



Elevate Youth California: Youth-Led Participatory Action Research

February 26, 2026



Disclaimer

- Elevate Youth California (EYC) is a program of the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) funded through Proposition 64 California Cannabis Tax Fund, Allocation 3, YEPEITA. Sierra Health Foundation: Center for Health Program Management (The Center) is contracted to support the implementation of EYC. This statewide program provides funding and technical assistance for organizations that are developing or increasing community substance use disorder (SUD) prevention, outreach, and education focused on youth.



Land Acknowledgment

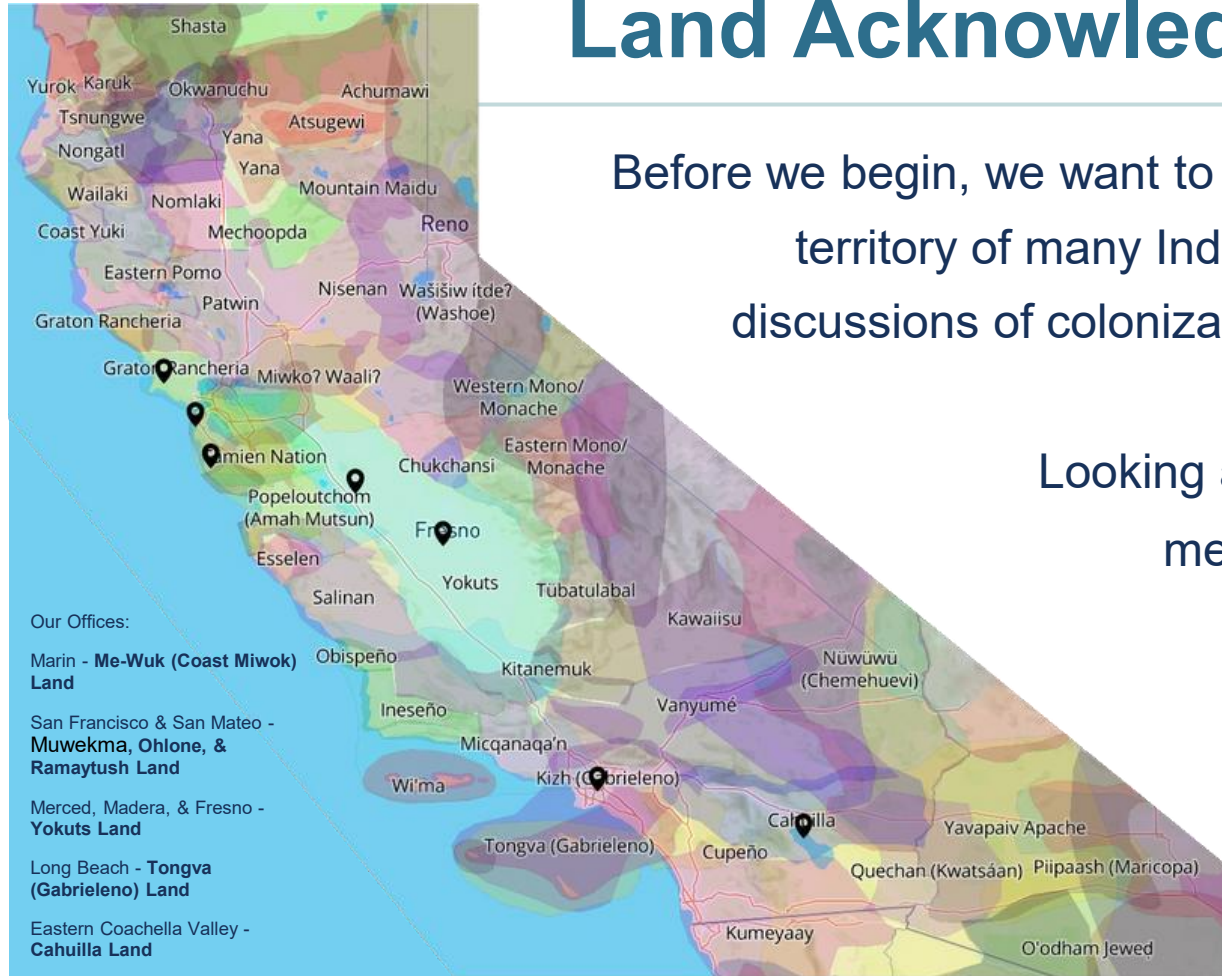
Before we begin, we want to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. Native Land brings about discussions of colonization, land rights, language, and Indigenous history tied to our personal histories.

Looking at the land from an Indigenous perspective means acknowledging that the land is a living being - this understanding both gives us insight into and increases our awareness of how we

treat and interact with the land.

via **Native-Land.ca**

yli.org



In this workshop we will:

- Learn about the importance, benefits, and principles of youth-led participatory action research.
- Share real-life examples of how youth-led participatory action research has changed communities.
- Explore the Seven Steps of Research and what each step involves.



Community Agreements:

- Take care of yourself and your family.
- Embrace the awkwardness.
- Keep an open mind.
- Be present.
- Participate.
- Take space, make space.
- Have fun!



The title "Community Builder" is centered on the page. It is flanked by decorative elements: on the left and right are three vertical blue lines of varying heights, and above and below the text are three horizontal blue lines of varying lengths, creating a stylized frame around the title.

Community Builder



Community Building

In a pair or trio:

- Have you led a youth-led participatory action research project with EYC youth participants? If so, when did this take place? Briefly describe your experience.





Why Engage Youth in Research?



Why Engage Youth in Research?

- Action research can be a powerful tool to engage youth in community problem solving.
- Youth participation ensures that the research is more relevant to their peers.
- Youth research can provide the community with fresh new data.



Why Engage Youth in Research?

- Data related to youth-serving systems collected by youth themselves mobilizes a community response.
- Participation in research is a powerful youth development experience for youth.



Three horizontal blue lines of varying lengths, stacked vertically, positioned above the title text.Three vertical blue lines of varying heights, positioned to the left of the title text.Three vertical blue lines of varying heights, positioned to the right of the title text.

Youth-led Participatory Action Research

Three horizontal blue lines of varying lengths, stacked vertically, positioned below the title text.

Youth-led Participatory Action Research Definition

- Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is an approach to youth and community development in which young people are trained to conduct systematic research to improve their lives, communities, and the institutions intended to serve them. In this approach, young people are the researchers and changemakers. Projects build skill development through inquiry, evidence, and presentation. Projects are action-oriented, with research findings that can illuminate the issues and solutions that are important to young people.



YPAR Breakdown

YOUTH: Youth will take action, start dialogues, organize and mobilize alongside a team of young leaders, learn how to conduct research, lead campaigns, and make a difference.	ACTION: The goal is to utilize research to inform and create a plan of action aimed at addressing a community issue, such as substance use disorder and its root causes.
PARTICIPATORY: All participants, including community members, are considered contributors to knowledge and experiences.	RESEARCH: A systematic investigation or assessment of a problem facing the community. It centers on community strengths, narratives, and knowledge.



YPAR Principles

- Debunks stereotypes of the research expert
- People-centered
- Research to build power
- Action oriented



Principles pulled from the Research for Organizing Toolkit by the Urban Justice Center, Community Development Project, and Research and Organizing Initiative.

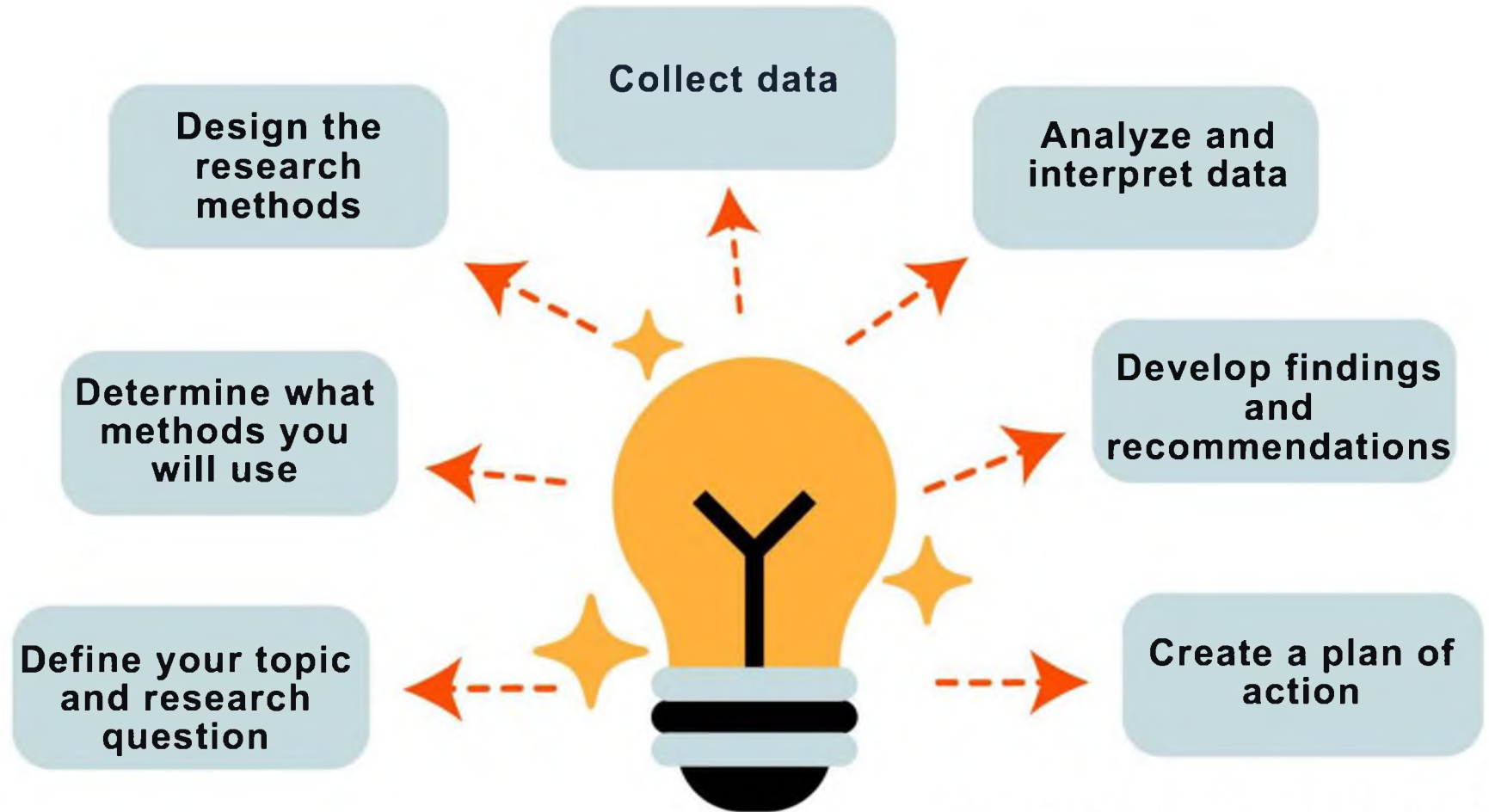




Seven Steps of Research

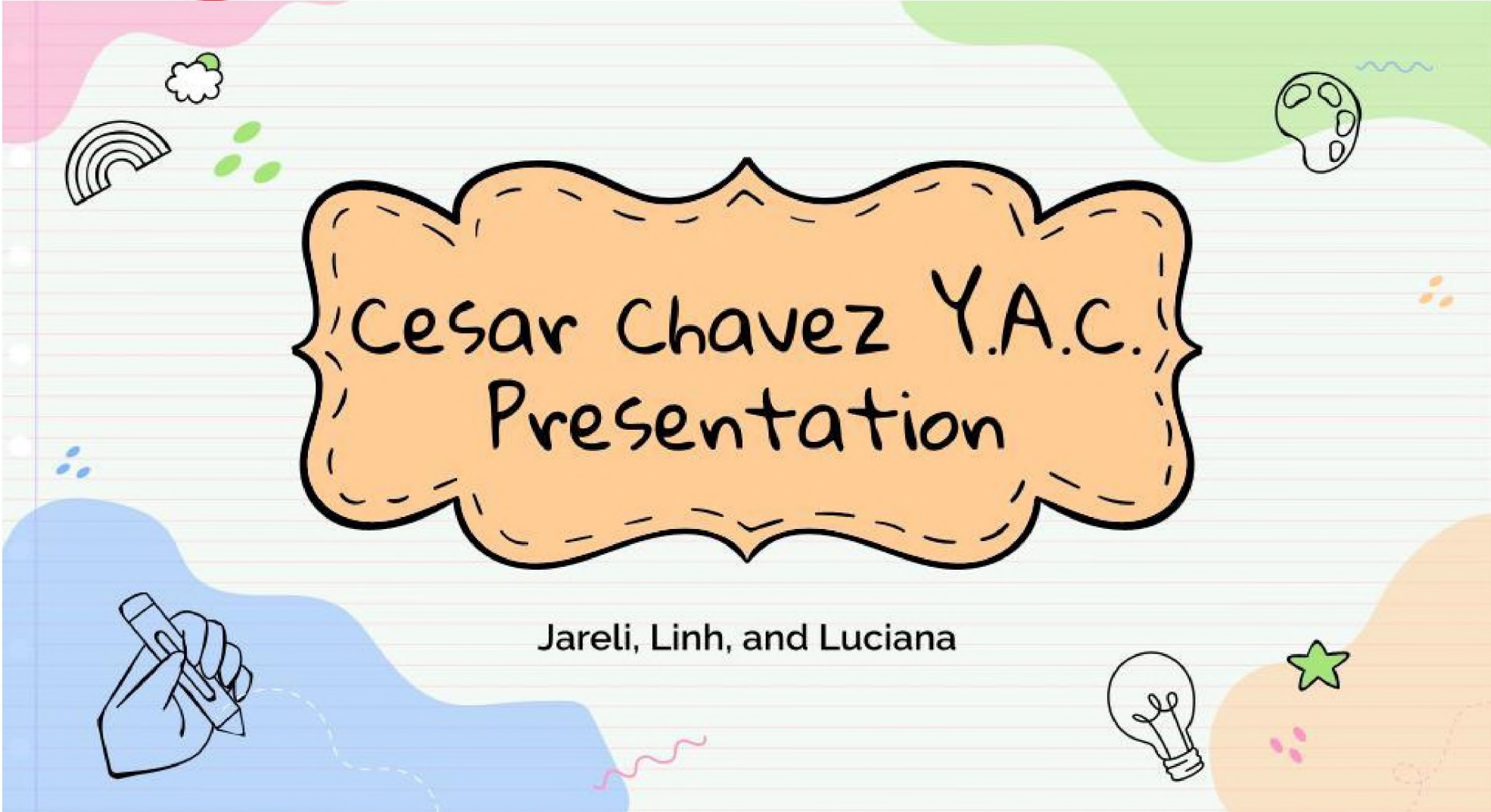


7 STEPS OF RESEARCH



Youth Leadership Institute (2009)

Cesar Chavez



Cesar Chavez Y.A.C. Presentation

Jareli, Linh, and Luciana

INTRODUCTION: Who We Are!



- ★ We are Cesar Chavez Middle School's Youth Advisory Committee.
- ★ Our Purpose: We want to improve our school's outdoor space so students can enjoy their daily school experiences.

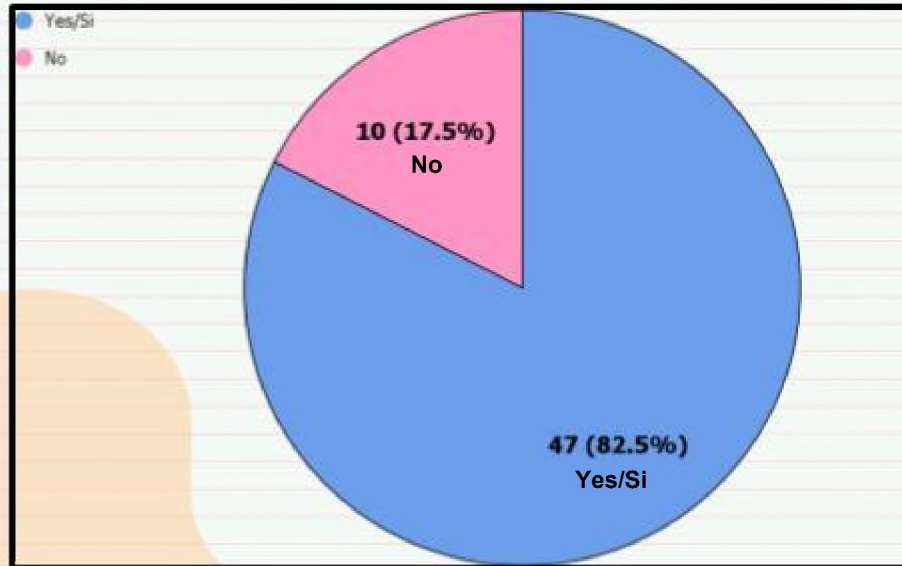
WHAT THIS PROJECT IS ABOUT

Purpose & Intended Impact

- ★ The purpose of our project is to improve student's experiences at school and to make more of our outdoor space usable.
- ★ Students already enjoy being outside, so we hope to make our outdoor space something students look forward to when coming to school.

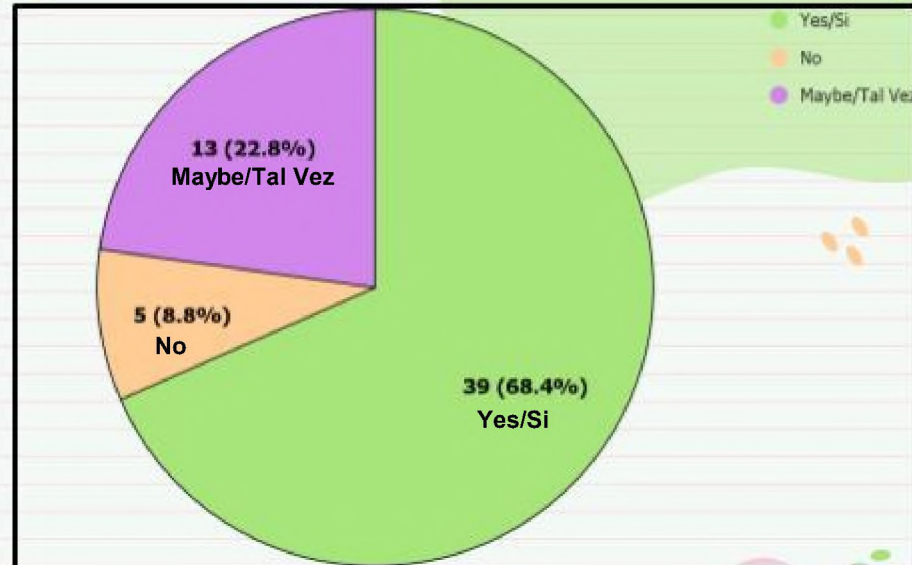
Our Data & Results

Do you like being outside?



★ Majority of survey respondents
already enjoy being outside!

Would you hang out in the grass area if it was better maintained?



★ Majority of survey respondents say
they would like to be outside in the
grass if it was better maintained!

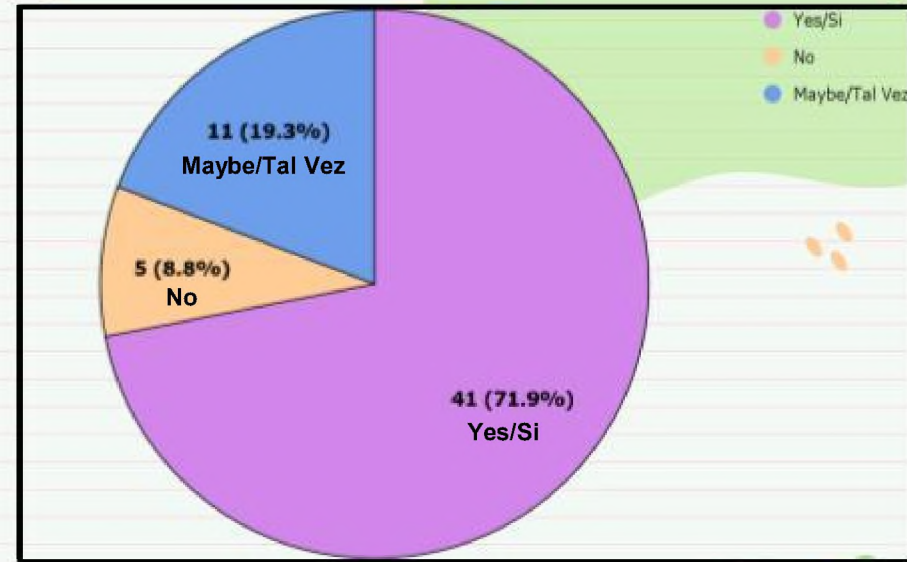
Our Data & Results

What kind of seating would you like to see outside?



★ The most popular seating option students wanted to see outside is a swing set! Students would also like more benches

Would you prefer to eat outside if there was more shade for the lunch tables?



★ Majority of survey respondents already enjoy being outside!

Surprising Results



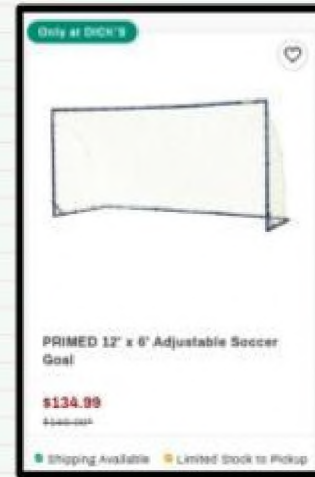
- ★ Most students *see trash outside,* *but* most students *don't pick it up.*
- ★ When asked *what students want to see outside,* the most popular responses were *benches, shaded areas, swings, and a garden space.*
- ★ A lot of students also asked for *more equipments for the sports they like to play,* like soccer, basketball, and volleyball.

Next Steps &

The Hayward Unified School District can invest more funding into high-quality sports equipment by the end of the year so students can stay active while enjoying themselves during the school day.



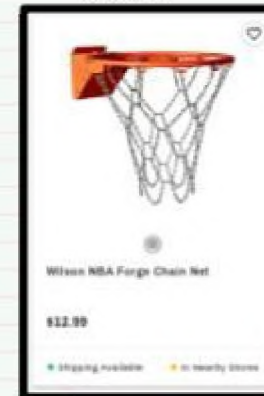
★ **Soccer Goals:** About \$150 each



★ **Balls:** ~\$15-\$20 each



★ **Metal Basketball Net:** \$13 each



Next Steps &

School administration can continue adding new seating options and construct new spaces (like swings and lunch tables) over summer break.



- ★ **Outdoor Shade for Lunch Area:**
~\$1500
- ★ **Patio Seating:**
~\$100-\$500



- ★ **Patio Swing:**
\$380



Next Steps &

Students and school administration can collaborate in creating a program for next school year that gives students an incentive to clean up trash around the school so the outdoor space stays clean.



- ★ For example, the school can offer community service hours as an incentive for students to help clean up around the school. The school can host clean-up weekends to offer an incentive to students to help clean-up around the school.



Break





Step 1: Defining Your Topics and Research Question



Using the Know and Wonder Chart

- Choose a topic.
- Learn about your topic.
- Consider your audience.
- Start asking questions.
- Select your question.
- Evaluate your research question(s).



**Step 2: Determine How
to Measure and What
Information You Will
Need**



Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

- Research methods are the specific ways that we will collect our data.
- Qualitative: Helps identify themes, more descriptive data.
- Quantitative: Collection data that will yield numerical data.



Research Methods

- Surveys.
- Interviews.
- Focus Groups.
- PhotoVoice.
- Community Mapping.
- Walking Audits.
- Existing Data.
- Diaries: travel, wellness, social media.





Step 3: Design the Research Methods



Quantitative: Survey

- We encourage youth to have both a quantitative and qualitative method. Surveys are the most common. Youth may break down a larger question into subtopics that yield additional questions. Youth then create answer choices for each question.

Qualitative: Interviews, Photovoice, and Focus Groups

- For interviews and focus groups, youth can create the protocols and questions. A total of eight to twelve questions are recommended.





Step 4: Data Collection



Data Collection Goals

- It is important to create achievable data collection goals. The amount of data collected depends on the number of eligible individuals or the criteria you establish. As an example, if implementing a citywide YPAR project, the project should aim to get at least 200 surveys. If this is unattainable, the project may explore implementing a focus group, interviews, or a PhotoVoice.

Creating a Data Collection Plan

- When creating a data collection plan, keep in mind the prioritized audience, channels, relevant outreach materials, location and time of implementation, key partners, and the project timeline.





Step 5: Analyze and Interpret Data



Data

- Review the raw results from all the research methods.

Findings

- Transform this raw data into findings that are easy to understand for all audiences. Findings are “startling data” that informs, surprises, or provides greater context.

Recommendations

- Create actionable steps to improve or solve the research topic. For example, education to decision makers and recommended actions based on the research findings.





Step 6: Develop Findings and Recommendations



Findings and Recommendations Report

- Introduction – Who are you?
- Background – What is your research question/issue?
- Methods – How the research was conducted.
- Findings – What were the key results?
- Recommendations.
- Next steps.





Step 7: Create an Action Plan



Campaign Actions

- One-on-ones.
- Build a coalition.
- Meet with decision makers.
- Provide public comment.
- Power Mapping.
- Educational activities.
- Social media engagement.
- Hold a press conference.





Evaluation

- Please take a moment to fill out an evaluation form.



Closing

- Share one word in the chat that captures your experience in this workshop today.



Additional Resources

- UC Berkley: [Youth Participatory Action \(YPAR\) Hub](#)
- Informed Change: [Experts of Their Own Experience – Simple Methods for Collecting and Making Sense of Youth Participant Data](#) (Handout)
- Informed Change: [Practical Tools to Invite Youth into the Evaluation Process](#) (Presentation)
- Liberating Structures: [What, So What, Now What?](#) (Reading)



Questions?





Thank You!

