news content or media production and are looking for opportunities to give back or for organizations with pools of talented young people...

If you are an educator who seeks to better incorporate media and technology into your school or classroom...

If you are a funder or decision-maker looking for promising approaches for working with youth...

...then this story of youth media is for you

Youth media is an approach for engaging youth in hands-on learning through media production and dissemination that imparts what it means to be productive, informed, and engaged citizens of this world.¹

An impressive cadre of organizations are engaged in youth media work in Chicago. They run the gamut from long-standing to start ups, from far-reaching to very targeted, from multi-programmed to single-focus.

Fourteen of these organizations are characters in this story of Chicago youth media. Twelve of the 14 are part of a learning community called the **Chicago Youth Voices Network** (CYVN), and two are close collaborators of the Network. The CYVN, with **The Robert R. McCormick Foundation's** backing, has embarked on an evaluation process that seeks to illuminate the longer-range impact of youth media programs on the young people who participate.

This story of Chicago youth media will be told in two parts: Part 1—this report—is a pre-evaluation look at what these organizations do and the promise youth media programming holds for impacting youth in positive and lasting ways. The story is couched in the challenges Chicago youth face and the evolution of youth media work in Chicago. It was informed by in-depth conversations with the 14 organizations and other major players in the Chicago youth media sector.

Part 2 will focus on the evaluation and its findings. The evaluation will begin in the fall of 2012 and run through 2013. Nine of the 14 organizations featured in this report will participate. The evaluation will engage program alumni

to help answer some pressing questions posed by the characters in this story and by others looking to youth media as a potential replicable and scalable approach for responding to youth's social, emotional, and developmental needs:

- * How does journalism instruction and news and media literacy training impact critical thinking, communication skills, and valuing of First Amendment rights?
- * How do the hard and soft skills youth learn through youth media programs translate into other areas of their lives outside and beyond the program?
- * Are those who participate in youth media programs more civically engaged in young adulthood than they would be otherwise?
- * What do youth media programs accomplish along dimensions of youth development, including confidence, self-efficacy, having healthy relationships with peers and adults, sense of belonging, and ability to express oneself?
- * Where do youth media organizations fit on a young person's life trajectory and into the other forces at play for transforming youth's lives?
- * How do outcomes for youth differ based on program differences such as level of participation/engagement?

This story and the upcoming evaluation are based on the hopes these organizations hold for their youth participants' success. Through snapshots of their programming and through the voices of individuals who run the programs, the youth who participate, and Chicago youth media's supporters, it is our hope that this story will illuminate what youth media organizations in Chicago do and in what ways they expose youth to new life paths and opportunities.



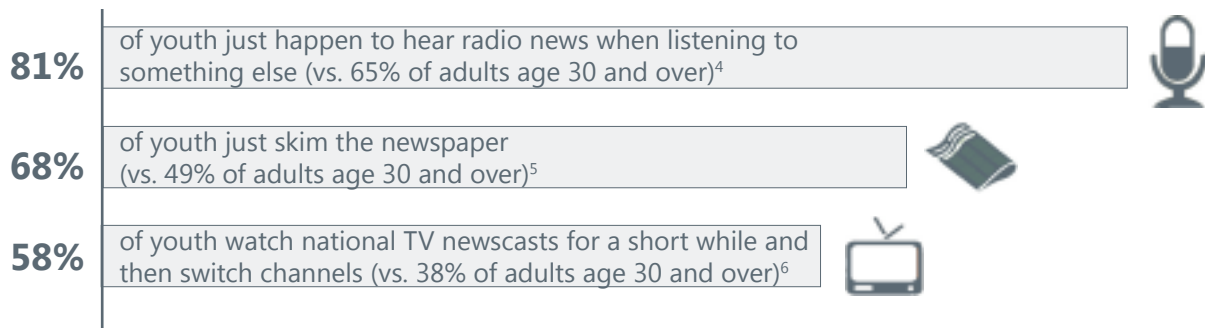
spotlight challenges facing chicago youth

Youth are coming of age in a fast-moving, dynamic digital information age:

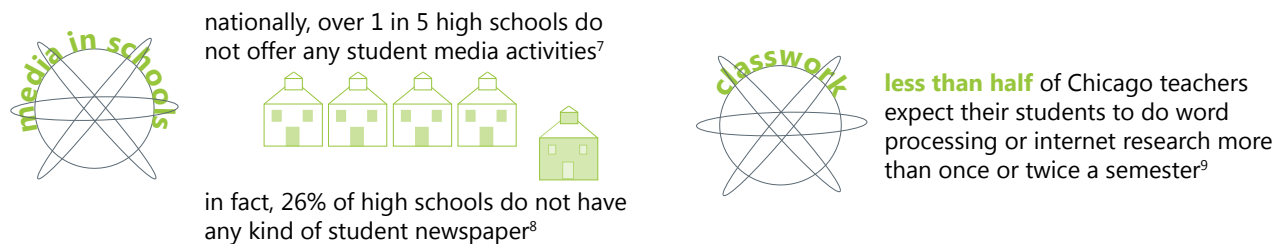
Youth are big information consumers. 8- to 18-year-olds spend more time with media—television, movies, video games, music, computers, newspapers, magazines, and books—than any other activity, an average of **7 ½ hours a day**, seven days a week.²

New media tools are sprouting up every day. For example, **more than 300,000 mobile applications** were launched from 2008 to 2010.³ The advent of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and countless online news forums and blogs leads to hosts of new challenges for news producers and consumers.

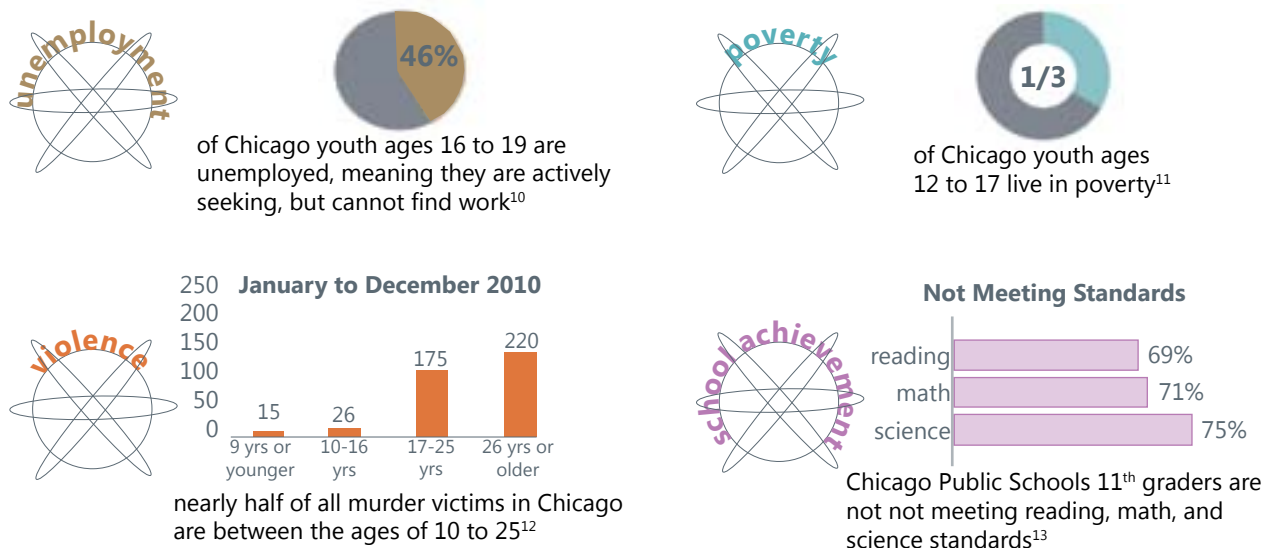
Limited time and seemingly unlimited options and access points to information can lead to quick reads and cursory attention instead of thorough, thoughtful consideration of the information:



Youth increasingly learn by interacting and engaging with multimedia and need to learn how to thoughtfully consume information. Schools find it difficult to integrate technology into their curriculum when resources are so limited:



Many Chicago youth face a variety of obstacles by virtue of growing up in communities with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and violence and with failing or under-resourced schools:





setting youth media takes root and grows



The desire to engage youth in safe and productive activities converged with changes in the media and education landscapes, and a creative approach that combines cross-cutting solutions emerged:

/youth media programs/ organizations whose focus is on teaching youth how to conceive, develop, produce, disseminate, and consume multi-media content and products

Youth media programs engage and interact with youth through hands-on production of media. Youth are encouraged to share and to tell their story through media to diverse audiences while learning different ways in which information can be interpreted and distributed. Youth media organizations stress the importance of credible information, teach youth how to distinguish spin from news, and emphasize the role of media in a democracy. Youth media organizations work with youth from marginalized communities, reaching into low-performing schools and low-income communities to expand opportunity.

changing context provides fertile ground

Youth media can be traced back to the first half of the 1900s, but it really took root in the 1960s and 1970s when people were mobilizing in protest to what they viewed as the mainstream media's biased coverage and exclusion of their political and social activism.¹⁴ To provide an alternative voice, socially-conscious journalists and media professionals

launched underground, independent newspapers, public access television and radio, and community media.¹⁵ These avenues provided an alternate journalism space that was more receptive to youth involvement than mainstream media at the time.

Meanwhile, rapidly changing technology—including portable video cameras—made media production far more accessible to far more people. It became more feasible that young people could relatively easily create and distribute documentaries, films, and public service announcements.¹⁶ Additional technological innovations in the 1990s and the availability of relatively inexpensive production equipment continued to fuel the growth of youth media programs.

Yet a competing trend began in the 1970s as many financially strapped schools began eliminating their arts programs including journalism. The school finance reforms of the 1980s exacerbated budget problems leading to further closures of school newspapers and arts departments, a trend that has continued in Chicago to this day.¹⁷

As evidence of cuts to school journalism programs emerged, the Robert F. Kennedy Foundation's Commission of Inquiry launched an investigation in 1974 into the state of high school journalism in America. The Commission found that high school journalism was generally accorded low priority, was subject to routine censorship, and that students of racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds had particularly low access to high school journalism.¹⁸

Connie Yowell / Director of Education,
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Media is a means for young people to develop skills and dispositions that will prepare them for citizenship and the workplace.

Warren Littlejohn / Youth Participant,
True Star Foundation

I know I don't have to turn to the streets. There are many kids that want to do stuff but they can't because they don't know about the programs or they don't have rides. When you have nothing to do the first thing you do is go outside into the streets.

Nikki Will Stein / Executive Director,
Polk Bros. Foundation

We value programs that help youth to develop their media-making skills and communicate the stories they want to tell. We also understand that youth are often visual learners, and film is an immediate and powerful force in their lives. We support media programs that engage their imagination, respect their intelligence, counter false minority representation in the media, and awaken their compassion and critical thinking.

Mindy Faber / Founder,
Open Youth Networks

Youth media organizations put youth back in control of how they are learning.

Ngoan Le / Vice President,
The Chicago Community Trust

The Trust recognizes the importance of having media led by and for youth so that the voices and perspectives of the young people in the Chicago region are represented in the public conversations about issues important to our communities. We are pleased to have been able to support youth media and are impressed with what this sector has accomplished.

youth media takes root and grows in chicago

In many ways, the Commission was the catalyst for dedicated youth journalism and ultimately youth media programs in Chicago. Its findings inspired Chicagoan Sister Ann Heintz to action, and she founded Youth Communication Chicago in 1976.¹⁹ The program brought together high school students from across Chicago to write, edit, and publish the news magazine *New Expression*, 70,000 copies of which were distributed monthly to Chicago Public Schools.²⁰

Sister Heintz's passion for youth journalism and expression proved contagious. Over the next several decades, more youth-dedicated journalism programs began sprouting up across Chicago, and as technology evolved many programs took a broader media approach.

By the mid-2000s, youth media in Chicago began to truly take shape as a recognized, impactful, and multi-dimensional force for change in the lives of youth and their communities. In 2006, the McCormick Foundation made its first youth media grant and by 2012 had invested more than \$4 million in the sector and in capacity building efforts. Yet many organizations remained small community-based organizations that lacked networks to share best practices and collaborate on projects. They often worked in relative isolation, engaging mostly with their local communities and schools.

The organizations and their supporters—including Chicago media professionals, artists, and funders—recognized this. In 2007, they combined forces to found the **Chicago Youth Voices Network** (CYVN) as a space to convene and intentionally collaborate, share ideas, troubleshoot challenges, and engage in mutually beneficial field-building activities.

The CYVN has met regularly since its inception. Currently at 12 member organizations, the Network has grown into an engaged learning community that works together to cultivate and strengthen the field of youth media by:

- ✧ Learning and sharing best practices in media literacy, pedagogy, and organizational management
- ✧ Building relationships and collaborating on projects that promote and disseminate the important voice of youth
- ✧ Building strategic partnerships with key allies, locally and nationally

Over the years, the CYVN has taken on collaborative projects to demonstrate the important contributions youth media makes and has hosted joint events to promote the field and foster champions for youth media (see spotlight on page 5). The upcoming evaluation to assess youth media programs' lasting impact on youth into young adulthood is the latest of the group's collaborative efforts and the next chapter in their story.



spotlight the chicago youth voices network

The CYVN members and its friends and supporters collaborate on mutually beneficial field-building projects. Here are three examples of ambitious CYVN collaborations.

Youth @ the Core

Many CYVN members offer professional development and training sessions to Chicago Public School teachers. The CYVN, with support from the Chicago Instructional Technology Foundation and consultant services, launched **Youth @ the Core** to capitalize on the talent behind these individual organization efforts. Youth @ the Core provides teachers with lesson plans, developed by the CYVN and aligned with Common Core Standards, for middle and high school students that integrate youth-based issues and media with school curriculums. The lessons include media production components that teachers can include if they are interested in increasing technology use in the classroom. All lesson plans are accessible online.

NUF SAID

The **NUF SAID** project involved youth from across the various CYVN organizations to research and produce media addressing how crime, education, employment, health/environment, and housing issues affect Chicago youth. Youth collected data on these issues from peer-to-peer-online polling, social media tools, and interviews. Youth shared the findings from each of the five issue areas through a variety of multimedia projects. The Chicago Community Trust, the Rappaport Family Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and IssueLab supported or worked on this project in various ways. All of the projects are accessible online.

The Power of Youth Voice

At the CYVN's **The Power of Youth Voice** event in January 2012, civic, education, and corporate leaders had the opportunity to see youth media firsthand. Youth from various CYVN organizations shared their media creations, poetry, and opinions with Chicago's movers and shakers. During a youth panel discussion led by NBC 5 Chicago's Carol Marin, current participants and alumni of CYVN organizations shared their experience with youth media organizations and their views on journalism. The Chicago Community Trust, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Polk Bros. Foundation, and NBC 5 supported the event. Segments from the event are posted **online**, as is a **motion infographic** created to showcase the CYVN.





plot what chicago youth media organizations do and why



The organizations in the CYVN seek to equip youth with the opportunities, supports, skills, and vision they will need to succeed as productive, informed, and engaged members of society.²¹

how do they accomplish this?

Youth media organizations use multimedia production and freedom of expression as the hook and reel to engage youth. Youth know from talking to each other that by signing up for a youth media program they will get to use different media equipment and production software, or they will have the space to produce media or write and perform poetry, stories, and music.

Chicago youth media programs operate in a variety of settings where youth naturally are or want to be and at various times throughout the week and year. Some organizations have agreements with public schools or alternative schools to teach a credit course. Some provide professional development and lesson plan to support Chicago Public School teachers looking to integrate media into their classrooms. Others run afterschool programs on school grounds. Still others run out-of-school programs at various community sites. Many do a combination of these things.

No matter the setting, the programs have structured courses and curricula to guide each session. They also frequently recruit journalists and media arts professionals to teach youth journalism or other skills as either guest instructors or mentors. Sessions often include demonstrations of why news matters, how to use equipment, topical brainstorming about issues impacting their community, writing workshops, online exercises designed to develop news and digital literacy skills, field trips, and a wide variety of other activities. This experiential

learning is in stark contrast to many youths' experiences in the traditional school classroom.

Sessions last anywhere from a few hours to an entire school year, leading to youth being engaged at a number of different levels depending on the degree of their participation (figure 1). Often, youth come back and take other sessions after completing their first session, further deepening their skills and knowledge. Some even decide that they want to pursue futures in journalism, media production, or the arts and take the next step of becoming apprentices, mentors, and instructors. Chicago youth media organizations recognize that no level of participation is too small and value what youth get from their involvement at each level.

After production, dissemination is the logical next step in giving youth a vehicle for self-expression and for encouraging community investment. In this spirit, most organizations use social media such as Facebook and YouTube to disseminate the youths' creations. Some hold events like screenings and open mic nights and even submit pieces to local and national contests, and some telecast work on community access television outlets. A few organizations run publications so they have a ready vehicle for promoting youth work.

An added bonus? Youth often receive payment or stipends for their work. In addition to providing much needed income for many youth who come from low-income communities, this exchange of work for a paycheck provides real-life experience that introduces youth to the responsibilities of being a reliable worker—while still in a nurturing, flexible, teaching environment.

vital stats of the 14 youth media organizations in this story, 2010-2011 school year and 2011 summer²²

vital stats of each individual organization are highlighted beginning on page 22

* \$16,046,356 combined budgets, representing support from funders in the journalism, arts, education, youth development, civic engagement, news and media literacy, career development, and broadcast journalism arenas	* 53: number of local middle schools that host their programming
* 13,089: number of youth engaged in these programs annually ²³	* 22: number of elementary schools around Chicago that host their programming
* 5 to 24: age range covered by these youth media programs	* 20: number of community-based organizations that host their programming
* 207: number of Chicago-area high schools that host their programming ²⁴	* 5: newspapers and magazines produced and distributed
	* 4: television shows produced and aired
	* 2: radio programs produced and aired

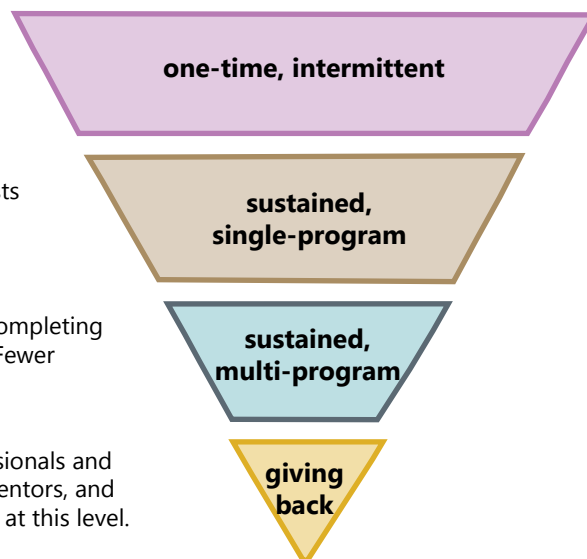
figure 1: levels of participation in youth media programs

one-time, intermittently engaged: youth the program reaches as an audience member, for a short workshop, for drop-in events, and other such “low-touch” activities. The largest number of youth participate at this level.

sustained, single-program engaged: youth involved in a program that lasts at least a few hours a week for a number of weeks. For youth who officially enroll in or take a program, this is the most common level of participation.

sustained, multi-program engaged: youth who come back after completing one program to take others and/or who come back year after year. Fewer youth participate at this level of engagement.

giving back: youth with high potential to become professionals and leaders in a related field and who become role models, mentors, and instructors in the program. The fewest youth are engaged at this level.



why do they do this?

Chicago youth media organizations are committed to this work because they see such promise in an approach that weaves together many different threads and as a result touches many areas of a youth’s life—social, emotional, mental, and developmental. They hope to impart change along six different dimensions or outcome areas:²⁵

journalism skills: youth learn basic journalistic skills, including researching, interviewing, and writing, and gain an appreciation for the function of media in a democracy.

news and media literacy: youth become more news and media literate, learn to discern news from sensationalism, and gain hands-on experience using technology to access information.

civic engagement: youth use different media platforms to express their views on issues that matter to them, share their personal experiences, become more aware of community and social justice issues, and engage in political discourse.

youth development: youth have a safe haven for self-discovery. As youth work in groups to translate ideas into media presentations, they develop the confidence to question their prejudices and beliefs and experience a sense of belonging as a member of a group and an organization.

career development: youth not only gain technical expertise but they also acquire soft skills that transcend the fields of journalism and media arts production. Youth learn effective basic communication and critical thinking skills and become stronger readers and writers.

youth expression: youth learn about the arts and avenues for telling stories about the issues that affect them, their peers, and their communities.

While any given organization may emphasize one particular area more than others, each of the organizations do touch on all of these areas, and one would be hard pressed to find other youth-serving entities with programming aimed at such diverse areas of a young person’s life. We explore each of these outcome areas in turn in the following pages.



/journalism skills/

the ability to present and disseminate information and news through research and investigative reporting

La Risa Lynch / Instructor,
North Lawndale Community News

Youth are an alternative voice to what's out there.

Brenda Butler / Executive Director,
Columbia Links

We aim to turn the classroom into a newsroom.

Frank Whittaker / Station Manager and Vice President of News,
NBC 5 Chicago

By supporting youth media and listening to the youth of Chicago tell their stories, we are able to do a better job covering our city.

Antonia Thomas / Youth Reporter,
North Lawndale Community News

I try to present a balanced view, but it can be difficult.

For many youth media organizations in Chicago, journalistic inquiry and exploration is the cornerstone of their programming. Through a combination of news literacy lessons, workshops with journalism professionals, and hands-on production experiences, youth learn basic journalistic skills, including reporting, writing, editing, using primary and secondary sources, interviewing, and composition. They learn how to present multiple facets of a story with supporting evidence.

Chicago youth media organizations hope that the journalism focus equips youth who see journalism as a career path with the skills to move down that path and helps them foster connections in the field. For all youth—whether future journalists or not—the focus on journalism creates stronger writers, more confident communicators, and more discerning news consumers.

evaluation questions about youth media programs' focus on journalism skills

- ✧ How does journalism instruction impact young adult's critical thinking, communication skills, and valuing of First Amendment rights?
- ✧ How do journalism skills translate into other areas of youth's lives outside and beyond the program?



examples of how a few chicago youth media organizations address journalism skills

We The People Media's Urban Youth International Journalism Program teaches youth who live in and around public housing basic journalism skills, how to document their lives, and how to critique mainstream media. Two courses form the backbone of this program: J-101, the introductory level course, covers basic reporting skills, interviewing, researching, story composition, and editing, while J-102 teaches youth the function of media in a democracy and gives them intensive hands-on training in advanced writing and broadcast journalism.

After participants complete J-101 they can contribute to the *Residents' Journal*, written for and by current and former Chicago public housing residents, and receive payments for their stories. Youth also have the opportunity to contribute to We The People Media's *RJ TV*, a live call-in television show.

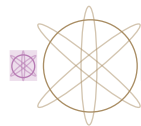
Strategic Human Services publishes *North Lawndale Community News* to link residents of the North Lawndale community to information and resources that can help create a stronger community. In conjunction, Strategic Human Services offers journalism training for youth and the opportunity to submit their stories for publication in the weekly paper as regular articles or sometimes in a special youth edition.

The stories in the youth edition delve into issues that matter to youth, from a youth perspective. In the trainings, youth learn news and media literacy, photography, and basic journalism skills, including writing and research. Participants also go on field trips to media outlets and listen to guest journalist speakers who expose them to different career paths within the media field.

Columbia Links' academies focus on different levels of journalistic skills. The Fall and Summer Academies cover basic reporting, and the Spring Academy focuses on investigative reporting. Each academy is themed, and all academies employ multimedia reporting with videos/photos accompanying stories as well as a webcast and podcasts feature.

Each youth participant works with a mentor to meet the program's expectation that they write a story and create an appropriate multimedia piece to complement it. Professional journalists, professors, and graduate students from Northwestern University and Columbia College's journalism departments and *The Columbia Chronicle*—Columbia College's student newspaper—participate as mentors and lecturers. The mentors edit student writing and assess their news literacy and journalism competence against program goals. Columbia Links' website and its news web casts and podcasts highlight participants' stories, and the program's annual magazine, *R_WURD*, is a compilation of the best stories of the year.

Columbia Links' website also includes journalism lesson plans for high school teachers to use in their own classrooms.



/news and media literacy/

the ability to analyze and evaluate the reliability, credibility, and intent of information produced from different media platforms; to differentiate news from propaganda; to understand the role of media in a democracy and the right of freedom of speech under the First Amendment

Jorge Valdivia / General Manager,
Radio Arte

Media is changing drastically every day.

Darronte Matthews / Youth Participant,
Columbia Links

I didn't want my article to be a research paper, so I went back and interviewed subjects to add a personal touch.

Ethan Michaeli / Executive Director,
We the People Media

Media is everything. Kids need to learn how to control, manage, and respond to media

News consumers today are bombarded with seemingly endless options from which to stay informed of what's happening in the world. Print? Radio? Blogs? Online news digests? Facebook? YouTube? Twitter?

News and media literacy are critical tools for navigating such an information landscape. Both are two sides of the same coin: Being news literate means using critical thinking skills to evaluate the credibility of news sources. Being media literate is about interpreting information through one's own lens and not automatically defaulting to the interpretation of the source.

Chicago youth media organizations see the value of starting young by teaching youth news consumers how to peel away the layers of context surrounding the information they receive. There is a natural fit in learning how to critically think and analyze the intention of the creator, presentation, method of dissemination, evidence, and target audience of the message within the construct of learning how to be a responsible media producer.

evaluation questions about youth media programs' focus on news and media literacy

- ✧ What is the connection between being a media producer and becoming a conscientious news consumer?
- ✧ How long and how well do news and media literacy concepts stick beyond the program?
- ✧ How do levels of news literacy differ among those who were part of a program with a focused news literacy curriculum and those for whom news literacy concepts were imparted more organically through media arts?



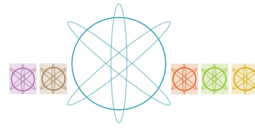
examples of how a few chicago youth media organizations address news and media literacy

The **News Literacy Project** (NLP) developed a curriculum for youth that addresses four questions: Why does news matter? Why is the First Amendment protection of free speech so vital to American democracy? How can students know what to believe? What challenges and opportunities do the Internet and digital media create?

NLP works with educators in Chicago schools to integrate NLP's lesson plans into the teachers' own curriculums, most often in English language arts and social studies classes, with the aim of infusing news literacy into the everyday classroom. Teachers can also add the lesson plans as separate drop-in units. NLP has nurtured a network of volunteer local journalists who guest lecture throughout the lesson series, bringing the subject matter alive. The lesson series is capped with the students producing their own media or multimedia project—a newspaper, audio or video piece, song, rap, or game—and sharing their work on NLP's [blog](#).

Common Sense Media (CSM) brings news and media literacy together with digital literacy, and through its website puts related resources directly into the hands of parents and educators. CSM gives age-based ratings for all forms of media so parents can be equipped to make informed decisions about the media their children consume.

The **Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum** is designed for educators to implement in their classrooms with support from CSM. Through the curriculum's three subjects—Safety and Security, Digital Citizenship, and Research and Information Literacy—students learn how to protect their identities and keep personal information safe, how to recognize and respond to online predators, how to responsibly communicate and represent themselves online to friends and family, and how to conduct online research through different search engines and discern the credibility of cited resources and web sites.



working to make a difference in one's community through both political and non-political involvement and actions

Mike Hawkins / YouMedia Coordinator & Lead Mentor,
Digital Youth Network

It isn't necessary to just engage youth through pop or hip hop, because their neighborhoods and schools mean something to them.

Brittany Douglas / Youth Apprentice,
Community TV Network

The message I want people to take away from my documentaries is that they are not alone in dealing with what you are dealing with because all of us are dealing with the same problems ourselves. We cope in our own ways but that does not mean you should give up so easily.

Peter Adams / Chicago Program Manager,
The News Literacy Project

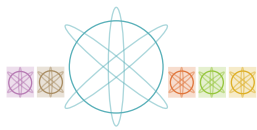
Youth are experts about youth issues; we encourage them to be a source. They know what is important.

Chicago youth media organizations have discovered that while, of course, youth are interested in celebrities, music, fashion, and sports, they can also see themselves as part of a larger social fabric and are deeply concerned with issues impacting their communities. Sometimes the community they are concerned about is their community of place, and the issues they identify as pressing might be related to lack of parks, an overabundance of pollution, or the effects of violence. Other times the community of concern is a community of people, often other youth, and the pressing issues may be related to abusive teen relationships, being accepted as LGBTQ, or teen homelessness.

Youth media organizations give youth a space in which to become more socially aware and to safely explore these issues, and the act of producing media offers a vehicle for expression that many youth lack. In this way, Chicago youth media organizations are trying to foster youth who are engaged in their neighborhoods and society, who care about issues facing their peers, and who are invested in community problem-solving. The aim is to have this connectedness take root in the programs and then grow so that these Chicago youth become civically-engaged adults.

evaluation questions about youth media programs' focus on civic engagement

- * Can involvement in a youth media organization be a stepping-stone for civic engagement in adulthood?
- * For those who do become civically engaged as adults, what does that engagement look like? Is it different than others who did not participate in youth media programs?



examples of how a few chicago youth media organizations address civic engagement

Radio Arte offers a unique blend of bilingual music and news. Latino youth are given the opportunity to express themselves and a platform to discuss issues pertinent to their communities and lives. To participate in Radio Arte's yearlong **radio training program**, youth must be fluent in both Spanish and English.

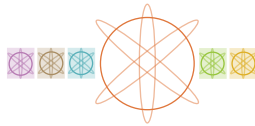
Currently, Radio Arte is evolving into a media center with online-based "radio" programming; its new curriculum will reflect the changing landscape of media and reach wider audiences. As it transitions into Difusión Media, the organization will offer a unique media-training program that uses journalism as a foundation. Difusión Media will work to train and promote the next generation of Latino journalists and media-makers to make a meaningful difference in their communities.

Community TV Network's (CTVN) youth participants are encouraged to use their skills in using cameras and editing software to produce videos placing their personal experiences into a larger context. With this encouragement, not only do youth gain technical expertise, but they also develop an understanding of how their personal stories and struggles reflect greater issues affecting their peers and communities.

Youth get an opportunity to showcase their work on CTVN's television show, **Hard Cover**, which is also youth produced.

Mikva Challenge's programs expose youth to different levels of civic participation. In the **Youth Policy Making** program, youth research, develop, and present policies that affect them and their peers to city and school leaders. Youth in the **Community Problem Solving** program identify issues in their communities and develop and implement action plans on how to resolve these issues. Youth are encouraged to utilize media to bring publicity to issues in their communities and their action plans. Through the **Electoral Participation** program, youth learn about the political process by working on political campaigns, helping with voter registration, and serving as election judges.

Mikva Challenge also offers teachers workshops on how to incorporate their **Action Civics** curriculum into the classrooms. The curriculum provides teachers with tools and strategies on how to encourage civic engagement among students.



/youth development/

to engage in a process of self-growth facilitated by a nurturing environment, resources, and guidance

Jeff McCarter / Founder & Executive Director,

Free Spirit Media

We're able to say to youth that your work matters, your voice matters, you're not just doing this for a grade, not just doing this to entertain your friends, to be in a program or earn a paycheck. You're making meaningful and important media for the real world.

Joe Riina-Ferrie / Teaching Artist,

Community TV Network

Youth media organizations give students opportunities they otherwise wouldn't have, that they should have. They allow kids to engage in a way they are never really asked to do in their public or alternative school lives.

Brittany Douglas / Youth Apprentice,

Community TV Network

We are only together for 4 weeks before we start filming so we don't know each other too well to be comfortable to open up but we force ourselves to open up so we can learn who has the best story to tell.

Youth organizations are often built on the principle that there is much value in simply supporting youth through the frequently turbulent years of middle and high school. As youth try to work out who they are, who they want to be, how they relate to others, and how they feel about themselves, having supports outside of their families is important.

As Chicago youth create and disseminate their own media products through youth media programs, the hope is that they simultaneously experience a sense of belonging, the breaking down of traditional peer groups, connections to adults and their peers, and confidence building. Youth media organizations encourage youth to venture outside their communities and meet other youth from different backgrounds with unique perspectives. Youth from the south, west, and north sides of Chicago are brought together to collaborate on projects. They also learn that there are other pathways they can follow beyond what their immediate circumstances seem to offer.

evaluation questions about youth media programs' focus on youth development

- * How do youth media programs impact people along dimensions of youth development, including confidence, self-efficacy, having healthy relationships with peers and adults, sense of belonging, and ability to express oneself?
- * Do these impacts persist into adulthood?



examples of how a few chicago youth media organizations address youth development

Young Chicago Authors (YCA) exposes youth to the written word and its public platforms. With its diverse programming and mentorship from YCA's artists-in-residence, it is likely that any interested youth will find a program that suits them and their medium of choice for self-expression; YCA's platforms for expression and reaching audiences are numerous: YCA's online magazine *Say What* gives youth the chance to participate in each aspect of the magazine's publication from content conception to designing and editing. Youth can also craft and perform their work at YCA's WordPlay, a weekly open mic session. YCA participants can also enter the **Louder Than a Bomb** festival, a month-long poetry slam. To get a behind the scenes look at how youth prepare for the festival, check out the documentary, *Louder Than A Bomb*.

YCA makes a point to engage youth on their own terms. Artists-in-residence go into classrooms and create democratic learning spaces where youth from different communities and backgrounds work together or individually to produce authentic stories about themselves. Youth are given an opportunity to share their stories with their peers; these sharing sessions empower youth—for many it is their first time having their voice and stories acknowledged as valid and significant.

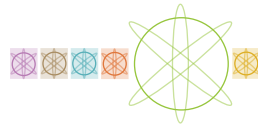
Digital Youth Network (DYN) provides middle and high school students learning opportunities to engage with digital media both in and outside of school. They emphasize offering youth enriching, exciting workshops and collaborative projects where youth learn news and media literacy without realizing they are gaining valuable skills and knowledge that will better prepare them in their future endeavors. Mentors share their experiences and knowledge and provide youth with the motivation to complete projects and work toward goals. They engage and connect with youth by recognizing that youth have their own capital and are sources of information that mentors can also learn from.

DYN collaborates with the Chicago Public Library to run **YOUmedia**, a unique pioneering learning space for youth. In the YOUmedia lab, Chicago youth get an opportunity to learn, apply, and showcase their digital media skills to peers, mentors, and clients.

Open Youth Networks brought together 20 youth from Chicago and Barbados for **YouthLAB** (Youth Listening Across Borders). For 2 weeks, youth interacted and conversed from their respective locations through different online platforms such as video chat, blogs, video letters, Google Maps, and Facebook. Before the program began, a youth from the Chicago group went to Barbados to provide youth there with computers, cameras, internet service, and training. Both groups created multimedia projects and discussed a broad range of topics, such as racism, segregation, inequality, migration, and social justice.

Street-Level Youth Media (SLYM) operates a community-based media arts center and production studio that offers year-round programming for city-wide youth ages 8 to 22. SLYM's **workshops and afterschool programs** expose and train youth on a wide range of media and digital art platforms (stop motion animation, multimedia journalism, digital music production, graphic design, and digital photography) as they explore topics and issues most pertinent to their lives.

SLYM fosters youth community-building and sharing of their work through monthly events including open mics, music performances, film screenings, and an on-site gallery. SLYM also stresses intergenerational mentorship and youth leadership development by providing opportunities for teen participants to work one-on-one with adult artists to create collaborative multimedia installations, act as peer mentors and leaders in youth-run interest clubs, and serve as studio engineer interns leading sessions for their peers during the center's **Open Lab** schedule.



/ca·reer de·vel·op·ment/

to build technical expertise and interpersonal skills, and to provide meaningful experiences that can be applicable to any workplace

La Risa Lynch / Instructor,
North Lawndale Community News

Computers are tools for career building, not just for entertainment. Youth can use social media to get their work out there.

Darronte Matthews / Youth Participant,
Columbia Links

I want to be an anchor. I learned I'm not very good at reading from a projector, so I need to get better at my fluency and stress certain words in certain situations.

Antonia Thomas / Youth Reporter,
North Lawndale Community News

I learned a little bit more about responsibility. We have deadlines, and I love deadlines because it's a sensible way to work. Deadlines teach others who are a little lazy by pushing them and making them realize that deadlines are part of the real world.

Some Chicago youth will go into media-related fields after their experiences in youth media programs. Others will not. No matter what educational and career path they take, Chicago youth media organizations are confident that the exposure they provide and the skills they teach will serve all youth well.

For the future journalists and multi-media producers, programs provide hard skills development, exposure to college programs and career opportunities, and enriching hands-on experiences in producing television shows, newscasts, radio broadcasts, documentaries, and films; some of these experiences even involve internships and "real" clients.

For the future nurses, welders, attorneys, teachers, administrative assistants, public relations professionals and the host of other professions youth may choose, the programs impart computer skills, lessons on the value of work, and soft skills related to being a reliable coworker/employee and communicating well.

evaluation questions about youth media programs' focus on career development

- ✧ How are youth media organizations influencing people's future academic and career choices?
- ✧ How do the hard and soft skills youth learn through the program translate into other areas of their lives outside and beyond the program?



examples of how a few chicago youth media organizations address career development

Free Spirit Media's (FSM) *HoopsHIGH* program is a weekly telecast on Chicago Access Network Television that presents high school sporting events; the telecast concludes with *FSM News*, a 10-minute newscast. Through *HoopsHIGH* and *FSM News*, youth gain an appreciation for the team effort that goes into producing a show, and their eyes are opened to "behind the scenes" career opportunities they may never have considered before. For example, in addition to learning how to operate a camera, announce play-by-plays, and conduct sideline interviews, youth learn about the effort it takes to set up for the broadcast, direct shots, manage the control room, and edit the video packages within the broadcast.

FSM's media industry contacts are then put to good use through FSM's **Flash Forward Initiative** where advanced-level students are placed into meaningful internships where they gain valuable on-the-job experience and advice on pursuing media-related professions. FSM also runs an outward facing production company, **Free Spirit Media Productions**, and advanced youth get opportunities to work on projects for actual clients including Nike, the Chicago Park District, and the Chicago Public Schools.

Community TV Network (CTVN) runs a **Video Services** division that offers paying clients video production services. Advanced youth who have gone through other parts of CTVN's programming participate on the projects and receive one-on-one mentoring and guidance on pursuing a career in the field of media. Previous clients include the Chicago Foundation for Women, Northwestern Business College, and Real People's Music.

True Star Foundation (TSF) operates much like a publishing house that is primarily run by youth to publish its two magazines, *True Star* and *True Star Jr.* The magazines reach 55 schools in the Chicago area with a readership of 150,000. Youth in afterschool and out-of-school programs are responsible for different components of the magazine's production, from interviewing and writing articles, to taking photographs, to creating graphic design, to managing layout, to marketing and selling advertisement spots for the magazine.

Another outlet for youth to share and communicate with their peers is through TSF's weekly radio show, *True Star Radio*, on Power 92 FM. Youth learn how to select discussion topics, create voiceovers, and book and interview guests. TSF's instructors give youth an opportunity to observe first-hand the work media professionals do and their work environment by shadowing their instructors to their jobs and going on field trips to media outlets. TSF also gives youth practical real-world experiences through opportunities to make marketing presentations to corporations and clients.



/youth ex·pres·sion/

sharing authentic youth ideas, opinions, and beliefs through different multimedia and arts platforms with audiences

Brittany Douglas / Youth Apprentice,
Community TV Network

I keep going back to tell different stories people are scared to tell.

Rebecca Hunter / Executive Director
Young Chicago Authors

Bringing young people in a cultural space and giving them the cultural tools to begin using their voice to tell stories, you open the door to cultural and arts participation. In doing so you are advocating for a new generation of citizens who feel very adept and comfortable with participating and engaging in arts and cultural activities on their own terms.

Sue Thotz / Chicago Program
Manager, Common Sense Media

You no longer need to have thousands of dollars of equipment to be a creator. It's inspiring and exciting.

Torey Malatia / President and CEO,
Chicago Public Media

Where adults see producing media as performance, youth view it as a way to naturally express themselves. Where adult producers are conscious of expectations as a result of the work they do—that it will be judged critically by an audience—youth focus on the immediate experience itself—the creation of the expression they are delivering. Thus, young producers are much more comfortable, genuine, and forthcoming in their media work than adults.

Youth have something to say. Often they just don't have the confidence or the skills to say it. Chicago's youth media organizations hope to foster this confidence and build skills all while opening youth's eyes to the vast number of vehicles that exist by which to make their voices heard—and impart lessons on how to be attentive, discerning, and responsible media arts producers and consumers.

evaluation questions about youth media programs' focus on youth expression

- ✧ How do youth media programs impact people's ability to express themselves?
- ✧ How do youth media programs influence participants' appreciation for and involvement in the arts?



examples of authentic chicago youth voices

Listening Across Borders: Creating Virtual Spaces for Youth Global Exchange

An article on Open Youth Networks' project, YouthLAB where youth in Chicago interact and exchange ideas with youth in Barbados through social media.

I Am Chicago: Born a Black Woman

A digital project by Jessica Lopez of YOUMedia for the One Book One Chicago project, where youth across Chicago participate in reading and discussing the same book at the same time.

Facebook vs. Twitter

Which social media platform do teens prefer: Facebook or Twitter? Reporter and producer Antonia Thomas interviews her peers to find out what social media platform they prefer and why.

YouthInk on 18th

A collection of community journalism and digital media from Chicago youth in Radio Arte's After School Matters' Radio Broadcasting program.

Say What Magazine Online

Youth writers, editors, and artists work together to publish the magazine. They explore, document, and tell stories that impact their lives and communities.

Home Sweet Home

The winning documentary at the 2012 Do It Your Damn Self!! National Youth Film Festival, the film focuses on the lives of homeless youth and how they get through each day without a place to call their own.

Youth Voice: Ushering in a New Era for Chicago

The Mikva Challenge City Youth Commission developed a list of twelve recommendations on how to better incorporate youth voice into City Government, the Chicago Police Department, and the Chicago Transit Authority.

Our Own Actions

Mount Vernon Elementary School students in Chicago produced a video on youth violence that tackles the issue in five parts: *Innocent Victims*, *Youth Violence in Sports*, *Teen Violence*, *Then and Now*, and *Who is Responsible?*

True Star Magazine

Chicago teens create, design, and publish the magazine. They tackle subjects on everything from the presidential election to youth violence, to drug abuse to diabetes.

The Plight of Jobless Teens: The Summer Blues

A documentary that chronicles the lives of teens who need summer jobs and why finding a summer job is important to them.

Occupiers, Officials Try to Help Homeowners

Tyreshia Black interviews activists and supporters at the Occupy event at Illinois Institute of Technology and tries to find out how distressed homeowners are being helped.

It's Their Life: LGBT Teens in Chicago

The Media That Matters Festival 2011 winning documentary created by Free Spirit Media youth working with The Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, *It's Their Life: LGBT Teens in Chicago* explores homosexuality in high schools, youth perspective, and growth through understanding.

If I Had a Trillion Dollars

Middle school students in Street-Level Youth Media's on-site afterschool video workshop produced this video in which they interviewed a variety of people and asked them "If you had all the power, what would you do with a TRILLION dollars?"



spotlight subjects and audiences of youth media

In addition to impacting participating youth in important and meaningful ways, youth media produces relevant content that has value for a broader group of stakeholders. From the products' subjects to their audiences—including parents, teachers, community members, and policy makers—youth-produced media can change hearts and minds by illuminating the concerns and amplifying the voices of youth.

YOUTH MEDIA THEATER

Dear Mom, Dear Dad

Brittany Douglas & Community TV Network

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzBfY1ouVxw>

WHEN 1 IS THE ONLY NUMBER

Darronte Matthew & Columbia Links

<http://www.columbialinks.org/page/when-1-is-the-only-number>

IT'S THEIR LIFE: LGBT TEENS IN CHICAGO

Kelsey Phillips & Free Spirit Media

<http://freespiritmedia.org/work/video/Its-Their-Life-LGBT-Youth-in-Chicago>

"While filming *Dear Mom, Dear Dad*, Lornell and Angela learn that the mistakes of their absentee parents should not affect how I lead my life. I should learn from their mistakes and not make them myself."

-Brittany Douglas

"I was curious to know if it's true that single parents are to blame for violent actions taken by their children. I and others learned it doesn't take two people to raise a decent child. You can live with one specific person even if you have the absence of somebody else, and if you feel hurt by that, that doesn't necessarily influence your life decisions to turn to crime or whatever. You can come out fine even living in this situation."

-Darronte Matthews

"There are many people in our community who are gay but they can't come out because they are afraid to be judged. By working on this, *It's Their Life: LGBT Teens in Chicago*, others were touched and it helped them understand not to worry about what other people say."

-Kelsey Phillips



epilogue evaluation to help reach ambitious dreams



As the Chicago youth media sector continues to take shape, the organizations in this story have dreams for the future and envision endless opportunities for the field and ultimately for youth.

These dreams range from the modest...

- ✧ Add more programs and reach more students and communities
- ✧ Expand into new technology
- ✧ Update aging equipment
- ✧ Improve program models
- ✧ Increase sustainability
- ✧ Partner with more schools
- ✧ Nurture further curriculum development
- ✧ Increase interaction with audiences through different social media platforms
- ✧ Offer consulting and professional development opportunities to teachers and artists

...to the big and creative...

- ✧ Develop a portable media lab that can travel to underserved neighborhoods to teach different media platforms
- ✧ Develop a student exchange program where students get an opportunity to exchange best practices and expand their technological skills
- ✧ Create and launch a mobile news application with the ability to notify community residents immediately of opportunities and services
- ✧ Design and launch mobile applications to reach youth, especially those who do not have access to computers, and encourage digital interactions between youth from other cities
- ✧ Reach a national audience and publish content through social media, mobile applications, and podcasts
- ✧ Start (or restart) a school newspaper in every Chicago high school

Realizing these dreams requires not only a bold vision, but also a solid sense of the efficacy of the current programs upon which they hope to build. Chicago youth media

organizations understand the importance of having evidence—in the form of outcome and impact data—to improve programs and to support their claims that they play a critical role in the lives of youth; ultimately, the field wants recognition as an effective force in the lives of youth so they can foster more support that will allow them to do even bigger and better things.

The first step to this end is understanding if they have an effect, what that effect is, and how much effect the organizations do indeed have. Backed by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, nine organizations involved in the Chicago Youth Voices Network are meeting this challenge head on by embarking on an evaluation process in late 2012 through 2013 that will help illuminate their effectiveness and highlight areas where programming can be even more effective.

The evaluation will build on what these organizations already know and the data they are already collecting about their programs, both of which are largely focused on whether youth walk away from a program with more hard and soft skills than they entered it with. Other research on youth media has contributed valuable knowledge to the field, including, among others, the study commissioned by the [Open Society Institute](#) and the [Surdna Foundation](#) about the [impact of youth media](#) on audiences and its channels of distribution as well as the [Stuart Foundation's](#) work that [details their experience](#) funding five youth media organizations.

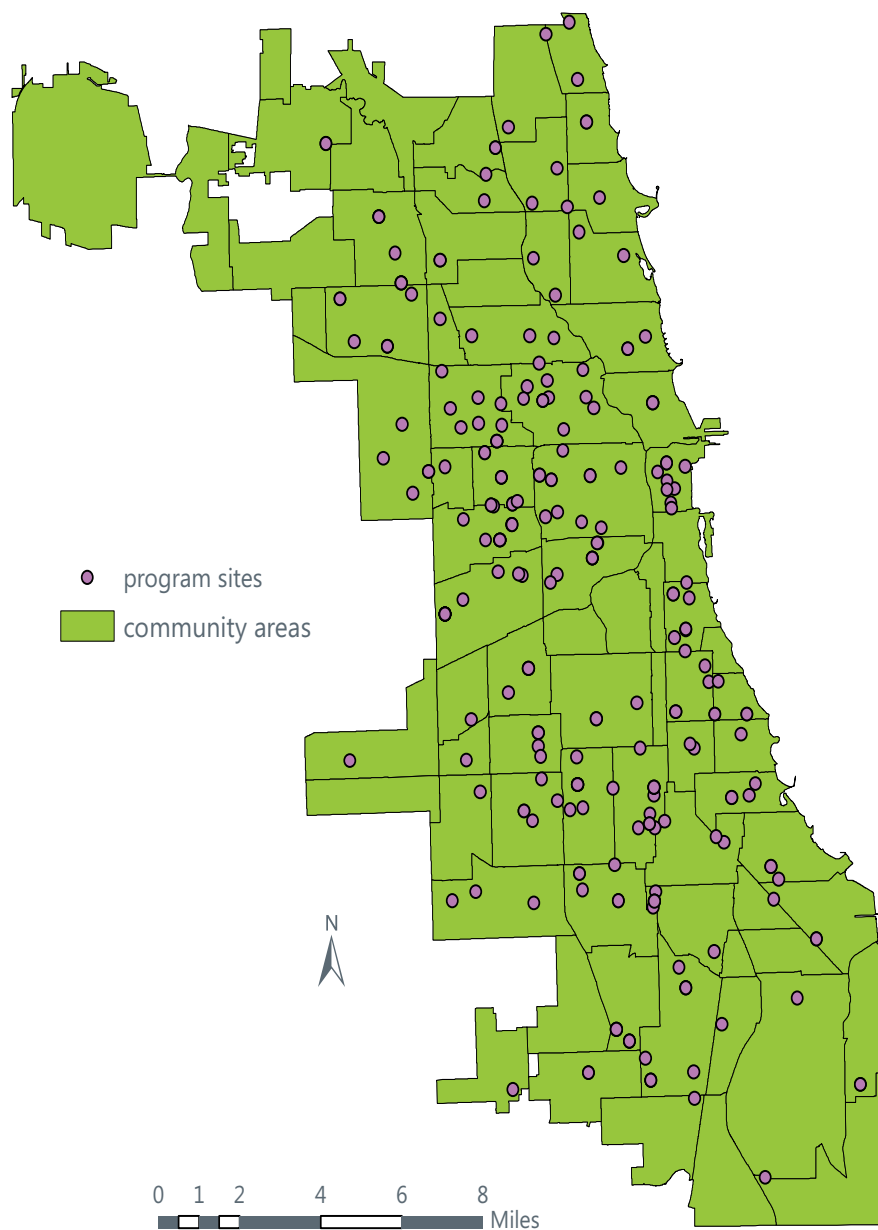
This evaluation, then—the Part 2 of this story—seeks to fill a knowledge gap: What happens to participants once they are no longer youth and no longer in youth media programs? Do learnings, behaviors, and attitudes stick with them? Which ones? Have they put to use what they gained from being a youth media participant? And what exactly did they gain? The evaluation will engage adult program alumni to help answer these and other important questions.

So this isn't the end of the story. Consider it **to be continued....**



spotlight profiles of 14 chicago youth media organizations

program sites of 14 youth media organizations in chicago*



*Program sites include elementary, middle, and high schools, libraries, and community-based organizations. Some schools using curriculum developed by youth media organizations are not mapped.

organizations are listed in order by
when they start working with youth



elementary (k-5th)

Common Sense Media /since 2003/
www.commonsensemedia.org

who: k-12 students, educators, and parents

where: in select cities throughout the nation—32,000 registered schools with Common Sense Media, including 273 Chicago Public Schools

what: educators and parents from all over the world can access free lesson plans, handouts, videos, interactive games, and activities on digital literacy and citizenship through Common Sense Media's website; Common Sense Media provides teachers with hands-on support and consultations on how to incorporate the lessons in their classrooms and also offers robust guidance and reviews for parents on all sorts of media based on child development criteria

why: to provide teachers and parents with information and training that facilitate youth learning how to think critically, behave safely, and participate responsibly in today's digital media world

when: through Common Sense Media's website 24-hours a day, 7 days a week

how: with a \$9,500,000 annual budget (nationally) and 1 part-time staff in Chicago

Digital Youth Network /since 2003/
www.digitalyouthnetwork.org

who: middle school and high school students from across Chicago—approximately 877 youth annually

where: at 14 middle schools, 4 Chicago Public Libraries, and 1 community organization

what: mentors take students from idea conception to product completion: from poetry to recording and producing music; from writing to film production; and from graphic design to advertisement

why: to create spaces for youth to learn, create, and experiment with new media so that they develop valuable 21st century skills—critical thinking skills, news and media literacy, and social skills

when: youth meet after school for 2 hours per week for 38 weeks; out of school for 2 hours for 1 session or a 3-week series; and 15 weeks for in-school classes

how: with a \$150,000 annual budget, 4 full-time staff, and 6 teaching artists



The News Literacy Project /since 2008/
www.thenewsliteracyproject.org

who: Chicago youth—approximately 1,300 youth annually

where: in select cities throughout the nation; in Chicago, at 5 middle schools and 5 high schools

what: partner with teachers to train them in news literacy and on the News Literacy Project curriculum; teachers implement three to five News Literacy Project lessons, host journalist volunteers as guest teachers, and facilitate a hands-on final project so students can apply what they've learned

why: to equip youth with the basic skills they need to discern news from spin, to evaluate the credibility of a piece of news or information, and to value the importance of the First Amendment so that they become conscientious consumers and responsible creators of news and information in the digital age

when: 3-week to semester-long in-class lessons

how: with a \$250,000 annual budget and 3 full-time staff in Chicago



middle school (6th-8th)

Strategic Human Services'

North Lawndale Community News /since 1999/
www.nlcn.org/cms/

who: North Lawndale middle school and high school students—approximately 90 youth annually

where: onsite at Strategic Human Services and 1 local elementary school

what: journalists teach students the basics of journalism, news literacy, and print publication

why: to equip and expose youth to journalism tools and media that help them become advocates for their communities

when: middle school students meet for 1 hour, 2 days a week; high school students meet for 3 hours, 3 days a week during the school year in afterschool programs and 4 days a week in the summer, for 8 to 10 weeks; occasionally, a particularly interested youth enrolls in a subsequent session

how: with a \$109,368 annual budget, 1 full-time staff, and 2 teaching instructors



high school (9th-12th)

Columbia Links /since 2006/
www.columbialinks.org

who: high school students from across Chicago and some suburbs—approximately 40 youth annually

where: at Columbia College in downtown Chicago

what: three different 6- to 8-week journalism academies taught by staff and guest professional lecturers, with each youth assigned a professional media mentor

why: to nurture and teach youth critical thinking skills, ethical journalism, news literacy, reporting, writing, and leadership skills so that they can be well prepared to pursue careers in journalism and media

when: youth meet for 4 hours, 2 days a week in academies that run during the school year and 3 to 5 hours, 3 days a week during the summer session; occasionally, a particularly interested youth takes more than one academy

how: with a \$129,000 annual budget and 3 part-time staff

Community TV Network /since 1974/
www.ctvnetwork.org

who: Chicago youth—approximately 720 youth annually

where: at 11 alternative schools, 2 Chicago Public High Schools, 2 park district sites, and onsite at CTVN

what: sessions on video production that teach all aspects of production from script writing to editing different types of film

why: to encourage youth to look at the quality of life in their communities and youth issues through a critical lens, so that they and their communities can grow and improve

when: youth meet 1 to 4 days a week, for 8 to 10 weeks in afterschool, in-school, and summer programs; approximately 20 percent of youth build on their skill sets by becoming an apprentice or mentor at Community TV Network's onsite media center

how: with a \$450,000 annual budget, 3 full-time and part-time staff, and 9 teaching instructors

Free Spirit Media /since 2000/
www.freespiritmedia.org

who: Chicago youth—approximately 560 youth annually

where: at 5 high schools and 1 youth center

what: intensive broadcast journalism and media production programs that teach novice filmmakers from idea development to telecast-worthy media productions

why: to give youth the information, exposure, and tools, so that they can become productive, independent, and engaged adults

when: youth meet for 8- to 10- weeks for afterschool programs, semester-long in-school classes, and 6 to 7 weeks in summer programs and internships; occasionally, a particularly interested youth joins the advanced apprenticeship program

how: with a \$959,000 annual budget and 20 full-time staff

Mikva Challenge /since 1999/

www.mikvachallenge.org

who: high school students from across Chicago—approximately 5,100 youth annually

where: at 85 high schools throughout Chicago and 5 middle schools

what: youth learn about civic engagement by participating at different levels of the political process often using media as a tool

why: to expose youth to politics, increase their civic knowledge, develop their leadership skills, and help youth become advocates for their peers and communities, so that youth can become future civic leaders

when: through summer programs as well as full-year programs

how: with a \$1,925,000 annual budget, 23 full-time staff, and 5 part-time staff

Open Youth Networks /since 2007/

www.openyouthnetworks.org

who: Chicago youth—approximately 20 youth annually

where: at Columbia College in downtown Chicago

what: Open Youth Networks is an outreach program of the interactive arts and media department at Columbia College Chicago.

through mentorship and hands-on training, Open Youth Networks puts young innovators in intergenerational collaboration with industry leaders, artists, and designers to create innovative software applications, games, and interactive media

why: to create engaging and participatory learning spaces where youth can learn how to apply emerging digital and social media tools to address issues impacting themselves and their communities

when: workshops, consultations, and summits conducted throughout the year

how: with a \$15,000 annual budget and 1 full-time staff; in addition, Open Youth Networks draws on the Department of Interactive Arts and Media's resources, which include 7 full-time staff, 30 faculty, state-of-the-art classrooms, software, and facilities, and a \$500,000 annual budget

True Star Foundation /since 2004/

www.truestarfoundation.org

who: high school and middle school students from schools across Chicago—approximately 375 youth annually

where: onsite at True Star Foundation, 3 middle schools, and 6 high schools

what: youth learn journalism skills, entrepreneurialism, radio broadcasting skills, photography, graphic design, and digital media, which they apply to the youth-conceived and produced media properties: *True Star Magazine*, *True Star Jr. Magazine*, *True Star Radio*, and *Truestaris.com*

why: to teach valuable communication and technology skills that help youth become well-rounded, productive citizens

when: in-school, semester-long classes; for 3 hours per day for 2 to 3 days per week for 10 weeks in afterschool programs; and for 16 hours per week for 6 weeks in summer programs; a particularly interested youth will take other TSF programs learning the various aspects of media development

how: with a \$457,000 annual budget, 2 full-time staff, and 10 teaching instructors

We The People Media /since 1999/

<http://wethepeoplemedia.org>

who: youth living in Chicago's public housing and low-income communities—approximately 102 youth annually

where: at 13 Chicago schools, 1 community organizations, and 1 college

what: lessons cover basic journalism, news literacy, and the importance of freedom of speech

why: to teach journalism and communication skills that help youth become well-informed, participatory citizens

when: youth meet 1 hour for 2 days a week, for 8- to 10- weeks in afterschool programs and summer sessions

how: with a \$171,000 annual budget, 1 full-time staff, 2 part-time staff, and 3 teaching instructors

Radio Arte /since 1997/ transitioning to **Difusión Media** /since 2012/

<http://wrte.org>

who: Latino youth—approximately 100 youth annually

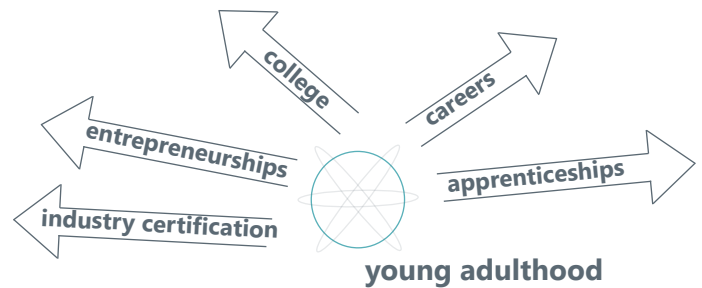
where: onsite at Radio Arte

what: youth develop journalism and media skills by working behind the scenes at 90.5 WRTE-FM, a unique bilingual radio station, from radio broadcasting to topic selection

why: to train Latino youth on online 'radio' platforms—blogging, podcasts, and video—by using journalism as a foundation so that they can become socially-conscious journalists and positive voices for their communities

when: yearlong media training, offered afterschool

how: with a \$275,000 annual budget, 2 full-time staff, and 6 part-time staff



Young Chicago Authors /since 1991/
<http://youngchicagoauthors.org/blog/>

who: youth from across Chicagoland—approximately 3,000 youth annually

where: onsite at Young Chicago Authors, 118 schools throughout Chicago, 1 playwright conservatory, and numerous cultural, media, private, and social institutions through private bookings and partnerships

what: a corp of YCA-trained teaching artists offer instruction on different modes of expression: creative writing, journalism, poetry, hip hop poetry, spoken word, oral history, nonfiction, realist portraiture, and performance arts delivered through a YCA curriculum, culminating in a variety of public platforms of literary display

why: to cultivate authentic youth voices in chorus with a community and create cultural spaces for them to share and exchange stories and experiences so that they can be civically-engaged and culturally-literate citizens

when: year-round workshops, performances, events, afterschool programs, and in-school classes; artistic mentorship through residency at YCA and professional development

how: with a \$550,000 annual budget, 2 full-time staff, 6 Corp Teaching Artists, up to 15 emerging teaching artists, 2 freelance research and community liaison positions, and a freelance book keeper

Street-Level Youth Media /since 1995/

www.street-level.org

who: Chicago youth—approximately 805 youth annually

where: onsite at Street-Level Youth Media, 4 middle schools, 7 high schools, and 2 community organizations

what: youth receive instruction and access to tools to work and explore issues important to them, from digital audio and film production to photography and graphic design

why: to equip youth with digital media skills that prepare them for our tech-savvy and information-based society

when: 3 to 6 hours a day for 2 to 5 days for the bootcamp workshops; 8 to 10 weeks in afterschool programs; semester-long in-school classes; and for 20 hours per week for 8 weeks for summer internships; occasionally, particularly interested youth take more than one class or even start and teach their own classes

how: with a \$620,988 annual budget, 7 full-time and part-time staff, and 9 to 12 teaching artists

endnotes

¹Free Spirit Media's logic model language for long-term outcomes.

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⁴Patterson, T. E. (2007). *Young people and news*. Retrieved from Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University website: http://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/young_people_and_news_2007.pdf

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⁹Coca, V., & Allensworth, E. M. (2007). *Trends in access to computing technology and its use in Chicago Public Schools, 2001-2005*. Retrieved from Consortium on Chicago School Research website: <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/07TechReport.pdf>

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¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Rabkin, N., & Hedberg, E.C. (2011). *Arts education in America: What the declines mean for arts participation*. Retrieved from the National Endowment for the Arts website: <http://www.nea.gov/research/2008-SPPA-ArtsLearning.pdf>

¹⁸Freedom Forum. (1994). "Chapter 6: Unless we listen and learn...Looking at Captive Voices 20 years later." In *Death by Cheeseburger: High School Journalism in the 1990s and Beyond* (pp. 91-110). Retrieved from http://archive.firstamendmentcenter.org/pdf/dbc_text.pdf

¹⁹Youth Communication Chicago. (n.d.). *A legacy of youth voices and creating change*. Retrieved from <http://www.youthcommunicationchicago.org/aboutus.html>

²⁰Brower, M. (1985, April 15). Sister Ann Heintz Instills Chicago's Teenage Reporters with Good Journalistic Habits. *People*, 23(15). Retrieved from <http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20090438,00.html>

²¹Free Spirit Media's logic model language for long-term outcomes.

²²Information collected directly from the youth media organizations.

²³This is a conservative estimate of youth engaged in programs annually. Youth engaged as audience members and through short-term, drop-in workshops and student receiving curriculum developed by youth media organizations are not included.

²⁴Separate programs in the same schools are counted multiple times. Some schools using curriculum developed by youth media organizations are not included in this estimate.

²⁵Interviews, discussions, and literature on youth media informed and shaped each outcome area's description and definition here and on the following pages.

33 West Grand Avenue, Suite 500
Chicago, IL 60654
research@heartlandalliance.org | 312.870.4949

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