

Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together: Evaluation Year IV

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Executive Summary

The YATST program helps schools to develop an action-research process designed to address school change through youth and adults working in partnership. The strengths of the YATST program include a clearly articulated theory of change, strong support for relevant skill-development that is differentiated for participating youth and adults, as well as a reflective, research driven organizational culture.

Purpose: In this evaluation, we sought to understand the school-based experience of the YATST program. We focused on understanding how YATST groups conceptualize and implement the YATST vision, how adults and youth respond to YATST training, the longitudinal experience of the YATST life cycle, specific outcomes for schools, adults and youth, and the long-term sustainability of YATST as an organization as it looks towards the future and expanding its reach to more schools.

Methods: This evaluation focuses on the perceptions of adults participating in the YATST process. We conducted 23 semi-structured interviews: 14 with YATST adult advisors and nine with principals of participating YATST schools. Additionally, we observed three days of the YATST summer training institute and reviewed over 150 documents related to the YATST programs, curriculum, trainings, strategic planning and public media. All of the collected data was reviewed with reference to the objectives for the evaluation.

Findings: The findings of this evaluation can be grouped into three categories: vision, processes, and outcomes. Each of these categories is discussed with reference to the aims of the evaluation.

Vision: Few models of youth-adult partnership exist in the United States and of these, YATST has one of the most sophisticated visions of this work. YATST's focus on adults and youth working in partnership together runs counter to the traditional student-teacher model that is embraced by the organizational culture of most schools. In engaging in partnership, we found that adult advisors and principals had to proactively educate other adults and students about what youth-adult partnership looks like and what it can mean for youth-adult relationships within schools. Similarly, the mission of YATST needed to be translated into terms that could both be understood by other students and members of the staff outside the groups, as well as fit into clearly definable "niches": a curriculum focused organization, a community service organization, a student voice organization, etc.

Process: Training and Support: The forms of technical assistance provided by YATST staff are highly sophisticated and a model nationally and beyond for how to provide support to a youth-adult partnership process. YATST provides support to its school teams throughout the year in the form of facilitation trainings, planning retreats, on-site support, personalized support, and the credit-bearing graduate school course and professional learning community. The level of support provided by the parent organization is extensive and the response from both youth and adult members of the YATST teams was overwhelmingly positive. Adult advisors cited the trainings provided as a key source of skill-building for their youth participants, particularly trainings around facilitation. The planning time retreats and other formal trainings provided allowed groups the space and time to be thoughtful and strategic in

their planning. Many adult advisors also cited the personal support provided by the YATST staff, Dr. Beattie and Harry, as integral to the process of moving the action-research process forward at their schools. Suggestions for improving the trainings included engaging a “master-teacher” on staff who can support adult advisors as they hone their skills in their advising role.

Process: YATST Life Cycle We observed a common cycle of participation in the YATST program. After a school decides to join YATST, a first step in the life cycle of a YATST schools begins with recruiting students. Recruitment affects the type of students who participate in YATST. Often initial recruitment is a convenience sampling of students—that is the adult advisor reaches out to the student whom he/she knows the best. Once an initial group of students has been recruited, the first year is spent simultaneously attempting many goals: beginning the action-research process and administrating a school survey; establishing group dynamics and processes; and building the legitimacy of the YATST group to both school faculty, other students and sometimes to the school administration.

For adult advisors, the first year is often a time of trial and error. While many of the adult advisors are deeply invested in student voice and youth-adult partnership, schools experience a learning curve regarding how to best participate in the group dynamics and process, as well as reflection on what unique knowledge they as adult advisors can bring to the action-research work. To support advisors during this initial period and in subsequent years, YATST offers credit-bearing graduate course and Professional Learning Community as an important support for both troubleshooting and sharing best practices.

Year 2 tends to be a time of uncertainty as many groups move from the relatively straightforward process of creating the survey and gathering their data to the murkier process of interpreting the data, identifying strengths and puzzling gaps, as well as formulating a plan for action. Deciding what action to take can be a time-consuming process for groups and often involves choosing priorities carefully and in consultation with teachers and students outside of the group, as well as the administration. Momentum and clear goals are important assets during this time period and proved to be critical indicators that distinguished between groups who struggled and groups who moved forward. As successful groups establish priorities for action, they continue to engage in legitimacy building, team-building, and skill-building.

By Year 3, groups were working on making their action plans a reality. This process included gathering qualitative data from students and teachers through fishbowls, in-services or interviews to discuss and refine their action plans as they rolled them out within their schools. Turnover of group leadership became an issue for many groups as the experienced members of the group prepare for graduation and life beyond high school and younger members of the group take on new leadership roles. As of the time of this evaluation, no groups had re-administered their survey to their school, but schools entering Year 4 had plans to do so.

Outcomes: Outcomes of the action-research process included both tangible outcomes at individual schools as well as outcomes for adult and youth participants such as feelings of

empowerment and agency, a sense of belonging, new skill-sets and competencies, and enhanced ability to communicate with others.

Moving forward: As YATST continues to grow, the organization has positioned itself for broad, deep school reforms within the state of Vermont (Coburn, 2003). The breadth of YATST reforms are reflected in a number of its activities. First, YATST continues to expand to new schools each year. Second, the expansion of support for teachers, incorporating more and more adults in the formal trainings provided by the program as well as reaching many more through partnering with school districts to provide content for in-services. Lastly, YATST continually engages in sharing outwards by presenting the work at both professional and academic conferences. The depth of YATST reforms are evident in their partnership with like-minded schools and organizations, their increased flexibility around the implementation of the program at individual school sites and a marked effort to document outcomes of the work of YATST teams and outcomes for individual students.

As YATST moves forward with these efforts, a shift in reform ownership as well as sustainable sources of funding will be needed in order to bring these efforts to the state-wide scale (Coburn, 2003). The Vermont Department of Education has indicated its support of these types of innovations to help reform state schools; however, increased ownership at the school level will need to become a standard feature of the program. Some YATST schools have already accomplished this level of ownership in partnership with their administration; however, institutionalization of the program and built-in time for YATST planning has yet to become a standard feature at all YATST schools. This kind of institutionalization will become increasingly important as YATST expands its reach and its program staff must support greater numbers of schools.

The YATST Vision

The YATST vision is based on three ideas:

- *School change based on 4Rs:* Rigor, relevance and relationships have all been identified as key components of school success for students. To these, YATST adds a fourth “R” - shared responsibility. The YATST theory of change centers around these concepts as a “common language” for both youth and adults engaged in school reform. The action –research piloted by each YATST group uses the 4R’s as the touchstone for both survey creation and subsequent conversations between youth and adults about survey findings.
- *Brain based research focused on expectations and learning:* Drawing on the work of Medina (2008) and Sousa (2006) among others, YATST groups proceed from the assumption that all students can learn, and that high expectations for learning along with lots of support and encouragement are both necessary for student success.
- *Asset based focus:* YATST operates from a “strengths first” perspective that works to identify assets and then leverage those assets to address perceived challenges. This approach is operative both at the school level as schools use their action-research to identify their unique strengths, and also at the organizational level.

The vision of YATST is unique for youth-adult partnership models because of its depth and rigor. The deep focus of the work is a notable difference of the YATST model from other models as often, youth-adult partnerships tend to focus more on surface issues such as school beautification projects, lunchroom issues, and similar tasks. While these projects are valuable, they differ from the YATST philosophy in that YATST schools seek to move more to the heart of schools with classroom and system reform and change.

Additionally, each component of the YATST vision and process is based on best practices from research and other successful reform efforts. The careful crafting of this program based on evidence-based practice provides a solid foundation on which schools grow. Theories and models of student-adult partnership, as well as action research, are drawn from the scholarly work of Adam Fletcher (2003a; 2003b; 2005), Kathleen Cushman (2003; 2005; 2010), Allison Cook-Sather (2002; 2007), and Dana Mitra (2007; 2008; Mitra & Gross, 2009), among others. These models include Fletcher’s Ladder of Student Involvement (2005), Tuckman’s stages of group development (1965), and Dweck’s Mindset Framework (2007) as foci for YATST training and a common language of the work.

Purpose of this Evaluation:

The goals of this evaluation were determined in consultation with Dr. Beattie , founder and director of YATST. The researchers and Dr. Beattie began this work with a series of conversations about what the

YATST board, staff and groups were interested in better understanding about their work. In the end, five focus areas and series of sub-questions were identified as guides for the project:

1. **Fidelity to the YATST theory of change:** To what extent do YATST groups draw on the 4Rs? To what extent do YATST groups draw on a strengths-based paradigm? Has the YATST vision shifted over time in relation to the model in practice? If so, how?
2. **Training and support for participants:** What training is necessary to engage in this work? How can YATST better support its adult team members?
3. **Longitudinal understanding of the YATST group life cycle:** What are salient issues and processes typical to Year 1 schools? Year 2 schools? Year 3 schools? What implementation models are there and what works?
4. **Outcomes:** What outcomes do we see for youth? For adults? For schools?
5. **Sustainability and Scale:** What strengths and challenges currently exist to bringing YATST to scale? What strengths and challenges exist for YATST's long-term sustainability as a reform effort and organization?

Methods:

This evaluation focuses on the perceptions of adults participating in the YATST process. Previous YATST evaluations have focused on the student perspectives over the past two years (Corbett, 2011; Goldwasser, 2010). The findings presented here are based on interviews with teachers and principals at YATST schools as well as participant observation of the YATST program conducted at the finish of the third formal year of the organization's existence.

Interviews: Participants for the interviews were recruited in consultation with YATST's director. Dr. Beattie sent a letter to all YATST participants informing them of the evaluation process and encouraging their participation in the phone interviews that the evaluation team would be conducting beginning in May 2012 and continuing throughout the summer months. Twelve principals and 15 YATST lead teachers at all 2011-2012 participating YATST schools were contacted and asked to participate in interviews. Of these, nine principals and 14 YATST lead teachers chose to participate. Special effort was made to include the perspectives teachers and principals of YATST schools which had chosen not to continue with the YATST program, in addition to those which would be continuing. The majority of the interviews were one-hour in length, though some were as short as 30 minutes and some were as long as an hour and fifteen minutes. We used semi-structured interview protocols which covered topics relevant to the individual school's YATST practices and routines, group dynamics and recruitment, projects related to the action-research cycle, as well as the participant's reflections on the benefits and challenges of the program at the school and policy level, and the future of YATST as an organization or reform movement. Additional interviews were conducted with representatives from the Vermont Department of Education about the role of YATST in the context of state-wide reform efforts.

In-person observations: Information obtained from the interviews was supplemented with participant observations conducted at a three-day YATST summer retreat. The retreat was attended by three schools, two veteran groups and one group which was new to the YATST program. We attended the formal activity-based training sessions as well as attended the time that was allotted for groups to spend planning with their individual teams. Detailed field notes were taken during all of these sessions recording the contributions YATST staff, student facilitators, as well as adult and student participants. During these sessions the researchers sat apart from the activities and discussions and did not participate. The purpose of these observations was to understand the YATST group process as it was happening and to obtain a snapshot of both veteran and new schools at different places in the action research cycle.

Document and artifact analysis: Extensive public and internal documentation was provided to us from the YATST director and adult YATST participants from individual schools. These documents included promotional materials, blog posts, media coverage of YATST activities, surveys and survey results gathered by YATST groups, previous evaluations, videos made of YATST activities, curriculum for both YATST trainings and for the graduate seminar offered to adult YATST participants.

All of the data collected--transcribed interviews, field notes, and documents—were coded using a pre-determined coding structure with the assistance of qualitative data analysis software NVivo. Codes included activities engaged in by YATST groups (such as gathering voice, improving group reputation, interaction with teachers), group processes (such as ownership and decision-making, churn, different types of norms, and veteran-newbie differences), conceptions of major YATST concepts (such as the YATST mission, future of YATST, student voice, the 4Rs, as well as conceptions of self), organizational concerns (such as coordination with other issues, YATST organizational staff, resources like time and money, sustainability, legitimacy and systems), and outcomes (such as student outcomes, adult advisor outcomes, school-level outcomes, and negative outcomes). After the initial coding, the data from both the interviews and the field observations was divided by participating schools and then these were divided by number of years participating in the program, so that the data could be reviewed systematically with the intent of creating a narrative of the YATST experience longitudinally.

Findings:

Our findings are broadly categorized into vision, process and outcomes. Our analysis begins with the ways in which YATST team members understand the YATST model and their experience communicating that understanding to others unfamiliar with YATST. Next, we focus on the YATST model in process. First, we synthesize the experiences of the adult team members into snapshots of YATST work during the first year, the second year and the third year. We then describe the support provided by the YATST organizational team in the form of trainings, on-site support, personalized support and the Professional Learning Community which has been created for YATST teachers. Finally, we look at the outcomes of the work, both for the participating schools and the participating youth and adults.

Conceptualizing the YATST vision:

Few models of youth-adult partnership exist in the United States and of these, YATST has one of the most sophisticated visions of this work. The YATST model was described by many of the participating adults as a powerful approach to youth-adult partnership that really built deep connections between adults and youth around meaningful projects. YATST staff designed the structure of protocols and group process training based upon theory-based research and upon best practices of previous and ongoing reform efforts. For example, group process/behavior research on “storming, norming, reforming” and group reflection protocols based on previous critical friends and other reform work (Tuckman, 1965).

Adults discussed the importance of communicating to students that YATST was more than a traditional student council because it focused on changing the culture of the school. One adult advisor noted:

"[The students] are more interested in senior privileges and picnic tables outside, or dances at the school. They're more interested in... just getting some basic student things happening here than what YATST is really interested in...when I talk about YATST I'm interested in changing the culture of the classroom, and having students have more of a voice in what's happening academically in the classroom than the painting of a wall kind of stuff. "

A YATST staff member acknowledged this difficulty and the importance of focusing on the heart of YATST – relationships, rigor, relevance and responsibility.

"Our first year we slipped in climate issues and we really confused the school as to who we are. So to be specific about the 4Rs and how we are engaging students in their work—that is who we are and the heart of our work. We need to be focused on that. "

Another advisor described how she was attempting to communicate the goals of YATST to her students and to the administration:

"We're really trying to position YATST as a community service organization, and a student voice organization, but with a student voice speaking not so much to policy development as instructional practices and school climate."

Despite the strength of the YATST vision, groups still struggle to communicate the purpose of their work because it is counter normative to traditional student-teacher relations. The YATST staff focuses trainings on communicating the YATST vision to school personnel. YATST teams then need to translate this vision to their school communities at every phase of the action research cycle. The following quotations from YATST teachers demonstrate the gap between YATST vision and perceptions of expected youth-adult relations in YATST schools. One principal commented on this issue by noting:

"Here, we're starting from ground zero, so even the kids don't really think they should be able to tell teachers like, "Hey, that didn't work for me." They don't even know that they can do that, or

that they have that right or anything. It's really foreign to them, so it started off really slow because the kids were having a really hard time getting that if they did something, that it might actually have a positive impact. Slowly, we're building that up."

A second year YATST advisor spoke to the counter-normative nature of the YATST vision and how it could be confusing and threatening to the other staff members as well:

"When you bring YATST into a school there can be a lot of conflict not just between school but between teachers and it is important to communicate between each other and make them realize that YATST isn't trying to take over the school but is trying to build a supportive foundation and help."

Given the struggles with re-envisioning youth-adult relations in schools, YATST continues to look for ways to help improve the articulation of the YATST vision and communication about their work. The Advisory Board and the staff stress the need to communicate the vision as an issue and have already taken steps to improve. These steps have included the creation of a Communication intern position which will be filled by a student majoring in Communications at the University of Vermont. Staff increasingly videotape YATST activities to be used for both training of future YATST participation and also multimedia for legitimation and funding purposes.

The YATST School Life Cycle

With three years of YATST work completed, it is becoming possible to see a longitudinal growth cycle across school experiences. The heart of the YATST work lies in the importance of inquiry-based reform practice, which requires learning communities that collaborate to engage in meaning making and to develop and assimilate new knowledge (Fullan, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). As a school reform process, an inquiry-based approach offers a way to begin to understand school cultures and to change them. Rather than importing solutions developed by outside organizations that presume to know how to "fix" schools, it suggests that students, teachers and administrators in schools possess unique knowledge about their schools' context (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Jennings, 2001). Thus, the YATST action research cycle focuses on collecting data about the school—including prizing the value of student voice as a part of this data collection process. The YATST teams must also learn how to make sense of the data that they collect and share these data back to the school with the goal of taking action based on the data.

Building upon YATST's emphasis on theory based approaches, the choice to develop the YATST model based on an inquiry-based process is a significant one. While this process can happen at the classroom, grade or departmental level, or school wide, inquiry has the possibility to teach students that they can make a difference in their world. Participation in inquiry practices not only supports academic learning, but it also develops social processes by fostering opportunities for teachers and students to collaborate, exchange viewpoints, and engage in problem solving activities (Jennings & Mills, 2009).

Year 1:

Year One is a time of intense learning for YATST schools. A great deal of this learning occurs while working on the first step of the YATST action research cycle—the development, implementation, and analysis of a school-wide survey. The purpose of the survey is to collect student and teacher opinions on the state of the four R's within their school. Questions include topics such as student engagement, teacher engagement, respectfulness of teacher-student and student-student interactions, student-teacher relationships, formal and informal assessment, and student involvement in decision-making. Two youth facilitators who had been through the survey process and a YATST staff member spoke about the survey as a central focus of the year's work and the importance of that in a workshop at the summer retreat:

Youth 1: Our work relies on data. With data there are no opinions—we think this, we think that. It is clear what is going on. It's not teachers versus students. There is a clear thing to attain and then there is also an understanding from teachers and students and this issue is proven to the data.

Youth 2: It is only proven if it is an authentic survey. It matters how you frame the questions and you can skew people's results. If you are not working from this foundation—

YATST staff member: Garbage in, garbage out.

Getting students and faculty to take the survey seriously was an important part of establishing legitimacy for the group and obtaining quality data to base their work around. Schools went about establishing this legitimacy in different ways. One school made a video to present to the students about the survey before they took it. Another school made it into a civic exercise and put “your voice, your vote” posters all over the school in the days leading up to the survey, which was administered in mock-voting booths. A YATST staff member discusses the importance of this piece as foundational to the action-research process:

“It means that you have to do a ton of work in building understanding about what this work is...It meant teachers had to agree to interrupt their day. It meant having a faculty meeting. It meant the faculty not saying “you have to go to complete a stupid survey.”

Following survey analysis, the group had to make a plan to share the data. This sharing was often accomplished through planned in-services, fishbowls, chalk-talks, and other methods, though these were also methods that schools used in order to work through the data as a group. Groups approached this stage of the process in different ways.

“The transition from the gathering of data to the actual forming action...It was uncharted water for us, so we called on Helen and we got together a few different times. Looked at the

data in different ways, and slowly decided what are our three, let's just say three because that's pretty much what we settled on, main weaknesses and strengths, and how we were gonna roll all of that information out to the student body and to the teachers for their knowledge, so they could remain in the conversation. Because it really, we were just facilitating the conversation."

Collecting supplemental qualitative data was not uncommon as the groups worked through their data analysis process and figured out the strengths and weaknesses of their survey design:

"Our number one priority was collecting that information and seeing what the data said. I was discovering that they had done some mistakes in designing the survey and then helping them understand what those mistakes were, then how to get around that and do some focus groups with kids and teachers."

However, finding the most productive ways to collect qualitative data has been a process of trial and error. As a YATST staff member observed about experimenting with open-ended questions on school surveys:

"They ended up being a gripe session and took us away from the 4Rs. Very disrespectful and it showed that they didn't fully trust this work yet. What they wanted to change in the school—the cafeteria"

Once the data is collected and the group has identified the areas it believes represent strengths and challenges for the school, the group then has to open up dialogue about those strengths and weaknesses with staff and students at the school to begin to think about an action plan to address their challenges. Presenting at faculty in-service days or faculty meetings is a big part of this process. One third-year faculty advisor told the story of how her group went about presenting the results of the survey to the faculty at an in-service:

We did things very cautiously... We didn't get to the data until we were an hour-and-a-half into the training. We used chalk talks, which I think are incredibly valuable experiences, because it just allows every voice to speak. It was really neat because we ended it with an activity, the snowball activity, where ...all the teachers wrote one action that they would take as a result of what they learned during the session. It was incredible the number of teachers that said, "I'm going to start focusing more on talking about the relevance of my subject matter with my students. I'm going to bring more voice into decisions that are made in my classroom." ... No one was freaked out. No one was upset. It was really, it was well received. It was really awesome because some of the

students came to us after, the ones that participated, and said, "No one's ever asked me my opinion about these things. No one's ever asked me what I thought we should do about it."

After groups presented their findings to the faculty, they began to think about how to move from data to action. Often, formulating specific actions based on the findings of the data was an activity that carried them into their second year.

In addition to moving forward in the action-research process, adult advisors of YATST groups identified many tasks that must be attended to simultaneously: recruiting students into the group, retaining students, fostering relationships within the group, building up the legitimacy of the group within the school (differentiating from other groups already existing within the school). These activities also become points of learning as groups learn to navigate the diversity of issues which come up during this work.

Recruitment of students. Recruitment affects the type of students who participate in YATST. Often initial recruitment is a convenience sampling of students—that is the adult advisor reaches out to the student whom he/she knows the best. How a school approached recruitment affected student participation in the partnership. The recruitment often seemed to be related to a) who introduced YATST into the school (i.e. by the principal, by a teacher, by a guidance counselor) and b) what position/connections adults had to youth. Schools that reported the most success in engaging a diverse group of youth (i.e. both successful and low-achieving students) were often led by an adult who had access to and relationships with a wide range of young people— often, a guidance counselor. Teacher-led groups or groups led by student council advisors tended to comprise mainly the “high-achieving” students. In the quotations below, adult advisors talk about the struggle to recruit a diverse student group:

“We really, really wanted it to be as representative of our demographic population as possible. We started from there. We tried to find kids who maybe were more disenfranchised. We tried to find kids who maybe didn't come to school all the time, and all those sorts of things. What we discovered is, those were the kids that were going to struggle to come to school longer to be in a meeting, or to do something school type in the summer. You know, "Hey, we're going to do a school activity for two days in the summer. Won't that be fun?" Those kids are like, "I don't think so.”

“We were trying to ... also add some kids that weren't engaged with school, because [we] thought they would kind of bring a different—a slightly different voice. Interestingly, the voice is actually fairly similar. The difference was just that the kids who were engaged recognized that

there were problems, but were going to play along anyway. The kids who weren't engaged saw the same set of problems, and then didn't – and so didn't engage with it. That was kind of an interesting thing that happened."

This issue is, of course, not limited to groups working through their first year. A third year YATST advisor observed:

"It is not for lack of effort that our most consistent group members are fairly homogeneous (largely white, largely female, largely middle-class). When working with a "coalition of the willing," students falling within this particular demographic appear to be the most willing. It has become clear to us as a group that simply opening the door to the general population is not enough to encourage everyone to participate (what exactly might be enough is still unclear?)."

One difficulty that this raised for adult advisors was discussing issues of privilege with students related to their school experiences.

"I think the students that we had in the group that were the most dominant personalities really were already benefiting very much from the system that's in place and didn't quite really recognize the activist piece to this work, which is increasing each voice for everyone, everyone, including kids who have already been served by the system for years and benefited in lots of ways and kids who haven't. I don't think we—those conversations could never really get going well in our group. We came to a place where a lot of the [students] were like, "These kids just need to learn that school is important; you need to learn. You need to do what your teachers are telling you," and we were like, "Whoa, how did we get here?"

Some advisors were comfortable with addressing this perspective with their groups while other advisors felt that they struggled to effectively facilitate a conversation about diverse school experiences. "I don't know how to get them there without being the teacher," one advisor related. Many YATST advisors discussed their attempts to get a diverse set of students' voices into the room, but one area of interest for the YATST PLC and graduate course might be addressing having those "teachable" conversations with students.

Teambuilding/Norm setting: Once formed, one of the first tasks of a YATST group is to form a sense of trust and cohesion among group members. While YATST adults cited the importance of teambuilding and setting norms an on-going activity as each year students transition into and out of YATST, the need for team-building in the first year was emphasized by many adult advisors as a priority. Many groups highlighted this work as an activity that their groups either engaged in explicitly or recognized was important. One first year YATST advisor explained:

“First of all, this group, because they formed themselves into a group very quickly, getting them to allow other people in and teaching them what happens when you don’t—helping them see and understand when you don’t—when you become a clique in and of itself, is always been—was a hard struggle for them at first. That’s been a lot of the work. “

While Dr. Beattie and the YATST staff provide training and support for YATST school group team-building efforts through the summer retreat overnight retreats as well as conferences throughout the year, groups reported using the YATST curriculum guide at their school based meetings to help supplement the team-building that happened at all-YATST events.

Building a niche for YATST within the school. Establishing an identity and a place for YATST work within the school was an important part of Year 1. A critical part of this work was sufficiently differentiating YATST from other groups, such as student council or service learning organizations. The adult advisors negotiated with both the administration and the other teachers about the definition of what was a YATST activity and what was not.

“What is the role of National Honor Society, what’s the role of student council, what’s the role of YATST, getting clear on those so there’s no feeling that we’re stepping on each other’s toes. In actuality they have very, very, very different partitions. That’s not obvious to begin with. All those organizations feel they have—because they’re working with students—feel they have student voice and feel they have youth/adult partnership. The reality is that—we all do it in a different way. We all have a different role. That’s the biggest challenge, is straightening out who does what. Because we share all the kids. It’s not like it’s a 400-kid school and you have plenty to choose from. It’s not—that just isn’t what happens. You really do have to work all that stuff out.”

A few principals stressed that the unique value-add of YATST was its focus on instructional and curricular practices at the school. By keeping a sharp focus on these issues, as opposed to what one principal defined as “policy” issues typically assigned to student council, YATST could negotiate a unique place for itself within the school.

Some adults were not able to identify the niche of YATST at their school, in some cases because the school already had other avenues for student voice engrained in its culture. These adults commented:

“I’m just looking to find ways to more fit the YATST work into the structures that already exist here instead of trying to, like I said, copy what other schools are doing that doesn’t really fit. I would say our focus for this year [was] sort of open-ended and we were lacking a clear direction...”

“As I was reflecting back on my lack of success in fostering the growth of a YATST group here at [our school], I thought well, maybe the work is already being done some other way and maybe I need to just respect that, too.”

In other schools, adults reported that inability to sufficiently differentiate the YATST work from other school activities (like school council) had created “turf wars” within the school that needed to be resolved. These adult advisors commented:

“Most of the conflicts that [the students] had to deal with really were adult conflicts... There were road blocks put up by the adults... That threw out barriers the kids weren’t expecting. The administration was really supportive, because when there were adult conflicts, the principal was very quick... to say [to the students], “You’re right. This is an adult problem, not a student problem. Let us solve the adult problem.”

Others reported that they suffered from lack of visibility or branding: administration, teachers and students did not know who they were, or what they were doing. They stated:

“I think faculty—anything that feels like an outside initiative, I think, sort of raises the cynical hackles of faculty. It’s just like, oh, one more thing that we have to do or one more initiative from the Department of Ed, even though it wasn’t a DOE thing. Some of the challenges were getting kids to take those chances and establish their credibility with faculty and that happened gradually.”

“[Our principal] felt like what YATST was doing was already occurring in other clubs to some extent, like student council. .. We talked a little bit about that. I tried to clarify that YATST was a little different and that I didn’t really think that what YATST does was happening at [our school], but needed to. ”

Occasionally, youth and adults sometimes became frustrated with situations where their activities were unfavorably received because of this lack of clear delineations of YATST work or an unsupportive administration. One adult advisor observed:

“The first few meetings, it ended up being instead of us moving forward and let’s talk about YATST and let’s get a plan and how are we going work at school, it ended up being a conversation of “We don’t think we’ll ever be allowed to do anything.” What ended up happening was students just stopped showing up to meetings. I would see students in the hall and talk to them and, “I’d really like you to be involved, show up,” They would tell me they would tell me they would show up, they wouldn’t show up. ”

Building momentum and managing expectations. Maintaining momentum in the face of the naturally slow pace of the action-research cycle proved to be the biggest difference between the schools whose advisors reported having positive experiences with YATST and schools where advisors expressed frustration.. Some adult advisors reflected on how difficult it was to maintain student interest, particularly in the first year, as the data gathering and action process moved slowly.

“I’ve definitely heard students say, “Well, we don’t get anything—nothing happens there,” and those are often, sadly, students who are less academically motivated and are there and are

really important kids to have in the conversation, but lose their motivation to be part of it, I guess, because they're not seeing a change in their classrooms to the level that they want enough of."

A few acknowledged that this slowness is an inherent part of the action-research process. Advisors identified that being able to quantify for the students the change that they were working on in tangible ways was important to maintaining group motivation and to retention.

Year 2:

After the first year of identity formation and data collection, year two tends to be a time of crafting and implementing action plans. Activities during their second year varied: some groups attempted to come up with plans that answered the question "What actions can we take to address the issues we identified in the data we collected?" Often, these activities were conducted concurrent to continued attempts to build up the legitimacy of the group within the school, reach out to non-YATST students, and to recruit new members. Some groups worked to present their data to the faculty in new ways, or to present action-items that they believed might help the school. Advisors from these groups observed:

"One [area] the students really feel they need to work on some more is the question of "what would the class look like if students offered input into how teachers deliver lessons? This is a question that is going to come in to play as we move forward with our work."

"It was a lot of little steps to, once we had figured out our direction, to communicate the information, but then to take action on it. We needed to reach out and get the voices again in order to decide what are some concrete things that we can do. That just took longer than we thought."

"One of the most powerful pieces of action that our YATST team coordinated and participated in was their presentation at a faculty meeting on the rigor and relevance of exams. The students used the Fishbowl protocol and shared their thinking on exams, their learning and what they thought was important to them. They shared their thinking on how they learn and why they need multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate what they know. The voices of ten students from various cognitive and social abilities were heard from in a sincere and respectful manner. The student facilitator then requested teachers to join the Fishbowl and respond to what they heard. This shared dialogue provided our faculty with an opportunity to SEE learning through the eyes of the student."

"The YATST kids, over the summer, were at a summer retreat and learned more about just some of the current brain research and developed a skit that was done for all of the teachers in the district.... Our auditorium was packed and it was just this really interesting skit about the

adolescent brain. Illustrated how stress impacts learning, illustrated how just what we expect kids to be able to process and what the brain research is telling us about what they can take in. People thought that was the highlight of the whole in-service week."

This excerpt from a longer conversation between a YATST team at a planning meeting is an example of how a team goes about translating their survey data into action. In this conversation, the team was looking at their survey data in order to identify a "puzzling gap" in the data that they would like to build an action plan to address during the upcoming year. Through this conversation, the group narrows in on the concept of respect and begins to discuss how to open a dialogue about this topic at their school.

Youth 1: What did the students say about relationships?

Adult Advisor: Well, (*pulls out data- they all look at sheet*).

Youth 1: I think all teachers should know to be respectful to students

Youth 2: It's different in a small school because it's hard to remember when you see people every day that there is a line in the sand and --

Youth 1: -- especially when we don't define respect. And respect is always changing.

Adult Advisor: I agree. And look at this data: Students agreed 61% of the time that teachers were respectful towards them. When we talked about 'Are students respectful of teachers', 29% of the students said they don't think that students are respectful.

Youth 2: And we don't know if that's the students that are respectful or are not.

Adult Advisor: And that's the focus group part.

Youth 1: And it's different to different people. And respect is really at the root of all the issues of people that are at our school.

Adult Advisor: And when you had the meeting with the teachers, they all agreed that we had to define respect. And I think that's a good topic for an in-service. It should be an all-day thing, delving into this in real detail.

Youth 2: I agree.

Adult Advisor: Because what the comments say to me, is that it's impossible. And there are so many comments on this and none of them really support – I mean, they all said, "Yeah, we should be more respectful." Nobody said, "This is okay." And the kids are feeling stronger about it than the teachers.

This conversation is also a small demonstration of how rooted the YATST dialogue is in the four R's. Directly addressing the concepts of rigor, relevance, relationships and responsibility were important components of the action plans of many of the YATST schools who were moving from collecting data to planning action.

Year 3 and beyond

Year 3 activities were similar to Year 2 activities as schools continued to work on their action plans. Schools in their third year or beyond seemed more secure in the rhythm of the YATST work. Salient issues in year three included graduating group members and transfer of leadership, refining the

group focus with the addition of collected qualitative data, and thinking about moving forward with the action research cycle by re-administering the original or a modified version of their survey. While no schools conducted a second survey, a few adults referenced plans to do another survey in the near future.

Transfer of leadership. Often Year three is also a time of new beginnings as many of the student leaders of the group may have graduated. Thus a rebuilding process tends to be a focus of year three work as well as building on ongoing work. One adult advisor discusses her seniors moving on next year:

“It is very interesting because the state-wide workshop that was coming up in culmination of the year just happened and all three of our seniors were not able to make it because they had to be at a musical festival and it really provided the juniors, and actually a lot of them wanted to step up. I was like, look. We need people to work within our group and they’re showing our video and you’ve got to get up there and introduce it. It’s just great to watch them because they got to do it and might have not been totally in their comfort zone, but I can tell that it put them out there a little bit more. We do have some that were, as we call, developing leaders and they’ll come to the summer retreat with me again and so again, we’re kind of in a new cycle of fostering those skills in that group of kids.”

Ending one action cycle and beginning another: An important part of YATST work is the idea of the cyclical nature of action research. Schools should implement action plans and at some point begin a new action cycle. Part of a new action cycle is collecting new data. Schools therefore are encouraged to re-administer surveys every two years, though some schools delayed re-administering the survey till their fourth year, largely because they were still working on moving forward with their action plans. Fitting with research, ending a cycle of inquiry is hard to do since inevitably there is always more work to be done. Re-administering allows younger students in the group an opportunity to see a snapshot of their school not as it was two or three years ago before their arrival, but how student and teacher perspective on the 4R’s stand in the present. Re-administering the survey also allows schools to document the changes happening within schools as they move forward with their work

Another dilemma during the transition from one action cycle to the next includes the documentation of previous work. A tension therefore exists between giving schools sufficient time to continue its ongoing action work and encouraging reflection and documentation of the work that was completed. YATST staff member/intern/external consultant could assist with documenting this process; other schools may choose to document their work themselves.

Support for school-based YATST teams:

The forms of technical assistance provided by YATST staff are highly sophisticated and a model nationally and beyond for how to provide support to a youth-adult partnership process. The YATST organizational team provides support for schools in a variety of different ways and indeed, the level of support that YATST provides to its school groups is unique among youth-adult partnership organizations.

YATST organizational team provides a combination of formal training sessions, on-site group support, as well as personal support to both youth and adult team members.

Training:

Trainings occur throughout the year for both students and their adult team members. Each YATST year is kicked off with an annual summer retreat where schools engage in formal training modules as well as structured planning time. In the fall, a popular student facilitation training which teaches students the skills that they need to run group meetings, facilitate in-services and other public speaking and group management skills. Both of these events were described by adult team members as essential for their school-level successes. In the winter/spring, YATST offers teachers participating at school sites a credit-bearing graduate course through a local university.

Summer retreat. The summer retreat consists of a three-day fully funded program that trains new groups and provides a space for current groups to plan for the following year. The summer retreat lays a foundation for year-long success. This third-year YATST advisor emphasized the importance of the retreat to building enthusiasm:

“I think most YATST schools start with a huge momentum. You really need to come to that August retreat because it’s really awesome, and it gets teams really, really pumped. That’s what we did. We came out of that like a missile, and really got a lot of good work done the first year.”

This foundation is built through three days of discussing the theory behind the YATST vision and purpose, team-building activities such as night orienteering, trust-creating exercises, a large amount of built-in team-planning time and the modeling youth-adult partnership in action. Workshops are also offered on topics such as the action-research cycle or building an excellent survey. These skill-building sessions, often run by senior YATST students, both model and teach essential YATST skills such as facilitation, listening, and leadership.

“That summer retreat was the key to everything. The fact that we did team activities, as well as learned the skills to run meetings, learned the skills to be able to—the kids learned it.”

Additionally, the summer retreat creates initial team-building opportunities for many groups. This team-building helps establish positive in-group norms and dynamics. A third year adult advisor said,

“We do this amazing team building activity at night. That’s where our group completely gelled and came together. They all found each other’s strengths, they all found places where they could contribute. That was the key. It was amazing how we came together. ...Anytime we were struggling we would go back to the memory of that.”

Furthermore, the attention to team-building helps to introduce new members of the group to YATST and also to allow older members to begin to bridge between their leadership and younger students. The same third year adult advisor discussed the benefits of this aspect of the trainings:

“The new members worked with the seniors and that has been very special. This was the first senior class I got to work with. These three in particular have been the delight of my year with YATST and to bridge that with the new YATST members has been really special for me.”

For the adult advisors, the summer retreat is also an opportunity to spend time with their students outside of the school building and get to know them as people. This experience, in turn, can help adult advisors understand what it really means to work with partner youth as equal stakeholders in the change process. As one exuberant first year advisor explained:

“The overnight conferences will be something you will never forget, and...it'll help you value if you ever done any experience in your teaching life where the line was blurred, and we're all working together on the same thing, and how great it feels. How absolutely, deliciously wonderfully freeing, and powering—you get an experience like that at the overnight, and it just makes you understand that old model, behaviors model of you at the front as the source of wisdom is really not true. [Youth and adults], we're all pioneers together; you're just a little bit more experienced, maybe. Maybe you have a little more patience, that's about it. The rest of it is, we're all human beings just working together in the dark to try and find some light. That's what that YATST experience will reaffirm or give you for the first time if you've never had it.”

It can be difficult, however, for youth and adults to coordinate their schedules to attend this August training. A number of second and third year schools were unable to attend and planned to try to recreate the planning time that is built into summer training at their own campuses. In 2012, the training was split from one three-day training for all schools into two successive three day trainings to accommodate these scheduling difficulties.

Student facilitation training. Through funding provided by the Nellie Mae Foundation, the Bay and Paul foundation and the Rowland Foundation, YATST has been able to invite Daniel Baron, a School Reform Initiative founder and youth advocate, to provide a two-day training in facilitation to interested youth YATST members. Based on the methods and protocols of the National School Reform Faculty (n.d.), this training incorporates the use of Critical Friends protocols. The training is focused around helping youth to build sophisticated facilitation skills including constructivist listening, meeting management, and understanding Covey's (1996) realms of influence.

A number of the adult advisors remarked specifically about the huge gains that they had seen by students who attended the facilitation training by Daniel Baron. In fact, adults most often pointed to positive outcomes for youth that directly related to their development of facilitation skills as part of their work with YATST.

“We were able to take the training with Daniel Baron, a facilitator workshop. One of my students...was at that workshop and she was... pretty transformed. She said “Yeah, I realized I really like facilitating.” She’s really good at it – I mean, who knew? Now she’s leading stuff and it’s really exciting.”

One adult advisor discussed the importance of the training as an opportunity to provide youth with the skills that were essential to what they were being asked to do as a part of YATST:

“I brought some kids to a facilitator training [with Daniel Baron], so they learned facilitation skills...it was important because we want them to be leaders, but we have to give them the training and the skills to become leaders.”

Youth who participated in that training were able to assume more responsibility within the group, allowing the adult advisors the opportunity to cede more control. One first year advisor commented:

“The other thing...that I’m remembering we did was Daniel Barron’s facilitation workshop. When we came back from that...the students played a more active role in the next couple of meetings. We asked them to be facilitators... they took a more active facilitator role.”

The training itself typically comes before a state-wide conference on youth leadership, which allows the students to then practice the skills that they began to develop in the training. A second year adult advisor discussed the ways in which YATST intentionally sequences training opportunities to help support where students and groups are in their development of necessary skills throughout the year:

“One of the good things about YATST is that the leadership training and the ongoing training throughout the year that they do with the students and with the leaders sort of corresponds with student development throughout the year, so that... by the end of the year, when they had the [school-wide] student meeting, they ran that meeting one hundred percent by themselves...The kids really understood how to organize a meeting by that time.”

While much admiration was expressed for the role of this training in developing youth skills, some adults mentioned the need for a “master-teacher” on the YATST organizational staff to help similarly develop the abilities of the adult advisors in both advising youth as well as facilitating their development through the action-research model. The expansion of the YATST staff to include Martha Rich, a retired principal and experienced instructional leader, may help address this challenge in the coming year.

On-site support and coaching.

Translating an action-research cycle into concrete steps proved daunting for many groups. As one adult described, *“I think we constantly discussed that we were trying to increase youth voice in decision-making and we were trying to increase student engagement there for all learners. However, the*

actual research steps that we went—process that we went through totally or partially along the way, I don't know that we ever got there.” Another adult described being even more lost by saying, “I'm ready to go in any direction. I just feel like we haven't gone in a lot of directions at all, but I feel like everyone's nice and everyone's cordial and everyone's excited for the future and there are—tons of possibilities lay ahead of us.”

The feelings about uncertainty in day to day decision-making were counterbalanced for many of the adults by the support provided by Dr. Beattie herself, who they cited as an incredible inspiration to them and an important support in the work they are doing. Her energy, expertise, and mentorship were mentioned by numerous people as particular assets to the organization and to their work of being an adult in partnership with youth. With the addition of two new coaches, this on-site support is expanding as teams are expanding statewide. Many recognized that without her and the extended YATST team, it would be impossible for them to really engage in this work. One adult advisor explained,

“All the pieces are there, but Helen has the whole picture. We're all in the minutia, trying to make this thing grow and become a culture change... We need Helen right now to bring us back out so we can see the whole picture.”

The value-add of Dr. Beattie's support is her consistent focus on the YATST long-term vision of change and the way she communicates that to frontline staff working within schools. A YATST school principal expressed similar thought:

“I think it does take an outsider coming in because I think sometimes schools are so trapped. They have a difficulty seeing outside the box sometimes. Having somebody from the outside come in, it's really important to bring in someone from the outside to say you're just working in this box, I don't know if you see all sides of this box or even where there might be doors or windows to that box. I think Helen's really good about doing that.”

Adults expressed the importance of having support outside the school for other reasons, as well. The YATST staff's crucial role in providing the scaffolding needed for the work through trainings and positive reinforcement was mentioned by a second year adult advisor:

“You know what she does is she just validates the work. She's incredible about validating the work. She's always able to sort of take it to sort of the big picture. I think that that part of her role—and just being able to provide the exposure and organize some of the learning, I think that that is just incredibly valuable.”

On-site coaching by Dr. Beattie and Mr. Frank provided personal assistance that helped to resolve the concept of an action-research cycle with the dilemmas of local contexts. Many groups cited the specific things that Mr. Frank and particularly Dr. Beattie did to support the work moving forward at their site. This support included providing examples of surveys, and, before the curriculum guide was

developed, training on how to facilitate activities, and ideas for how to organize in-services, among others. A third year YATST advisor commented,

“When it came time to, once we had the data, you know how to go about compressing it and dealing with it and choosing what we’re going to focus on and everything, and so because it was those earlier years, we were fortunate enough to be able to access Helen a lot. Actually quite a lot, so she really should be counted as an early on team member...because we did our little retreats with her, and everything. Our success, our early on success I think is thanks to her because it wasn’t all established yet.”

A number of adult advisors echoed these feelings about the support of the YATST staff team, particularly some of the advisors of second and third year YATST groups. These advisors emphasized the necessity of this support as groups experimented with the YATST model in its early years. One advisor observed:

“YATST is not fixed in stone. You know? It’s very organic and so we went with the flow that existed then. Helen would encourage us to take a different approach and take different turns in the river. “

To scaffold the action-research cycle, YATST has created some project-oriented steps to help benchmark schools’ progress. For some schools these concrete steps helped to orient the group on the next step. For other groups, the concrete steps felt distracting from their action research process. One such adult explained, *“This year, the last few months anyway—it’s felt like we’ve just been trying to check the boxes of the YATST requirements, like making a video, getting the survey done, doing this meeting.”*

A newer adult expressed similar confusion by stating, *“As someone who was relatively new to YATST, one of the parts that felt unclear to me was how to focus our group’s time and energy. There were conferences, Action research, facilitation training, and Great Expectations work. I think that part of our group’s challenge was that we were working on our conference presentation, along with our survey at the start of the year. The conference was a clear deadline, so it took precedence, and our survey suffered.”* The tension between providing scaffolding and helping groups stay focused on the main goals of the action research cycle will need to continue to be developed.

Professional Learning Community

Research has demonstrated that one of the greatest gaps in most youth-adult partnership efforts is a focused effort on providing support and training to the adult facilitators (Mittra, 2005). Some advisors expressed the difficulty of knowing how much to do when, when to step in, when to motivate, when to let youth try something they as adults think might not work out. One person described it as a constant dance of what to do when. Sometimes this dance came back to simply knowing the kids in the group and knowing which students needed to see tangible outcomes of the work and which students

were more all right with the “glacial pace of school change”. YATST has worked hard to address this issue. As one adult advisor commented:

“Helen is always thinking...she’s always researching. She’s always trying to create tools and generate discussion around the latest...research.”

At YATST one of the greatest sources of support to adult is a yearly course that adult advisors can take for course credit or PLC credit (ongoing learning credits required by their contract). The creation of a course allowed for structured time for adult training, with a reward of college credit. Adults cited school and classroom responsibilities that would prevent them from being able to work with the YATST group meaningfully without these external supports.

The course is designed to help participants reflect on individual practice, troubleshoot common challenges in a group setting, as well as help participants to immerse themselves in the theory of youth voice and youth-adult partnership. The syllabus for the class includes goals such as, understanding the “theory and practice of authentic youth-adult partnership”, “the basic steps of the action-research model, including how to conduct qualitative and quantitative research in school and how to assess an action plan”, “characteristics of schools which have increased student engagement in learning and voice and decision-making”, and “the fundamentals of school change theory”.

To complete the course, participants work with their YATST groups once a week on moving forward in the action-research project and journal on a monthly basis about their experiences working with their group. Participants also put together a portfolio of their team’s work which can include survey results, photos, drawings, writings, video, or whatever will help to tell the story of the team’s process. Additionally, attendance at the PLC meetings is an important component of the course as sharing experiences and brainstorming solutions to challenges is a major component of the class. Additionally, short reading and writing assignments are given. These readings include empirical as well as theoretical pieces about student voice from the scholars whose work is central to the YATST vision. At the end of the class, a final reflection paper is required.

Members of the PLC expressed how useful it was being able to hear what was happening at other schools and how energizing it was to be around other adults who were also invested in student voice. One advisor shared,

“It’s nice to be around people who have the same end goal in mind, that student-adult partnerships should be the norm for every school, so the topics and readings and conversations we had were actually supportive of the work that we’re doing here. “

The relationships that adults built through these connections allowed them to transcend the cultures of their individual schools and connect with like-minded adults in other schools. These connections created an important support network for these adults to turn to in the course of their work with students. One advisor explained:

“My relationships with members of the PLC developed and flourished inside and outside of YATST work, deepening and broadening my connection to a network of innovative educators. It was always enjoyable and enlightening to get together as a group.”

A few related specific anecdotes about ways that the PLC had helped them think through dilemmas that they were facing in their work with youth. For one new advisor, the diet of readings and discussions allowed her to develop the skills she need to be a better advisor:

“It took me most of this year to understand how to leverage the YATST tools to perfect our... school. As I floundered, so too did the students. The adult gatherings and the readings were where the puzzle pieces ever so slowly fell into place.”

Some regret was expressed that after the course was opened to principals that more principals did not choose to take advantage of the opportunity to participate. A few adult advisors felt that this participation might have led to a deeper understanding of the model and better collaboration between their YATST groups and the school administration.

Despite the benefits of the course, geography proved to be an issue in teacher training—even in the small state of Vermont. Adults raised concerns about the “north-south” divide in Vermont and the difficulty this presented in attending meetings of the graduate course and other trainings offered by YATST. Adults located in the South expressed a desire to be more involved in YATST organizational activities but said that the distance was too far to come regularly. It was suggested that some meetings might happen in the South to make the problem of distance more equitably distributed between the participants. The hiring of additional YATST coaches should help to address this problem.

A second facet of this theme of “north-south” was the suggestion that the south of Vermont differs culturally from northern Vermont and that northern Vermont schools might have either had more exposure to the idea of student voice or culturally might just be more open to the idea of giving students a voice. One participant mentioned the difficulty of making the case for student voice both to the students and to the teachers in a southern Vermont school - outside of the YATST group, it was difficult to get students and teachers to see the need or relevance.

School and Teaching Outcomes:

At the heart of the YATST model is a focus on data collection aimed at building on strengths within each school to make positive changes. As one youth eloquently stated, “It is an evolving process...There is no template for it. It happens individually and organically at each school. This work never ends.” The individualized nature of the work can be an extremely powerful catalyst for change as well as a challenge for individual YATST groups attempting to find their way forward in the action-research process. YATST advisors reflected on a few key themes relating to creating school change in partnership with youth. Many advisors framed their response about what their groups had accomplished with an acknowledgement of the inherent slowness of the action-research cycle and institutional change within schools. One commented:

"We've had some concrete accomplishments along the way this year, but in terms of students seeing an actual thing change like no styrofoam in the kitchen—which is like an immediate thing you don't see—it's not as evident. In the beginning we were anxious about that, I think, and we wanted students to feel like they were accomplishing something so we did things that they could accomplish quickly that did impact our culture in a positive way and the classroom in a positive way, but wasn't necessarily a paradigm shift among the students and staff."

In response to managing the slowness of the action research cycle, some advisors tried to engage the students in short term projects/goals that, while not directly related to the action-research cycle they were undertaking, helped to deepen the bonds in the group and give them a sense of accomplishment. This strategy fits with the literature showing that visible victories (McLaughlin, 1993; Mitra, 2008) are necessary for a youth-adult partnership to feel that they have a purpose and are achieving their goals. A few of the advisors who used this strategy discussed explicitly trying to connect these projects with the 4Rs. Service-learning opportunities either in-school or out of school that could be completed as a group were one way that some groups chose to focus on short term wins, such a one group's community service trip to New York City that the students fundraised for and planned themselves. Others talked about contextualizing the action-research project for students in ways that made their actions "feel big" – understanding, for example, that doing a survey is a big action.

Despite the need for short term wins, adult advisors discussed a number of ways that they could see YATST actually changing the school, starting with their own teaching practices. One adult advisor talked about his experience incorporating feedback opportunities within his own classroom at the end of the year:

"It's not that I'd never done it before, but this group, for some reason, saw [the class] happening in a different way than what I've been doing it. I just went with what I heard from them and incorporated it into what I was doing."

A few advisors talked about feeling a gradual change amongst the school staff because of positive responses to the activities of the YATST group. One advisor described what was happening in her school this way:

"I think teachers are really looking at their practice based on not only what they've learned from professional development, but [based on] what the kids have raised about concerns, especially from the data that they had collected. Certainly, I think the kick-off [in-service this year] with the [presentation on] brain development—I mean, that was a K-12 presentation and the feedback that was given to us after that was like, "This is the first in-service we've had where kids have been at the center of it!" [Kids]—not a PowerPoint presentation and not somebody telling us what we have to do this year. It was kids talking about, "This is what we want you to know"

about how we learn and think about all those different kids that are in your classroom"... I think it's having an impact."

Her perception of positive response to the in-service is echoed in the responses that participants wrote on their feedback cards. While other aspects of that in-service got mixed reviews, attending teachers were almost universally excited by the presentation that the students had done on how the brain develops and processes information. One wrote, "The skit was really great and brought the brain research alive."

Such presentations are not the only accomplishments of YATST groups working to create deep change within their schools. Although the focus of each group is unique to the strengths and challenges they identified from their surveys, projects have included instituting mid-term feedback sheets in classrooms, creating student teaching assistants to assist teachers within classrooms, and options for project-based mid-term and final exams. To get a full sense of the range of projects that YATST groups work on, see **Appendix A: Table of Accomplishments and Projects by School**.

Student Outcomes:

Many advisors were able to identify students that they felt had changed because of their participation in YATST. While acknowledging that high school is a time of incredible change and growing for most students, adult advisors most often pointed to changes in students' belief in themselves and in their ability to make a difference within the school, their sense of belonging (both to the YATST group itself and to the school), their development of specific skills such as facilitation, leadership, conflict resolution and problem solving, as well as developing their ability to discuss their opinions and school reform more generally in a respectful, mature manner. As one principal recounted, "I think that the work is really being done to benefit systems but I think the benefit that it has for individual kids who take this on is incredible. I think that's important to recognize, too... I think, has changed kids' lives and that's amazing to see."

The outcomes align with previous research by Mitra and Serriere (2012) that has shown that youth-adult partnership initiatives can build the ABCs of youth development—agency, belonging, competence and discourse.

Agency: Agency is signified by belief in oneself, growth in one's leadership, and the belief that one can make a difference. In discussing the growth of their students during their participation in YATST, a number of adult advisors cited examples of growth in their student agency and self-efficacy. One advisor discussed a senior in YATST:

“The one who has become one of the biggest leaders and facilitators, and who has also helped... in conferences and different things is, she’s going to graduate this year. As a freshman and a sophomore, she was just someone who didn’t get involved with things, and who was just very, very quiet, very, very reserved... We never would have imagined that she would turn into this person. Now obviously YATST has only been a piece of her experience, but I’ll tell you the trust that has been put in her to lead and guide the group has really made her a different person. ”

It is not just adult advisors who see the change in youth agency because of their participation. Youth also are able to identify ways in which YATST has increased their feelings of confidence and self-efficacy. An adult advisor describes a student’s reflection on his own growth:

“[A] senior, who just graduated this year, I think he didn’t realize that he had the confidence to do as much public speaking and to really have his voice be heard. We just had our reflection dinner last week and that was what he shared, that how much he has grown and how important the work that he has done and he has the confidence now to speak up than this year.”

Belonging: Belonging is defined as a connection to one’s peers, to teachers, to one’s YATST group, and also a greater attachment to school. One of the major themes of reflection for students participating in the YATST summer retreat was how the youth and adults of YATST were able to create such an accepting environment where youth could feel free to express their ideas. Some the reflections they shared at the summer retreat included:

“One thing that stood out for me that was pretty cool was that everyone had a voice, nobody controlled the conversations. It was easy to get your ideas out there, a lot different from my grade.”

The culture created at YATST events through careful modeling by both the adult and youth facilitators is noticed by the youth participants and cited as one of the attractions of the program. The atmosphere at YATST sparks this young person to muse on culture change within his own school:

“People have so much to say and you don’t see that in school so much, and to come here and hear what all the students have to say...it’s so amazing and I wish the students at school would also act that way and if in such a small group of people we can come up with ideas like this, what if we [did this with] a school of 750 people!”

Another theme that youth and adults both expressed was the closeness they felt within their school-based YATST groups. Students expressed the ways in which YATST allowed them to connect with those that they had previously not known well or felt different from. One young person reflected:

“We’re different personalities but we’re not so different that we can’t work well together and because of that I think it’s going to be a really successful year and everyone will be able to bring something different to the table.”

In one case, a group decided to make team-building an explicit part of their first year of YATST work. Their advisor recounts:

[The students asked me], "...How are we ever gonna become a team? We're spending so much time doing this stuff but we're not doing any teambuilding." They had just come from a workshop saying how important teambuilding was, that Helen had done... That got them into the discussion that ultimately led to [a team-building focused] project."

This idea of closeness was also expressed about cross-school collaboration and friendships. The adults and the students agreed that they felt like they were part of a network of schools engaged in youth-adult partnership work. One adult advisor reflected in her final reflection for the graduate course:

"Contact with our fellow YATST schools has been one of the highlights of the year. Meeting so many progressive and caring individuals has enriched our little YATST group. Our students keep in touch with friends from [other schools]. We are looking forward to the summer activities and fall conference."

Competence: While competencies can be broadly defined, competence with reference to student voice signifies the development of specific skills, such as facilitation, public speaking, and problem solving. Adults described a number of skills that some of their students have developed as a result of their participation in YATST. These skills included the ability to facilitate meetings, to speak at in-services, to troubleshoot issues that come up at their schools in implementation and building legitimacy for their groups, as well as overcoming obstacles.

Youth speaking at faculty meetings, school and district in-services and academic conferences is often pointed to by adults as one of the most impressive outcomes for YATST youth. Adult advisors spoke often about the public speaking skills that students had developed because of their participation in YATST trainings as both participants and facilitators. One adult advisor discussed the outcomes of the many opportunities that YATST participation provides for growth in student leadership:

"There's this tiering effect of opportunities for us to work as a team, and for individual students who really wanted to continue building their skills to be able to attend those trainings and then bring them back to our group and put them to play. We had kids facilitating with incredible facilitation skills at our meetings. The adults, again, could sit back—I would take notes. I didn't facilitate. It was wonderful."

The growth of student skills in meeting facilitation includes not only the ability to facilitate large meetings of adults, but of students as well. One experienced YATST advisor reflected on his students' growth by the end of the year:

"By the end of the year when they had the student meeting, they ran that meeting a hundred percent by themselves. The teachers were all in a panic that the students were all going to be in a room talking about the data without a single teacher in the room. In fact they made me

arrange to have our disciplinarian outside in the hall, which was really funny because they didn't need it at all. It was one of those—the kids really understood how to organize a meeting by that time."

However, participating as a facilitator or leading meetings was not the only way which adults observed growth in youth competence as a result of participating in this work. Youth were able to grow in their ability to take personal risks express their thoughts to faculty in less formal settings than in-services:

"I do see it varies for different kids, but I think I've seen growth in all of them, even the kids that don't come on a regular basis. Just to be able to sit in that fishbowl and be able to have their voices heard from faculty I think was really empowering for them. They might not come to all the meetings. They might not be involved in everything, but I do see that, boy, they took that little risk and hopefully that risk transfers to what they say in a classroom or how they speak up for themselves in other settings."

This risk taking was not limited to public speaking. The nature of YATST work as an on-going and evolving process allowed students to cultivate perseverance and problem solving skills. One first year advisor recounts her group's reflections on a project they implemented based on their survey:

"[The project] didn't go as well as it should have and I think the adults were kind of responsible for that piece, but the kids said, you know what? We're okay that [it] didn't work great... [The adults] heard it and they were willing to take a risk to make a change. So, that's coming out of the 17-year-old's mouth and I was like, oh, my word. You're right. It's not gonna be perfect the first time...but they were part of the process for teachers to kind of look at and administrators to look at what decisions needed to be made."

One youth at the summer retreat similarly reflected:

"There is never a perfect action to take and it is a lot of trial and error and that is a large part of all of us coming together and we take in opinions from everyone and we try to come up with what the best action is and it may not be perfect but it works."

YATST's rapid prototyping approach to rolling out action-research projects in schools exposes youth to the idea of problem-solving on the go. This led youth to be pro-active about locating resources that could support their work. As one advisory described:

"In the beginning they'd sit there an whine about their disagreements. That didn't last too long because none of them were natural whiners and none of them wanted to really whine. It just wasn't their style. The whining part quickly led into "We can't operate this way, how are we gonna change the way we do this or we're never gonna get anything done." That started them into looking into conflict resolution and teambuilding."

Discourse: An important part of developing both student voice and youth-adult partnership is learning how to talk honestly and openly with people different than oneself. The ability for youth to engage in honest, respectful dialogue with adults was often listed as one of the outcomes from participation in YATST groups. One adult advisor described a student’s growing assertiveness:

“One of [the students] tended to be very quiet...I would see her as being much more direct in what her needs are. Both with me and with teachers, and with her peers. If someone is causing her problems, for example, she will let them know that.”

A particularly powerful example of how students develop the ability to communicate with others came through in an anecdote about one adult advisor’s student at a YATST training. A student shared his personal story in a way that transformed the experience of the meeting for those involved:

“During [a YATST training] there was one point where we were almost play-acting a teacher’s response to YATST and asking for more individualized, flexible accommodations in the classroom. This woman was playacting, “But I’m a math teacher and I’m very clear about—I have my way that I’m very fair in how I calculate my average and you’re asking me to be not fair.”

Some of the other people were sort of arguing back with what does “fair” mean and [this student] just shares his personal story. He says, “Well, I’m ADD and this is what school was like for me. This is why I think that it’s fair to change things. ‘Cause here’s some things that I’m able to do and here’s some ways that I wasn’t able to demonstrate it.”

People just raved about how much that shifted the feeling of the conversation. He had sort of gone from kid who couldn’t make it in school—Now he was being viewed as someone who had really important things to say and could actually make an argument better than all of the data and expertise that’s out there. “

The climate of YATST gatherings that encouraged this student’s sharing is the same climate that allows students to practice listening and understand the experiences of others during these retreats and trainings. As part of his reflection on take-aways for the summer training, one youth reflected: *“Everyone brings something different to the table and new perspective and that is always humbling for me. I just learned something new, just because I stopped and listened.”*

Moving forward:

Beginning its fourth year of work, YATST is at a transition point from defining who it is as an organization to thinking of how to stabilize, sustain and to continue to grow its work. Evidence of this shift can be seen in the summer institute. Training sessions focus less on what YATST can be and more

on video clips showing what YATST does look like and current student facilitators articulating the meaning of the work to them and transferring that enthusiasm to new teachers and students. At the YATST staff level, strategic processes are beginning to move the work forward as this shift happens.

To have staying power, YATST will have to be able to have an identity beyond Dr. Beattie. The hiring of new staff has helped to expand this vision. In the short term, additional staff will help YATST meet its strategic plan vision of providing support for both Southern Vermont YATST teams and their adult advisors wishing to pursue graduate work. In the long term, this may allow for more distributed leadership across the organization, freeing Dr. Beattie for the strategic visioning that will be needed to continue to scale YATST.

- **Harry Frank, Assistant Director:** Harry Frank has been working with YATST over the past year to assist Dr. Beattie both in coordinating the logistics of workshops, the creation of curriculum and in providing individualized coaching to YATST teams.
- **Martha Rich, School Coach:** Martha Rich will be joining the YATST team this year as a school coach. She will be providing individualized support to YATST teams as the organization continues to expand the number of participating schools.
- **Hillary Laggis, Communications Intern:** Hillary Laggis, a Communications major at the University of Vermont, will be working with YATST to help coordinate external communication about YATST work as well as internal communication between YATST schools. She will specifically be focusing on expanding YATST's use of technology to communicate its mission outwardly as well as to facilitate the sharing of best practices between schools and maintaining the connections between the youth and adults who are doing this work that are cultivated at events like summer retreats, the adult learning community and other workshops.

As YATST moves forward, it is seeking to build relationships with a broad range of funders, policymakers and fellow practitioners to network, find resources, and to deepen its work. We use a model of “scaling up” or spreading the work of a reform effort, to explore the ways that YATST has grown and continues to grow. Coburn (2003) describes this scaling up process as having three components—deeper work, broader work, and work that shifts ownership of the reform. Depth is the staying power of the reform and the importance of a school, and individuals within that school, deepening their commitment to the reform work by incorporating it into more aspects of the school culture. Through deepening the work of the reform, it becomes part of the “way we do things here” as opposed to a new idea that is being tried. Lastly, a scaling up in reform includes a shifting of the reform ownership from YATST to the schools themselves. Such a shift is visible through financial commitments, staffing commitments, scheduling commitments, and school statements of vision and programming. In looking towards the future, the YATST Advisory Board has created a strategic plan that looks to support these dimensions of scale.

Breadth

Breadth is typically the measure used to understand taking a reform to scale. As the reform spreads from its initial schools, YATST has extended its reach in terms of schools, teams, and individual participants.

More schools: YATST has expanded its reach from its initial area of impact in the Northeast Kingdom to schools in other locations in Vermont and is continuing to grow. Since it was founded in 2008, YATST has moved from a small handful of schools to groups to 12 schools in 2012. The YATST strategic plan outlines a vision to increase the number of schools to “24-26 high schools by 2013-14 (40% of Vermont High Schools)”.

Increased flexibility: The strategic plan outlines an option to allow schools to enter the program at the mid-year mark rather than starting August as schools typically have. Additionally, non-YATST schools will have the opportunity to participate in year-long thematic topics designed to “augment student voice opportunities in their schools”.

More teachers: Adult advisors at Year 2 or 3 schools referenced the increasingly favorable impressions of their work amongst faculty groups at their schools as legitimacy and support for their work increases. With this increased presence has come increased interest in both supporting and participating in the work. This increased interest and participation is an essential part of expanding faculty commitment to student voice in the long term as more teachers are introduced to YATST core concepts through not only school-based in-services, but district-wide in-services which reach teachers and schools not formally associated with YATST.

Cultivating like-minded partners: Alignment of goals with other reforms entering the schools helps to reinforce and deepen the work for both organizations. YATST has actively reached out to schools such as Casco Bay High School in Maine, an expeditionary learning community, or Big Picture High School in Burlington, a school within a school that uses proficiency based graduation requirements. Relationships with these partners allowed for cross organizational learning as YATST students visited or learned about these schools so as to understand what a transformation of institutional schooling might actually look like. For example, YATST groups have been able to visit Casco Bay High School in order to get a concrete picture of what project-based learning across the curriculum actually looks like and how it is experienced by students and teachers in a high school. Furthermore, the YATST vision and curriculum have been a key influence in helping Big Picture High School more clearly define its protocols for enacting authentic student driven curriculum by helping provide activities and protocols for facilitating community meetings and dialogue between school staff and students.

Sharing outward: Articulating one’s activities is often a useful activity to promote deepening because it encourages internal reflection and reflection by an audience as well. Part of YATST’s focus on shared responsibility includes the need to share lessons learned from the work outwards at conferences across the state and the region. YATST students have participated as presenters in the Vermont Department of Education’s BEST institute, have presented testimony to the Vermont House Education Committee, as well as been Keynote Speakers at a Harvard conference on Community Organizing and School Reform.

As the staff of YATST expands to include a communications oriented staff member, the organization's capacity to share outwards is likely to increase in the next year as YATST continues to document and share their work through social media technology.

Depth:

Bringing a school reform to scale means not only disseminating the reform widely, but also ensuring that quality of implementation and increasing institutionalization of the reform happens simultaneously. The fundamental work of YATST groups is embedding their processes as a natural part of planning and normalizing the inclusion of student voice. The best way to understand how this work is happening is by looking at the case of a single school, Hazen Union School, now moving into its third year of YATST work, and at the case of a single student within that school.

Hazen Union School is a small, rural school in North-Central Vermont. While the Hazen Union YATST group is now entering its third year of existence, the group is advised by the school guidance counselor, who has been working with them for the past year. The group was founded by the previous school guidance counselor with support of the school's principal, who was interested in encouraging the development of student voice at Hazen Union School. They started by recruiting the president of the student council, an involved student with obvious prior commitment to school change and youth voice. From there, they recruited other student leaders and started out with a select group of students lacking in academic diversity.

In its first year, the YATST group at Hazen Union worked on creating and then rolling out their survey to the faculty and the student body. They did this by playing up the idea of student voice as a civic voice. Before they administered their survey, they embarked on a poster campaign throughout the school with the slogan "Your voice, your vote". On the day of the survey, students and staff filled out their surveys in the school gymnasium in individual voting booths that had been set up for the occasion. These actions were able to generate a lot of initial enthusiasm and awareness about the work that the group was doing. After they had analyzed the survey results, they were able to capitalize on that initial enthusiasm throughout their second year as they presented the data to the faculty, focusing on the strengths of the school and teaching represented within the findings.

These first few faculty meetings were important as they were the first exposure, aside from the survey, that the faculty really had to the aims and norms of the YATST group. After these first few meetings, the principal describes a "growing sort of mutual appreciation" that happened between the YATST students and the Hazen Union faculty as the students began to really feel heard and the faculty began to respect the work that the students were leading. During that same time, YATST was able to move away from the climate issues that the student council focused on and differentiate themselves as an organization focused on curriculum and instruction.

During their third year, they were anxious to formulate some action that capitalized on the reputation that they had built during their second year. They opened the year by performing a skit

which communicated some of the theory behind the YATST vision about how brains process information to all the teachers in their district (Medina, 2008; Sousa, 2006). The year was a “busy one”, according to their adult advisor. Not only were they working on a number of their self-identified projects around changing the mid-year and final exam structure at the school; the school administration approached them and asked if they could work on a project to institute mid-year and end-of-year feedback forms in all classrooms in the high school. The reputation that they had spent the previous two years building with the faculty resulted in their perceived legitimacy as the go-to group for instituting a student-feedback tool.

As they enter their third year, the group has identified areas where they can continue to deepen their relationship with the school community. The group members feel fairly confident that their work is well-respected amongst the faculty; however, they worry that they have little communication with the student body and that students who are not involved with the group do not know or understand what they are doing. They hope to raise awareness this year while moving forward on collecting their second wave of quantitative data by re-administering their survey. Furthermore, the success of the YATST group at this site has had an effect how the administration at the district level views student voice. The second high school in this school district was encouraged to start a YATST group (which is now entering its 2nd year) because of the work of the Hazen Union YATST group.

A second example of the deepening of YATST efforts is the cumulative effect it has had on the trajectories of some of the participating youth. One student in particular, Finn, has been deeply affected by his participation in a YATST group since his sophomore year of high school. As a student, Finn struggled with dyslexia throughout his time in school, and as a result, he came to YATST with a deep empathy for students who struggled with traditional, undifferentiated school experiences that did not address their individual needs. Through his work with YATST, Finn received training in facilitation and leadership, which he put to use assisting in conference presentations with YATST director Dr. Beattie, as well as co-facilitating a number of workshops for his classmates and peers at other schools. This fall, Finn has begun pursuing a degree in Education Policy Studies at the University of Vermont and living in an intentional dorm community inspired by the writings of John Dewey. Finn states that he is interested in understanding and making policies that inform how schools educate, rather than teaching himself, because of the work that he has been involved in with YATST.

Documenting outcomes. Like any reform initiative, YATST struggles with how to powerfully articulate the outcomes of the work in ways that can fully reflect the scope of the work (1) in ways that are meaningful to YATST and (2) outcomes that resound with the funder and policy community. As Coburn (2003) writes, documentation of outcomes when trying to capture depth as well as breadth is extremely difficult. At its heart, the issue is how to measure the *integrity* of the YATST process in an authentic and comprehensive way. Some possible paths forward in tackling this issue include:

- Interest in looking at longitudinal survey work at the three year schools for changes in survey responses to faculty openness to student voice, for example, could serve as an important and meaningful outcome.

- Finding ways to create an ongoing process for data collection. The response rate of the current end of year faculty survey is meager. Creation of new strategies such as smaller exit cards at training sessions to get a pulse on faculty and student perceptions are one thought.

Culling through the typed outcomes from Expectation Institute could be a starting point

Shift in Reform Ownership

As YATST scales up and increases in both the breadth and depth of its reforms, a shift in reform ownership will become important for creating long-lasting sustainability (Coburn, 2003).

Support from VT Department of Education: The Department of Education has recognized the alignment of the YATST theory of change with its vision for high school reform in Vermont and has been interested in and supportive of YATST's efforts to increase its reach. A state official explained:

"I would start by saying that we absolutely believe that students should be at the center of the construction of their own learning experience. For that to work, happen, be meaningful, it seems to me that student voice is essential. Meaningful student voice is essential, both in terms of the development of a personal learning plan, but also in the development of the school's environment for learning. That's why it's so important to us that we make these kinds of opportunities available throughout the state."

A state-level approval and encouragement of YATST work has the potential to ensure funding stability for the work statewide as well as to spread the work to further schools. The state official talked about funding:

"We're going to keep working on that, with the goal of creating this environment in which the agency, by then, will be able to encourage these kinds of innovations, including what YATST is doing...There are some things already going on that would fall into this category—that we want to support, and we would find a way to direct some funds to enable the expansion of that...Then I think there's a category where we don't know exactly what it is we're looking for, but we want to encourage it, and that might be in the form of, "Submit your proposals to do something that has to do with personal learning plans," and that we would fund some good candidates for that."

Individual school ownership: While administrators may speak of the value of the YATST work, they demonstrate its value by incorporating it into school procedures and activities. YATST groups have already explored a number of models for institutionalizing the work within the school structure via credit-bearing classes, and the creation of YATST PLC groups. As schools move to re-administer the survey and in doing so document the changes that have taken place during their existence, increased ownership at the school-level can be expected. Such activities create time to devote to cultural change and legitimacy as a part of the official school day rather than as an after-school/adjunct activity. For example, at Harwood Union High School, youth and adults have been finding time to meet in the evenings in order to carry on this work and find sufficiently long blocks of time together to allow them to plan their activities. In the upcoming year at this school, the administration has allowed planning time to

be allocated to YATST during in-service days. Participating teachers will get credit for professional development while youth and adults will not have to sacrifice either class or personal time in the pursuit of this work.

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Appendix A: Accomplishments by school

School	Accomplishments in the past year	Goals for 2012-2013
Big Picture High School (entering Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Administered survey to staff and students -Students led parts of community meeting -Gathered some qualitative data through student interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increased leadership/facilitation of community meetings by students -Involvement and leadership in considering and proposing interventions to increase student productivity during SDL with the restorative justice best practices in mind (pundit square). -Planning and facilitating some of the learning during Orientation term. -Possible changes or criteria for YATST membership. -Write a YATST Learning Plan for the coming year. -Agree upon a time and amount of time to meet each week. -Apply the self-assessment tool to our summer planning at the retreat.

Burlington High School (Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Conducted survey for staff and students -Analyzed survey data -Presented findings to faculty in an all-faculty meeting -Hosted smaller follow up dialogues with 10-15 teachers and 6 youth at a time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Recruitment of more students -Create advertisements for YATST using videos -identifying and leveraging teacher advocates in building -Coordinating with Student Voice Fellow in school -Facilitate conversation between themselves and other “youth” organizations in school
Cabot High School (Year)	(Unknown)	(Unknown)
Craftsbury Academy (entering Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Administered survey to staff and students -Teambuilding work via Service Trip to NYC -Analyzed survey data -Presented survey data to faculty -Presented survey data in separate meeting to students -Hosted fishbowl to discuss issues related to YATST niche in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lead district in-service in conjunction with Hazen Union YATST group --Create roadmap for action -Facilitate faculty-student conversation about respect
Harwood Union (entering Year 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Formulated roadmap for action -Hosted Chalk talks to gather information about action plan -YATST established as PLC group for following year -“This is your brain on information” opening for district in-service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher/student feedback tool -Public relations reach out to students about their academic options -The establishment of a student assistant position
Hazen Union (entering Year 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Worked with teachers to change exam style and schedule: led faculty meeting on this topic, -Created Great expectations video -Development of mid-semester feedback tool -Student on every hiring committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lead district in-service in conjunction with Craftsbury YATST group -Revisit exam schedule so teachers will be more coordinated -Increase student body understanding of YATST and its

		<p>purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Implementation of mid-semester feedback tool
<p>Mill River (entering Year 2) (though had one year of related non-YATST work with Principal Advisory Council)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Created and administered survey -Analyzed survey data -Integration of YATST and student council -Presentation of findings to faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create action plan around survey results
<p>People's Academy (entering Year 5)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reestablished YATST group with all new membership -Administered survey to staff and students -Analyzed data -Presented data to faculty members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work with faculty around issues of respect for student body -Increase visibility for group in school
<p>Twinfield Union (Rights in action class established in 2001)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Transition year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Revisioning/constitution of class format as part of larger humanities curriculum
<p>Windsor High School (entering Year 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -“This is your brain on information” presentation at in-service -Created and administered survey -Analyzed survey results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Try to increase student-teacher relationships in building -Recruitment of more students -Increase visibility of YATST group within school

Appendix B: Protocol for Individual Interviews

Focus of work

- What is the focus of the YATST work in your school?
- How was this focus developed?
 - Has it changed?
 - Relation to the 4Rs?
- In what ways are student perspectives gathered? (ways of getting information from students)
 - What formats (focus groups? Surveys? ; How often has this data collection occurred?
- Are students participating in any conversations or meetings on the reform work of the school?
- Are students participating in data analysis of this work?
- Any other ways that students are involved in the reform work of the school that we did not discuss?

Individual involvement

- When did you get involved in the group? Why did you get involved?
- Why have you stayed involved? What makes it meaningful to you?
- Is the YATST group what you expected it would be?
 - What do you like best about it?
 - What could be improved?

- What do your friends think of the group? Your family?

Overall student involvement

- What types of students does the group involve?
 - academically; socially; college-bound?
 - [Is the group connecting the connected or the underserved?]
 - Why weren't they connected before?
 - What is special about this group?
- Anyone in the group not involved anymore? Why did they leave?
 - Anyone leave b/c they didn't like the group?

Outcomes

- Have you noticed any changes in yourself through your participation in YATST?
- Changes in your peers/colleagues?
- Any changes in school decisions or policies that seem to have been affected by student perspectives?
- Greatest accomplishments of the group so far?
- Do you think it's made any changes in the school?
- Have you noticed any changes in how the students participating in this work:
 - Interact with each other? Is a group forming?
 - Perspectives on school?
 - Perspectives on their future?
 - Does the impact seem to vary between different types of kids?
 - Have you noticed any changes in staff conversations as a result of students participating in the work?
 - How have teachers overall perceived the introduction of student data and student participation in their meetings and decision making?

Group process/sustainability

- Describe their roles in your YATST group and identify who plays them.
- Who would you say are the leaders of your group?
- What would happen to the group if that person was not here next year? What would need to be done to make sure the group lasted?
- How is a decision made in the group? [a map of how something gets done]
- Group norms/ways things run?
- Any examples where there was a disagreement in the group? Tell me about it; how was it resolved?

Training/support needed:

- What types of training and support do students need to participate in action research?
- What types of training to teachers need to participate in YATST?

Big ideas/final reflections:

- What does student-centered learning mean to you?
- Can you think of any examples of student-centered learning in your school?
- What advice would you give to other schools who want to start YATST
- So overall what would you say the role of students should be in being a part of the changes at your school?
- Are there places students don't belong?
- Can YATST survive without Dr. Beattie?